

2 May 2000

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Dear Theresa,

Before she left for Hawaii Shannon Davies told me of your interest in doing a book that would encompass the whole range of Scott's and my artistic interests. Nothing could delight us more. This could be the book that we have always wanted to do. It had always been my original plan or hope to interest a publisher in such a book by first publishing a critically praised blockbuster such as our elephant folio "Of Birds and Texas."

I guess that strategy worked albeit fourteen years after our folio debuted. I cannot tell you how many times Scott and I have been told by important art people - museum directors and curators, art critics, dealers and collectors - how we were very unusual, even unique because of our lifelong partnership and our many different interests. Dealers in particular, especially those who did not know us well, have often found it frustrating to promote a clear image of us as artists because of the seemingly disparate directions our curiosity has led us. Only at length have they been able to see what has always been obvious to Scott and me, that the subjects of our artistic pursuits have always been intimately interrelated. We have never had to sit down and think about a direction which our art should take. Our art infact has always been more of a by-product of our interests rather than a motivating force incouraging those interests.

Now it appears that we will have the opportunity to demonstrate to a large audience of readers just what we and our art are all about. And what a visual feast such a book could be! The influences of our love of natural history, pre-Colombian cultures, classical music, a fascination with archaeology and history in general have been a part of our lives since we were small children. It made us stand out somewhat from the rest of our friends who good-naturedly tolerated our eccentricities as a probable by-product of our mutual closeness as twins. That there has always been a strong thread of romanticism and a love of the exotic in our work is obvious, but we have nevertheless worked hard to penetrate the superficial veil of the romantic's view of history to grasp something of its reality by studying the intimate and perishable objects of the past that have by some miracle survived and that we have made a part of our own lives. Hence our interest in 18th century clothing, and in ancient Greek, Roman, Islamic and pre-Colombian antiquities,

all of which we have collected and made a part of our own daily existence. In some ways Scott and I are forced to laugh at ourselves, because such a pursuit of an historical "reality" is probably the ultimate in romanticism.

And yet, for the most part, we maintain that we are not interested in recapturing history if that were possible. The apparent exception seems to be our Aztec project, since we have actively been attempting through our models, drawings, paintings, and our collection of original post-classic central Mexican art to reconstruct a small glimpse of a world that mostly vanished with the coming of the first Europeans. Even these paintings and models, however accurate we try to make them, are still the products of our own mindscapes which we have developed over decades of intense and concentrated study. And we will always have to admit that our Aztec paintings are only a pale reflection of the actual reality of those times, though I think our views will be the best ones ever done and will probably be definitive for many years to come.

I think I can say that all of Scott's and my artistic interests are the result of our life-long fascination with the nature of time and how the past survives in subtle ways to become an integral part of our own contemporary thoughts and feelings. I agree with William Faulkner who said in his Nobel Prize speech that, "History is not 'was' but 'is'". We have never been able to explain how we entered this world as tabula rasas and yet so early on were fascinated by birds and Baroque music and ancient cultures and model building and painting. We were not surrounded by these influences at home but got brief exposure here and there at the movies or by an occasional airing of Mozart or Handel on the radio, usually at other people's houses. And I cannot explain why the work of John James Audubon struck us so profoundly, and permanently, on a first viewing in spite of the fact that by that time Scott and I had already been exposed to other bird artists' works. All these interests we absorbed like sponges. They profoundly influenced our thinking and gently directed us toward careers in art. Most artists, I think, begin with a love of doing art, even a compulsion, and eventually find their way into a style and subject matter. We always had something to say, but it took years for us to develop the artistic means to express it.

I have made a tentative outline for the new book. Scott and I would like it to have at least 100 color plates which I know are thirty plates more than you were considering. I really believe that such a book needs at least as many reproductions as I suggest to do justice to the subject, and I am willing to help raise any necessary additional funds to make it possible.

I have talked to Dr. Edmund Pillsbury about writing a Preface. He said he would be delighted. Both he and I believe that we can also persuade mutual friend Dave Hickey to provide a Foreword. He is a very well-respected critic of contemporary art and was practically a lone voice in the wilderness when representational art was considered out of bounds for contemporary painters. I have also talked to author Michael Thomas who has excellent connections with the eastern art

establishment. He has published two well-received novels, has written for Vanity Fair, Architectural Digest, and the New York Times etc. and would like to contribute to the book if asked. He is a very witty and insightful observer of the contemporary scene and might be a most amusing addition to the book.

Scott and I would also like to write an Introduction to the book plus brief introductions to the various sections I have outlined. I think that each color plate should also be preceded by a page containing some of Scott's or my commentary on the plate. I am also planning to do a still life for a possible book cover that will be something like my painting "Self-portrait for the Day of the Dead." It will show examples of our many artistic interests and influences. Scott may also work on the painting so that he can be part of the cover as well - although neither one of us care if the other's painting happens to be chosen for a cover.

We also have a title for the book which both Shannon and I think is appropriate. It is:

From Time to Time

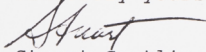
The Art of

Scott Gentling and Stuart Gentling

Theresa, I think it would be very helpful if you could come to Fort Worth in the next few weeks to see us and our art for yourself. As much as Shannon Davies thought she knew about us, I believe she was somewhat dumbfounded by what she saw here. We would be honored if you could come and have a comfortable place for you to stay if you don't want to stay in a hotel. I do hope that my enclosed tentative outline will be helpful. Although the text will be very important, I see this book as primarily a picture book.

I should also mention that both Ted Pillsbury and Michael Thomas would like to organize a touring retrospective exhibition of our paintings throughout Texas and perhaps elsewhere - even the New York Historical Society - to coincide with the publication of "From Time to Time." The publication of this book will open doors to all sorts of possibilities. Let me know what you think.

Sincerely yours,


Stuart Gentling

PS. I am also enclosing the two other contracts which I finally found in my "well-organized" files. Also included is a notebook of our designs with commentary for the Bass Performance Hall which I recently put together for a few Hall patrons and Ed Bass.



Proposed Outline

FROM TIME TO TIME The Paintings of

Scott Gentling

Stuart Gentling

- I. Acknowledgements - by Stuart Gentling
- II. Foreword - by Dave Hickey, nationally known author, contemporary art critic and social commentator.
- III. Preface - by Dr. Edmund Pillsbury
- IV. Introduction - by Scott and Stuart Gentling. This section might contain three or four small reproductions of some of our earliest work as teenagers.
- V. Portraits, still lifes and landscapes. Each color plate to be preceded by a page with commentary by Scott or Stuart. The Gentling costume paintings will not have a separate section but will be included here. There may be a short introduction to this section which should contain 60 color plates.
- VI. Birds. There should be 10 color plates with commentary and a short introduction. Some of these plates will be from "Of Birds and Texas".
- VII. Composers. There should be 10 color plates and commentary. Several pages may contain more than one reproduction, Since we have 20 composers from which to choose. A short introduction written by Scott will also accompany this section.
- VIII. Aztec Views. There should be at least 10 color plates with commentary and perhaps a somewhat longer introduction.
- IX. Bass Performance Hall Art. There should be a short introduction followed by at least 5 color plates with commentary. More than one reproduction can be placed on a page here. This will leave us with five additional color plates which may be allocated to any section, most likely the Aztecs.