

GENTLING

28 November 1984

Mr. Don Otto, Director
The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History
1501 Montgomery Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

Dear Don,

I want to tell you how very pleased Scott and I are about the news that the museum's Board of Directors has voted unanimously to purchase the original bird paintings to our book, *OF BIRDS AND TEXAS*. Though the money involved is certainly not an insignificant factor, that is not what has so excited us. In fact, to be candid, we could have gotten more money for the collection elsewhere. But that an institution of the size and stature of the Museum of Science and History should show such an interest in the efforts of two "local boys" and, what is more important, to back that interest up with action, represents a serious acknowledgement of our efforts which matches the magnitude of our enterprise. This is the first time that I know where an important Fort Worth Institution has so recognized and honored the talent and accomplishments of Fort Worth artists. For once we have a situation where a museum acted quickly, where there will be no reason to regret that what could be an important artistic and historical legacy to the city was allowed to slip away, simply because it was recognized first first by others in some other area of the country. Perhaps the other museums of Fort Worth will pay attention to this example and give other artists the attention they deserve.

One thing is for certain, that the Museum of Science and History has acquired with this complete collection, the very heart of a project which represents one of the most important artistic bird pub-

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lications of this century. Don, I have researched this and have talked with several important librarians, all of whom agree that we must look back to the 19th century for any example approaching the size and artistic importance of our book. If I may forgo modesty for a moment, I frankly think that neither the works of Gould nor Lear nor Selby nor Wilson, but only Audubon's efforts can compare in beauty with our paintings. I truly believe that they will be a delight to the public and a very deep source of pride for the community.

Don, I believe that I have mentioned that all of our preliminary drawings and studies, notebooks and correspondence have been kept by us as a complete record of the creation of our book. Who knows? It might be of interest to researchers one day. All this material will be given to the museum when the paintings are transferred. I might also mention that all the paintings will be matted and framed according to the most exacting archival, museum standards.

One last thing, Don. It would be very useful if I could have a brief letter acknowledging the museum's interest in purchasing the bird paintings, the amount that the museum is going to pay and any other relevant comments. I am about to go to the bank to secure the loan to initiate the printing of the book, and I have listed the paintings as part of our assets. It would please the bankers very much to see that an important museum like the Museum of Science and History is interested in purchasing the collection. This letter will in no way bind the museum should there be a shift in the museum's fortunes and a subsequent change of the Board's mind.

If I may be of any help whatsoever, please feel free to call me. We should get together anyway sometime soon, perhaps after the holidays, to discuss some of the important timing and logistical considerations

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arising from the eventual transfer of the collection to the museum. Until then, Don, again let me say how deeply honored Scott and I are that our work has been recognized and so warmly received by the people who represent an institution that really means something to us. It will be an enduring source of pride and comfort to us, knowing that our paintings have found a home in the very city where they belong.

Sincerely yours,

Stuart W. Gentling