

Dear Theo,

I write you often these days, and I often write the same thing, but let it prove to you that I have one thing especially in mind – the necessity of entering that period of figure drawing.

And then it may be egoistic if you like, I want my health restored. My impression of the time I have spent here does not change either; in a certain sense I am very much disappointed by what I have made here, but my ideas have been modified and refreshed, and that was the real object of my coming here. But as I have perceived that I relied too much on my health, and that, though the core is still all right, yet I am but a ruin compared to what I might have been, so it would not astonish me at all if you, too, were absolutely in need of that same more hygienic life that was prescribed for me.

If I am not mistaken in this, I think we cannot join each other soon enough, and I keep objecting to a stay in the country. For though the air is bracing, I should miss there the distraction and the pleasant company of the city, which we should enjoy so much more if we were together. And if we were together soon, I should disappoint you in many things, yes, to be sure, but not in everything, and not in my way of looking at things, I suppose. Now that we are discussing things, I want to tell you to begin with that I wish both of us might find a wife in some way or other before long, for it is high time, and if we should wait too long, we should not be the better for it.

But I say this in all calmness. However, it is one of the first requisites for our more hygienic life. And I mention it because in that respect we may have to overcome an enormous difficulty, on which a great deal depends. And herewith I break the ice on the subject; we shall always have to return to it. And in the intercourse with women one especially learns so much about art.

It is a pity that, as one gradually gains experience, one gradually loses one's youth. If that were not so, life would be too good.

Have you already read that preface to *Chérie* by de Goncourt? The amount of work those fellows have achieved is enormous when one thinks of it.

It is such a splendid idea, that working and thinking together. And every day I find new proof of the theory that the main reason for much misery among the artists lies in their discord, in their not co-operating, not being good but false to each other. And now, if we were more sensible in that respect, I do not doubt for a moment that within a year's time we should make headway, and be happier. I am not getting on very well with my work, but I do not force things, because in fact I am almost completely forbidden to.

And I want to keep up my strength for that first time in Paris, if that is to follow first, without any other interval than that one month in the country. For should like to go there in good condition.

It was Sunday today, almost a spring day. This morning I took a long walk alone all through the city, in the park, along the boulevards. The weather was such that I think in the country they will have heard the lark sing for the first time.

In short, there was something of resurrection in the atmosphere.

Yet what depression there is in business and among the people. I do not think it exaggerated to be pessimistic about the various strikes, etc., everywhere.

They will certainly prove not to have been useless for the following generations, for then they will have proved a success. But now it is of course hard enough for everybody who must earn his bread by his work, the more so because we can foresee that it will get worse and worse from year to year. The labourer against the bourgeois is as justifiable as was the tiers état against the other two a hundred years ago. And the best thing to do is to keep silent, for fate is not on the bourgeois side, and we shall live to see more of it; we are still far from the end. So although it's spring, how many thousands and thousands are wandering about, desolate.

I see the lark soaring in the spring air as well as the greatest optimist; but I also see the young girl of about twenty, who might have been in good health, a victim of consumption, and who will perhaps drown herself before she dies of any illness.

If one is always in respectable company among rather well-to-do bourgeois, one does not notice this so much perhaps, but if one has dined for years on la vache enragée, as I have, one cannot deny that great misery is a fact that weights the scale.

One may not be able to cure or to save, but one can sympathize with and pity them. Corot, who after all had more serenity than anybody else, who felt the spring so deeply, was he not as simple as a workingman all his life, and so sensitive to all the miseries of others? And what struck me in his biography was that when he was already very old in 1870 and 1871, he certainly looked at the bright sky, but at the same time he visited the ambulances where the wounded lay dying.

Illusions may fade, but the sublime remains. One may doubt everything, but one does not doubt people like Corot and Millet and Delacroix. And I think that in moments when one does not care for nature any more, one still cares for humanity.

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If you can, send me something extra this month, be it more or less, even if it's only 5 francs, do so. If you can't, then it can't be helped.

I am greatly longing to know your decision, if perhaps you would approve of my coming to Paris already about April 1. At all events write soon about it.

Goodbye. With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent