

5/17/82

Dear David,

I know that it has been several months since Tom Taylor brought my friend, Bill Beck, and me to your studio ^{where} and I had the opportunity to show you the bird paintings that my brother, Scott, and I had done as part of a project to produce a book on birds of Texas.

At that time you seemed to be more than casually interested in the project. You even mentioned that you might like to design the book. I ~~did~~ ^{had} not followed up your remarks immediately, because even now, though we have completed nearly thirty of the forty projected plates, Scott and I are still eight months to a year from completion.

I am this day contacting John Graves to tell him to begin the writing of the book. He will not merely ~~be~~ ^{write} contribute an introduction to the book, but will share equal status with Scott and me as one of the three contributing artists. I think that what he will do will be unique since he has no restriction on his subject other than length. I don't want too much writing. I told him that he does not even have to write about birds. He can write about Texas in general. Since Scott and I purposely picked birds from every main distinct

However, I feel that it now time to touch base with you to see if you are really interested in becoming involved.

region of the State, ~~you~~ has one or all of these areas to work about. ~~The~~

The book is tentatively titled "Of Birds and Texas." It is not an ornithological work in any scientific sense, but purely a personal artistic effort on the part of all three of us. Not the pictures illustration. They are paintings of birds and involve a great deal of personal expression. Indeed, I know ^{personally} many of the best bird painters in the country almost all of whom paint birds better than my brother and me. But most of ~~them~~ ^{most of them} being ex-commercial illustrators, ~~they~~ don't seem to be able to cross that subtle barrier between good illustration and higher art.

I know that I am being immodest, but our work does not show that pervasive influence of ^{commercial} illustration, because we have never been involved in that field. Our schooling has always been in the fine arts (we are both alumni of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) and ~~as~~ ^{our} work shows it. I keep up with what is being done in the bird painting field, and I can see that in a ^{great} ~~field~~ ^{crowded} with artists, our painting ^{stand} ~~are~~ ^{is} unique. I might add that while Scott and I are deeply interested in the painting of birds and have been ~~since~~ ^{since} we began painting over twenty years ago, bird painting is only a small but ^{important} ~~side~~ ^{line} to our other work, the painting of portraits, landscapes and still lifes. Working with birds is almost but not quite a hobby.

~~I do not know~~

If you are interested in the project, I do not know how much you would like to do or whether or not we can come to terms, but if we can come to some sort of mutual agreement I would very much like to work with you. I'll tell

you what we need. We need not only a ~~of~~ superb designer, but we also need someone experienced in the production of fine books to see that the design is carried out without compromise. I know, David, that I myself could design a good looking book, but I ~~haven't the drive~~ ~~neither the skill nor the talent~~ to design and produce a truly exceptional book, and that is what I want. I know that the costs will be prodigious, but I am not worried about them. What I want to produce is something that will truly make its mark in the history of Texas Publishing. We will have superb pictures, we ^{will} have superb writing. What we need is superb design to produce a book of the first quality.

If we can find our way to work to gether ~~and of this~~ ^{I am sure that work of} uncompromising quality can be attained. As for as sales are concerned I am not at all worried. I have shown the paintings and have discussed what ~~I want~~ ^{the concept} with museum big-wigs, bird book collectors, book dealers, ^{and} millionaires ~~etc~~ - many people all of whom have been universal in their enthusiasm. I have two very wealthy men who want to back the project, but I know that we can do it ourselves. I have already by the most casual effort sold more than seventy books ~~already~~ at \$2500 ⁰⁰ a book. Several dealers - all of whom have signed up for the book, some ordering several copies - have told me to stop pre-selling the book, because I am selling it too cheaply and I will regret

it when the book is finally published. I have
listened to them and will only sell when people
call me. They must be right, David, because not
one person ^{with whom I have discussed the book} ~~of means~~ able to afford the work with
and who have been able to afford it have turned
me down. Not one! my record is 100% at this point.
I might add that both the Dallas Museum of
Natural History and the Fort Worth Museum of Science and
History are subscribers to the work.

We are talking about a very great deal of
money, both in costs and in profits. I like
money and ~~I want to make~~ I am going to make
a lot of ~~money~~ ^{it} from this project, but what I want
to do first - it's ego, I guess - is to produce a book
from Texas that ~~truly~~ will be admired and
respected by all lovers and connoisseurs of great
books.

Those same ^{fine} book dealers and collectors who
warned me to "cool it" about pre-selling until I
was sure of the price, ~~were~~ unanimous in
declaring that we could sell the entire edition
of 750 books before publication, if the quality
of ^{material} design, printing, and binding conform to the
standards that I wish them to be. If the book
sells quickly as I feel certain it will, then my
brother and so will do painting, for a volume
two, which because of the performance record of
the first ^{book} should be even easier to sell. Scott
and I have about forty more subjects than
we are able to fit into this first volume and
that would make a second volume almost
imperative, if the first book succeeds.

That would just about do it for birds,
but Scott and I have at least four or five

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other books ^{on other subjects} in mind, all of which would be good sellers, if they are produced with quality.

What I would like to do, David, is to form a kind of team to produce several truly exceptional books in the next few years. There ~~would~~ ^{will} be a great deal of money to be made and it will be made by everybody involved in producing these works, but what is much more important - we can leave ~~behind us~~ ^{create} a number of books from Texas that will be ^{most} regarded; ~~we can create~~ ^{we can create} ~~extraordinary~~ works of art that will be sought after and treasured by every collector and lover of fine books.

I know that your press is too small to print the Bird Book but it will not be too small to print the other books that Scott and I have in mind. In the meantime consider ^{please} what I have proposed and if you are interested in participating with this project please let me know. I am sometimes hard to reach by phone, because I am frequently out of town but you can always leave a message at my mother's house.

my number: 1-817-738-4427
address 4801 Harley St.
Ft. Worth, TX 76107

my mother, Mrs N.D. Smith 1-817-732-5448

I am looking forward to hearing from you. Until
then, Sir, & remain
most respectfully yours