

My dear Theo,

If we take a whole length of ordinary canvas, this is the net price – I have just found it out by chance:

Ordinary rough yellow canvas, width two yards

No. 0, 10 yards in the piece, price 40 francs.

The discount is certainly 25 per cent, probably the factory price at first hand 33 1/3 Per cent.

So here is an opportunity to check Tasset's prices. Whether or not we set aside the five yards I ordered, it would be better to take a whole piece. As I have recently bought some canvases, the stretchers of which I shall keep, the advantage is considerable.

To make a size 30 canvas, not counting the stretcher I have, the canvas will cost me 1 fr. 50 (the price mentioned above) and at present, with the stretcher, it costs 4 Fr. Figure 1 fr. for the stretcher, which costs less, that makes a difference of 1.50 fr. and more on each size 30 canvas, the extra will go toward the carriage, which will be 5 francs. Just see, if you can, what Tasset says when you ask him the price of the piece, but what I have just given you as the price per piece is correct, and you can compare.

Do you remember among the little drawings a wooden bridge with a washing place, and a view of the town in the distance [F 1473, JH 1405]? I have just painted that subject in a large size [F 427, JH 1490].

I must warn you that everyone will think that I work too fast.

Don't you believe a word of it.

Is it not emotion, the sincerity of one's feeling for nature, that draws us, and if the emotions are sometimes so strong that one works without knowing one works, when sometimes the strokes come with a continuity and a coherence like words in a speech or a letter, then one must remember that it has not always been so, and that in time to come there will again be hard days, empty of inspiration.

So one must strike while the iron is hot, and put the forged bars on one side.

I have not yet done half the 50 canvases fit to be shown in public, and I must do them all this year.

I know beforehand that they will be criticized as hasty.

I know also that I hope to stick to my argument of this winter, when we were talking about an association of artists. Not that I still have any great desire for it or hope to realize it, but as it was seriously thought out, it is our duty to go on taking it seriously and to retain the right to come back to the question.

If Gauguin won't come to work with me, then I have no other means than my work to set against my expenses. This prospect is only moderately alarming. If my health does not betray me, I shall polish off my canvases, and there will be some that will do among them.

I am almost reconciled to the orchard, the one not on stretchers, and its pendant with the stippling. They may pass muster in the crowd. But I have less trouble working in the full heat than I did in the spring. I shall soon send you some rolled-up canvases, and the others one by one, as it becomes possible to roll them.

I should very much like to double the order for the zinc whites. This zinc white is partly the reason why they dry so slowly, but it has advantages in mixing.

Wasn't it rather pleasant this winter at Guillaumin's to find the landing and even the staircase, not to mention the studio, quite full of canvases? You can understand, therefore, that I have a certain ambition - it's not the number of canvases, but just that the very mass of them represents real labour, on your part as well as on mine. The wheatfields have been a reason for working, just like the orchards in bloom. And I only just have time to get ready for the next campaign, that of the vineyards.

And between the two I'd like to do some more marines.

The orchards meant pink and white; the wheatfields, yellow; and the marines, blue. Perhaps now I shall begin to look around a bit for greens. There's the autumn, and that will give the whole scale of the lyre.

I am very curious to know what Gauguin will do. The great thing is not to discourage him, but I think all the same that his whole plan is nothing but a freak.

You do know what I want to repeat once again, that my personal wishes are subordinate to the interests of others, and I still think that someone else might profit from the money that I spend alone. Either Vignon, or Gauguin, or Bernard, or someone else.

And that I am ready for some such combination, even if it means leaving here.

Two people who have some sort of understanding, or even three, do not spend much more than one.

Not even on paint.

So then, without counting the extra work done, you would have the satisfaction of keeping two or three going instead of one.

This sooner or later. And provided that I am as strong as the others, believe me there wouldn't be much chance of disappointment, seeing that if they had difficulties with their work, I should have been through those difficulties myself, and I'd know what it was all about. So that one would have a perfect right, it might even be one's duty, to urge them to work.

And that is what must be done.

If I am alone – I can't help it, but honestly I have less need of company than of furiously hard work, and that is why I am boldly ordering canvas and paints. It's the only time I feel I am alive, when I am drudging away at my work.

If I had company, I should feel it less of a necessity; or rather I'd work at more complicated things.

But alone, I only count on the exaltation that comes to me at certain moments, and then I let myself run on extravagances.

So the canvases that I bought here not so long ago are almost all used up, When I send you the rolled-up canvases, perhaps you could take a goodish lot of stuff that isn't very important off the stretchers, so that, by the end of the year, we may be able to show, say, 50 pieces to Pissarro and the others.

And the rest – I mean the studies – will be a stock for reference, and when they are properly dry, they can be kept in a portfolio or cupboard, without their taking up too much space.

A handshake for you and the comrades, if you see any of them.

Ever yours, Vincent