

Letter 464
Arles, c. 25th February 1888

My dear Theo,

Thanks for your nice letter and the 50-franc note.

So far I haven't found life here so cheap as I'd hoped, but still I have finished three studies, which is probably more than I could have managed in Paris these days.

I am glad the news from Holland was pretty satisfactory. As for Reid, I am not much surprised at his taking it ill (though he is wrong) that I should have got the start on him in the Midi. For us to say, for our part, that we have never got any advantage out of his acquaintance would be rather unfair since (1) he made us the present of a very fine picture (which picture, between ourselves, we meant to get hold of); (2) Reid has forced the price of the Monticelli up, and since we own five, it follows that these have gone up likewise; (3) he was right good company for the first few months.

Now, as for us, we tried to bring him into a far bigger thing than the Monticellis, and he pretended not to know much about it.

It seems to me that if we are to maintain the right to be masters on our own ground where the impressionists are concerned, so that there can be no doubt as to our good faith towards Reid, we might let him do as he likes, without interference from us, with the Monticellis at Marseilles. Insisting that our interest in the dead painter is only indirectly financial.

If you agree to this, you can, if necessary, tell him from me too that if he intends to come to Marseilles to buy Monticellis, he has nothing to fear from us, but that we have the right to ask what he intends to do, seeing that we have got the start on him on this ground.

As for the impressionists, it seems fair to me that they should be introduced into England through your intermediary, if not directly by you. And if Reid should get in first, we should be justified in maintaining that he had acted in bad faith towards us, more especially since we gave him a free hand with the Marseilles Monticellis.

You are doing a kindness to our friend Koning by letting him stay with you; his visit to Rivet must have proved to him that we did not give him bad advice. If you want to take him in, I think that it would be a way out of the difficulty for him, only you must come to an understanding with his father so that you will have no responsibility – even indirectly.

If you see Bernard, tell him that so far I have had to pay more than at Pont-Aven, but that I think if one got private lodgings here, one could economize; that is what I am trying to find, and as soon as I have verified it, I shall write to him what I think his average expenses would come to.

I have thought now and then that my blood is actually beginning to think of circulating, which is more than it ever did during that last period in Paris. I could not have stood it much longer.

I have to get my paints and canvases either at a grocer's or at a bookshop, and they haven't got everything I want. I shall really have to go to Marseilles to see how they are off for this sort of thing there. I hoped to find some good blue, etc., and I still think I may, since one ought to be able to buy the raw material at first hand in Marseilles.

I wish I could make blues like Zeim, they don't fade so much as the others – but we shall see.

Don't worry, and give a handshake from me to the comrades.

Ever yours, Vincent

The studies I've done are – an old *Arlésienne* [F 390, JH 1357], a landscape in the snow [F 391, JH 1358], a view of a bit of a pavement with a pork-butcher's shop [F 389, JH 1359]. The women here are beautiful, no humbug about that; but on the other hand the museum in Arles is a horror and a humbug, and ought to be in Tarascon. There is also a museum of antiquities, but these are genuine.