

"From Maine to Mexico"

An exhibition of watercolors and models by Scott and Stuart Gentling commemorating the visit of members of the Bohemian Grove Club to Dallas, Texas, February 18, 1995.

When Mr. Trammell Crow asked the Gentling brothers to assemble a small show of their work to honor his guests from the Bohemian Club we found ourselves faced with the somewhat daunting task of trying to compress the range of their interests into an exhibit of no more than fifteen paintings. While we are generally pleased with the results we cannot help but lament the exclusion of paintings which, for lack of space and/or availability, we could not show. But, then, such is usually the case even with a large exhibition. To make up for this we have assembled this notebook of biographical articles, book and art reviews for those who are interested in learning more about these artists.

The twins chose to title their show "From Maine to Mexico" not just because their paintings actually depict these places but rather because the title does imply a certain broad latitude of subject matter. From early childhood they have been interested not only in art but also in nature studies, history, and music, especially music of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The effects of these interests appear over and over again in their paintings.

Few people get a chance to see their art and curiosity collections, but these do tell a great deal about the artists. For more than thirty years they have been acquiring art of all kinds, from ancient to modern. Their print collection spans almost five centuries and includes natural history works by Audubon, Wilson and Selby as well as prints ranging from Durer to Robert Motherwell. They also collect the art of India, China, Nepal and Japan as well as wooden masks and sculptures of African cultures. Perhaps their most important collection is that of pre-colombian ceramics and sculpture covering most of the high cultures of the Americas. This includes an extremely rare grouping of Aztec and Mixtec artworks. Scott also has a small collection of eighteenth century stringed instruments as well as a harpsichord which was made for him when he and Stuart were students at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Almost as if to complement these instruments the Gentlings over the years have assembled an extremely interesting collection of eighteenth century mens' clothing ranging from military uniforms to elaborately embroidered suits from the royal courts of Europe. Many of these things appear from time to time in their paintings, and they continue to be a source of study and contemplation. In their paintings the Gentlings are constantly exploring the effects of the past on their existential sense of the present. It is for both of them a very personal journey that they hope others can also enjoy.

The Gentlings also have a large and wide-ranging library which is the result of their life-long love of books. In 1986 they even published a book of their own, a forty-six pound elephant folio of colored plates and text entitled, "Of Birds

and Texas." It was universally acclaimed as the most magnificent publication of its kind in Texas history. It was dedicated to the memory of John James Audubon whose work the Gentlings copied in their early teens. Both twins believe that their childhood interest in Audubon led them to become artists. They are now working on their next book about the Aztec Capitol city of Tenochtitlan on the eve of the conquest of Mexico. It will be titled "The One Reed Year." Though an exhibition of their Aztec models and paintings and original Aztec art will accompany the debut of their forthcoming book, the Gentlings' efforts have already received important recognition from Museums, film makers, archaeologists and even the Mexican government. Two years ago their art was an important part of the Denver Museum of Natural History's epic exhibition titled "Aztec," the largest show of Aztec art and culture ever held outside of Mexico. In April their drawings and paintings will appear in Kevin Costner's long-awaited, eight-hour documentary on the history of Native Americans titled "500 Nations."

We hope you enjoy the landscapes, still lifes, and portraits chosen for this show. They range from simple, direct works to paintings of intricate symbolism. The paintings seek to convey, not only to the artists themselves but to the viewer, first and foremost, a deep and abiding poetic sense of things, a sense of magic and wonder that all too often seems to be slipping away in our post industrial culture. Though their art strives to get in touch with reality, the Gentlings are the first to admit that that reality is often entirely their own.

Another testament to the wide range of the Gentlings' artistic interests lies in the fact that Gentling works in one form or another are on display in all of Fort Worth's largest museums, The Museum of Science and History, The Amon Carter Museum, The Kimbell Art Museum and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. I know of no other living artists who can claim that distinction. The Modern Art Museum recently purchased Scott's highly acclaimed portrait of Doctor Jane Goodall which is reproduced in this catalogue. It is currently on display there and regretfully could not be loaned for this exhibit.

One final note: Scott and Stuart Gentling were chosen last year to create all the paintings and sculptures for the interior and most of the exterior of the new Fort Worth Concert Hall, the last great building of its kind to be constructed in the United States this century.

~~S. Ralph Carr~~