

The Hague, Saturday 25 February 1882

Dear Theo,

I received your last letter with the 100 fr. enclosed in good order, and thank you very warmly for sending it. I should have acknowledged it at once, but I was very busy with a few drawings, for which I had a model. For you should bear in mind that if you are busy, it is the same with me, and will be increasingly so because my work is becoming more and more absorbing to me, and it is only with effort that I tear myself away from it to write a letter or call on someone when necessary.

I was very glad that you wrote that you would soon come to Holland. After you have seen what I have been doing lately, we shall perhaps get a clearer understanding of the future. When you come, I hope we shall spend some quiet time in the studio, and I also hope you will let me know beforehand so that I can arrange things with my model, and not have her during the days of your visit.

You write about Father's birthday. I must tell you that I am so glad to be free of it all, it gives me such a feeling of tranquillity, something I need so much for my work. My head cannot hold more than it does, and I dread beginning a new correspondence so much that for the present I am leaving things as they are. When I think of Etten it gives me the shudders, as if I were in church. Well, qu'y faire, and once more qu'y faire? By the way, you must not take it amiss, Theo, or think I'm finding fault with you, but you wrote me something which you thought would perhaps please me, but it didn't please me at all. You said that small watercolour was the best of mine that you had seen – well, it isn't, because those studies of mine which you have are much better, and last summer's pen drawings are better too. That little drawing is of no importance whatever, I only sent it to show you that it is not impossible that I may work in watercolour sometime. But there is much more serious study and more character in those other things, though they may look rather yellow-soapy. And if I had anything against Mr. Tersteeg (but I have nothing against him), it would be the same thing, which is that he encourages me not in the difficult study from the model, but rather in a style of work which really is only half fit to render what I want to express, according to my own character and my own temperament.

Of course I should be very happy to sell a drawing, but I am happier still when a real artist like Weissenbruch says about an unsaleable??? study or drawing, "That is true to nature, I could work from it myself." although money is of great value to me, especially now, the principal thing is for me to make something serious.

Well, the same thing that Weissenbruch said about a landscape, a peat bog, Mauve said about the figure, i.e., an old peasant who sits brooding by the hearth [F863, JH 034], as if he saw things from the past rising in the glow of the fire or in the smoke.

It may take a longer or a shorter time, but the surest way is to penetrate deep into nature. "Il reste à être vrai," Gavarni says. One may be in pecuniary difficulties for some time; but one gets over that, and then the drawings that were refused at first are sold.

I have written C. M. to tell him that I have taken a studio here, and he wrote back that he will be coming to The Hague soon, and will visit me then. The other day I received greetings from my old friend Wisselingh in London; he promised to come too, and he was glad that I was working.

Well, I hope you will succeed in getting a vacation, for I long very much to see you. I think when you have seen these last weeks' studies, you will quite approve of my having models regularly. Of course I can draw the models better when I have come to know them well. And I have had rather good luck in finding them. Today while I am writing you I have a child who has to rest for half an hour, and I'm using the half hour for this letter.

Once more thanks for what you sent me and a handshake in thought. Adieu.

Yours sincerely, Vincent

P.S. I have made two more studies of the child today. It is getting dark now. Good night.