

February 18

E. da Martin
Sup¹⁹ American Art
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Dear Mr. Martin -

Here is the information concerning the Audubon
painting of the Boat-tailed Grackles which my
brother and I purchased last year. You will also
find enclosed herein a description of the
work written by Don Cresswell of the
Philadelphia Print Shop - the dealer who
sold me the work. You will also find ^{an} enclosed in a
separate sheet showing the print of the Grackles
as it appeared in Bonaparte's ^{where one of Charles Merriam's} ~~supplement~~ ^{supplement}
to Alexander Wilson's American Ornithology -
the first great publication on American Birds
produced in this country. In addition to
this material I have sent along two letters
from me to Ron Tyler Assistant Director
of the Amer. Carter Museum, and William Lusk
detailing some of my personal observations
on the ~~work~~ painting - many of which
have subsequently been verified. Bill
Lusk's article published by the Carter Museum
was acquired by me after I wrote my
essay on the Grackle Painting and

find
the enclosed
the two
pages of
this letter
American Ornithology

great dealer

Audubon's Philadelphia experience.

I hope that by now you have had an opportunity to see the original painting for yourself. I believe that I mentioned to you on the phone the other day that there is an Audubon Watercolor of three British finches currently for sale at Hirsch and Adler Gallery. It ~~measures~~ ~~to each larger than it~~ ~~it is 5 inch longer~~ ~~it measures~~ ~~about 1/2 inch larger on each~~ side than our painting. It has a good provenance - having been given by Audubon to the English wildlife artist, John Pridmore Selby. Mary Ward (who is handling this picture) told me that their asking price is \$300,000.

In determining the value of ^{our} Audubon painting of the Boat-tailed Grackles it is very important to keep in mind that this is John James Audubon's very first published bird painting, and its publication in the Bonaparte Supplement to Alexander Wilson's American Ornithology (Both the original Wilson work and the Bonaparte Supplement are considered by most dealers to be one work.) provides the ~~only link~~ ^{primary} ~~between~~ an extremely unique and special link between the works of ^{two} America's founding fathers of American

ornithology. To the best of my knowledge
the Audubon Double Painting is the
only Audubon bird painting, published ^{in Audubon's} ~~in the~~ work of another famous ornithologist.
The fact that ~~that~~ ^{first} Charles Lucien Bonaparte was
at the time ~~that~~ this painting was given
to him by Audubon ^{Charles Lucien Bonaparte was one} of the most famous
and important ornithologists of Europe also
adds to the prestige of this little work. And
finally both Carol Matkin and I believe
that this picture ~~is~~ is the only Audubon
bird painting published in his lifetime still
remaining in private hands.

Most Audubon biographers write about
Audubon's first attempts to have his work
published in Philadelphia in 1824. This
painting provides some very important clues
as to what actually happened to Audubon,
a series of disappointing events which made
the "American Woodman" determined to go
Europe to have his work properly published.
Carol Matkin has told me that the
discovery of this lost picture is an
important event in American art history and
a especially significant moment in the
history of Audubon scholarship. ~~Stone~~
She has no doubt that there will
be an avid interest among scholars

American

and public when the discovery of this work is officially published. And

Audubon painted three paintings of Boat-tailed Grackles. The first work was painted in early January 1821 at Branch Church above New Orleans during Audubon's famous flatboat journey down the Mississippi. The second painting ^(the picture) was painted in Philadelphia in May of 1824 at the request of ~~the~~ Charles Bonaparte. Audubon copied the pose of the 1821 Louisiana painting but put the two birds together so that they overlapped and he left out ^{the} surrounding foliage to meet the demands of ^{the engraver} Tawson, and George Aud, Wilson's biographer and trustee for Wilson's estate. This painting is also a smaller picture than the 1821 painting so that it could fit the smaller format of the Bonaparte-Wilson Supplement. The third version of Audubon's Grackles was painted in Charleston South Carolina in 1837. It is this work that finally was published in the Birds of America. Needless to say the New York Historical Society would like to have all paintings because they own the all two originals and the inclusion of this our Grackle painting would complete ~~at~~ one of the most unique cycles in all of John James Audubon's oeuvre.

all over again