

STUART W. GENTLING

4 October 1992

Dr. John M.D. Pohl
Pathways Production
5101 Whitsett Avenue
No. Hollywood, Ca. 91607

Dear sir:

Thankyou for your inquiry of September 14, and for the enthusiasm for our work that you expressed in our telephone conversation last week. Scott and I are flattered that you would consider us for your ambitious project.

We are currently involved in a project of our own which will be the product of our nearly life-long interest in the high cultures of Mesoamerica, especially the Mexica-Aztecs. We have only just begun to put our views into paintings and words for a book we hope to publish within the next five years. It will be our second publication following our production in 1986 of a Great Imperial Folio entitled OF BIRDS AND TEXAS. This massive letterpress work weighs 46 pounds, earned high praise, and we sold out the edition of 525 copies issued at \$2,500. The project took us almost ten years to complete so that we have few illusions about the difficulties we will encounter in dealing with this new, more complicated topic. At least we will not have to deal with the nightmarish logistical problems of a huge folio format, for the Aztec book to be entitled THE ONE REED YEAR will be a publication of smaller size that will measure something like 12 inches by 14 inches. I am enclosing some information about OF BIRDS AND TEXAS to give you some idea of the kind of high standards we aim for.

In May of 1991 Scott and I were reluctantly persuaded to let the public take a peek at what we were doing in a small gallery exhibition at the Fort Worth Gallery owned by a personal friend. The public reaction was quite unexpected and overwhelming. The exhibit had to be extended for another month and a half and was often visited by more than 100 viewers a day after The Dallas Morning News and other publications enthusiastically reviewed it. Many of the viewers were Mexican-Americans and other hispanics who seldom visit our local galleries. That small show resulted in an invitation from the Dallas Museum of Art to exhibit next year at the opening of their new forty million dollar Hammon wing dedicated to latin american art, and the Mexican government is interested in future shows in Mexico and Spain.

Our main predicament is that events are simply moving faster than we are. We have many years of research behind us,

STUART W. GENTLING

but we have literally just begun to make the kind of finished statements that we want to show the public. I might add that neither Scott^{or} I are ever likely to be completely satisfied with every work we do, ~~since we do not always agree each other and the fact that each painting will always be based on speculation.~~ We are well aware that no one really knows exactly what the Aztec capitol of Tenochtitlan looked like, though we do believe that we can give people a better glimpse of that city than they have ever had, ~~before.~~ It sometimes seems that every time a new Aztec book comes out the authors trot out that old Marquina painting of the Templo Mayor done in the 1950's. I only know of a few attempts to integrate the archaeology of the last twenty-five years into a fresher view of the great ceremonial center. And I know of no one who has undertaken to depict views which integrate the descriptions of the conquerors and early colonial sources with a knowledge of the religious and symbolic orientation of the known archaeological remains and the additional and as yet unlocated structures mentioned by Sahagun and Duran.

The black notebook we are sending you, ~~that is~~ written and illustrated by Scott, is a record of our investigations into the make up of the great ceremonial center of Tenochtitlan. It represents our best efforts to date to reconcile the archaeological discoveries of Gamio, Batres, the Metro digs, Sosa y Vega, Matos etc. with the early drawings and maps (Nuremberg, Sahagun, Duran etc.) and the religious observations of early and modern scholars (Sahagun, Duran, Motolinia, Tezozomoc, Seler, Nicholson, Van Zantwick, Townsend, Aveni, Matos etc. etc. etc.) Quite a challenge! What we hope to achieve is a view of the city and its people and its remarkable ceremonial center that will satisfy most archaeologists and give the public to see them in something of their original splendor.

Scott has been working on two models of the great square that measure six by six feet and two by two feet respectively and which will offer new interpretations and insights concerning the appearance of the Templo Mayor. Some of our interpretations will be controversial, and we genuinely hope that our efforts will encourage comments from other scholars. When the models are complete they will serve as subjects for drawings and paintings. All the temple drawings in Scott's notebook were done from the models. It is our hope that any reader of Sahagun and Duran will actually be able to locate in our models and paintings the places where the yearly festivals were held, that viewers will be able to follow their progress and hence get a better understanding of the symbolic ordering of space and time and myth that the Aztecs created with their Templo Mayor.

As far as the Denver Museum catalogue is concerned, we tried to discourage their use of the Templo Mayor and the Aztec palace garden scenes, since they were early works and ^{do} not represent our current thinking. Scott has recently completed another view of the Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc seen looking east from the great Tzompantli and another palace garden scene. The Templo Mayor illustration in the catalogue is closer to

STUART W. GENTLING

the Marquina model although in it Scott has painted the Temple of Tezcatlipoca in the foreground facing west. We decided to allow publication of the paintings in the hope of attracting interest in our project. Your contact is one of several that we have already had. Also, the inclusion of our paintings in a catalogue of the largest Aztec exhibition ever held outside of Mexico enhances the cachet and credibility of our efforts. Scott is currently working on a view of the temples at Malinalco. When it is finished I will send you photos.

If you have any scenes or subjects that you would like to see, please do not hesitate to suggest them. If there is time, and the subject fits within our project, we might be able to help you. As far as being compensated for our efforts or the use of our work, I really do not know what to suggest. Scott and I are fine artists by profession. We make our living and finance our Aztec studies entirely through sales of our own art works. We are not illustrators. While some of our Aztec paintings ^{are} ~~will~~ created to convey factual information, our true goal is to immerse the spectator deep into the poetry of this remarkable and mysterious culture in paintings that will not be easily explained. We want to engage both the amateur and the expert in what is essentially our own personal poetic vision. The book we hope to produce is intended as a work of art as was our book OF BIRDS AND TEXAS. Our studies of Aztec culture and our gathering of facts about their history, religion, architecture etc. are simply a necessary means to an end, namely the best possible expression of our personal artistic visions.

We would appreciate it if you would return the black notebook in a month or so, and we will be looking forward to hearing what you have to say about our efforts. We do regret that we literally have only just begun to paint the many paintings that will comprise our book, but if we can be of any assistance at this early stage of our own project, please let us know how

we can help.

Sincerely,

Stuart Gentling