

My dear sister,

I want to add to my letter to Mother ² a few words to you.

Theo and his family came to see me last Sunday; I think it very pleasant that I am now living less far away from them. I am working a good deal and quickly these days; by doing this I seek to find an expression for the desperately swift passing away of things in modern life.

Yesterday in the rain I painted a large landscape, showing fields as far as one can see, looked at from a height, different kinds of green growth, a potato field of a somber green colour, between the regular beds the rich violet earth—on one side a field of peas in white bloom, then a field of clover with pink flowers and the little figure of a mower, a field of long and ripe grass somewhat reddish in tone, then various kinds of wheat, poplars, on the horizon a last line of blue hills, along the foot of which a train is passing, leaving behind it an immense trail of white smoke over all the green vegetation. A white road lies across the canvas. On this road a little carriage, and white houses with harshly red roofs by the side of this road. [F 760, JH 2019].

A fine drizzle streaks the whole with blue and grey lines.

There is another landscape with vines and meadows in the foreground, and behind them the roofs of the village [F 762, JH 2020].

And another one with nothing but a green field of wheat, stretching away to a white country house, surrounded by a white wall with a single tree. [F 804, JH 2018].

I painted a portrait of Dr. Gachet with an expression of melancholy [F 753, JH 2007], which would seem to look like a grimace to many who saw the canvas. And yet it is necessary to paint it like this, for otherwise one could not get an idea of the extent to which, in comparison with the calmness of the old portraits, there is expression in our modern heads, and passion – like a waiting for things as well as a growth. Sad and yet gentle, but clear and intelligent – this is how one ought to paint many portraits.

At times this might make a certain impression on people. There are modern heads which people will go on looking at for a long time to come, and which probably they will mourn over after a hundred years. Knowing what I know now, if I were ten years younger, with what ambition I should work at this! Under the present circumstances I cannot do very much for I do not hold intercourse with, nor should I know how to hold intercourse with, the people I want to influence.

I sincerely hope to be able to paint your portrait someday.

I am very anxious to have another letter from you, I hope to see you soon, I embrace you in thought.

Yours, Vincent

1. Written in French.
2. See letter 641a to Vincent's mother.