

The One Reed Year

"During the morning we arrived at a broad causeway . . . And when we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land and that straight and level causeway going towards [Tenochtitlan], we were amazed and said it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of Amadis on account of the great towers and [temples] and buildings rising from the water and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things we saw were not a dream . . . I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about . . . Of all these wonders that I then beheld, today all is overthrown and lost, nothing left standing."

Thus lamented the great chronicler Bernal Diaz del Castillo as he recounted that fateful day in November, 1519, when he and a small army of Spaniards under the command of Hernan Cortez first glimpsed the splendid Aztec capitol of Tenochtitlan. By ironic coincidence, 1519 was a portentous year in the Aztec calendar, for it was the year of the calendar round that not only honored the birth of the great god Quetzalcoatl, but also marked the year of his predicted return to Mexico to reclaim his historical right to rule over the land. For the Aztec people it was the year "Ce Acatl", The One Reed Year.

For artists Stuart and Scott Gentling a persistent conviction has grown over their nearly thirty years of close study of this subject that it might just be possible (based on what is known and on what is being discovered almost daily) to capture in a series of paintings and drawings some idea of what it felt like to look upon these vanished marvels.

Fort Worth Gallery is pleased to bring together for the first time for public viewing many of the watercolors, pencil drawings, and architectural models that — along with wood carvings and original Aztec art from the Gentling's own collection — form the core of this remarkable work-in progress. It is hoped that a future book, entitled *The One Reed Year*, will result from these efforts and become a companion reference for those people who continue to be enchanted by the descriptions of those who were permitted to look on in wonder and pen down what they saw.

