

My dear Theo,

Yesterday I went to the furniture dealer's to see if I could hire a bed etc. Unfortunately they would not hire, and even refused to sell on a monthly installment plan. This is rather awkward.

I thought perhaps if Koning leaves after seeing the Salon which I believe was his original intention, that you might send me the bed that he now occupies after his departure. One must take into account that if I sleep at the studio it will make a difference of 300 Frs. a year which would otherwise have to be paid to the hotel. I know that it is impossible to say in advance that I shall stay here so long but all the same I have many reasons for thinking that a long stay here is probable. I was in Fontvieilles yesterday at McKnight's; he had a good pastel – a pink tree – and two watercolours just started, and I found him working on the head of an old woman in charcoal. He has reached the stage where he is plagued by new colour theories, and while they prevent him from working on the old system, he is not sufficiently master of his new palette to succeed in this one. He seemed very shy about showing me the things, I had to go there for that express purpose, and tell him that I was absolutely set on seeing his work.

It is not impossible that he may come to stay for some time with me here. I think we should both benefit by it.

I think very often of Renoir and that pure clean line of his. That's just how things and people look in this clear air.

We are having a tremendous lot of wind and mistral here, just now three days out of four, though the sun shines anyway: but it makes it difficult to work out-of-doors.

I think there would be something to do here in portraits. Although the people are blankly ignorant of painting in general, they are much more artistic than in the North in their own persons and their manner of life. I have seen figures here quite as beautiful as those of Goya or Velázquez. They will put a touch of pink on a black frock, or devise a garment of white, yellow and pink, or else green and pink, or else blue and yellow, in which there is nothing to be altered from the artistic point of view. Seurat would find some very picturesque men's figures here in spite of their modern clothes.

Now, as for portraits, I am pretty sure they'd take the bait.

But first before I dare start along that line, I want my nerves steadier, and also to be settled in so that I could have people in my studio. And if I must tell you roughly what I figure it would take to get me quite well and acclimatized for good, it will mean a year, and to set me up completely, a cool thousand francs. If during the first year – the present year – I spend 100 francs on food and 100 francs on this house per month, you see there won't be a cent left in the budget for painting.

But at the end of that year I should have a decent establishment and my own health to show for it – of that I am sure.

And in the meantime I should spend my time drawing every day, with two or three pictures a month besides.

In figuring what it would cost to set me up, I am also counting in a complete new set of linen and clothes and shoes.

And at the end of the year I should be a different man.

I should have a home of my own and the peace to get back my health.

(Needless to say, if you have got canvases that take up too much room, you can send them here by goods service, and I will keep them in the studio here. If this is not yet the case, it will be later on, and I am keeping a good many studies which don't seem good enough to send to you.)

And then I can hope not to get exhausted before my time. Monticelli was physically stronger than I, I think, and if I had the strength for it, I'd live from hand to mouth as he did. But if even he was paralyzed, and that without being such a tremendous drinker, there'd be precious little hope for me.

I was certainly going the right way for a stroke when I left Paris. I paid for it nicely afterward! When I stopped drinking, when I stopped smoking so much, when I began to think again instead of trying not to think – Good Lord, the depression and the prostration of it! Work in these magnificent natural surroundings has restored my morale, but even now some efforts are too much for me: my strength fails me. And that was why, when I wrote you the other day, I said that if you left the Goupils, you would feel healthier in mind, but the cure would be very painful. Whereas one does not feel the disease itself.

My poor boy, our neurosis. etc., comes, it's true, from our way of living, which is too purely the artist's life, but it is also a fatal inheritance, since in civilization the weakness increases from generation to generation. If we want to face the real truth about our constitution, we must acknowledge that we belong to the number of those who suffer from a neurosis which already has its roots in the past.

I think Gruby is right about such cases – to eat well, to live well, to see little of women, in short to arrange one's life in advance exactly as if one were already suffering from a disease of the brain and spine, without counting the neurosis which is actually there. Certainly that is taking the bull by the horns, which is never a bad policy. And Degas did it, and succeeded. All the same, don't you feel, as I do, that it is frightfully hard? And after all, doesn't it do one all the good in

the world to listen to the wise advice of Rivet and Pangloss, those excellent optimists of the pure and jovial Gallic race, who leave you your self-respect?

However, if we want to live and work, we must be very sensible and look after ourselves. Cold water, fresh air, simple good food, decent clothes, a decent bed, and no women. And not to let oneself go with women, or with life that is life, as much as one would like to.

I am not set on sleeping at the studio, but if I went to sleep there, it would be because I saw the possibility of settling down pretty definitely for a long time.

Now that I need take up no more room in the hotel, seeing that I have the studio, I shall beat these people down to 3 francs a day, whether they like it or not. Consequently there is nothing urgent. But if it's all the same to you, send me 100 francs next time anyway, as I want to get some drawers made, just as I have had the shirts and shoes, and must send almost all my clothes to be cleaned and mended. Then they will be quite all right again. This is urgent in case I have to go to Marseilles or see people here. The more precautions we take now, the surer we are of being able to hold out in the long run, and of getting the work under control.

I have got ten canvases that I'm looking for a case for, and I'll send them one of these days.

A handshake for you, and Koning too. I got a postcard from Koning saying that he had had a letter telling him to take back the pictures from the Independents' show. Naturally it was the only thing to do, and what could I do about it?

Ever yours, Vincent