

My dear Theo,

Gauguin's canvas, "Breton Children," has arrived and he has altered it very well.

But though I quite like this canvas, it is all to the good that it is sold, and the two he is about to send you from here are thirty times better. I am speaking of the "Women Gathering Grapes" and the "Woman with the Pigs." The reason for this is that Gauguin is beginning to get over that disorder of the liver or the stomach which has been tormenting him lately.

But I am now writing to reply to what you said about having a little canvas of mine of a pink peach tree framed, I imagine to send to ces messieurs. I don't want to leave any doubt as to what I think of that.

First, if it is your wish to let them have something of mine, good or bad, upon my honour if it can in any way give you any pleasure now or later, you have absolute *carte blanche*.

But if it is either to please me, or for my own advantage, then on the contrary I'm of the opinion that it is absolutely unnecessary.

If you had asked me what would please me, it's just this one thing: that you keep in the apartment for yourself whatever you like out of my work, and sell none of it now.

As for the rest, send whatever is in your way back to me here, for the good reason that all the things I have done from nature are chestnuts pulled out of the fire.

Gauguin, in spite of himself and in spite of me, has more or less proved to me that it is time I was varying my work a little. I am beginning to compose from memory, and all my studies will still be useful for that sort of work, recalling to me things I have seen. What then does selling matter, unless we are absolutely pressed for money?

And besides, I am convinced beforehand that you will end up seeing it the way I do.

You are with the Goupils, but I most certainly am not; after having worked with them for six years, both sides were utterly dissatisfied, they with me, I with them. It's an old story, but all the same, that's how things were.

So go your own way, but as a matter of business I think it is incompatible with my previous conduct to come back to them with a canvas as innocent as this little peach tree or something similar.

No. If in a year or two I have enough for an exhibition of my own, say thirty size 30 canvases or so, and if I said to them, "Will you do it for me?" Boussod would certainly send me about my business. I know them, alas, rather too well, and I think I shall not apply to them. Not that I should ever try to do them any harm whatever – on the contrary, you will have to admit that I urge all the others to go there, with great zeal.

But as far as I'm concerned, I still carry that old grudge.

Understand quite clearly that I consider you a dealer in impressionist pictures, completely independent of the Goupils, so that it will always be a pleasure to me to push artists in that direction.

But I do not want Boussod to ever have a chance to say, "That little canvas isn't too bad for a young beginner." On the contrary, I will not go back to them, I would rather never sell anything than go to them otherwise than as a purely business matter. Now they are not the people to behave fairly, so it's no good beginning again.

Understand that the more clear-cut we are about this, the sooner they will come to you to see them. You yourself do not sell my work, so you are not doing business outside the firm of Boussod V. & Co. by showing it. So you will be acting quite correctly, which is always decent.

However, should someone or other want to buy, very good, then they have only to apply directly to me. But be sure of this, if we can stand the siege, my time will come. I cannot do anything but work just now, nor should I.

A handshake – we need some more paints.

I must also tell you that this month with the two of us together is going better on 150 francs than on 250 for myself alone. At the end of a year you will see how things have developed.

I cannot say any more.

I am rather sorry to have my room full of canvases, and to have nothing to send when Gauguin sends his.

It is because Gauguin has told me how to get rid of the grease in the things painted in impasto by washing from time to time.

And then when that is done, I must go over them to retouch them.

If I sent them to you now, the colours would be duller than they will be later.

They all think what I have sent too hastily done. I do not contradict it, and I will make some alterations.

It does me a tremendous amount of good to have such intelligent company as Gauguin's, and to see him work.

You will see that some people will soon be reproaching Gauguin with no longer being an impressionist. His last two canvases, which you will soon be seeing, are very firm in the impasto, there is even some work with the palette knife. And they will throw his Breton canvases a little in the shade – not all, but some. I have hardly any time to write. But for that, I should already have written to these Dutchmen. I have had another letter from Bock, you know, the Belgian who has a sister among the “Vingtistes”; he is enjoying his work up there.

I hope we shall always remain friends with Gauguin and doing business with him, and if he could succeed in founding a studio in the tropics, it would be magnificent. However, it requires more money according to my calculations than it does according to his.

Guillaumin has written to Gauguin. He seems to be very hard up, but he must have done some fine things. He has a child now but he was terrified by the confinement, and he says that he has the red vision of it always before his eyes. But to this Gauguin aptly replied that he himself has seen it six times.

Jet Mauve is much better as far as her health is concerned, and as you perhaps know, she has been staying in The Hague since last August, near the Jewish cemetery, and therefore almost in the country.

You will lose nothing by waiting a little for my work, and we will calmly leave our comrades to despise the present ones. Fortunately for me, I know well enough what I want, and am basically utterly indifferent to the criticism that I work too hurriedly. In answer to that, I have done some things even more hurriedly these last few days.

Gauguin was telling me the other day that he had seen a picture by Claude Monet of sunflowers in a large Japanese vase, very fine, but – he likes mine better. I don't agree – only don't think that I am weakening. I regret – as always, how well you know – the scarcity of models and the thousand obstacles in overcoming that difficulty. If I were a different sort of man, and if I were better off, I could force the issue, but as it is I do not give in, but plod on quietly.

If, by the time I am forty, I have done a picture of figures like the flowers Gauguin was speaking of, I shall have a position in art equal to that of anyone, no matter who. So, perseverance.

Meanwhile I can at all events tell you that the last two studies are odd enough.

Size 30 canvases, a wooden rush-bottomed chair all yellow on red tiles against a wall (daytime). [F 498, JH 1635]

Then Gauguin's armchair, red and green night effect, wall and floor red and green again, on the seat two novels and a candle, on thin canvas with a thick impasto. [F 499, JH 1636]

What I say about sending back the studies is not in the least urgent, and I mean the bad ones, which will still be useful to me as documents, or the ones which are cluttering up your apartment.

And as for what I said in general about the studies, there is just one thing I am set on: let the position be quite clear, don't make any deal for me outside your own house. As far as I am concerned, I shall either never darken the Goupil's door again, which is probable, or else I shall go in boldly, which is hardly likely. Good-by again, and thank you for all you do for me.

Ever yours, Vincent