

Letter 493
Arles, 24 or 25 May 1888

My dear Theo,

I have been thinking about Gauguin,¹ and look here. If Gauguin wants to come here, there is Gauguin's journey, and there are two beds or two mattresses, which in that case we absolutely must buy. But afterward, as Gauguin is a sailor, we shall probably manage to eat at home.

And the two of us will live on the same money that I now spend by myself.

You know that I have always thought it idiotic the way painters live alone, etc. You always lose by being isolated.

This is in reply to your wish to get him out of his trouble. You can't send him what will keep him going in Brittany and me what keeps me going in Provence.

But you may think it a good idea for us to share, and fix a sum – say 250 a month, if every month, besides and in addition to my work, you get a Gauguin.

Provided that we did not exceed this sum, wouldn't it even mean a profit?

Besides, it has always been my idea to join hands with other people.

So here is a rough draft of a letter to Gauguin, which I will write, if you approve, with whatever changes that will doubtless have to be made in the phrasing. But this is how I wrote it first.

Take the thing as a plain matter of business, that is the best way for everyone, and let's treat it squarely as such. Only, seeing that you are not in business for yourself, you may perhaps see fit to let me take it upon myself, and to let Gauguin join in with me as a comrade.

I judged that you wanted to help him, just as I myself am distressed at his being ill, and it's a thing that doesn't get better overnight. We cannot suggest something better than this, and others would not do so much.

As for me, it worries me to spend so much money on myself alone, but the only way to remedy it is for me to find a woman with money, or some fellows who will join me to paint pictures.

I don't see the woman, but I do see the fellows.

If this will suit him, we must not keep him dangling.

And this would be the beginning of an association. Bernard, who is also coming South, will join us, and truly, I can see you at the head of an Impressionist Society in France yet. And if I can be of any use in getting them together, I would willingly look upon them all as better artists than I. You must realize how it vexes me to spend more than they do; I must find some arrangement more advantageous both for you and to them. And it would be so in this case. Think it over carefully, but isn't it true that in good company you can live on little, provided you spend your money at home?

Perhaps the time will come when we shall be less hard up, but I do not count on it. It would please me so if you had the Gauguins first. I am not such a bad hand at cooking, etc., but they have had more practice, as they have done their military service, etc.

With a handshake for you and regards to Koning; all the same it is a satisfaction to you to hand him over in good condition, which is more than he might have been if you hadn't taken him in. It is satisfactory, too, that the Goupils have decided to take that hall you suggested.

Ever yours, Vincent

Has Tersteeg come to Paris yet?

You must think things over very, very, very carefully before you start travelling. I think it is very likely that your place is in France.

To prepare the way, and to round off this letter, I wrote to Gauguin, but without saying a word of all this, only talking about work.

1. In a letter dated May 22, 1888, Gauguin had asked Theo's help. He had been living on credit at the inn at Pont-Aven for two months already, and he did not see how he could extricate himself from his difficulties. This explains Vincent's plan to let him come to Arles.