

Letter 538a

Arles, c. 17 September 1888

I am inclined to think that the letter Gauguin wrote you throws a clear light on the question. But I should not like to rely on the word of an artist of his merit when he says: You will have to pay my travelling expenses and my debts if you want me to come, for I myself have not got any money. But on the other hand, if this is the case, he ought to be very generous with his pictures. So that's that; however, in any case there would have to be money – but then I don't see much harm in the business. But those pictures, which will be sold one day, may freeze the interest on the purchase money invested for years to come. As a matter of fact, a picture for which you pay 400 francs today, and which you sell for 1000 francs after ten years, will still be sold at the current price, as all that time nothing could be done with the money. Well, you know this better than I.

I should not be surprised if little by little you regained your love for business, or at least if you got reconciled to your present situation, as soon as you feel that the inventors of new things in commerce do not know how to produce a great revolution in it. You are good to the artists, you are in the very center of the trade, you do what you can, you are damned right. Only take care of your health if you can, and don't get into a stew over nothing. Now, if it must come, it will come of its own accord.

I only want to stress the point that it appears to me that if Gauguin deposited his pictures exclusively with you and calmly awaited his hour, working with me here, and if he paid us for our out-of-pocket expenses with his work, he would be pursuing a policy that I would respect more than any other he might adopt.

With regard to Bernard – if Bernard should want to come here, it would not be on the same terms as Gauguin, at least so it seems to me.

If living together should be to his advantage, nothing would prevent your agreeing to buy something from him from time to time, if it is possible. But no arrangement of any sort with him, for he is too fickle.

If Gauguin should not come, he will succeed all the same, but then he will not succeed by means of his combining, but through the intrinsic merits of his canvases, if only he goes on having the time, the money and the liberty necessary to paint them – that's all. I assure you that under the present circumstances I should not be a better businessman than you are, so much is certain, and so much you know too, only I should like to send you better pictures. This I endeavour to do, and this I shall go on endeavouring to do. Very soon the hour will come for me to resume my painting in the garden. It is a tremendous advantage for me not to be short of canvases and paints, and so it is my bounden duty to work on indefatigably. If Gauguin should come, I think we might try to make our colours at home; I dare not do it alone, for I am afraid of getting discouraged if I do not succeed at once. I am very curious to know what price Tanguy will ask for his tubes. Did you read in the number of the *Courrier Français* you sent me an article entitled "La trace bleue"? Very good, it just makes one think of Segatori. No doubt you will read this article with pleasure.