

Amice Rappard,

I wrote you today and your letter from Terschelling crossed mine.

I am greatly pleased to hear that you are going to bring back rather a lot of things from your trip, and from what you say about your studies I am confident that you will bring along useful things. I still regret that I have not seen that picture "Fish Market," even in its first stage.¹

As I told you already, what I said about it may be wrong in so far as my words – "If you keep the division of the space substantially as it is now, it is my opinion that it can be saved only by a division of light and brown, a vigorous effect of chiaroscuro" – may apply to something quite different, may flatly contradict your intention – if you wanted to make a grey picture, for instance. And yet – I suppose your sketch conforms to the picture with regard to the amount of canvas space taken up by your figures as compared to the canvas space taken up by the houses, street, sky. And then it struck me at once that the figures would be crushed by the rest, and that there would be too much of a struggle between the figures and the surroundings.

Well, I'm damned sorry I didn't see the picture itself in its first stage.

All the same I did not lose sight of the fact – as you suppose – that it is you who are making the picture, not I – but I base my argument on something you will hardly deny, namely that you are making a PICTURE.

And a picture – whoever the artist may be – you or anyone else – should express preferably one thing only and that quite clearly.

Speaking of Van der Weele, I remember saying to him about the picture which he got a medal for in Amsterdam – and this contrary to the opinion of others – that I greatly appreciated his having succeeded so well in preserving the unity of STYLE despite all the different things that appeared in it, and that it really and truly was a picture, i.e. something quite different from a realistic study from nature.

But – after all – I know nothing of your original concept, except from that hasty little sketch, and I don't doubt in the least that there will be praiseworthy things in it. But all the same I stick to what I said, and I want to point out again that I am afraid that your foreground, for instance, cannot carry all the things standing in it – it will either become paint or else unfixed and woolly – what is called mou. This very summer the same thing happened to me with a weaver's interior that I could not go on with because the whole thing came too much to the forefront – because the picture began with what ought to have been the second plane – the first plane, the solid foundation, was missing. And I reproached myself in the same way that I am now speaking to you.

It is something that happens very often to nearly all painters, and it may happen that it can be remedied only by transferring the whole to a larger canvas.

By the way, do you know "Ordered off" by Frank Hol in the London News? I brought it back from Utrecht together with a "Shepherd" by Thompson.

Good-by. I hope you will come in October; if possible, write in advance the exact date when you are coming.

With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent

1. See letter 369 to Theo.