

25 September 1990

Martha Hill
King Gallery
Sportsman's Edge, Ltd.
136 East 74th Street, NY, NY 10021

Dear Ms. Hill:

I just received the King Gallery newsletter with the announcement of your coming on board there. Congratulations!

Perhaps I should re-introduce myself. My name is Stuart Gentling, and we met at your Kuhnert lecture at the Fort Worth Zoo a few years ago. I was, and still am, a zoo board member serving on the committee in charge of the planning and construction of an art gallery at the zoo which will be centered around the Zoological Association's impressive Kuhnert collection.

At the time we talked my brother and I had just published an elephant folio titled Of Birds and Texas, a copy of which I had given to the National Audubon Society library in New York some months before in the hopes of perhaps getting some coverage in their magazine. They had never acknowledged the gift, and you offered to check it out. I really believe that it was through your efforts that I finally received a note of acknowledgement from the society librarian.

It is about our book that I am writing this letter. It has been four years since we published Of Birds and Texas in an edition of 500 books plus 25 Artists' Copies with title pages remarqued with original watercolor bird studies. As of last March we finally paid off all the \$800,000 that our publication cost to produce, thus freeing us from the bank's lien on the slightly more than 150 remaining copies. We can now promote and sell these remaining copies as we choose.

In the four years that have elapsed since the publication of Of Birds and Texas we have concentrated our book promotion efforts entirely within Texas. Due to the enormous cost overruns just to produce the book we never had any money left over to pay for professional advertising and public relations. All the publicity that we were able to garner came directly from our own personal efforts. The sheer size and extraordinary quality of the book was a considerable help in this (I do hope that you read the book reviews and comments when you get a chance.). However, there is only so much that can be done without money. We would have had no national publicity at

all if we had not made the remarkable discovery of John James Audubon's long-lost first-published bird painting which we had to sell at Sotheby's in 1987, incidently for the highest price yet paid at auction for such a work. Our book was dedicated to this great bird artist when we first began work on it nearly ten years before, and as it turned out Audubon literally helped to bail us out from his grave by making it possible for us to finance a major part of our extra costs. It is a remarkable and very true story which until the Sotheby sale many magazine editors simply would not believe. The CNN TV network covered the sale and "People Magazine" gave us two pages of coverage which considerably helped sales outside of Texas.

Inspite of the lack of promotion money and the disastrous Texas economy which turned precipitously downward in 1986 and is yet to recover — especially for the luxury trade — our book at \$2,500 per copy did extraordinarily well here. Copies now reside in almost all university and private libraries of importance as well as many art and natural history museum libraries in Texas. Of Birds and Texas has been unanimously praised not only for its beauty and elegance, but also as a work of literature. But you judge for yourself with the copy that I am sending you. Before you peruse the book, please study the reading instructions.

My twin brother Scott and I are essentially artists, not publishers. Although we now have the freedom to promote the book as we would like, we quite frankly have little desire to do so. We still sell two or three books a month with no promotion effort at all, and occassional gift copies do make for good tax deductions. Inspite of our reluctance to get involved in full time promotion endeavors, we would genuinely like our book to become better known outside of Texas. It may be difficult for you to believe, but we have sent brochures and book materials to only a handful of collectors, museums and libraries outside the state. Important art and bird people who pass through Fort Worth and see the book are simply amazed that they have heard nothing about such an important work. The title Of Birds and Texas somewhat belies the fact that three-fourths of the birds depicted are well known inhabitants in the rest of the United States, and nearly one-third are game birds. Our book was never really meant to be another item of "Texana".

I should mention that there has been considerable interest in the possibility of our publishing a smaller, less expensive and more easily read

edition which might include some of our pencil and watercolor studies and remarques to make such a book stand slightly apart from the elephant folio. Such a book, I think, would be successful throughout the country if a good distribution network could be established. I should also mention that we had printed 250 extra copies of each color plate to be signed and numbered and sold separately for \$150.00 each. These prints have never been offered for sale outside of Texas.

By now you have probably guessed what I am leading up to. It is this. Because of the prestige of the King Gallery and its network of many clients and contacts in the field of natural history art, I would like to suggest the possibility of our entering into a special relationship with King Gallery that would allow you to have an exclusive access to the remaining 150 or so books and all the single color plate editions and perhaps even eventually participate in the production of a smaller book for general consumption. My brother and I would stay out of sales entirely except to help with publicity etc. Although the price of the book should be raised to at least \$3,000, the value of the 150 copies at the original \$2,500 issue price is still \$375,000, and there are more than \$1,800,000 worth of individual prints that could be placed exclusively at your disposal.

King Gallery is the very first contact to whom we are making such an offer. Although I am frankly in no hurry to move on this offer, you might want to take advantage of this Christmas season if you are interested. Is King Gallery going to participate in the upcoming Game Conservation International convention here in Fort Worth in January 1991? If so, perhaps you would like to discuss our book, its national potential and your possible participation in book and print sales at that time. As I said, I am in no particular hurry.

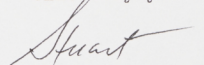
After taking two rhino catching expeditions last year to Africa and Nepal, I am currently hard at work with my brother preparing for a December 1st exhibition of portraits, still lifes and landscapes at the Janie Beggs Gallery in Beverly Hills. I have no idea how well we will do there, since it is our first show outside of Texas, but here in Texas over the last twenty years we have never had a show that was not a sellout. Our drybrush watercolors are quite different from the stylized pictorial conventions of our bird book except for the book's landscape plates in portfolio one. As a lover of good painting I think you would be very impressed with our work.

Please let me know what you think. If you are interested, I certainly will give you all the time you need to discuss this business with your people and with us. Since all the tremendous efforts of many years have already been done to produce this important book and the large reserve of individual prints — a resource that has not been nationally tapped, perhaps you can see an exciting possibility here for the King Gallery and for us. I really believe that Of Birds and Texas will sell extremely well nationally if only more people outside of Texas could learn about it and see the color plates in magazine ads and articles or in your color mailouts. It would also be ideal for my brother and me to work exclusively through one nationally known dealer than spend our valuable time away from painting pursuing multiple contacts.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to call me at any time. My telephone number is I-817 738-4427. I am shipping you a copy of our book by UPS. I am also sending you a tube containing book reviews and comments by important art and book people, some extra color plates and our two facsimile size (22" X 28") brochure pages of which we have a plentiful supply. The brochures will be at your disposal if you decide to work with us.

Please forgive the length of this letter. There really is so much more to tell you. There is a wonderful story about what the King of Nepal said to Russell Train and Ed Bass of the World Wildlife Fund when they presented him with a copy of our book. And two weeks ago I personally presented a copy of our book to the Vice President of the United States! Hope to see you here in Fort Worth in January.

Sincerely yours,


Stuart Gentling