

Letter 561  
Arles, c.12 November 1888

My dear Theo,

I have received a letter from M. C. Dujardin on the subject of the exhibition of my pictures in his black hole. I am so disgusted at the idea of handing over a canvas in payment for the proposed exhibition that really there is only one possible answer to the gentleman's letter. The one you will find enclosed. Only I am sending it to you and not to him so that you may know what I think, and that you may simply tell him that I have changed my mind, and at the moment have no desire to exhibit. Getting angry with the scoundrel doesn't do the slightest bit of good, it is better to be conventionally polite. So no exhibition at the Revue Indépendante; I boldly venture to think that Gauguin is also of this opinion. In any case he is making no attempt to persuade me to do it.

We have hardly exhibited, have we? There have been a few canvases, first at Tanguy's, afterward at Thomas's, and then at Martin's.

Now as for myself, I tell you flatly that I can see no use even in that, and it really seems to me much better if you simply keep the studies you like in your apartment, and send the others back here rolled up, since the apartment is small, and if you kept everything, they would crowd it up.

Then, without hurrying ourselves, I am going on down here, getting the staff ready for a more serious exhibition.

But as for the Revue Indépendante, please tell them curtly it's no go. It's too good an opportunity, and you will feel that they are greatly mistaken if they think I am going to pay for being put on view in such a dark, suspect little hole as that.

Now as to showing a few canvases at Tanguy's and Thomas's, it's a matter of such indifference to me that it isn't worth talking about, but above all remember that I simply don't care. I already know what I shall do the moment I have enough canvases. Right now I am only concerned with making them.

What will please you is that Gauguin has finished his canvas of the "Women Grape Gatherers." It is as beautiful as the Negresses, and if you paid say the same price as for the Negresses (400, I think) it would be well worth it. But of course you have the lot to choose from, and I have not seen the Breton things. He has described several to me, and they must be fine.

I have done a rough sketch of the brothel [F 478, JH 1599], and I quite intend to do a brothel picture.

Gauguin came here on October 20, so we must figure that he had 50 francs from you last month.

Yes, I think there must be a clear understanding about the exhibition of my work. You are with the Goupils, you have no right to do business outside the firm. I myself, being away, do not exhibit. I repeat, it is another matter at Tanguy's provided Tanguy fully understands that he has no right to my canvases whatever.

Then my position is at least clear, which is not altogether immaterial to me.

With a little more work behind me, I shall have enough not to have to exhibit at all, that is what I am aiming at.

I too have finished a canvas of a vineyard all purple and yellow, with small blue and violet figures and a yellow sun [F 495, JH 1626].

I think that you will be able to put this canvas besides some of Monticelli's landscapes.

I am going to set myself to work from memory often, and the canvases from memory are always less awkward, and have a more artistic look than studies from nature, especially when one works in mistral weather.

I think I haven't yet told you that Milliet has gone to Africa. He got a study of mine for troubling to take the canvases to Paris, and Gauguin gave him a small drawing in exchange for an illustrated edition of Madame Chrysanthème. I have not yet received the exchanges from Pont-Aven, but Gauguin assures me that the canvases were finished.

We are having wind and rain here, and I am very glad not to be alone. I work from memory on bad days, and that would not do if I were alone.

Gauguin has also almost finished his night café. He is very interesting as a friend, I must tell you that he knows how to cook perfectly; I think I shall learn from him, it is very convenient. We find it very easy to make frames with plain strips of wood nailed on the stretcher and painted, and I have begun doing this.

Do you know that Gauguin is really partly the inventor of the white frame? But the frame of four strips nailed on the stretcher costs 5 sous, and we are certainly going to perfect it. It does very well, because the frame has no projection, and is one with the picture.

Good-by for now, a handshake for you, and my compliments to the Dutchmen.

Ever yours, Vincent

Gauguin sends his greetings, and asks you to keep, out of the price of the first picture you sell, the amount necessary for the stretchers with screws that he wants, and also what Bernard will be asking you for a commission he gave him.