

Dear Theo,

I write you once more because at all events my time here has almost come to an end, and I have to go back one of these days. The time of working out-of-doors will be there at the slightest change in the weather, so if it must be, and if you wish it, my being in Brabant would not be quite futile. But however this may be, I continue to try to induce you to carry out the Cormon plan, and I personally would so much prefer to go on drawing from the casts for a time.

I guess my health is improving a little, at least in that I can digest my food a little better. But it always remains unsteady, and it varies from one day to the next. I have finished another drawing from a cast, and since I wrote you that the teacher had let me know indirectly that it had not been his intention to offend me, there has been no further trouble between us, and he even said that today's drawing hardly needed any correction of the proportions, and none at all of the tone. So I almost dare to hope that I shall also manage to get along with Cormon, whatever he may be like, and that makes me long the more to be there. Well, if I may have some luck with my health, I hope to make some progress this year.

I also continue to believe that I shall be able to find some work, though I have not been lucky in that respect. But my time has been taken up almost completely by my work at the academy.

From what I hear, I infer that what the fellows happen to sell is always portraits. There is said to be a fine exhibition of impressionists in Brussels.

You see, since I have heard and seen here how the other fellows who concentrate on the figure manage – and you see they all have more to spend than I – they have always made use of models at some studio in the city, just to save expenses. And at the same time one has some intercourse with other fellows, and can see how they work.

And I can't help thinking all the time that perhaps we ought to have taken that measure two or two and a half years ago – that much more reason not to put it off any longer now.

After all Antwerp has pleased me very much. Of course I wish I had arrived here with the experience I have now, at the moment I leave. But if that were possible, things would be easier, and one always begins everywhere by being a greenhorn. But I hope to come back to Antwerp some time, for life is rather free and artistic here, if only one looks for it, more than anywhere else perhaps.

Then one sees all kinds of people, English, French, German and Belgian, and that gives variation.

If there is one city that resembles Paris, it is Antwerp rather than Brussels, in the first place because it is a centre for people of all nationalities, secondly, with regard to business, and in the third place because of its liveliness, and of the fact that one can amuse oneself there.

If the course at the academy continues, I should like to stay, but unfortunately from May on there is nothing but competitions, and the day class for the works of the ancients, and these are also almost over.

And now I have not seen Antwerp in a flourishing condition, for one generally hears that it used to be much livelier, and that now it is depressed by two crises at the same time – in the first place the general one, and then in addition, the afterpains of the exhibition in the shape of numbers of fraudulent or common bankruptcies.

Think it over carefully again, whether we can't find a combination that would render it possible for me to come to Paris before June. I should like it so much, because I believe it would be better for so many reasons, which I have already mentioned to you. To which I may add that I think we can discuss taking a studio by June so much better if we are both in Paris beforehand, and can investigate the pros and cons.

Well, write me soon. With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent