

Letter 167
The Hague, 1 – 2 January 1882

Dear brother,

I just send you my best wishes for the New Year. May it be a good year for you in every respect, and egotistically I add, for me too. Well, as for me it will perhaps please you to hear that I am installed in a studio of my own – a room with an alcove. The light is bright enough, for the window is large, twice as large as an ordinary window, but it faces the south.

The furniture I have taken is in the real “village policeman style,” as you call it; but I think mine is more so than yours, although you invented the word. (I have, for instance, real kitchen chairs, and a real strong kitchen table.)

Mauve has lent me 100 guilders for rent and furniture, and to have the window and light adjusted. You can imagine that this is a load on my mind, but, well, it was the only possible way, because in the long run it is much cheaper to have things of your own than always to spend money for a so-called furnished room.

Well, I had a lot of trouble getting everything, and before I could arrange the furniture so as to make it do. But now, boy, I have a real studio of my own, and I am so glad.

I did not dare hope that it would happen so soon, but now I am very glad, and I hope you also will approve of it.

Listen, you know that my expenses will be greater than in Etten, but I shall try to struggle along. Mauve gives me great hope that I shall soon begin to earn something. And now that I am in a studio of my own, this will not make an unfavourable impression on the persons who until now suspected me of amateurism, of idleness, of sponging on others. I hope you will be able to send me something these days. If I were greatly in need and asked Mauve, he would not refuse me, but I really think he has already done enough. It happens that once in his life every man has to set up housekeeping, and though at first I greatly dreaded the feeling of being in debt, I feel after all it is better so.

We arranged that I shall work regularly from the model; it is the most expensive and yet the cheapest way in the end.

De Bock does not improve on further acquaintance; he rather lacks backbone, and he gets angry when one says some things which are only the ABC. He has some feeling for landscape, he knows how to put some charm into it (for instance, in a large picture which he is making now), but one gets no hold on him. It is too vague and insubstantial – du coton filé trop fin. His pictures are the shadow of an impression, and in my opinion that impression is hardly worth repeating so often.

I do not wish to associate much with other painters. Each day I find Mauve cleverer and more trustworthy, and what more can I want? However, Theo, I shall have to dress a little better now. I know now the direction in which I have to go, and need not hide myself, so I shall not avoid meeting other people – neither shall I seek them. Mauve and Jet send you their compliments.

Adieu, I still have a lot to do, believe me,

Yours sincerely, Vincent