

Stuart and Scott Gentling were born in Rochester, Minnesota but came to Fort Worth at the age of five when their father became the head of the anesthesiology department at Harris Hospital. They are products of the Fort Worth school system, having graduated from Arlington Heights High School. Both later attended Tulane University and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where they studied under Walter Stuempfig and watercolorist John McCoy. It should also be noted that they have been coming to Fort Worth Art Association exhibits since the days when the art museum was at the public library, and much of their early art skills were developed in the Fort Worth Art Center classes of John Chumley and James Blake. Their first exposure to the arts of Africa and pre-colombian Mexico, as well as ancient and modern European and American art occurred at our museum's visiting exhibits.

The Gentlings are probably best known for their publication of a monumental elephant folio in the spirit of John James Audubon titled Of Birds and Texas. It debuted to universal acclaim. Ron Tyler, former assistant director of the Amon Carter Museum and currently director of the Texas State Historical Association called it, "One of the most important books published in Texas." Texas Historian Laureate and author A.C. Greene declared it "The most stunning and prodigious book in Texas history." Kimbell Museum director Edmond Pillsbury praised the book as "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 from Britain of greater appeal and sheer beauty."

The entire collection of forty original bird paintings created for the book was purchased by the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History and is displayed there about every four years. The Gentling Collection has also traveled to museums in Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston.

An interesting side note. While in the midst of publishing their book which had been dedicated to John James Audubon when the project began years earlier, the Gentlings discovered a long-lost original Audubon watercolor, in fact his first published bird painting. It had disappeared in 1825. The Gentlings purchased the work, authenticated it, and later, when cost overruns threatened to cancel their book project, they sold the painting at Sotheby's for the highest price ever paid at auction for an Audubon bird painting. The sale was televised nationally by CNN, and "People Magazine" ran a two page article on the event. The money made from the sale saved the book project so that it can literally be said that Audubon reached out from the grave to help the Gentlings successfully complete their publication.

The Gentling twins are currently working on their next book about the great Aztec capitol city of Tenochtitlan. The book is to be titled The One Reed Year. Already their work has attracted the notice of Aztec scholars, museums, the Mexican government and even movie companies. Their paintings and models of Aztec cities, palaces and temples were used in 1992 for the Denver Museum of Natural History blockbuster exhibit "Aztec,"

the largest exhibition of Aztec art and culture ever held outside Mexico. Recently Kevin Costner's film company purchased the rights to a dozen or more Gentling images to be used in a monumental new film series on native American cultures past and present called "500 Nations." The series is scheduled to air in four two-hour segments in the Fall of 1994. The Gentling publication is still about five years away, but already the Mexican government and the Dallas Art Museum have requested material for future exhibitions.

The Gentlings have been avid art collectors since they were in their early teens. Their collecting interests are eclectic and wide-ranging. They are particularly fond of works by American Abstract Expressionists, early 20th century cubists, and works by the so-called Fort Worth School. They also have collected 17th, 18th, and 19th century prints by such artists as Van Dyke, Hogarth, Goya and others. They also collect 19th century natural history prints by Alexander Wilson, John James Audubon and John Prideaux Selby. Japanese prints and paintings of the 18th and 19th century as well as similar period works from India, Indonesia, China and Nepal compliment their other collections. They also have a small but fine collection of African art. They are no longer active collectors of 18th century gentlemen's clothing, but they have many original costumes of Victoria and Albert Museum Quality. Andrew Wyeth's well known tempera painting titled "The Quaker" depicts two 18th century coats that the Gentlings gave him.

Acquiring art objects of pre-colombian Mexico and Peru has been a major interest since the mid 1960's. They have one of the best small collections in the area. Most of the pieces are of museum quality. Their collection of Aztec and Mixtec art is probably unique here. They also have good examples of Olmec, Veracruz, and especially Maya sculpture and ceramics.

Two years ago the Dallas Museum of Art requested two pieces for their exhibit of important pre-colombian art from private area collections. They ended up borrowing some twenty works. An important Aztec beaker from the Gentling Collection is currently on display in the Dallas Art Museum's new Hall of the Americas.

The Gentling brothers have lectured over the years at the Fort Worth Art Museum, the Amon Carter Museum, The Dallas Museum of Art, and the Kimbell Museum where they also exhibited their paintings for the Kimbell's popular Artist's Eye lecture series. Their topics have ranged from the hidden symbolism of the paintings of Jan Vermeer, to the drawings of the Fitzwilliam Museum, to pre-colombian art and architecture including Aztec city and garden planning. They have lectured at all the areas natural history Museums.

Last year Stuart Gentling helped design an Aztec symbolic garden for the Fort Worth Garden Club's annual garden design show. The exhibit won an award and prompted Garden Club officers to ask if he would help them design an Aztec garden for the organization.

Stuart Gentling has served on the boards of directors for many area organizations, the most notable of which are the

Fort Worth Opera, the Van Cliburn Piano Competition, Painted Spaces (which commissioned his well-known zipper design for the Williamson-Dickie building). He also served for five years as a board member of the Fort Worth Art Museum. He currently serves as a trustee for Intercultura and the Fort Worth Zoological Association where he enjoys working with multicultural art projects and wildlife conservation issues.

In 1989 Stuart traveled with Fort Worth Zoo director, Elvie Turner, to Africa to observe the capture of ten black rhinos to import to this country for a captive breeding program. Later that year he went to Nepal with board members of the World Wildlife Fund to meet representatives of the king of Nepal in order to negotiate the loan of breeding stock of one-horned Asian rhinos. In 1990 he and his friend and fellow artist, Nancy Ferguson, created for the World Wildlife Fund an award-winning poster painted in an Indian miniature style featuring the Asian rhinos.

Tonight Mr. Gentling will discuss his views on art in the context of the Gentling Aztec project. His talk is titled, "The Gentlings Pursue Their Vision of Ancient Aztec Mexico, but is it Art?"