

Letter 556
Arles, c. 21 October 1888

My dear Theo,

Thank you for your letter and the 50-franc note it contained. Thank you for writing more about the picture by these Dutch artists. I have had gas installed in the studio and in the kitchen, which has cost me 25 francs. If Gauguin and I went to work every night for a fortnight, shouldn't we get it back? Only as Gauguin may come any day, I do desperately need another 50 francs.

I am not ill, but without the slightest doubt I'd get ill if I did not eat plenty of food and if I did not stop painting for a few days. As a matter of fact, I am again pretty nearly reduced to the madness of Hugo van der Goes in Emil Wauter's picture. And if it were not that I have almost a double nature, that of a monk and that of a painter, as it were, I should have been reduced, and that long ago, completely and utterly, to the aforesaid condition.

Yet even then I do not think that my madness could take the form of persecution mania, since when in a state of excitement my feelings lead me rather to the contemplation of eternity, and eternal life.

But in any case I must beware of my nerves, etc.

But I tell you this because you would be mistaken if you thought that I should mistrust these two Dutch painters in any way. But it was really only after your second letter that I could form any idea of what they are doing, and I am very curious to see the photographs of their drawings.

I should like to write you a letter expressly for them to read, to explain once again why I believe in the South both at present and for the future.

And to say at the same time how right I think it is to see a tendency toward great things in the impressionist movement, and not only a school which would confine itself to optical experiment. And as for those who are doing historical painting, or at least have done it in the past, if there are some right bad historical painters like Delaroche and Delort, aren't there also some good ones like Eug. Delacroix and Meissonier? Anyway, since I have the fixed intention not to paint for at least three days, perhaps I shall rest myself by writing to you and to them at the same time. For you know that the influence impressionism will have on the Dutch painters and on the Dutch collectors rather interests me.

Here is a very rough sketch of my last canvas, a row of green cypresses against a pink sky with a crescent moon in pale citron. In the foreground a field, sand and some thistles. Two lovers, the man in pale blue with a yellow hat, the woman with a pink bodice and a black skirt. [F 0485, JH 1615]. That makes the fourth canvas of "The Poet's Garden," which is the scheme of decoration for Gauguin's room.

It makes me sick to have to ask you for money again, but I can't help it, and even so I am broke again. However, I think that someday the work I do by spending a little more will seem a better bargain to us than the earlier stuff.

Besides, I had already told you, if it had been possible to make a deal with Thomas, I should have dearly liked to be able to put even 200 francs more into the work before Gauguin's arrival.

As that could not be, I have nevertheless pushed what I was working on as far as I could in my great desire to be able to show him something new, and not to be subjected to his influence (for he will certainly influence me, I hope) before I can show him indubitably my own individuality. He will see that, however, in the decoration as it is now.

Do please, if it is in any way possible, send me another 50 francs at once, I do not quite know how I shall be able to get through without it. I am very glad you have read Tartarin. I do hope that you will be able to write me no later than by return mail.

With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent