

STUART W. GENTLING

18 August 1983

Ms. Katherine Rutledge
c/o Tayler Clark Inc.
2623 Government Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

Dear Katherine:

Please forgive my typing (it is always terrible). I am enclosing some photos of the plates of our book titled " Of birds and Texas. " Because the pictures were taken by me, they are not very good and will give you only a slight indication of how the originals actually look. The colors are all off to some extent, and the compositions frequently truncated, but because most of these pictures are not finished, these are only preliminary pictures. We will be going to press early in 1984 and should be finished with the publication process by the end of the year. I don't know if I told you that this book has been designated as one of the State art projects for the observances of the Sesquicentennial of Texas in 1986. To date we have sold about \$350,000 worth of books without the slightest bit of promotion or effort.

One of the main reasons that I have kept touching base with you is the fact that I would like to have a very few limited outlets for the book and the extra print sales. Each print in the book will have 250 copies for sale individually when the book is published. I am going to wholesale very, very few of the books, and I am going to hand pick a select few outlets for the prints in this country and abroad. Though an offset lithograph, as you know, is not a work of fine art in any way — even a signed and numbered one — I nevertheless want the handling of these prints to be as exclusive as possible. I have already been approached by a couple of nationally syndicated frame and print dealers, but I do not intend to have them plastered on every wall of every print shop in the country. The limited number of 250 prints is a very small number for national and international distribution, and I plan to pick those people very carefully and to give them a wide territorial exclusivity. I will probably have no more than twenty to twenty-five dealers in the country. One of my genuine worries is the fact that I feel that this bird book could very well be sold out in Texas alone and thus could be totally absorbed into the private collections of wealthy collectors. I want this book to become well known outside of the state of Texas, and I am willing to forgo some additional profits if the wholesaling of a limited number of books would reach other important collectors. Because Tayler Clark is one of the most widely respected dealers in the trade of important bird prints — namely the work of Audubon, I would very much like some sort of association with you.

In the meantime we are at last just about to finish the re-modeling of our art gallery, a process that I thought would never end. It has cost me more money than I care to think about, but I think that the final product will

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have been worth it. The place will make a perfect home for our paintings and a good office to accomodate the bird book project. Recently I noticed that you listed for sale in your price list two prints of Audubon which I have always admired, The Pomerine Jaeger Havell plate 253 and the Razornill Auk Havell plate 214. I would really like to aquire one or both of these prints before they become completely unaffordable or simply dissappear from the market. Because I have spent so damn much money on this building of mine and because I will not be open for business until October, I would like to know if Taylor might be interested in making a trade of some sort. The painting that I have in mind is the original painting of the Kentucky warblers which we had reproduced a few years ago. This painting has never been offered for sale. Its value is \$3,500. The original is much more beautiful than the prints which I have enclosed. I do not like to talk too much about art as an investment. I tend to think that is too much over rated in that regard, but this painting should be kept and not sold should Taylor be interested in making a trade. Scott and I do not do many bird paintings, and none of the original paintings for the bird book is for sale. When the book is published and the articles in Audubon Magazine, Texas Monthly, Newsweek, the New York Times appear as planned the value of this picture would, of course, be greatly increased.

Scott and I have a show to open our gallery in October, and in addition to this we have to complete the twelve or more paintings of birds to meet our publishing deadline in February. Because none of the forty bird paintings is for sale, Scott and I have not been able to derive any immediate income from the ~~ix~~ production of these original paintings. A trade of any kind could be an advantage to both parties. ^{of the book} If perhaps, Taylor should be interested in making a trade for an artist's copy, there is one copy left. There are only twenty-five artists copies so designated. They are like the other book³ in all respects but one -- each artist's copy will contain one watercolor original bird study by either Scott or me. The issue price of this artist's copy was \$5,000, and as I have said, I only have one copy left. I might also add that if at any time in the future that we might make trades of paintings for prints, if these paintings do not sell within a reasonable time, then they can be returned to us and another paintings substituted until one is sold. I might add again somewhat immedestly that both Scott and I have about a 98% sales record for our work, and we have never had a major show that was not a sellout.

Katherine, please let me know what you think and how Taylor feels about this proposal. I really do want to acquire some Audubon prints before they simply become unobtainable. With the recent rising interest in Audubon's work, I really believe that many of my favorite prints will be gone by the time my book is published and I can afford them.