

Letter 244
The Hague, 14 November 1882

Dear Theo,

Just a word to ask you whether you have received my last letter as well as a little roll, also sent by mail, containing a proof of a lithograph.

The reason why I can't help suspecting that it didn't reach you but got lost, or that the letter got lost, is that I haven't heard from you since then; and besides, today is already November 14. For the last five or six days I have been literally without money, and consequently I cannot go on with my work, at least not as I should wish.

I think the reason is that you want to send me, along with your letter and the money, the information I asked you for about the lithographic process and the autographic ink, and that you had to wait for it. And I hope that perhaps today it will be explained this way.

But on the other hand, I'm always nervous when something like this happens and I feel anxious, and then I am afraid of having written or done something which you do not approve of. So last night I worried about it: perhaps you didn't approve of my having had my lithograph printed; perhaps you would conclude from my letter that I intended to publish my work, or something like that. Well, I was anxious, thinking something had happened. But probably nothing is wrong. For safety's sake, however, I will tell you that you must not confuse publications with experiments made to learn a process.

The former, namely publications, are things which I would certainly not undertake without consulting you, and for the present, I do not think of it; and besides, as you know, I only busy myself with the drawings and the artistic side of the work, that's all. These experiments I make are certainly part of this, however, and it is quite natural that I work on them.

Some time ago Rappard, for instance, made similar experiments with etchings, which also had to be printed; but the printing an artist does is not publishing – it has nothing to do with business, being quite a private affair. This seems to me as clear as daylight, but, as I told you, last night (as I had not received a letter from you) I was worrying about it, lest you take it for quite a different kind of action.

Well, I hope it will soon become apparent that I had no need to worry. I hope, on the contrary, that you succeeded in getting information about the same matter, namely that you can tell me something about the processes.

On what was left of the printing paper, I made another trial last week with the little figure "Sorrow." Just now when I said that I was afraid you would suspect from my last letter something that was not my intention, I was remembering that I said something like: "This is what I should like: to have some of these sheets printed at our own expense, which would give us more prestige with the editors of the magazines." Now, my idea is by no means that either you or I should handle the business part if we undertook the printing at our own expense. I did not and should not think of that for a moment. I just think that when one applies for a job, it is well to have some work to show. It saves words and is more practical.

I don't think it improbable that some time I shall make things which will come into the public's hands, but it leaves me rather cold, and I don't consider it a pleasure at all.

Two reasons would force me to it. In the first place, if I became employed by a magazine, then of course I should have to do what is required. In the second place – something which may come later, but which I have certainly thought about already – if sooner or later I should have something which forms a whole and has a purpose and expresses something, I would certainly publish it; but never without consulting you or letting you know, and only if I could not find anyone else to do it for me.

Such a thing would probably cost me money rather than bring money in; it would be for art's sake, not primarily for profit. If I ever did it, I should let you know everything, and in no respect, neither as to the work nor as to the publication, would it be dishonest – otherwise, of course, I would never do it.

So, if there were anything that you might consider as my undertaking a step toward publication (I don't suppose there is, but in my nervousness, as I could find no other reason, I thought of that sentence in my letter), rest assured that this means nothing more than experiments which anyone who etches or lithographs, or reproduces his drawings in some way or another, must make in order to learn the process and the effect of black and white. If some sheet or other succeeds and the maker prints a certain number of copies, it would be – at least for me, and for most artists who do such a thing – something of an absolutely artistic nature, without any relation to commercial publication. If I didn't know from experience that misunderstandings may arise about matters such as showing drawings (and showing printed copies is similar), and it is often considered presumptuous, it would never have entered my head. Now as to the non-

arrival of your letter, I must tell you that, when I think of all your faithfulness, I am sure it probably has nothing to do with this matter, and there must be some other reason for it.

When I used the above-quoted sentence in my last letter, what I meant was that someday you will see my intentions more clearly in my drawings. In print (because of the lithographic crayon) they are all, especially "Sorrow," much stronger than in the drawing. And just because the originals are kept grey and sober, I have only to follow my study to get vigour into my lithograph. And this is something which I should have to point out to the people with whom I might get in touch if I could get some work for a magazine. Well, if you have not written, do so at once when you receive this. For I am rather hard up. Adieu, with a handshake,

Yours sincerely, Vincent