

Letter 508
Arles, 5 July 1888

My dear Theo,

Work engrosses me so much that I cannot manage to write letters. I should have liked to write Gauguin again, because I'm afraid that he is worse than he said; his last letter in pencil looked very much as though he were.

If it's true, what's to be done? I have had no reply from Russell yet. Yesterday at sunset I was on a stony heath where some very small and twisted oaks grow; in the background, a ruin on the hill, and wheat in the valley. It was romantic, you can't escape it, like Monticelli; the sun was pouring bright yellow rays on the bushes and the ground, a perfect shower of gold. And all the lines were lovely, the whole thing nobly beautiful. You would not have been a bit surprised to see knights and ladies suddenly appear, coming back from hunting or hawking, or to have heard the voice of some old Provençal troubadour. The fields looked violet, the distances blue. I brought back a study, but it is very far below what I tried to do. [F466, JH 1489] Tasset did not send enough zinc white the other day. I get on very well using it, but it has the disadvantage of drying very slowly, so that the studies made at Stes.-Maries, for instance, are not yet dry. I was planning to go into the Camargue, but the veterinary surgeon who was to have taken me with him on his rounds has left me in the lurch. I don't much care, as I have only a moderate affection for wild bulls.

To my amazement I can already see the bottom of my purse, though it is true that I have had to pay my month's rent.

You must realize that when I take the money for food and lodging out of it, all the rest goes into canvases. Altogether these are pretty expensive, not counting the trouble they give.

I dare hope that someday we'll get back part of the money we spend, and if I had more money, I should spend even more to try to get a very rich colouring.

Here is a new subject. A corner of a garden with clipped shrubs and a weeping tree, and in the background some clumps of oleanders. And the lawn just cut with long trails of hay drying in the sun, and a little corner of blue sky at the top. [F 428, JH 1499]

I am in the middle of reading Balzac, César Birotteau. I will send it to you when I have finished it – I think I shall read the whole of Balzac again.

When I came here I hoped it would be possible to make some connection with art lovers here, but up to the present I haven't made the least progress in people's affection. And Marseilles? I don't know, but that may very well be nothing but an illusion. In any case I have quite given up gambling much on it. Often whole days pass without my speaking to anyone, except to ask for dinner or coffee. And it has been like that from the beginning.

But up to now the loneliness has not worried me much because I have found the brighter sun and its effect on nature so absorbing.

Write me a day or two early if you can, the end of the week will be rather tough.

With a handshake.

Ever yours, Vincent