

My dear Theo,

Many thanks for your letter and the 50-franc note which it contained.

I also received Maurin's drawing, which is magnificent. That man is a great artist. Last night I slept in the house, and though there are some things still to be done, I feel very happy in it. Besides, I feel that I can make something lasting out of it, from which others can profit as well. Now money spent will not be money lost, and I think that you will soon see the difference. At present it reminds me of Bosboom's interiors, with the red tiles, the white walls, the furniture of white deal and walnut and the glimpses of an intense blue sky and greenery through the windows. Its surroundings, the public garden, the night cafés and the grocer's, are not Millet, but instead they are Daumier, absolute Zola.

And that is quite enough to supply one with ideas, isn't it?

Yesterday I had already written to you, saying that if I figure the two beds at 300 francs, the price will not allow of any further reduction. If I have already bought more than that anyway, it is because I put half of last week's money into it. Yesterday again I had to pay 10 francs to the innkeeper and 30 francs for a mattress.

At the moment I have 5 francs left, so I must beg you to send me what you can, or else – but do let it be by return mail – a louis to last me the week, or indeed 50 francs if it's possible.

In one way or another I'd like to be able to count on getting this month, meaning the whole month, another 100 instead of the 50, as I asked you in yesterday's letter.

If I myself save 50 francs during the month, and add the other 50 to that, I should have spent altogether 400 francs on furniture. My dear Theo, here we are on the right road at last. Certainly it does not matter being without hearth or home and living in cafés like a traveler so long as one is young, but it was becoming unbearable to me, and more than that, it did not fit in with thoughtful work. So my plan is all complete, I will try to paint up to the value of what you send me every month, and after that I want to paint to pay for the house. What I paint for the house will be to repay you for previous expenditure.

I am still a bit commercial, in the sense that I long to prove that I pay my debts, and that I know how much I want for the goods which this blasted poor painter's profession keeps me working at.

Altogether I think I can be almost sure of bringing off a set of decorations which will be worth 10,000 francs in time.

Listen to me. If we set up a studio and refuge here for some comrade who is hard up, no one will ever be able to reproach either you or me with living and spending for ourselves alone. Now to establish such a studio requires a floating capital, and I have eaten that up during my unproductive years, but now that I am beginning to produce something, I shall pay it back.

I assure you that I think it is essential for you as well as me, and no more than our right, too, to always have a louis or two in our pockets, and some stock of goods to do business with. But my idea is that in the end we shall have founded and left to posterity a studio where one's successor could live. I do not know if I explain myself clearly enough, but in other words we are working for an art and for a business method that will not only last our lifetime, but can still be carried on by others after us.

For your part you do this in your business, and it is certain that you will make good in the end, even though you have plenty to harry you at the moment. But for my part I foresee that other artists will want to see colour under a stronger sun, and in a more Japanese clarity of light.

Now if I set up a studio and refuge right at the gates of the South, it's not such a crazy scheme. And it means that we can work on serenely. And if other people say that it is too far from Paris, etc., let them, so much the worse for them. Why did the greatest colourist of all, Eugene Delacroix, think it essential to go south and right to Africa? Obviously, because not only in Africa but from Arles onward you are bound to find beautiful contrasts of red and green, of blue and orange, of sulphur and lilac.

And all true colourists must come to this, must admit that there is another kind of colour than that of the North. I am sure if Gauguin came, he would love this country; if he doesn't it's because he has already experienced more brightly coloured countries and he will always be a friend, and one with us in principle.

And someone else will come in his place.

If what one is doing looks out upon the infinite, and if one sees that one's work has its *raison d'être* and continuance in the future, then one works with more serenity.

Now you have a double right to that.

You are kind to painters, and I tell you, the more I think it over, the more I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people. You will say that then it would be a good thing to do without art and artists. That is true in the first instance, but then the Greeks and the French and the old Dutchmen accepted art, and we see how art always comes to life again after inevitable periods of decadence, and I do not think that anyone is the better for abhorring artists and

their art. At present I do not think my pictures worthy of the advantages I have received from you. But once they are worthy, I swear that you will have created them as much as I, and that we are making them together.

But I will not say more about that, because it will be as clear as daylight to you when I begin to do things more seriously. At the moment I am working on another square size 30 canvas, another garden or rather a walk under plane trees, with the green turf, and black clumps of pines [F 470, JH 1582].

You did well to order the paints and the canvas, because the weather is magnificent. We still have the mistral, but there are calm intervals and then it is wonderful.

If there were less mistral, this place would really be as lovely as Japan, and would lend itself as well to art.

As I was writing, a very kind letter arrived from Bernard; he is thinking of coming to Arles this winter, just a whim, but it is possible that Gauguin is sending him as a substitute, and would rather stay in the North himself. We shall soon know, because I am convinced that he will write you one way or the other.

In his letter Bernard speaks of Gauguin with great respect and sympathy, and I am sure that they understand one another.

And I really think that Gauguin has done Bernard good.

Whether Gauguin comes or not, he will remain friends with us, and if he does not come now, he will come another time.

I feel instinctively that Gauguin is a schemer who, seeing himself at the bottom of the social ladder, wants to regain a position by means which will certainly be honest, but at the same time, very politic.

Gauguin little knows that I am able to take all this into account. And perhaps he does not know that it is absolutely necessary for him to gain time, and that with us he will gain that, if he gains nothing else.

If someday he decamps from Pont-Aven with Laval or Maurin without paying his debts, I think in his case he would still be justified, exactly like any other creature at bay. I do not think it would be wise to offer Bernard straight off 150 francs for a picture every month, as you did Gauguin. And Bernard, who has evidently been over and over the whole business with Gauguin – isn't he rather counting on taking Gauguin's place?

I think it will be necessary to be very firm and very explicit about the whole thing.

And without giving any reasons, to speak very plainly.

I cannot blame Gauguin – speculator though he may be as soon as he wants to risk something in business, only I will have nothing to do with it. I would a thousand times rather go on with you, whether you are with the Goupils or not.

And in my opinion, you know, the new dealers are exactly and in every way the same as the old.

In principle, and in theory, I am for an association of artists who guarantee each other's work and living, but in principle and in theory I am equally against attempts to destroy old, established businesses. Let them rot in peace, and die a natural death. It is pure presumption to hope to regenerate trade. Have nothing to do with it; let's guarantee a living among ourselves, live like a family, like brothers and friends, and this even if it should not succeed – I would like to be in this, but I will never have anything to do with an attack on other dealers.

With a handshake, and I hope that what I have been obliged to ask you will not be too terribly inconvenient. But I did not want to postpone sleeping at home. And in case you are short yourself, 20 francs more will get me through the week, but it is urgent.

Ever yours, Vincent

I am keeping all Bernard's letters, they are sometimes really interesting. You shall read them someday, there is quite a bundle already.

When I said that we must be firm with Gauguin, it is only because you had already given your opinion when he told you his plan of action in Paris. You made him a good answer then without committing yourself, but also without wounding his self-respect.

And the same thing may become necessary again.

I think I shall see Milliet today. Thank you in advance for the Japanese things.