

27 March 1987

Dear Michael,

I just read about your new book in Time magazine the other day, and I imagine that you are probably out on the book-promoting trail doing what has to be done. I am sorry that we by some way or another missed getting together over the holidays. I hope that this was because of some change in your plans and not my own. I sure tried to stay close to the phone during that time. In the months that have passed since we talked I have finally begun to get a few important comments and reviews which are proving very helpful in encouraging others to venture an opinion. You are certainly more experienced with this process than I am, but I am constantly amazed at the timidity of book persons who should know their own minds. All the reviews and comments which we have received so far are very enthusiastic as you will note, but most of these are Texas-made remarks by Texas people for a Texas audience. Getting the book reviewed on a national level is much more difficult and time-consuming. It is important to note that most of the birds depicted in our book are species which inhabit parts of the rest of the United States. In spite of the book's title OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, it is meant to be a publication of national import. Having been so completely occupied with the promotion of our own book, I know how all-consuming your own current promoting efforts must be. If you are still interested in doing something for Connoisseur Magazine, I would certainly like to help you in any way I can. First of all, I think you should see a copy of our book for yourself so that you can see what we have done.

I hope you believe me, Michael, when I say that no written brochure or verbal description of any kind adequately describes the book or can properly prepare a person for the impact of actually seeing the book itself. Everyone — and I do mean everyone — is surprised when they actually behold the book. Not only would I like to send you a copy, but I would also like to send a copy to Thomas Hoving for his perusal. And I would like both books to be gifts. I cannot believe that Connoisseur Magazine would not be interested in our discovery and authentication of a lost Audubon painting which just happened to turn out to be Audubon's first published work and the only Audubon bird painting published in the artist's lifetime that at this moment remains in private hands. This painting goes on the auction block at Sotheby's on

May 28th. We paid \$18,000 for the work, and Sotheby's has estimated its value to be somewhere between \$250,000 and \$350,000.

I would also like to approach Audubon Magazine about our book, and to this end I have sent a copy to writers Michael Harwood and Mary Durant (they are married and frequently write together). Their book titled ON THE ROAD WITH JOHN JAMES AUDUBON is one of the best books ever written about the artist. They write frequently for Audubon Magazine. They absolutely flipped out over our book and do wish to write something soon, but they told me that Audubon Magazine is very eccentricly run, and it would prpbably take a long time to get coverage there.

Please give me a call when you can , and let me know if you are still interested. If you are too tied up, I will understand. We must seek some kind of national exposure by one route or another or we will end up by selling all the books out here in Texas. We are certainly not worried about sales, but if the book is mostly absorbed into Texas libraries and Texas collections, we will have failed perhaps in the primary aim (other than the artistic considerations) for which I embarked on this project—to create an extraordinary vehicle through which to promote our careers and make us better known outside of Texas. There is no question in my mind and in the minds of book people who have seen OF BIRDS AND TEXAS that we have created by offset lithography and hand set type one of the most extraordinary books of its kind to come out of American publishing in this century. But this is not going to do us much good if only a few people outside the state of Texas ever get a chance to know about it. Michael, let me know what you think. If you would like a book to judge the work for yourself, I would be glad to send you one.

Best always,

Stuart Gentling