

Dear Theo,

I received your last letter and the enclosure in good order and thank you for it with all my heart. I was and am even now rather hard up, that is to say, in regard to painting. There are so many, many expenses. This is partly because so many things that I start turn out wrong, and then one has to begin anew, and all the trouble has been in vain – except that after all, this is the way to make progress, and one must persevere.

In your last letter there was no answer to what I asked you about, whether or not to send the painted studies. Perhaps you forgot all about it. So I thought that after all it is not a question of real importance, and today I sent you a painted study by mail. But as I told you in my last letter, of course I would much rather that you saw them all together; and of course you can't judge the future from the one, as I have been handling the brush for too short a time not to expect great changes.

I would rather have sent you something else, but the one I would like to send is not dry enough to be rolled. Like myself, you will find much to criticize in the background. I can only give this explanation for it, the study is made as a study of the foreground, that is, the tree roots; there had already been so much work on them, and as usual I didn't sit quietly because of the passers-by, and when I had brought the study as far as you see it now, I couldn't stand it any longer.

You cannot imagine how irritating and tiring it is when people always stand so close to you. Sometimes it makes me so nervous that I have to give up. So yesterday morning, though it was still very early and I had hoped to be left alone, a study of the chestnut trees in the Bezuidenhout (which are so splendid) turned out all wrong for this reason. And people are sometimes so rude and impertinent. Well, but it is not just the disappointment it causes, but also the waste of materials. Of course such things will not get the better of me, and I shall overcome them just as other people do, but I feel I should reach my goal much more quickly if there were less of those little miseries.

Now as for this study; if when looking at it and knowing that I have many more besides this one, you do not regret having enabled me to make it, then I shall be satisfied and shall continue with good courage. If it is a disappointment to you, you must remember that it is such a short time since I began painting. If it pleases you, so much the better for me, for I want so much to send you something that gives you pleasure.

Now I still have to tell you that quite unexpectedly I had a very pleasant visit from Father, at my house at the studio; I think this infinitely better than his hearing about me from others.

If people come to see me, well, then their impression is at least original, but I do not like opinions which are based on what people say.

I was really very glad to see Father and to talk to him. I again heard a great deal about Nuenen; that churchyard with the old crosses. I cannot get it out of my head. I hope I shall be able to paint it someday. I also heard a great deal about your visit, and that you gave them that engraving after Israëls, which greatly touched them.

I should have liked to send you a marine too, but the last one is not quite dry. I might have sent the first one, but since then I have caught the colour of the sea better, and so I'll wait until one of the last ones is dry. I have painted much more lately than I originally intended and than I agreed on with you. But perhaps it is necessary to keep on doing it, if at all possible.

I have just received a letter from Rappard. I wish he lived a little nearer.

And remember that I want to hear your criticisms exactly as you think. I often feel the longing and need to ask someone's advice on different questions, but I do not give in to it after what happened with Mauve, and I do not talk to painters about my work. Somebody may be remarkably clever, but what use is it to me when he tells me to do things differently from the way he does it himself? I would rather Mauve had told me something about the use of body colour instead of saying, "Under no circumstances must you use body colour," whereas he himself and all the others almost always use it, and with the best results. Well, in many cases, one will eventually be able to find out things for oneself, and that is what I try to do. Yes, if I could do exactly what I wanted, I should undertake painting on an even larger scale, and especially with more models.

When I don't paint, I draw from the figure a great deal.

In this study the figure is there only for the size, so that I shall be able to find the proportions of some other figure when I use this study. Of course a real figure is quite different; it presents many more difficulties. Then it is also there to give a little accent.

So please understand, brother, that I am sending you this only because I didn't know what to do, as you didn't write about it. Of course a real figure is quite different from this, and I send it the same way I sometimes send you a little sketch, to give you an idea of what I am making.

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Adieu, a handshake in thought. I send you all possible good wishes, and hope that your headache is not chronic or one which returns again and again. With me it is also more a feeling of uncomfortable fatigue than of excessive pain.

I took a walk on the Rijswijk road with Father; it is very beautiful there. Again farewell, and believe me,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

If this one arrives in good condition, it will be an easy way to send you things. I don't know if one can send drawings or pictures by mail as printed matter.

Another thing, you understand that I could do with some little branches, etc., differently if I painted them anew; but in my opinion one mustn't change too much in studies which must be used later.

They must be put up in the studio just the way they come from the wood; to some people they may look less pleasant, but for the painter himself there is more of his own impression in them.