

STUART W. GENTLING

17 August 1983

Mr. Jack Maguire
Executive Director
The Institute of Texan Cultures
801 South Bowie Street
San Antonio, Texas 78294

Dear Jack:

I remember that I was first taught in high school that one should never begin a letter with an apology, but I must violate that rule to tell you how sorry I am that I have not written to you sooner. I have to admit that I was very disappointed with the news that the Institute had changed its mind concerning the timing and focus of its interest in presenting an exhibition of our paintings in late 1985. I have some knowledge of how some state institutions function under the pressure of various internal and external influences, and though I had thought that we had shaken hands in agreement at our last meeting in San Antonio, I confess that I am not surprised by this shift.

I want you to know that Scott and I are still interested in showing at the Institute in the latter part of 1986, and that we will do anything within reason to bring this about. The facilities that you have in San Antonio alone could reach more people in a month than an entire traveling exhibit scheduled through most of our other Texas museums combined. I am very aware of this. Though we do not need the Institute's support to sell copies of our forthcoming book, I constantly worry about the fact that this limited edition will be absorbed quickly into private collections and for the most part escape the notice of the general public. We want to reach as many Texans as possible with this work and not just a limited number of wealthy collectors. Quite frankly, the Institute could offer us that golden opportunity.

I very much want the book, Of Birds and Texas, to be accepted as a state Sesqui-centennial project. The very publication of this book is in itself an historical event, and it should receive the recognition it properly deserves. The Institute's sponsorship could be very instrumental in securing this important recognition. We will be going to press early in 1984, and barring no disasters we should finish with the publication process by the end of the year or early in 1985. Most of our publicity is aimed to appear at the time the publication process is completed. The Institute would have been able to take advantage of this publicity had our exhibition been scheduled there for late 1985. A new promotional approach will have to be considered, and I think that I have some useful ideas about what to do.

One of the most important factors for us to agree upon is, of course, the financing of such a show. In my capacity as a member of the Board of Directors of the Fort Worth Art Museum I have been shown several approaches to the financing of exhibitions. While the Institute does not exactly fit into the category of most art museums I have never heard of an artist personally financing a museum show. Most museums do not make money from their scheduled exhibitions. Costs

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are often defrayed by admission fees, sponsorships through endowments and grants, sales of posters and catalogues, and the sharing of expenses with other institutions on the tour. In our case a percentage of the sales of the book and of the individual prints could be a substantial source of additional revenues, but Scott and I would have to have some clear idea of what kind of financial involvement that might be expected of us. One very possible problem could be the fact that the entire edition of the book could very well be sold out before late 1986, unless a pre-determined number of books was reserved for the Institute to derive its percentage from their sales. It probably would be wise for the Institute to offer these reserved books for sale at the same time in 1985 that we do. This would allow for the Institute to take advantage of our separate publicity campaign and to prepare the public for a 1986 show. These are possibilities which we can discuss in detail if we can reach an agreement to have an exhibition.

For easy reference I have broken down the points to be considered into six main categories. These categories are rather arbitrary, but I think that they cover most of the issues.

- I. The Timing of the Exhibition
 - A. Beginning of Exhibition
 - B. Length of tour (if any)
- II. Pointsef Travel
 - A. Possible choices of museums and institutes
- III. Logistics
 - A. Packing, shipping, insurance
- IV. Prometion
 - A. Local and statewide publicity
 - B. Invitational openings, premier or preview openings on tour
 - C. Spensorship of book and exhibition as a Sesquicentennial project
 - D. Proper crediting of persons and institutions involved.
- V. Finance
 - A. The Institute and touring museums as possible source of revenue
 - B. Gentlings as source of revenue
 - 1.) Sales percentage of books
 - a) number of volumes allocated for sale at the Institute
 - b) percentage of sales receipts to go to the Institute
 - c) coordination of pricing for books etc.
 - d) length of time that the Institute is allowed to sell books
 - 2.) Sales of a poster. A unique and special picture could be done especially for the Institute to commemorate the show. The Institute would reproduce the poster at its own expense, and the Gentlings would promise to sign all of the prints
 - 3.) Sales of catalogues, if a catalogue is to accompany the show
 - 4.) Sales percentage of the signed and numbered individual bird prints and landscape prints (editions of 250) which are included in the book, Of Birds and Texas .
- VI. Determining an approximate time to sign an agreement

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I am certain, Jack, that I have missed some of the salient points, but the categories that I have mentioned, I think, will form a useful basis upon which we might eventually reach an agreement. I can see some possible complications here and there, but none of them seem in any way to present insurmountable obstacles, especially if we negotiate in good faith and reach an understanding and an agreement that we both can rely upon. This is an extremely important point for me, for if the Institute is genuinely not interested in putting on an important exhibition of our work to coincide with some time during the forthcoming Sesquicentennial, then I think that we should acknowledge that fact now and save both of us much wasted time.

We have worked very hard over the last few years to bring our book project into being. I know that we have something very special here, and I think that this volume will stand as a landmark in the history of Texas publishing to be enjoyed by future generations of Texans long after most of the celebrations and observances of the Sesquicentennial are but distant memories. There can be no doubt that the Institute of Texan Cultures could be very helpful to us in bringing this work of art to a larger Texas public, but in no way do I believe that John Graves or David Helman or Scott and I would be alone in deriving a benefit from a working relationship with the Institute. For all of its ample resources and in spite of its many accomplishments in preserving and presenting to Texans the vast sweep of their historical and cultural heritage, The Institute of Texan Cultures stands to benefit in a most unique and substantial way, for it can make history with its sponsorship of this important project and by so doing become a very important part of the history it has helped to create.

Jack, if you could let me know at your earliest convenience what you think about all of this, I would greatly appreciate it. I think that it would be best for you to make the first specific proposals and to state what the Institute might expect of us. I will regard anything that you might write to be in the nature of merely preliminary proposals, platforms for discussions and in no way binding upon either of us until we reach a final formal agreement. As I have mentioned, Scott and I will cooperate with the Institute to the best of our ability, and we sincerely look forward to working with you in a way that will be a source of benefit and pride to you at the Institute, to those of us who are creating this book and hopefully to the general public throughout the state of Texas.

Sincerely

Stuart W. Gentling