

My dear Theo,

I must beg you again to send me as soon as possible some ordinary brushes about these sizes.

Half a dozen of each, please.

I hope that you are well and your wife too, and that you are enjoying the fine weather a little. Here at any rate we have splendid sunshine. As for me, my health is good, and as for my brain, that will be, let us hope, a matter of time and patience.

The director mentioned that he had had a letter from you and had written to you; he tells me nothing and I ask him nothing, which is the simplest.

He's a gouty little man – several years a widower, with very dark spectacles. As the institution is rather dead and alive, the man seems to get no great amusement out of his job, and besides he has enough to live on. A new man has arrived, who is so worked up that he smashes everything and shouts day and night, he tears his shirts violently too, and up till now, though he is all day long in a bath, he gets hardly any quieter, he destroys his bed and everything else in his room, upsets his food, etc. It is very sad to see, but they are very patient here and will end by seeing him through. New things grow old so quickly; I think that if I came to Paris in my present state of mind, I would make no difference between a so-called dark picture and a light impressionist picture, between a varnished picture in oils and a mat picture done with solvent.

I mean by this that by dint of reflection, I have come by slow degrees to believe more than ever in the eternal youth of the school of Delacroix, Millet, Rousseau, Dupré and Daubigny, as much as in that of the present, or even in that of the artists to come. I hardly think that impressionism will ever do more than the romantics for instance. Between that and admiring people like Leon Glaize or Perrault there is certainly a margin. This morning I saw the country from my window a long time before sunrise, with nothing but the morning star, which looked very big. Daubigny and Rousseau have depicted just that, expressing all that it has of intimacy, all that vast peace and majesty, but adding as well a feeling so individual, so heartbreaking. I have no aversion to that sort of emotion.

I am always filled with remorse, terribly so, when I think of my work as being so little in harmony with what I should have liked to do. I hope that in the long run this will make me do better things, but we have not got to that yet.

I think that you would do well to wash the canvases which are quite, quite dry with water and a little spirits of wine to take away the oil and the spirit in the impasto. The same for "The Night Café" and "The Green Vineyard" and especially the landscape that was in the walnut frame. "Night" also, but that has been retouched recently and might run with the spirits of wine.

It's almost a whole month since I came here, not once has the least desire to be elsewhere come to me, only the wish to work is getting a scrap stronger.

I do not notice in the others either any very definite desire to be anywhere else, and this may well come from the feeling that we are too thoroughly shattered for life outside.

What I cannot quite understand is their absolute idleness. But that is the great fault of the South and its ruin. But what a lovely country, and what lovely blue and what a sun! And yet I have only seen the garden and what I can look at through my window.

Have you read the new book by Guy de Maupassant, "Strong as the Dead," what is the subject of it? The last thing I read in that category was Zola's "The Dream"; I thought the figure of the woman, the one who did embroidery, very, very beautiful, and the description of the embroidery all in gold, just because it is as it were a question of the colour of the different yellows, whole and broken up. But the figure of the man did not seem very lifelike and the great cathedral also gave me the blues. Only that contrast of lilac and blue-black did, if you like, make the blonde figure stand out. But after all there are things like that in Lamartine.

I hope that you will destroy a lot of the things that are too bad in the batch I have sent you, or at least only show what is most passable. As for the exhibition of the Independents, it's all one to me, just act as if I weren't there. So as not to be indifferent, and not to exhibit anything too mad, perhaps the "Starry Night" and the landscape with yellow verdure, which was in the walnut frame. Since these are two with contrasting colours, it might give somebody else the idea of doing those night effects better than I have.

But you must absolutely set your mind at rest about me now. When I have received the new canvas and the paints, I am going off to see a little of the country.

Since it is just the season when there are plenty of flowers and consequently colour effects, it would perhaps be wise to send me five metres more of canvas.

For the flowers are short-lived and will be replaced by the yellow wheat fields. Those especially I hope to catch better than I did in Arles. The mistral (since there are some mountains) seems much less tiresome than in Arles, where you always got it firsthand.

When you receive the canvases that I have done in the garden, you will see that I am not too melancholy here.

Goodbye for the present, a good handshake in thought for you and Jo.

Ever yours, Vincent