

Letter 510
Arles, 15 July 1888

My dear Theo,

Thank you very much for your letter and the 100-fr. note enclosed. I think now that you are right in this idea of settling Bing's bill, and for this reason I am sending you back 50 francs, But I think it would be a mistake "to have done" with Bing – ah no, on the contrary, I should not be surprised if Gauguin, like myself, wants to have some of those Japanese prints here. So do just as you think best about paying him the 90 francs of the deposit in full, and then take up a full 100 francs' worth later on. Or else Bing will only replace the stuff represented by the 50 francs enclosed.

If it were possible, seeing that the prints we have at our place are all beautiful, it would be better to take the whole stock. We get them so cheap, and can give pleasure to so many artists with them that altogether we must keep what favour we have with old Bing. I myself went to his place three times on New Year's Day to settle up, but probably because of the stock-taking, I found it shut up. Then a month later, before I left, I hadn't the money any more and I had also given a fair number of Japanese things to Bernard, when I exchanged with him.

Only, be sure to take the 300 Hokusai views of the holy mountain, as well as the pictures of Japanese life. There is an attic in Bing's house with thousands of prints piled up, landscape and figures, and old prints too. He will let you choose for yourself some Sunday, so take plenty of old prints as well. He'll take some of them out when he goes through them, but he'll leave you many others.

As far as I could see, that manager is a very nice fellow, and decent to anybody who is genuinely interested in things.

I myself cannot understand why you do not keep the lovely Japanese things at the Boulevard Montmartre. He would give you some of the best on commission, I am sure.

However, that's none of my business anyhow, but I am keen on our own private stock. All the same, stress the point that we make nothing on it: that we take a good deal of trouble about it, and finally that we have sometimes been the means of sending people to him.

When I was in Paris, I always wanted to have a showroom of my own at a café, you know how that fell through.

The exhibition of prints that I had at the Tambourin influenced Anquetin and Bernard a good deal, but what a disaster that was!

As for the trouble we took over the second exhibition in the room on Boulevard de Clichy, I regret it even less: Bernard sold his first picture there, and Anquetin sold a study, and I made an exchange with Gauguin; we all got something out of it. If Gauguin likes, we could have an exhibition at Marseilles just like it. But we can't count on the Marseilles crowd any more than on Paris.

But please keep the Bing stock, it is too much of an advantage. I have rather lost than gained on it as far as money goes, but for all that, it gave me a chance to look at a lot of Japanese stuff long and composedly. Your rooms would not be what they are without the Japanese things always there.

Now the prints cost us 3 sous each, so for 100 francs, if we pay the 90 francs, we shall have a new stock of 650 prints, over and above whatever is left, or half that for the francs enclosed.

I did not count on a 100 note this month after having received 50's, thinking that you were up against the Gauguin business and our sister's visit. So I will manage on that this month.

I am working on some drawings for Russell to get him to send me some of his. I would willingly take Tanguy's flowers in exchange for another study if he despairs of the flowers. It just happens that we have hardly any more of these flowers, but his bill is as absurd as a bill which I might draw up as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Portrait of Tanguy | 50 |
| Portrait of Mme. Tanguy | 50 |
| Portrait of Mme. Tanguy's friend | 50 |
| Money Tanguy has made on paints | 50 |
| Friendship, etc. | <u>50</u> |
| Total | fr. 250 |

Settling this bill is not urgent. All the same, I should be obliged to have something on account. But that's enough.

A handshake.

Ever yours, Vincent

By the way, about this book of Cassagne's, the difficulty of finding the publisher, if there is any, will be over if I tell you that the A B C D of Drawing by A. Cassagne is the text (sold separately, at 5 francs, I think) of Cassagne's Drawing for All, the 100 sections of which you surely know. It has just occurred to me that the book has the same publisher as the sections.

I have sent off a roll of drawings. If you went to see Thomas with these and added the (four, I think) other drawings of the same size, we might pick up a few pennies from Daddy Thomas, if you explained to him the rather exceptional reason we have at the moment for wanting to do a little business. Then again, Thomas might buy something from Gauguin if he knows of the combination we have planned.

If you pay the first deposit in full, why shouldn't we ask 200 franc's commission instead of less?

But on no account cancel the deposit. In a way all my work is founded on Japanese art, and if I have held my tongue about Bing, it is because I think that after my visit to the South, I may be able to take up the business more seriously.

Japanese art, decadent in its own country, takes root again among the French impressionist artists. It is its practical value for artists that naturally interests me more than the trade in Japanese things. All the same the trade is interesting, all the more so because of the direction French art tends to take.

Drop me a line to say if the drawings have reached you in good condition.

Ever yours, Vincent