

Letter 552  
Arles, 13 October 1888

My dear Theo,

I did not quite dare to hope for your new money order for 50 francs so soon, and I thank you very much for it.

I have a lot of expenses, and it worries me a good deal sometimes when I realize more and more that painting is a profession carried on most likely by exceedingly poor men, and it costs so much money. But the autumn still continues to be so beautiful! It's a queer place, this native land of Tartarin's! Yes, I am content with my lot, it isn't a superb, sublime country, this; it is only a Daumier come to life. Have you reread Tartarin yet? Be sure not to forget. Do you remember that wonderful page in Tartarin, the complaint of the old Tarascon diligence? Well, I have just painted that red and green vehicle in the courtyard of the inn. You will see it.

This hasty sketch gives you the composition, a simple foreground of grey gravel, a very, very simple background too, pink and yellow walls, with windows with green shutters, and a patch of blue sky. The two carriages very brightly coloured, green and red, the wheels – yellow, black, blue and orange. Again a size 30 canvas. [F 0478a, JH 16005]. The carriages are painted like a Monticelli with spots of thickly laid on paint. You used to have a very fine Claude Monet showing four coloured boats on a beach. Well, here they are carriages, but the composition is in the same style.

Now imagine an immense pine tree of greenish-blue, spreading its branches horizontally over a bright green lawn, and gravel splashed with light and shade. This very simple patch of garden is brightened by beds of geraniums, orange in the distance under the black branches. Two figures of lovers in the shade of the great tree; size 30 canvas. [F 0479, JH 1601]

Then two more size 30 canvases, the Trinquetaille bridge [F0481, JH 1604] and another bridge [F0480, JH 1603], along the road where the railroad is.

This canvas is a little like a Bosboom in colour. The Trinquetaille bridge with all these steps is a canvas done on a grey morning, the stones, the asphalt, the pavements are grey; the sky, pale blue, the figures, coloured; and there is a sickly tree with yellow foliage. Two canvases in gray and blended tones, and two highly coloured ones.

Forgive this very bad sketch, I am half dead with painting that Tarascon diligence, and I see that I am not in the right mood for drawing.

I am just going to have dinner and I'll write you again this evening.

But these decorations are getting on a bit, and I think that they will broaden my way of seeing and doing things.

There will be a thousand things to criticize in it, but that's all right provided I can manage to get some verve into it.

But here's to the country of good old Tartarin, I am enjoying myself in it more and more, and it is going to be our second fatherland. Not that I forget Holland, the very contrasts make one think of it many a time. I will go on with this letter directly.

I am going on with it now. I so much wish I could show you the work that I am doing.

I am really so tired that I can see my writing isn't much.

I'll write better another time, because the idea of this decoration is beginning to take shape.

I wrote Gauguin again the day before yesterday to say once again that he would probably recover more quickly here.

And he will do such beautiful things here.

He will need time to recover, I tell you. I assure you, I believe that if ideas for my work come swarming over me now, and more clearly too, eating decent cooked food has a lot to do with it, and that is what everyone who paints ought to have.

What a lot of things there are that ought to be changed. Isn't it true that all painters ought to live like workmen? A carpenter or a blacksmith is accustomed to producing infinitely more than they do. And in painting too we should have large studios where each man would work with greater regularity.

I am really falling asleep and I can't see any more, my eyes are so tired.

Good-bye for the present, because I still have a lot to say, and I must make you some better sketches. I shall probably make them tomorrow.

Thank you again very much for your money order. A good handshake.  
Ever yours, Vincent

That makes 5 canvases I have started this week, which brings the number of these size 30 canvases up to 15, I think.

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 2 | canvases of sunflowers     |
| 3 | “ the poet’s garden        |
| 2 | “ the other garden         |
| 1 | “ the night café           |
| 1 | “ the Trinquetaille bridge |
| 1 | “ the railway bridge       |
| 1 | “ the house                |
| 1 | “ Tarascon diligence       |
| 1 | “ the starry night         |
| 1 | “ the furrows              |
| 1 | “ the vineyard             |