

STUART W. GENTLING

10 July 1982

Dear Larry,

Please forgive my terrible typing; I'm the worst of those masters of the hunt-and-peck system, but this is the fastest method for a person who like me hates to take the time to write letters. I want to continue to keep you up to date on Scott's and my progress, both in regards of the gallery and the book project.

As far as the gallery is concerned, I can not really use the building until our contract with Dutch Phillips expires in October and we are no longer bound to him. Scott and I are definately not going to re-new our contract with him. However, we do want to see his new building succeed, and we may go ahead and have a show for him in capitalizing his first year in business. He is going to have an extremely high overhead, and though he is lining up some very good and important artists for the gallery, I do not think that any of them will sell as well as Scott and I do. In the past we provided about 50% of the gallery's entire income, and our pulling out on Dutch just as he is opening will, I think, hurt him badly. Dutch told me that when he went to talk to the bankers to get a loan to build the new building, the first thing that the bankers asked him was how were the Gentling's eyes. They were referring to the Star Telegram article which mentioned our problems with cataracts. They wanted Dutch to assure them that Scott and I could produce pictures before they would grant Dutch the loan.

Scott and my desire to help Dutch is not an entirely unselfish one. A healthy and successful gallery across the street will help our business also, even though Scott and I do not need Dutch or a fancy gallery to sell our work. Dutch who is very much like a brother to us has, as I have already told you, not treat us very well. Fifteen months ago he closed the little gallery

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down without giving Scott and me the slightest warning. He then made any public access to the gallery by appointment only which irritated a great many customers. From that day on, for fifteen months he never sold one of our paintings by appointment only and the gallery's income fell drastically. I took it upon myself to sell my own work and Scott's too, and though it does take time away from my painting, I found that it was not a very difficult thing to do. I told Dutch what I was doing, and I also told him that I was not going to pay him a commission for work not performed. He accepted that, but warned me not to overdo it or I might have a law suit on my hands. Since then I have been extremely cautious about selling pictures, though I continue to do so now and then. Scott and I are just biding our time until October when we will be released from this burden.

Larry, when I bought the gallery building last March, I obligated myself to monthly payments of \$568.00. My electric, gas and water bills added about another hundred dollars to these monthly payments. I offered to Dutch the proposal that he re-open the little gallery while the new building was being built and that he could do so at his old rent of \$275.00 a month plus his usual bills, and I would pay the difference. He would not do it. He frankly thought it beneath him to go back into that modest structure when an elegant new building was being built for him. I had previously learned that one of the reasons why Dutch had closed the gallery to begin with was that he had received a sizable amount of money from his trust from some gas leases and simply didn't have to work while the new building was being planned and built. Scott and I were not the only artists left out on a limb; he did not inform any of the other artists associated with the gallery, and who derived much of their income from it, that he was closing the business until the new building was built across the street. I told him to write his artists to keep them informed as to what was happening, but he did not do so until about a month ago. Since Scott and I no longer owned any part of the business, it was not our responsibility, but nevertheless I made it a point to keep all the local artists informed, unofficially, of course.

I am telling you this, Larry, in strict confidence. I do not shoot my mouth off in public about it, but you are a good friend who has proven himself far more than casually interested in our business and our wellfare. Regardless of whether or not Scott and I have a show for Dutch during his opening season, it will only be one show, and then we will be displaying all our work in the little building. I have some plans for making the place very nice looking, very tasteful, and something very new and different for a Ft. Worth gallery. Scott and I are going to make a kind of personal study or library out of it. Of course, it will be open daily except Sunday and Monday to the public, but it will be an intimate looking place with couches and persian carpets, with floor-to-ceiling bookcases in a couple of areas, black and white tile floors in a couple of the rooms. We will have tables with reading lamps on them as well as the usual gallery lighting which will be used mostly for gallery openings. The whole effect should be one of extreme comfort and calm, and our paintings and prints can be viewed very much as they would be seen in a comfortable house and not a gallery. I am going to knock out the front wall and build out onto the porch to enlarge the little front gallery. I am putting a large bay window with mullions and panes instead of a single piece of glass there facing the street. The front door will be moved from its present location and shifted around to enter this newly enlarged side gallery. The main gallery presently entered by the door as it is will have its one window sealed up, so that I can absolutely control all lighting in that room. I am going to put wooden shingles in a Cape Cod style on the outside of the building. All windows not used will be covered over and concealed. The existing windows will be replaced by new windows with mullions and panes in the New England manner. The trim will be in white and there will be dark green shutters for every window. The front walk and steps will be broken up and replaced with antique brick. A gas light will be placed out by the street entrance to the walk and there will be a carriage lantern by the front door. I have talked to several people whose taste and opinions I value, and all of them love the idea of the idea of an intimate study-library. As

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far as the library itself is concerned, Scott and I have one of the best art and history libraries in the city with over two thousand volumes to choose from. We also have books on the current art trends and business prospects for the arts. In all, it should be a very informative place to spend a quiet hour or so reading and viewing in comfort and leisure.

I have gotten estimates on the cost of this renovation. Everything can be done for under \$15,000.00. We could get a loan to do it, and I would like to have it done especially if Scott and I do not show with Dutch, but instead open our gallery with a show of our own. It is one of those typical Catch 22 situations. Scott and I could easily afford the renovation after we had an opening show. We both think that it is probably unwise undertake any more financial obligations until we are free from our contract with Dutch. Besides I really believe that the public is really interested in our work and will be patient about the building until we can afford to restore it with some style and taste. I guess I am just too impatient to get every thing done at once. All of the renovation must and will be done, however, when it comes time to promote and sell the bird book.

As far as the bird book is concerned, I have nothing but good news. Scott and I are on schedual in producing the paintings. In fact we may be a little ahead of schedual. However we have sacrificed a great deal of time from our other work in order to paint these bird pictures. Larry, you really ought to see them. They seem to get better and better. We have completed nearly thirty of them, and we hope to have them all done in less than a year. We are slowly but surely getting them all framed so that when it comes time to really promote the book, we can put on a beautiful traveling exhibition to various cities in Texas. It should be one of the most spectacular shows of its kind.

I received a wonderful letter from John Graves a couple of weeks ago. He still does not know how he is going to approach the task before him since I have given him complete freedom to do anything he wants to, but he is extremely excited about the project and said that together we are going to produce a

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book that is both "beautiful and meaningful." I was in Austin recently laying the groundwork for the actual physical production of the work with David Holman who owns and operates Wind River Press. David Holman, his father William Holman, and a man named Herzog are recognized as the three finest custom book designers in Texas and among the very finest in the United States. David will co-ordinate the entire production of the book and will completely relieve me of that area of responsibility, since I know so little about how a fine book is actually made. He will order the right papers, oversee the typesetting, the page design, the custom design of the fabric and leather for the covers and the boxing and shipping.

David took Scott and me to the Rare book building of the library of the University of Texas, an awesome structure housing one of the best rare book collections in the world. He took us there to meet a man named John Chalmers who is Assistant Director for the collection of rare books. I had been told that he is a somewhat remote man and a hard person to get to see, but when he heard that David Holman was there to see him and that he had us with him, he came out of his office instantly and greeted us like visiting royalty. Somehow, and it was not through David Holman, he had heard about us and our bird book project and the fact that John Graves was going to write it. He was very gracious to us and showed us through the entire building and personally retrieved for our inspection many extremely rare 18th and 19th century books on birds. He told us that nothing like our project has ever been done before in the history of Texas publishing. He also placed at our disposal any of the facilities of the University of Texas Library that we might need and that he wished to order several copies for the main library and the other branch libraries of the University of Texas. David later told me that I had no idea what an honor that was, and that it was further evidence of the future success of this book, because Chalmers would never have committed himself to this project if he was not completely sure of it.

Holman is so certain of the success of the book that he is not asking for any money up front, but is willing to take a modest percentage of the net profits. He frankly told us that this book would enhance his reputation more than anything that he has done prior to this time and that he very

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much wanted his name connected with a book of this quality and grandeur. In fact he is so certain about this book that he has suggested that we form a team for the production of fine books which would include a book of Scott's and my landscapes, still lifes and portraits of Texas subjects, a volume on the ancient Aztec city of Mexico, and perhaps a volume two of Texas birds.

To date I have sold more than eighty-five books without the slightest difficulty. However, I have been told by several rare and fine book dealers that I am selling the book too cheaply for a work of such quality and that I should refrain from doing so until just before publication. They told me that because David Holman and John Graves are involved with us that there will be rare book collectors who know nothing about birds or care less but who avidly collect fine contemporary volumes -- these people will form a large market for this production. They all have said that I will regret it if I pre-sell too many books too soon. By the way, all the rare book dealers that I talked to in Austin and San Antonio recently have signed up for the book and have asked me if they could handle it. So far Scott and I have not committed ourselves to anything.

I am sorry that I have taken up so much of your time, Larry, but it has been so long since we have talked and there has been so much to tell you. I will continue to keep you in touch about our plans, and in the meantime Scott and I will continue to plug away as best we can on the project and the Gallery. It has turned out to be quite a job since we are not selling any of the birds and so are turning out a vast amount of work from which we can derive no immediate income. We are doing a kind of artistic juggling act -- painting a few birds here, a few landscapes there in order to pay the bills. All of this will end, however, when in a year or so from now that first book is received from the binder's hands. What a day that will be.