

Letter 497
Arles, 12 or 13 June 1888

My dear Theo,

I am dropping you another line as your letter hasn't come yet. But I suppose you thought I would probably be in S^{tes}-Maries.

Since the rent of the house and the painting of the doors and windows and the purchases of canvases all came at the same time, I've run out, and you would be doing me a very great kindness if you could send me the money a few days earlier.

I am working on a landscape with wheat fields which, I think, is as good as, say, the white orchard. It is in the same style as the two landscapes of the Butte Montmartre which were at the Indépendants, but I think it is more robust and rather more stylish [F 412, JH 1440].

And I have another subject, a farm and some haystacks, which will probably be the pendant [F 425, JH 1442].

I am very curious to know what Gauguin plans to do. I hope he'll be able to come. You will tell me that it's pointless to think about the future, but the painting is progressing slowly and where that's concerned you do have to plan ahead. If I sold no more than a few canvases, that would be neither Gauguin's salvation nor mine. To be able to work one has to order one's life as best one can, and to secure one's existence one needs a fairly solid basis. If he and I stay here for a long time, our pictures will become more and more individual, precisely because we shall have made a more thorough study of subjects in this region.

Now that I have made a start in the South, I can hardly conceive of going anywhere else. Better not to do any more moving – just to keep going out into the countryside.

I'm sure I should have a greater chance of success if I tackled subjects – and even business matters – on a somewhat bigger scale, instead of confining myself to one that is too small.

And for that very reason I'm thinking of working on larger canvases and launching out boldly to the 30 square. These cost me 4 francs apiece here, and taking carriage into account that isn't expensive.

The latest canvas absolutely kills all the others; it is only the still life with the coffeepots and cups and plates in blue and yellow that could stand the comparison with it. It must be because of the drawing.

I can't help recalling what I've seen of Cézanne's work, because – as in the harvest which we saw at Portier's – he has bought out the harsh side of Provence so much.

It has become very different from what it was in spring, and yet I certainly have no less love for this countryside, which is already beginning to look scorched. One might say that everything has old gold, bronze and copper in it, and this, together with the green azure of the white-hot sky, imparts a delicious, exceptionally harmonious colour, with broken tones à la Delacroix.

If Gauguin were willing to join us it would be, I think, a step forward for us. It would establish us squarely as the openers-up of the South, and nobody could argue with that.

I must try to achieve the solidity of colour that I got in that picture that kills the rest. I remember what Portier used to say, that his Cézannes, seen by themselves, looked like nothing on earth, but that when placed next to other canvases they wiped the colour out of all the rest. And also that the Cézannes looked good in gold, which implies a brilliant palette.

Perhaps, perhaps, I am therefore on the right track and I am getting an eye for the countryside here. We'll have to wait and see.

This latest picture stands up well to the red surroundings of the bricks with which my studio is paved. When I put it on the floor, on this brick-red, deep red, ground, the colour of the picture does not look washed-out or blanched.

The countryside near Aix – where Cézanne works – is just the same as here, it is still the Crau. When I get back home with my canvas and I say to myself, *Hullo, I've got old Cézanne's very tones*, all I mean is that since Cézanne, just like Zola, is so at home in these parts and hence knows them so intimately, one must be making the same mental calculation to arrive at the same tones. It goes without saying that seen side by side they would go together, but not look alike. With a handshake, I hope that you will be able to write one of these days.

Ever yours, Vincent