

Amice Rappard,

I received the package of wood engravings on March 30; as there was no accompanying letter, I waited a few days to see if you were going to write me. Now, however, I shall write you a few words to thank you very much for this batch, and to tell you that I found several sheets among them that I did not have myself (among other things, “A Ghost Story” by Thomas, “Christmas Carol” by Gilbert, Oberlander’s “In der Kirche” [In church], etc.).

I gave the other ones to Van der Weele, who was very glad to have them. I imagine you will be very busy with the picture you intend for the exhibition. When everything connected with it is finished, I shall look forward eagerly to the resumption of our correspondence about lithography and black and white in general, and – if it is possible – no less to getting together with you.

I am writing you only a short letter this time, as I can understand that you are very busy.

Just one thing, though. What do you think of the following method for making drawings in black and white? You make a drawing, either with lead pencil or with charcoal. Put as much vigour into it as you can, but without worrying about the weakness or inadequacy of the effect. When you have done this, you put a little ordinary printer’s ink on a palette, then a little Cassel earth, for instance, and also white – oil paint. With these – mixing the colours and the printer’s ink, which is as thick as tar in its ordinary state, with turpentine (no oil, of course) – you start to attack the original drawing again – with the brush, of course. This is something I tried out the other day.¹

It goes without saying that the printer’s ink – diluted with more or less turpentine (you can dilute it until it is so thin that you can wash with it with the utmost transparency – on the other hand, one can use it in so thick a condition that one gets the deepest black tones) – is the principal ingredient you use. I think this is a method with which much can be done. Well, more about it later on – I am still experimenting myself.

The drawing I am working on now with this method is an orphan man standing near a coffin – in what they call the “corpses’ den.”

Adieu, with a handshake, and thanks again for what you sent me,
Ever yours, Vincent

It stands to reason that, in order to simplify things, you could experiment with printers’ ink and turpentine only. This time, however, I don’t mean autographic ink, but ordinary printer’s ink. Perhaps you have it already, otherwise you can get it at any printing office.

It is my experience that this printer’s ink clings very nicely to the coarse grain of a certain paper which is called papier torchon here (but which is nothing like the Whatman torchon); Smulders ordered it again a short while ago in two sizes, the large size 3.75 guilders per quire.

1. See letter 279 to Theo.