

16 Dec 1974

Letter to Chris Lane  
The Philadelphia Print Shop

16 Dec. 1974.

Chris Lane

8405 Germantown Avenue

Chestnut Hill

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19118

Dear Sir:

I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you last Saturday, and I ~~want~~ wish to re-affirm the fact that I ~~want~~ <sup>wish</sup> to purchase the painting of the Great Cross Blackbird. As by our agreement I ~~will~~ <sup>shall</sup> make a deposit of \$5,000, and I shall pay the balance of \$3,500 within two weeks of your receipt of my deposit. Please do not send me the picture until I have paid the complete balance. Then I will also avail myself of your seven day examination period ~~upon receipt of the picture~~. Though there is no way to prove that the work is absolutely Audubon's, I am, even upon examination of <sup>only</sup> your black and white illustration, quite certain that it is either by his hand or it is a very <sup>good</sup> copy. A close examination of the <sup>actual painting</sup> ~~original~~ should be the deciding factor.

In the course of our conversation I mentioned to you that my brother, Scott,

and I are currently engaged in creating, what is by today's standards, a monumental book titled, "Of Birds and Texas." ~~We have~~ It is a bound set of plates with text.

The ~~main body of the text~~ I have included with this letter material detailing the exact specifications of the project. <sup>for the past 8 years</sup> We have been working on the paintings and the <sup>very</sup> complicated logistical problems surrounding the creation of such a monumental enterprise. To our great pleasure but not surprise the book has been extremely well received. As I told you, we have <sup>already</sup> sold slightly more than half of the books, and this has occurred with only a minimum of publicity. Our bankers are stupefied that so many <sup>people</sup> have so willingly parted with \$2,500 for a book that does not yet exist. <sup>we will be going to press in January</sup>

The Bankers ~~are~~ <sup>still</sup> further impressed by the fact that Scott and I were approached three months ago by a member of the Board of Directors of the Ft. Worth Museum of Science and History asking us if we might be interested in selling the ~~original~~ bird paintings to the museum. (Scott and I, at considerable sacrifice, had determined from the beginning to keep the entire collection



Dr. & letter with picture saying the "I am certain that  
all of the books will sell out etc."

of original ~~bird~~ paintings intact.) ~~the~~ It has  
always been our wish that a museum or  
large corporation would purchase the entire  
collection and to put ~~it~~ on public display.  
The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History  
is one of the largest of its kind in the  
United States. In fact it has the largest  
museum <sup>school</sup> ~~student~~ body in the country with  
over 6,000 students attending. A million  
people a year pass come to view the exhibits <sup>there</sup>  
more than three times the number <sup>of people</sup> who visit  
our city's three major art museums  
combined. C

We ~~offer~~ <sup>offer</sup> the collection to the museum  
for \$300,000.00, and the Board of Directors  
voted unanimously to accept the offer. It  
was the first unanimous vote in this particular  
Board's history, and it is the first time  
in the history of Ft. Worth that any of the  
city's artists have been so honored. For tax  
reasons ~~we will not be paid for~~ <sup>payments</sup>  
will not begin for a year and ~~those~~ <sup>then</sup> ~~will~~ <sup>and after the payments begin</sup>  
be a three year payout.

\* \* \*

Scott and I are both alumni  
of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.  
We are not wildlife artists, and we have

no intention of becoming such. We are essentially painters of portraits, landscapes and still life. I in particular have had a deep interest in ornithology from a very early age, and though ~~both~~ I and I have enjoyed both painting and drawing from the same early age, it is quite possible for me to say that, if it were not for our <sup>admiration</sup> love of Audubon's work, we might not be professional painters today. It is a long story, but to put it simply - we began ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> what would become <sup>to</sup> life-long careers by copying Audubon's <sup>Paintings</sup> ~~work~~ and by copying <sup>them</sup> ~~at~~ we ~~carefully~~ absorbed a knowledge of watercolor techniques that made it possible for us to pursue other directions in art when we became so inclined. It has always been our intention to <sup>dedicate</sup> our book in homage to Audubon.

Oh, and our book "Of Birds and Trees" depends upon the photo lithographic process to properly reproduce our paintings. We have never thought that the photo lithograph is "fine art," but there is no other way to make multiples of our paintings in ~~such a way~~ <sup>and</sup> as to properly translate them. The rest of the book, however, is by hand-set letterpress, a technique rarely used for large books today. The Holman of Wind River Press in Austin, Texas are designing the text,



and they are doing all the color work ~~they~~ on a Heidelberg Press that I recently purchased for them. The Halman's are perhaps the finest ~~custom~~ designers and printers of quality small editions in Texas. They are not widely known outside the state, but here in Texas every book <sup>edition</sup> which they publish is quickly sold out to librarians and bibliophiles. I have given them Corte Blanche to design the ~~type~~ facing book as they are fit within certain structural parameters set by my brother and me. When the book is finished it will win awards.

I might mention John Groves. He is without a doubt the most highly regarded prose writer in Texas. His best known book, "Boatage to River," has gone into several editions and has <sup>over</sup> been printed into eight foreign languages. His essay, <sup>for over</sup> a 13,000 word piece titled "Recollection of a Texas Bird Glimpse", is a major work from the pen of this not-very-prolific artist, and ~~this~~ it is eagerly awaited by his fans.

As far as our paintings are concerned, I hope that they speak for themselves. Though, for some reason, we have escaped criticism from dyed-in-the-wool lovers of realism in the rendering of natural history subjects, even a

a casual look at our work will reveal that it is a considerable departure from contemporary standards of nature painting. If our paintings appear to be somewhat reactionary, it is the influence of Audubon translated into our own idiom that best explains this. In Scott and me too much of today's wildlife depictions painting looks alike. I have taken a rather unusual step and have included a set of slides <sup>with this letter</sup> and photos to give you a sampler of what we have done for the book.

★ Ohir, I have reserved 100 volumes to be sold through the trade. It is a real wrong to Scott and me that this book will sell out locally, <sup>and</sup> ~~to~~ be absorbed in to private collections ~~and~~ must be well-known except to book people. There is no doubt in my mind that I could sell the whole edition myself and not have to pay a discount to dealers, ~~but~~ I do not have a distribution network. Of course I could do it all through advertising and through mailouts, but dealers do have access to "important" collection and it is to them people and institutions as well as <sup>to</sup> the general public that I wish to offer the book. About half of these 100 books <sup>already have been</sup> ~~are gone~~ sold to book dealers throughout the state, but I wish to sell books outside the <sup>state</sup> also. I have



made no moves yet to do this, because I have been totally involved in the logistics of this enterprise proper, for the ~~first~~ <sup>printing</sup> printing, to begin in January. I can assure that when the publishing is finished and the book actually exists, the remaining books will sell out very quickly - if they are not sold out before that time. Audubon Magazine is going to do a major article on the book, as well as Texas Monthly Magazine - which is the most popular magazine in Texas. ~~After~~ <sup>After</sup> these articles appear any remaining books will be gone.

~~not~~ It is not a secret, but not many people know that Scott and I are setting aside 25 to 50 copies <sup>of the book</sup> which will be held by us for a number of years before being sold. When we do finally sell them it will be to collectors <sup>or</sup> ~~from~~ whom we choose.

John Chalmer, Assistant Director of the Humanities Research Center Library at the University of Texas at Austin (this library has one of the best collections of rare books and manuscripts in the world) has told me that he knows of no publications for the history of Texas publishing that matches or even comes close to rivaling our book. In fact, he told me (and his knowledge is encyclopedic) that one would have to look back to the great publishing works of the 19th century to find anything to compare with

our work. His library, and several other libraries of the University of Texas have reserved copies, as well as the State Archives, the Governor's mansion, etc. etc. The list of people who have bought the book reads like a who's who of Texas. All this wonderful acceptance has been in Texas, not the rest of the country. I want <sup>important</sup> collectors outside of the State to know about the book before it is too late.

Perhaps you might be instrumental in helping us to do this. Who knows?

Please forgive me for this rather rambling letter. No letter, however eloquent, can match simply just sitting down and talking, — and I could talk about this project at the drop of a hat!

Sincerely yours.

Of the <sup>enclosed</sup> materials you will find a set of slides showing not just the birds but some of the 10 landscapes that will be included in the book. It should be kept in mind that many of the bird paintings were photographed before they were completed. As soon as the pictures were brought to a state where people could get a general idea what they would look like,



we put them under glass and went on to the next picture, later we ~~would~~ <sup>have</sup> returned to "Clean up" and to make some alterations. The finished product is quite smooth and resonant.

The poleroide that I have included are of the 42 lb. book on a viewing table of my design. The table enables anybody, no matter how weak, to turn the book and to open it for easy viewing. The drawer of the table ~~that~~ <sup>is</sup> designed to hold a magazine size ~~booklet~~ <sup>or</sup> soft bound book which will contain the text and a pictorial catalogue for even easier reading and for people who are not ornithologists, to replace the prints in <sup>their</sup> proper order. There is no writing on any of the prints.

You will be getting a tube containing a few of our past prints. The print of the Oyster Catcher is of 80 lb. stock. This print will be reprinted on 100 lb. stock for the book. I am also enclosing a print of our painter, of the wild turkey. As of this writing I have not yet seen the final product which was produced under very difficult conditions since there is only one 40 inch press in the state of Texas and that was a commercial press not particularly geared for fine art printing. However we have been promising a good print.

Return Slide.