

Letter T 1
Paris, 19 October 1888

My dear Vincent,

It was really a rather serious omission on my part to have talked to you about De Haan and Isaäcson without mentioning what they have done up to now.¹

Above all I wanted to give you an idea of the kind of fellows they are. I have not seen the large picture; but, judging from a photograph taken of a preliminary sketch, I think it cannot be at all bad. The subject is Uriel Acoste² before a Tribunal; it was a judicial crime in Jewish history. The composition is nothing like Rembrandt, as the light is not concentrated in one part of the picture, but for all that spread effectively all over it. Since the costumes belong to that epoch it has been said that it is a bad imitation of Rembrandt. It is certain that he was influenced by the latter, but notwithstanding this there is quite a personal quality in the work of his which I have seen to be found in the way he spreads his light all over his picture or drawing. The things I have seen were mainly charcoal drawings, their other work having been left behind in Holland. I am sending you two photographs of drawings, so that you will be able to judge for yourself; the photographs have turned out rather badly, for the drawings are a bit dim.

They look upon Breitner as one of the most vigorous of the modern Dutchmen; I don't think they place him above J. Maris, but they certainly do place him above Israëls. I believe that if you knew them, you would share my opinion that there is no reason to distrust them. I haven't seen anything of Isaäcson's yet except his sketches, which are very well done and highly original. He is waiting for drawings which are to be sent back from London. Seurat isn't back in town yet, and I don't know what he's doing. He is very vigorous, that fellow, and I quite agree with you that his frames calculated to suit the picture are worth more than all kinds of expensive frames.

A short while ago I read Tartarin of Tarascon, which I think fine, and his Nabob, which I like much less. I am also going to read the other Tartarin. They don't have Madame Chrysanthème in the library, but someone promised to let me have it, so that I may read it. I am quite eager to know it. It is very annoying that you have been having trouble with your eyes. What can be the cause of that?

So Gauguin is going to join you; it will mean a great change in your life. I hope that your project of turning the house into a refuge, where artists will feel at home, will be successful.

I'll stop now, for otherwise, the letter will not go off tonight.

Cordially yours, Theo

1. See Vincent's letter 555.
2. Uriel Acosta, originally Gabriel da Costa (c. 1591-1641), a Dutch Jew of Spanish origin, a philosopher and free-thinker, excommunicated and declared a heretic by a Rabbinical Court at Venice in 1624, and excommunicated by the Portuguese-Jewish Community of Amsterdam in 1623 and again in 1633. He committed suicide.