

Letter 558b
Arles, 28 October 1888

My dear Theo,

Thanks for the money order for 50 francs, which I received just now.

I knew well that Gauguin had made sea voyages, but I did not know that he was a regular mariner. He has passed through all the difficulties, and has been a real able seaman and a true sailor. This gives me an awful respect for him and a still more absolute confidence in his personality. He has, if one must compare him with anything, an affinity with that Pêcheur d'Islande [Icelandic Fisherman] by Loti. I think this will make the same impression on you as on me.

Now we have already worked of course. He is busy with a Negress and a large landscape of this region. What he tells me about Brittany is very interesting, and Pont-Aven is a most marvellous country. Certainly everything there is better, larger, more beautiful than here. It has a more solemn character, and especially purer in its totality and more definite than the shrivelled, scorched, trivial scenery of Provence. Never mind, all the same he, as I myself, likes what he sees, and above all things he is intrigued by the Arlésiennes. This week I made a new study of a sower [F 494, JH 1617], the landscape quite flat, the figure small and vague.

Further I have made another study of a ploughed field with the stump of an old yew tree [F 573, JH 1618]. Like this.

And that's all. How are you, and have you done anything in Brussels?

My brain is still feeling tired and dried up, but this week I am feeling better than during the previous fortnight.

What Gauguin tells of the tropics seems marvellous to me. Surely the future of a great renaissance in painting lies there. Just ask your new Dutch friends whether they have ever thought how interesting it would be if some Dutch painters were to found a colourist school in Java. If they heard Gauguin describe the tropical countries, it would certainly make them desire to do it directly. Everybody is not free and [in] circumstances [that allow them] to emigrate. But what things could be done there!

I regret I am not ten or twenty years younger, then I would certainly go there.

Now it is most unlikely that I shall leave the shore and put to sea, and the little yellow house here in Arles will remain a way station between Africa, the Tropics, and the people of the North.

At present it is rather probable that Bernard will go to Africa, where he will meet Milliet, who gives you his regards and will leave on November 1.

I like the look of the studio, especially in the evening, with the gas burning.

If you should come across more Daumiers, don't forget to grab hold of them.

And I think that in the evening we will bring along neighbours and friends, and, while chatting away, we will work in the evening as in the daytime.

Portraits of people in the light of a gas lamp, it certainly seems to me it can be done.

I shake your hand well and write to us soon

Ever yours, Vincent