

Arles, c. 21 August 1888

Dear Sister,

I write you these few words in a hurry, as I don't want to postpone telling you how pleased I am that you are in Paris, and I suppose you are going to see a lot of things in the days to come. It is not quite impossible that next year, when I shall be living with my friend Gauguin, you will happen to go as far as the Mediterranean. I am convinced you too will think it beautiful here.

What is your opinion of that picture of Gauguin's, the one with those Negresses which Theo has? – I could imagine you might understand it. At the moment I am working on a bunch of twelve sunflowers in a yellow earthenware pot [F 456, JH 1561], and I intend to decorate the whole studio with nothing but sunflowers. I hope you will go often to the Luxembourg, and also to go see the modern pictures in the Louvre, so that you will gain an understanding of what a Millet, a Jules Breton, a Daubigny, a Corot is. I make you a present of all the rest – except Delacroix.

Although at present they are working in quite a different manner, the work of Delacroix, and Millet, and Corot will last, and the changes in style will not affect it.

I hope when you go back to Holland you will take along some study of mine to decorate your room.

If I can get the mother and father to allow me to do a picture of it, I am going to paint a baby in a cradle one of these days. The father has refused to have it baptized – he is an ardent revolutionary – and when the family grumbled, possibly on account of the christening feast, he told them that the christening feast would take place nonetheless, and that he would baptize the child himself. Then he sang the "Marseillaise" in a frightful voice, after which he called the child Marcelle, after the daughter of "le brav général Boulanger," to the great indignation of this innocent baby's grandmother and some other members of the family.

I am getting to think the country here more and more beautiful. Have you read Tartarin de Tarascon by Daudet? You should, you know, and Tartarin sur les Alpes, for they are certainly not among the least of Daudet's novels.

I am sure you will observe that in summer the sun is a great deal hotter in Paris than at home.

I think I should not object to going even a bit farther, I mean where the country is less flat, seeing that in point of fact I never saw a mountain in my life. As soon as Gauguin is here, I suppose we shall do it. But until then I am going to stay in Arles. And after he has come I should like to go on a walking tour with him all over Provence.

I am very busy working on my sunflowers, and in reality I have nothing to say.

So I had better stop. Wishing you and Theo truly nice days and fine weather,

Vincent