

Letter 494a
Arles, 20 - 24 May 1888

My dear comrade Gauguin,

I have thought of you very often, and the reason why I did not write sooner is that I did not want to write empty phrases. The deal with Russell has not come off yet, but for all that Russell has bought some impressionists, e.g. Guillaumin and Bernard, so bide your time – he will come to it of his own accord, but after two refusals I could not possibly insist any longer, as the refusals also contained a promise for the future.

I wanted to let you know that I have just rented a four-room house here in Arles.

And that it would seem to me that if I could find another painter inclined to work in the South, and who, like myself, would be sufficiently absorbed in his work to be able to resign himself to living like a monk who goes to the brothel once a fortnight – who for the rest is tied up in his work, and not very willing to waste his time, it might be a good job. Being all alone, I am suffering a little under this isolation.

So I have often thought of telling you so frankly.

You know that my brother and I greatly appreciate your painting, and that we are most anxious to see you quietly settled down.

Now the fact is that my brother cannot send you money in Brittany and at the same time send me money in Provence. But are you willing to share with me here? If we combine, there may be enough for both of us, I am sure of it, in fact. Once having attacked the South, I don't see any reason to drop it.

I was ill when I came here, but now I am feeling better, and as a matter of fact, I am greatly attracted by the South, where working out-of-doors is possible nearly all the year round.

However, it seems to me that life is more expensive here, but on the other hand the chances of getting more pictures done are better. However this may be, if my brother were to send 250 francs a month for both of us, we might share, should you care to come. Only in this case it would be necessary to have our meals at home as much as possible; we might engage some kind of charwoman for a few hours a day, so as to avoid all the expense of going to an inn.

And you would give my brother one picture a month; you could do what you like with the rest of your work.

Well, the two of us would immediately start exhibiting at Marseilles, thus clearing the way for other impressionists as much as for ourselves. You must not forget that now there would be the cost of moving and of buying a bed, which would also have to be paid for in pictures.

Of course you are free to exchange views with my brother about this business, however I must warn you that in all probability he will decline responsibility for it. He will only assure you that up to the present the only means we have found of coming to your aid in a more practical way is this combining, if it should appeal to you. We have thought it over carefully. It seems to me that what your health requires above all is quiet. If I should be mistaken, and if the heat of the South should be too strong for you – well, then we must try to find another solution. As for myself, I am feeling quite well in this climate. I want to tell you a great many other things – but business must come first. Send us both your answer at your earliest convenience.

[Here the rough draft of the letter to Gauguin ends.]