

Dear Mother,

Once again I want to write you a letter while you are still in the old house, to thank you for your last letter and the news of Cor's good voyage. I believe he will work there with zest, and thus have some pleasure in his life. What he writes you makes me think of what my friend Gauguin told me about Panama and Brazil. I did not know until now that Isaäcson is also going to the Transvaal. You know I never met him personally – but lately I have written him because he intended to write about my work in a Dutch paper, and I asked him not to do it; but also to thank him for his faithful sympathy, as from the beginning we have often thought of each other's work and have the same ideas about our old Dutch and modern French painters. And I also like De Haan's work very much.

Now I can tell you that what I promised you is quite ready – the landscape studies and a small self-portrait [F525, JH1665] and a study of an interior. But I fear it will disappoint you and the whole batch may seem unimportant and ugly to you. Wil and you can do what you like with them, and if you feel like giving something to the other sisters – for this reason I am sending a few more.

But this does not concern me – I only try to form several things into a kind of whole which I would prefer remained together, so that it becomes more important in the course of time. But I already understand that you will not have room for everything, and therefore you may do what you like with them, but I advise you to keep them together, at least for some time, as in that case you will be better able to judge which ones you like best in the long run. I certainly agree with you that it is much better for Theo now than before, and I hope everything will go well with Jo's confinement; that will set them up for quite a while. It is always good to experience the way in which a human being comes into the world, and that leads many a character to more quietness and truth. Nature is very beautiful here in autumn with the yellow leaves. I am only sorry that there aren't more vineyards here. I started to paint one a few hours away though. It happens that a big field becomes quite purple and red, as the Virginia creeper with us, and next to that a yellow square, and a little farther on a spot which is still green. All this under a sky of a beautiful blue, and violet rocks in the distance [F495, JH1626]. Last year I had a better opportunity to paint that than now. I should have liked to add something like it to what I am sending you, but I'll owe you this for next year.

You will see from the self-portrait I add that though I saw Paris and other big cities for many years, I keep looking more or less like a peasant of Zundert, Toon, for instance, or Piet Prins, and sometimes I imagine I also feel and think like them, only the peasants are of more use in the world. Only when they have all the other things, they get a feeling, a desire for pictures, books, etc. In my estimation I consider myself certainly below the peasants.

Well, I am ploughing on my canvases as they do on their fields.

It goes badly enough in our profession – in fact that has always been so, but at the moment it is very bad. And yet never have such high prices been paid for pictures as these days.

What makes us work on is friendship for each other, and love of nature, and finally, if one has taken all the pains to master the brush, one cannot leave painting alone. Compared with others, I still belong to the lucky ones, but think what it must be if one has entered the profession and has to leave it before one has done anything, and there are many like that. Given ten years as necessary to learn the profession and somebody who has struggled through six years and paid for them and then has to stop, just think how miserable that is, and how many there are like that!

And those high prices one hears about, paid for work of painters who are dead and who were never paid so much while they were alive, it is a kind of tulip trade, under which the living painters suffer rather than gain any benefit. And it will also disappear like the tulip trade.

But one may reason that, though the tulip trade has long been gone and is forgotten, the flower growers have remained and will remain. And thus I consider painting too, thinking that what abides is like a kind of flower growing. And as far as it concerns me, I reckon myself happy to be in it. But for the rest!

This is to show you one must have no illusions. My letter has to be posted. At the moment I am working on a portrait of one of the patients here [F703, JH1832]. It is curious that after one has been with them for some time and got used to them, one does not think of them as being mad any more.

Embracing you in thought,

Your loving Vincent