

My dear Theo,

Thank you for your letter, and I am very glad to hear that Jo continues well. That is the one great thing now. I think about you very often. As for you, when you write that you are seeing so many pictures that you would like to see none for a while, it proves that you have had too many business worries. And then – yes, there is something else in life than pictures, and this something else one neglects, and then nature seems to revenge herself and fate itself is set on thwarting us. I think that in these circumstances one must keep busy with pictures as much as duty demands, but no more. As for the Vingtistes, here is what I'd like to exhibit:

- 1 and 2. The two companion pictures of Sunflowers. [F 456, JH 1561; F 458, JH 1667]
3. The Ivy, perpendicular. [F 609, JH 1693]
4. Orchard in Bloom (the one Tanguy is exhibiting just now), with a row of poplars across the canvas. [F 516, JH 1685]
5. The Red Vineyard. [F 495, JH 1626]
6. Wheat Field at Sunrise, on which I am working at the moment. [F 737, JH 1862]

Gauguin has written me a very nice letter and talks with enthusiasm about De Haan and their rough life at the seaside.

Bernard also has written me, complaining of lots of things, while resigning himself like the good boy he is, but not at all happy with all his talent, all his work, all his sobriety; it seems that his home is often hell for him. Isaäcson's letter gave me much pleasure; enclosed my reply, which you must read – my thoughts begin to link up a little more calmly, but as you will see from it, I do not know if I must continue to paint or let painting alone.

If I continue, I certainly agree with you that it is perhaps better to attack things with simplicity than to seek after abstractions.

And I am not an admirer of Gauguin's "Christ in the Garden of Olives," for example, which he sent me a sketch of. And then as for Bernard's picture, he promises me a photograph of it. I don't know, but I fear that his biblical compositions will make me want something different. Lately I have seen the women picking and gathering the olives, but as I had no chance of getting a model, I have done nothing with it. However, now is not the moment to ask me to admire our friend Gauguin's composition, and our friend Bernard has probably never seen an olive tree. Now he is avoiding getting the least idea of the possible, or of the reality of things, and that is not the way to synthesize – no, I have never taken any stock in their biblical interpretations.

I said that Rembrandt, and Delacroix, had done this admirably, that I liked it even better than the primitives, but stop! I do not want to resume this subject. If I stay here, I shall not try to paint "Christ in the Garden of Olives," but the picking of the olives as you still see it, giving nevertheless the exact proportions of the human figure in it, perhaps that would make people think. I have no right to meddle with it before doing some more serious studies of it than I have done up to now.

And the Pre-Raphaelites too went a long way in this category of ideas. When Millais<sup>1</sup> painted his "Light of the World," it was a more serious matter. Really there is no comparison. Without counting Holman Hunt and others – Pinwell and Rossetti.

And then here there is Puvis de Chavannes.

Now I must tell you that I have been to Arles and that I have seen M. Salles, who handed over to me the rest of the money you had sent him and the remainder of what I had handed over to him, that is 72 francs. Nevertheless, now only about 20 francs remain in hand for M. Peyron, since I laid in a stock of paints there and paid for the room where the furniture is, etc. I stayed there for two days, not yet knowing what to do in the future; it is a good thing to show yourself there from time to time, so that the same story doesn't start among people again. At present no one has any antipathy to me, as far as I can see: on the contrary, they were very friendly, and even welcomed me. And if I stayed in the country, I should have a chance to acclimatize myself little by little, which is hardly easy for strangers and would have its use when painting here. But we will wait a little first to see if this journey will provoke another attack. I almost dare to hope it won't.

It is often cold here too; however, we are a little more sheltered from the mistral by the mountains. And meanwhile I keep working. I have several things to send you with the canvas for the Vingtistes – I am waiting for that to dry.

If I had known in time that there were trains from here to Paris for only 25 francs, I should certainly have come. It was only when I went to Arles that I saw that, and it is because of the expense that I have not done it – now I think that all the same in spring it would be a good thing to go in any case and get another look at the people and things in the North. For this life here is terribly stupefying, and in the end I shall lose my energy. I had hardly dared to hope that I should again be as well as I am.

However, everything depends on whether this suits you or not, and I think it is wise not to hurry. Perhaps by waiting a little, we shall not even need the doctor at Auvers or the Pissarros.

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If my health remains stable, then, if while I work I again start trying to sell, to exhibit, to make exchanges, perhaps I shall succeed a little in being less of a burden to you on the one hand and on the other might recover a little more zest. For I will not conceal from you that my stay here is very wearisome because of its monotony, and because the company of all these unfortunates, who do absolutely nothing all day long, is enervating.

But what's to be done? – we must not make any pretensions in my case, I still make too many as it is.

Gauguin says that they get models easily. That is what I lack most here.

Bernard talks of an exchange; you are quite at liberty to arrange that with him if he wishes it and speaks to you about it. I should like you to have one good thing of his besides the portrait of his grandmother. It appears that he wants “La Berceuse.”

I think that the six pictures for the Vingtistes will be something of a whole, the “Wheat Field” will do very well as a pendant to the “Orchard.” I am writing a line to M. Maus to give him the titles, as he asked for them in his letter. In the meantime kindest regards to Jo and a good handshake. You must read the letter to Isaäcson, it complements this one.

Good-by for now.

Ever yours, Vincent

1. This is an error on Vincent's part. He means Holman Hunt.