

Letter 479
Arles, c, 24 April 1888

My dear Theo,

I must begin by telling you that the letter you did not get was wrongly addressed by me, and so came back. In a moment of absent-mindedness, just like me, I addressed it to Rue de Laval instead of Rue Lepic. That being so, I will repeat what was in the letter as though it just happened, the visit of McKnight, Russell's friend, who also came again last Sunday. I am to go to see him, and his work, of which I have so far seen nothing.

He is a Yankee, and probably paints much better than most Yankees do, but a Yankee all the same. Have I said enough? When I have seen his pictures or drawings, I'll tell you what I think of his work. Meantime, so much for the man.

The chief object of this letter is to find out if you have started and how. And afterward – oh! This afterward – perhaps you will hardly know yourself.

Well, it seems that these Boussod Valadon people still don't give two straws for the judgement of the artists themselves.

I can't deny that I felt it was bad news, and that I've been thinking about it – in spite of myself, I assure you – ever since.

You see, I daren't go on in a line of things which are going to cost you more than they will bring in at present.

For all these discussions with the B. V. people are rather an indication that impressionism hasn't taken on enough. As far as I'm concerned, I stopped painting at once, and went on with a series of pen drawings, of which you have had the first two but this time they are in a smaller size.

For I said to myself that a quarrel with these people would mean that you must have fewer expenses on my account. Not being so keen as all that on my pictures, I could leave them alone without repining overmuch. Happily for me, I am not the sort of fellow who cares for nothing in the world but pictures.

On the contrary, since I believe it's possible to produce a work of art at less cost than one must spend on a painting, I've begun the series of pen-and-ink drawings.

Meanwhile I have some vexations, and I don't think I can get rid of them as long as I stay where I am. I would rather take a room or if needs be two rooms, one for sleeping, one for work.

For the people here are trying to take advantage of me so as to make me pay high for everything, on the pretext that I take up a little more room with my pictures than their other clients, who are not painters. On my side I shall make the most of the fact that I stay longer, and spend more in the inn than the workmen who come and go. And they won't find it easy to get so much as a cent out of me.

But it's a perpetual nuisance to have to drag all one's apparatus and one's pictures after one, and it makes it harder both to go out and to come in.

As I must make a move in any case, would you like it, or rather would it suit you better, if I went to Marseilles now? I could do a series of marines there, like the series of orchards in bloom here. Also, I have bought three strong linen shirts and two pairs of stout shoes with the idea of moving.

At Marseilles I'd make it more especially my business to get hold of a window to show the impressionist if you on your side could promise that you would provide me with impressionist pictures for it; supposing you were asked to show any – that will be easy enough.

Sometimes I am seriously afraid that both you and I are going to be swindled by this B. V. & Co. crew, with all the annoyance they're giving us. But I'm for fighting it out.

Don't let the swindle you. That's enough for today; let me know your address if you go anywhere. When will you be in Holland? The same address for me, but I should like to move, for I'm not comfortable. I'll send you pen drawings in a little while; I've done four already.

With a handshake,
Vincent

I shall be very hard up by the end of the month, but I'll manage; it's just that I should like to be able to clear out at once, that's worrying me.