

Dear Theo,

In my last letter you will have found a little sketch of that perspective frame I mentioned. I just came back from the blacksmith, who made iron points to go on the sticks and iron corners for the frame.

It consists of two long stakes; the frame may be attached to them either upright or horizontally with strong wooden pegs.

So on the shore or in the meadow or in the fields one can look through it as through a window, the vertical lines and the perpendicular line of the frame and the diagonal lines and the point of intersection, or else the division in squares, certainly give a few basic markers, with the help of which one can make a firm drawing, from the indication of the main lines and proportions – at least for those who have some instinct for perspective and some understanding of the reason why and the manner in which perspective gives an apparent change of direction to the lines and a change of size to the lines and to the whole mass. Without this the instrument is of little or no use at all, and it makes one dizzy to look through it. I think you can imagine how it is a delightful thing to focus the viewer on the sea, on the green meadows, or in winter on the snowy field or in autumn on the fantastic network of thin and thick branches and trunks or on a stormy sky.

With long and continuous practice it enables one to draw quick as lightning, – and once the drawing is established to paint quick as lightning also.

In fact, for painting it is absolutely the thing, for to express sky-earth-sea one needs the brush, or rather in order to express all that in drawing it is necessary to know and to understand the treatment of the brush. I certainly believe that if I paint for some time, it will have great influence on my drawing. I already tried it in January, but then I had to stop, the reason for my decision being, aside from a few other things, that I was too hesitant in my drawing. Now six months have passed that have been quite devoted to drawing. Well, it is with new courage that I start to paint again. The perspective frame is really a fine piece of workmanship; I am sorry you did not see it before you left. It cost me quite a bit, but I have had it made so solidly that it will last a long time. So next Monday I begin to make large charcoal studies with it, and begin to paint small studies. If I succeed in these two things, then I hope that better-painted things will follow soon.

I want my studio to be a real painter's studio by the time you come again. I had to stop in January, as you know, for several different reasons, but after all it may be considered like some defect in a machine, a screw or a bar that was not strong enough and had to be replaced by a stronger one.

I bought a pair of strong and warm trousers, and as I had bought a pair of strong shoes just before you came, I am now prepared to weather the storm and rain. It is my decided aim to learn from this painting of landscape a few things about technique which I feel I need for the figure, namely to express different materials, and the tone and the colour. In one word, to express the bulk – the body – of things. Through your coming it became possible to me, but before you came there was not a day when I did not think in this way about it, only I should have had to keep exclusively to black and white and to the outline a little longer. – But now I have launched my boat.

Adieu, boy, once more, a hearty handshake and believe me,

Yours, Vincent