

My dear comrade Bernard,

We have worked a lot these days, and in the meantime I read *Le rêve* by Zola, and because of this I had hardly any time to write. Gauguin interests me very much as a man – very much.

For a long time now it has seemed to me that in our nasty profession of painting we are most sorely in need of men with the hands and the stomachs of workmen. More natural tastes – more loving and more charitable temperaments – than the decadent dandies of the Parisian boulevards have.

Well, here we are without the slightest doubt in the presence of a virgin creature with savage instincts. With Gauguin blood and sex prevail over ambition.

But enough, you have seen him at close range for a longer time than I have; I only wanted to tell you in a few words what my first impressions are. Moreover, I do not think you will be greatly amazed if I tell you that our discussions tend to treat of the terrible subject of an association of certain painters. This association must or may have, yes or no, a commercial character. We haven't arrived at any conclusion yet, nor have we set foot on a new continent.

As for me, with my presentiment of a new world, I firmly believe in the possibility of an immense renaissance of art. Whoever believes in this new art will have the tropics for a home.

I have the impression that we ourselves serve as no more than intermediaries. And that only the next generation will succeed in living in peace. Apart from all this, our duties and the possibilities of action for us can become clearer to us only by experience and nothing else. I am a bit surprised at the fact that I have not yet received the studies you promised me in exchange for mine.

Now something that will interest you – we have made some excursions to the brothels, and it is probable that in the end we shall often go and work there.

At the moment Gauguin is working on a canvas of the same night cafe I painted too [F 463, JH 1575], but with figures seen in the brothels. It promises to turn out beautiful.

I myself have done two studies of the fall of leaves in an avenue of poplars [F 486, JH 1620; F 487, JH 1621], and a third study of this whole avenue, entirely yellow [F 568, JH 1622].

I must say I cannot understand why I don't do studies after the figure, seeing that it is often so difficult for me to imagine the painting of the future theoretically as otherwise than a new succession of powerful, simple portraitists, comprehensible to the general public. Well, perhaps I shall go do the brothels before long. I leave a page open for Gauguin, who will probably write to you too, and I heartily shake your hand in thought.

Sincerely yours, Vincent

Milliet, the 2nd lieutenant of the Zouaves, has gone to Africa; he would like you to write him a letter one of these days.

[Underneath this letter there is a postscript by Gauguin, in which he says that he agrees with Vincent's idea of a new generation of painters in the tropics. He intends to go there as soon as he gets a chance. The two pictures by Vincent of the falling leaves are hanging in his room, and Bernard would think them fine.]