

Letter 472
Arles, 30 March 1888

My dear Theo,

Thank you for your letter and for the 50-Fr. note enclosed. I should have liked to write you at leisure, but must do it in great haste. First, Tersteeg as usual. I'm very glad that your consignments will go off on Monday, and perhaps after all that a canvas of mine will go along with it. All the same that one isn't very important, for I hope that you will like the one I have just done, and the result of this will be that another canvas of mine will be going off to Holland.

I have been working on a size 20 canvas in the open air in an orchard, lilac ploughland, a reed fence, two pink peach trees against a sky of glorious blue and white [F 394, JH 1379]. Probably the best landscape I have done. I had just brought it home when I received from our sister a Dutch notice in memory of Mauve, with his portrait (the portrait, very good), the text, poor and nothing in it a pretty water colour. Something – I don't know what – took hold of me and brought a lump to my throat, and I wrote on my picture

Souvenir de Mauve
Vincent Theo

and if you agree we two will send it, such as it is, to Mrs. Mauve. I chose the best study I've painted here purposely; I don't know what they'll say about it at home, but that does not matter to us; it seemed to me that everything in memory of Mauve must be at once tender and very gay, and not a study in any graver key.

“O never think the dead are dead,
So long as there are men alive,
The dead will live, the dead will live.”

That's how I feel it. Nothing sadder than that.

I now have four or five studies of orchards besides this one, and I am going to begin a size 30 canvas on the same subject.

This zinc white that I am using now does not dry at all. If everything were dry, I could send off a batch at once. But every day is a good day now – not meaning the weather, on the contrary there are three windy days to one that's quiet – but those orchards in bloom that there are to paint!

I find painting hard work because of the wind, but I fasten my easel to pegs driven into the ground and work in spite of it, it is too lovely.

Now keep in close touch with Tersteeg, success or no; I'm inclined to think that it will come within a year.

I think that Tersteeg and not Reid ought to start the Impressionist Exhibition in England now. I do not like Reid's behaviour toward us at all. It seems strange to me that you and Guillaumin have not already arranged between yourselves to cancel the sale of the picture in question.

You can certainly tell Guillaumin from me that this is my opinion, and both in Guillaumin's interest and in that of the whole trade, the price was ridiculous anyway.

Either Reid, after what has happened, must buy at decent prices, or else the artists should shut the door in his face. I used to think so in the past, and on consideration I think so still. One jeopardizes future sales for the sake of 500 francs in cash, and that's a great pity.

Is there any chance of your buying the picture in question for us? Tersteeg should be told the whole story of Reid, and should know that he has a rival for the English business and that we would rather he did it. For that matter, it isn't my business, but that of the firm of Boussod Valadon, to which you and Tersteeg belong. In great haste,

Ever yours,

Vincent

Kind regards to Koning, till tomorrow, I hope, if I have time to write.