

The Gentling Paintings: Of Birds and Texas

The Gentling collection comprises forty watercolor paintings of Texas birds inhabiting this state for all or part of the year. These birds are depicted life-size and are set against landscape backgrounds showing most of Texas' major geographical regions. These pictures are the result of an unusual collaboration by Fort Worth artists Scott and Stuart Gentling, twin brothers who spent more than eight years creating them for their book **Of Birds and Texas**. This monumental publication, printed in the Great Imperial Folio size of 22 by 28 inches, also contains the Gentlings' own commentaries and a work of literature by author John Graves, one of the most respected prose writers in Texas.

Scott and Stuart Gentling were born December 31, 1942, in Rochester, Minnesota. In 1948 their father, a physician, brought the family to Fort Worth, and with the exception of several years spent away at schools, this city has remained their home. Both attended Tulane University in New Orleans, but upon receiving an unusual invitation from the Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts to attend that school, Scott left Tulane for Philadelphia at the end of his freshman year. Stuart continued his schooling at Tulane and graduated with a B.A. degree in 1965. Following graduation he spent one year at the University of Texas School of Law. During that year he was encouraged by Scott to apply to the Academy in order to follow his own interest in art. He was accepted, and since 1966 the brothers have pursued their respective artistic careers.

Though painting birds is important to the Gentlings, it is nevertheless a peripheral interest compared to the main body of their work which is the painting of landscapes, portraits, and still lifes executed in drybrush watercolor. Many of the paintings in this collection show birds that are not depicted with a strict realism, but are rather stylized and formally arranged, recalling in some of the works the paintings of John James Audubon. Their book, **Of Birds and Texas**, is dedicated to Audubon. The Gentlings maintain that the reason they are artists today probably stems from their early interest in Audubon's life and work, an interest sparked when they were thirteen years old by their discovery of a book on Audubon's paintings in the library of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History.