

To Whom it May Concern:

I write regarding the monumental project entitled *Of Birds and Texas*, a publication in elephant folio consisting of 137 pages, including 50 printed color plates and 87 pages of text, for an edition of 525 including 250 *hors d'commerce*. The book, in its mastery of subject matter, artistic technique, and stylistic refinement, is a work of the highest aesthetic and literary quality. I feel competent in stating this, having served as Associate Curator of the Kimbell Art Museum for many years, with special responsibilities in the field of books, prints and drawings.

In commenting on the artistic working method employed for the creation of the book's color illustrations of birds in their habitat, I am particularly interested in the relationship between the 40 original dry brush watercolor images and their printed reproductions in the final publication, for which the 40 images served as direct models. These preparatory models, I emphasize, were executed in the Gentlings' well-known and preferred technique of painting dry brush with pigment mixed in a little bit of water, the utilization of which in this project ensured the high color quality of the book's reproductions.

The idea for a bird book arose during Stuart Gentling's charitable production of 9 black-and-white offset lithographs of birds in the wild for The Junior League of Fort Worth. These offset lithographs were made from original black-and-white drawings reproduced by means of photographs subsequently chemically etched onto metal plates. The resulting lithographs were printed in quantity, and sold by The League to help fund its charitable projects.

Three of the designs produced were of sufficient continuing interest to Stuart artistically that he took these three black-and-white offset lithographic prints, and—using them exactly as he would a preliminary black-and-white drawing—he added color to them, using his usual method of dry brush watercolor. The brilliance of color and veracity of illustration which resulted from this artistic undertaking were striking as well as intellectually interesting to the artist. Out of this experience, he chose to further explore the artistic possibilities of bird illustrations, a line of activity which resulted ultimately in the concept for the book *Of Birds and Texas*.

The Gentlings determined that these three hand-colored prints were of sufficient quality to stand on their own and serve as sharp, clear prototypical models for the illustrations in the book. Their clarity ensured that they could tolerate being photographed, with the resulting images being mechanically put down onto the lithographic plates from which the book illustrations would ultimately be printed.

The subsequent 37 illustrations were prepared by designing their models using dry brush watercolor on plain paper support. In these cases, instead of working from a black-and-white print as an underdrawing, the artists drew with graphite pencil directly onto the paper for the preliminary drawing, and the resulting black-and-white graphite drawing was then overlaid with dry brush watercolor in the usual way.

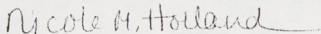
All 40 dry brush watercolor images are original works of art. Both the hand-watercolored prints and the watercolors on paper are key elements in the Gentlings' artistic working process, since they all served as prototypes for the book illustrations. To put it another way, all 40

images were given over to the printer for offset lithographic processing in order to achieve the book's illustrations.

It is absolutely clear and cannot be contested that the three Junior League-generated prints served as the only models for their corresponding book illustrations. Certain examples establish this without a doubt. For example, in *The Snow Goose* one can see the screening dots on the book illustration, which faithfully reproduced the dots of the previous black-and-white lithographic image. These dots are absolutely characteristic of lithographic printmaking. Second, lacunae such as a light spot in the grey sky, upper left of *The Snow Goose* hand-colored original, can clearly be seen in the printed color plate of the book.

I commend the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History for its efforts to provide a most appropriate home in Fort Worth for the 40 preparatory models for the book *Of Birds and Texas*, since the publication first arose from the Gentlings' desire to better the Fort Worth community by contributing their enormous artistic gifts to the Junior League of Fort Worth.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicole M. Holland". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Nicole M. Holland
Vice-President, InterCultura

December 10, 1989