

Letter 171
The Hague, 21 January 1882

Dear Theo,

Now that another week has passed, I am writing you again.

I have had a model regularly, every day from morning until evening, and the model is good.

Mauve has been to see me and Mr. Tersteeg also, and I am very glad of it. I have been working all the time now in watercolour, and I am getting to like it more and more.

How I wish you were here, I have so many things to ask and tell you. Do you think you will come in the spring? Will you know some time in advance?

What I have done now is far from good, but it is different and has more power and freshness, and is without body colour.

Now, I hope you will write me soon, and especially that we shall try to make some arrangement about the money. For though 100 fr. a month would be sufficient for my own expenses, it is quite a different matter when I have to pay models daily and must feed them, etc., etc. And then the expenses of paint, paper, etc. I told you in my last letter that whether I can work at full speed or half speed depends on my income.

Now that I am settled here, small expenses spring up afresh every day, which do not make life easy for me at all. However, I have worked on regularly for some time, but now I am without a cent.

It is only natural that when one settles somewhere, there are all kinds of expenses.

But in spite of this I am making progress and I shall learn to make watercolours, and then it will not be so very long before my work becomes saleable.

Mr. Tersteeg himself said something about it, and if some of those smaller ones turn out well, he will probably buy some. And I have completed still further the drawing of the little old woman which I sent you a sketch of, and someday it will surely sell.

Believe me, I work, I drudge, I grind all day long, and I do so with pleasure; but I should get very discouraged if I could not go on working as hard or even harder. If you write to Mr. Tersteeg about it, he will certainly credit you for an amount which you yourself fix, and he can control its expenditure if he does not trust me. But it would be terrible if I couldn't go on working the way I have these last three weeks.

As to the size of the drawings or the subjects, I will readily listen to Mr. Tersteeg's and Mauve's suggestions. I undertook some large ones recently because I wanted by all means to get rid of the dryness in last summer's studies. And now Mauve said to me last night, though of course he found some things to criticize, "It is beginning to look like a watercolour." Well, if I gain that much, I suppose I've wasted neither time nor money. And now that I've tried the use of the brush and the strength of the colours on a large scale, I can again risk some smaller ones. For that matter, I started two small ones, but as I did not get on with them and partly washed them out again, I started a very large one, which I'm sending you a sketch of.

So I have enough work for the week that begins tomorrow, but I'm afraid I haven't enough money, for 2.50 guilders and a few cents is all I have left. What should I do now? If I go and ask Mauve or Mr. Tersteeg, I do not think either would refuse me. But Mauve has already done so much, and I would rather sell a few small drawings to Mr. Tersteeg than borrow money from him. So answer me soon, and if possible do something, send me some money so that I can go on working. I feel, Theo, that there is a power in me, and I do what I can to bring it out and free it. All the worry and troubling over my drawings is hard enough, and if I had too many other cares and could not pay the models, I should lose my head. It is bad enough that you have to pay for everything, but things are not so bad as they were last winter. I feel that I am nearer success. I shall do what I can, I shall work hard, and as soon as I have more power over my brush, I shall work even harder than I do now. And if we push on energetically now, it will not be long before you need not send me money any more.

Well, boy, do what you can, and I shall also do what I can. Adieu. I count on your writing soon; you need not send so much at a time if only I can go on from week to week.

Receive a handshake in thought,

Yours sincerely, Vincent