

Letter 289
The Hague, 4 or 5 June 1882

Dear Theo,

I must tell you that this evening Van der Weele came to see my drawings. His opinion was favourable, and I am very glad of it.

Do you know what I have done – in regard to the necessity of earning some money if possible? I have sent small sketches of both compositions to C. M. I wish this may perhaps result in his helping to carry out my plan of making a series of drawings of the work in the dunes.

Then I thought that perhaps these drawings would be something for Cottier. I imagine they would look well, placed in the panels of a large cabinet over a mantelpiece, in a wainscot – in short, framed in woodwork as they do in England, and elsewhere too. But you know how it is with Cottier, when there is a certain degree of style in a drawing he likes it well enough, but alas, he generally pays little. Still, I believe he is one of those who would care for them; and besides, he could display the drawings favourably.

Then, couldn't you show the sketches to our friend Wisselingh, and tell him I think they would look well framed in woodwork? At all events, urge him to visit my studio, if perchance he might come to The Hague. For if he might find them suitable for such a purpose, I could perhaps make an arrangement with him for more of them; and if I knew he cared for them, I could perhaps make them even more suitable for that purpose by trying to give them a decidedly decorative character.

This morning I was already out-of-doors at four o'clock. I intend to attack the dustmen, or rather the attack has already begun. This drawing requires studies of horses, and I made two of them today, in the stables of the Rhine railway station: and probably I shall get an old horse at the refuse dump. That refuse dump is a splendid thing, but very complicated and difficult, and it will cost me a lot of hard work. I made a few sketches very early in the morning: the one that gives a vista of a brilliant little spot of fresh green will ultimately be the one, I think.

It is somewhat like the scratch I made here; everything, even the women in the foreground and the white horses in the background, must stand out in chiaroscuro against the little bit of green, with a streak of sky above it. So that all those gloomy sheds, gliding away, one after the other, and all that dirt and those grey figures are in contrast to something pure and fresh.

A group of women and a horse form the lighter part in the tone of the chiaroscuro, and the dustmen and the dung heaps, the darker.

In the foreground, all kinds of broken and discarded objects, bits of old baskets, a rusty street lamp, broken pots, etc.

So many ideas and such an desire to make new ones arose in me while making these first two drawings, that I do not know where to start, but I am definitely going to stick to the ash dump now.

Well, Theo, we must keep good courage and try to work on energetically. We may be hard up sometimes and not know how to make both ends meet, but that does not matter and cannot be avoided; he who perseveres often conquers.

And just now when it is doubly difficult for you to send the money, there is perhaps a real chance to sell something: if only you were here! I also thought, if he did not stick to his idea of not having anything to do with me, Tersteeg might perhaps have some use for these compositions on a smaller scale, for instance, in sepia. If only you were here, you might perhaps make some arrangement with him. I certainly do not refuse to take the trouble to make things, but as long as things are not right with Tersteeg and C. M. and I have no source of income whatever except the money from you, do your utmost, for I think everything depends on my working energetically just now.

Though I have hardly any money left, I have already made arrangements with the models for this new drawing, and with what is left for the moment I will perhaps get a Scheveningen bonnet and cape today. If I can get hold of that patched cape, boy, I have my woman's figure for the first plane of the drawing of the dustmen – I am sure of it; and it is a start to making other figures of women for Scheveningen drawings.

[Unfinished.]