

Harbinger

Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

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Of Birds and Texas



They are believed to have arisen almost 200 million years ago from reptilian ancestors—probably running or tree-climbing dinosaurs. The earliest known species, while reptile-like in many characteristics, had feathers and were probably capable of weak soaring, perhaps flapping, flight. In order for them to conquer the air, however, they have had to achieve an entire series of specific adaptations, evolving gradually according to the requirements of aerial movement.

Structurally speaking, birds show a certain uniformity, but the remarkable variety of forms and adaptations, the diversity of habitats in which they are found, and their extensive geographical distribution makes this one of the most fascinating of all animal groups.

Situated in the middle of the Central Flyway, a major migratory route for North American birds, Texas has the largest bird population in the U.S., with 542 species recorded. Not surprisingly, Texas is also home to legions of bird watchers. *Of Birds and Texas*, opening Friday, April 24, will offer visiting birders an opportunity to observe at close range a variety of Texas birds as depicted in works of art,

as well as in the form of mounted specimens.

The exhibition takes its name from the acclaimed collection of paintings of birds indigenous to Texas by noted Fort Worth artists Scott and Stuart Gentling. Eight years in the making, the complete set of forty dry-brush watercolors, which has recently been published in a limited edition folio-style book, will be displayed.

Although the artists acknowledge their debt to John J. Audubon, they felt that the sterile white backgrounds reminiscent of classic bird paintings wouldn't convey the flavor of the land they wanted to project, so the land, too, became an element of each work. Beautifully painted landscapes of typically Texas terrain provide poetic settings for the life-size bird portraits, showing the different regions of the state as well as the changing moods of the seasons. A flammulated owl circles in the sunset sky in Big Bend National Park. A church-will's widow pauses on a cedar fence post in the path of an oncoming tornado. A mourning dove drinks from dinosaur tracks in the Paluxy riverbed.

Apart from their considerable artistic, scientific, and historical value, the



"Roseate Spoonbill" by
Scott and Stuart Gentling

paintings which comprise *Of Birds and Texas* have a special significance for the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. It was here that as children attending Museum School the Gentling twins first cultivated their interests in natural history, bird husbandry, taxonomy, Texas history, and painting. "We want the Museum to have the paintings," Scott explains, "because we were students here when it was the Fort Worth Children's Museum. I began my painting career when I checked out one of the Museum's books of reproductions of Audubon prints and started making copies." The Museum is currently engaged in a drive to acquire all forty of the original paintings for its permanent collection, so that it and the city of Fort Worth will become the collection's permanent home (see box).

... Continued on Page 2

Museum To Acquire Paintings

WHAT do the Black-Crowned Night Heron, Rivoli's Hummingbird, and the Bobwhite Quail have in common? All three are Gentling paintings which have been purchased by donors for the Museum's permanent collection. In fact, so far a total of 21 paintings have been pledged to the Museum in its drive to acquire the forty watercolors of the Gentling Bird Collection, *Of Birds and Texas*.

Executive Director Don Otto noted that the collection, the first art by living artists that the Museum has ever purchased, exemplifies the Museum's commitment to quality acquisitions. "Individually," he said, "Scott and Stuart's paintings are very special; as a collection, they are spectacular."

Both Museum officials and the artists want to keep the collection intact and preferably at the Museum of Science and History, where, as children, the brothers became interested in painting while attending Museum School classes.

Donors wishing to ensure the acquisition of the paintings may make contributions to the Museum, which will in turn purchase the paintings from the artists. Donations are being accepted both for outright purchases of paintings for the Museum and for the Gentling Collection Fund. In addition, Museum visitors will have an opportunity during the exhibition to contribute to the fund through an on-site donation box, the proceeds of which will go toward the purchase of a painting as a gift from the people of the City of Fort Worth.

For more information about donations to the Gentling Collection Fund, contact Director of Development Anne Miller Tinsley, weekdays during business hours, at (817) 732-1631.

Rex Brasher hand-colored print: "Great Horned Owl"



FORT WORTH MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY
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Associates Participation Increases

CONTRIBUTIONS to the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History's operating budget during 1986 reached the total of \$398,058.00, said Donald R. Otto, executive director.

Of that amount, \$188,183 was contributed through the Museum Associates Program annual giving appeal, and \$209,875 through grants.

Donor participation for the second annual Museum Associates Program campaign increased by 21 percent, with 953 individuals, businesses, and foundations contributing to the fund that supplements the Museum's operating budget for the following year.

"We are particularly grateful to Mark L. Hart, Jr., for his leadership of the 1986 Associates campaign," Otto said. Hart, who was vice president of the board of trustees in 1986, was also chairman of the Museum's 1986 Development Council.

Grants to the Museum for operating purposes were from the Amon G. Carter Foundation; the Amon G. Carter Star-Telegram Employees Fund; the Institute of Museum Services; InterCultura, Inc.; Miller Brewing Co./Fort Worth; the Sid W. Richardson Foundation; the Texas Committee for the Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment of the Humanities; Union Pacific Foundation, on behalf of Union Pacific Corporation and its operating companies: Union Pacific Railroad Company, Champlin Petroleum Company, Rocky Mountain Energy Company and Upland Industries Corporation; and one anonymous donor.

Additional major contributions to the Museum in 1986 included \$177,620 pledged and \$130,408.25 paid toward purchase of the 40 watercolors of the Gentling Bird Collection, *Of Birds and Texas*. Total cost of this acquisition will be \$300,000, Otto said.

Otto said the current fund-raising year will be only nine months long, since the Museum will change its fiscal year from the calendar year to one beginning October 1 and ending September 30.

As of February 10, \$8,928.19 had been donated to the 1987 Associates campaign to supplement the 1987-88 operating budget.

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from December 5, 1986 through February 10, 1987

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Gentling Paintings On Display

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"Caracaras at Gohad" in old Spanish mission setting is the Gentling's Texas Sesquicentennial symbol.

The Gentling paintings will be joined in the exhibit by a selection of signed, hand-colored prints by the late Rex Brasher, who painted in Connecticut's Chickadee Valley earlier this century. Donated by Ruth Carter Stevenson, the complete, limited edition folio of signed, hand-colored prints, *The Birds of North America*, was received by the Museum in 1948.

Although Brasher's work has been exhibited at Yale University's Peabody Museum, this marks the first time they will be exhibited here.

Complementing the Gentling paintings and Brasher prints will be a selection of mounted specimens from the Museum's research collection, including examples of such rare and extinct species as the purple gallinule and the passenger pigeon. In addition,

some mounted specimens will be on tour from the Dallas Museum of Natural History.

A number of programs are planned in association with the *Of Birds and Texas* exhibit. On Saturday, April 25, the Museum will host a symposium in the auditorium. Guest speakers will include Scott and Stuart Gentling, and Warren Pulich, author of *The Birds of Tarrant County*, and biology professor at the University of Dallas. Also planned are family events including bird identification classes in conjunction with bird walks and owl prowls, and a children's workshop featuring a variety of science and art activities enhanced by storytelling.

Of Birds and Texas will continue in the Museum's East Gallery through September 7.

**MUSEUM
OF
SCIENCE
AND
HISTORY**

EXHIBITION FEATURING GENTLING BIRD PAINTINGS TO OPEN AT
FORT WORTH MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY

Contact: Nina Arback, Public Relations Coordinator

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A flammulated owl circles in the sunset sky in Big Bend National Park.
A black-crowned night heron perches on a moonlit branch above the Brazos River.
Two house wrens explore a worn pair of cowboy boots sprawled on a weathered porch.

These and other images of Texas bird life are featured in "Of Birds and Texas," opening Friday, April 24, at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. The exhibition takes its name from the acclaimed collection of paintings of birds indigenous to Texas by noted Fort Worth artists Scott and Stuart Gentling.

The paintings, which have recently been published in a limited edition, folio-style book, are the result of an unusual collaboration by the twin brothers. Eight years in the making, the vivid, dry-brush watercolors depict forty of the more than 540 bird species that inhabit Texas for all or part of the year.

Although the artists acknowledge their debt to John J. Audubon, they felt that the sterile white backgrounds reminiscent of classic bird paintings wouldn't convey the flavor of the land they wanted to project, so the land, too, became an element of each work. Beautifully painted landscapes of typically Texas terrain provide poetic settings for the life-size bird portraits, showing the different regions of the state as well as the changing moods of the seasons.

The Gentling paintings will be joined in the exhibition by a selection of signed, hand-colored prints by the late Rex Brasher, who painted in Connecticut's Chickadee Valley earlier this century. The Brasher bird prints are excerpted from

(more)

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Metro 654-1356

OF BIRDS AND TEXAS
ADD 1

the limited edition folio, "The Birds of North America," which was donated to the Museum by Ruth Carter Stevenson.

Mounted specimens selected from the Museum's research collection and that of the Dallas Museum of Natural History will complement the exhibition's artwork. Examples of such rare and extinct species as the purple gallinule and the passenger pigeon will be displayed.

A number of special programs will be presented in association with the "Of Birds and Texas" exhibition. On Saturday, April 25, the Museum will host a symposium featuring guest speakers Scott and Stuart Gentling, and Warren Pulich, associate professor of biology at the University of Dallas, and author of "The Birds of Tarrant County." In addition, bird identification workshops and bird walks are planned for May 14 and 16, and May 28 and 30, and a family "owl prowls" is set for June 16.

On July 25 and August 8, professional storyteller Elizabeth Ellis will return to the Museum to entertain children and their parents with tales of winged adventures, and children will have a chance to meet Athena, the Museum's great horned owl. For more information concerning registration for these special programs, contact the Museum School office at 732-1631.

"Of Birds and Texas" will be on display in the Museum's East Gallery through September 7. Museum hours are Monday through Thursday 9 to 5; Friday and Saturday 9 to 8:30; and Sunday 12 to 5. Admission to the Museum is free of charge. For more information, contact the Museum at (817) 732-1631 or Metro 654-1356.

##

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY TO ACQUIRE
ACCLAIMED GENTLING COLLECTION

Contact: Nina Arback, Public Relations Coordinator

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What do the Black-Crowned Night Heron, Rivoli's Hummingbird, and the Bobwhite Quail have in common? They are three of the more than 20 Gentling bird paintings which have been purchased by donors for the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History's permanent collection. The Museum is presently engaged in a drive to acquire all forty of the acclaimed watercolor paintings by Fort Worth artists Scott and Stuart Gentling which comprise the collection, "Of Birds and Texas."

Both Museum officials and the artists want to keep the collection intact and preferably at the Museum of Science and History. Executive Director Don Otto noted that the collection, the first art by living artists that the Museum has ever purchased, exemplifies the Museum's commitment to quality acquisitions. "Individually," he said, "Scott and Stuart's paintings are very special; as a collection, they are spectacular."

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GENTLING PAINTINGS
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The "Of Birds and Texas" exhibition, which opens April 24, will continue in the Museum's East Gallery through September 7. For more information about contributions to the Gentling Collection Fund, contact Director of Development Anne Miller Tinsley, weekdays during business hours at (817) 732-1631, or Metro 654-1356.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SCOTT AND STUART GENTLING were born on 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 brothers attended Tulane University in New Orleans, but upon receiving an unusual invitation from the Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania Academy of the 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 both brothers have pursued their respective artistic careers together.

The Gentlings are best known for their dry brush watercolors, frequently landscapes in a style they freely admit was influenced by Andrew Wyeth. They studied under his brother-in-law, John McCoy. They have also done a number of bird studies over the years.

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.

REX BRASHER (1869-1960) is the only man who is known to have painted all the birds of North America. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1869, Brasher spent most of his 91 years in the seclusion of his Chickadee Valley property in Kent, Connecticut. Early in life, he set for himself the goal of meticulously illustrating most of the bird species found in North America. This prodigious

(more)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ADD 1

feat was accomplished after a lifetime spent tramping by foot over a large part of the country, sketchbook in hand, slipping along the seaboard in a small sloop, lying motionless and observant in meadows and fields, hiding on river banks, and crouching beneath thorn bushes. At age 51, finally satisfied that the arduous task was accomplished, the artist first exhibited his collection of birds of 1,120 distinct species and subspecies of American birds painted from life, a collection famous among ornithologists for its accuracy and beauty.

##

COMMENTS FROM THE ART AND BOOK WORLD

about

OF BIRDS AND TEXAS

"This will be one of the most important books published in Texas. Anyone who loves Audubon, birds, Texas, or books would be well advised to invest in this book."

Ron Tyler, Director
Texas State Historical Association

"The most stunning and prodigious book in Texas History....The color printing is breathtaking....This is the Audubon elephant folio of the twentieth century....The beauty of the Gentling's paintings is delivered so stunningly that even to describe the work is to sound like a paid claque! But there has never been anything like this to come out of Texas before."

A. C. Greene
The Center for Texas Studies
Denton, Texas

"Marvelous, a simply overwhelming book."

Andrew Wyeth
Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania

"A triumph of beautiful design, fine printing, and original scholarship. There was nothing in Paul Mellon's incomparable collection of 18th and 19th century illustrated books...of greater appeal or sheer beauty."

Ted Pillsbury, Director
Kimbell Art Museum

"A country's heartland is best defined by its natural history, and Texas is well-served by this landmark gathering of powerful, colorful plates and accompanying bird tales, by a lengthy John Graves narrative of the birds in his life worthy of standing alone with the best of his work, and by a massive graphic symphony of letterpress and lithography by David Holman, the state's finest printer....A mountainous folio of a book, a museum-quality work, unlikely ever to be emulated."

Harold Billings, Director
General Libraries
University of Texas at Austin



Scott and Stuart Gentling's "Roseate Spoonbill," is one of forty of the artists' dry-brush watercolors included in *OF BIRDS AND TEXAS*, on exhibit at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History April 24 through September 7.



"Great Horned Owl," one of 40 hand-colored prints by Rex Brasher will be featured in OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, April 24 through September 7 at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. Photo Credit: Don Garland

CAPTIONS FOR COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

- A. "Caracaras at Goliad," one of forty dry-brush watercolor paintings by Scott and Stuart Gentling featured in "Of Birds and Texas," on display at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History through September 7.
- B. Two rufous-sided towhees explore a pumpkin patch in this dry-brush watercolor painting by Scott and Stuart Gentling, included in "Of Birds and Texas," on display at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History through September 7.
- C. "White Ibis," one of forty hand-colored prints by Rex Brasher included in "Of Birds and Texas," on display at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History through September 7.
- D. "Black-Crowned Night Heron," a dry-brush watercolor painting by Scott and Stuart Gentling is featured in "Of Birds and Texas," on display at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History through September 7.







