

Letter 586
Arles, 24 April 1889

My dear Theo,

I have seen M. Salles again, and he said that he has written to you. I think that this will be for the best, and I see no other way. The power of thought is coming back to me gradually, but I am much less able to manage practical things than hitherto.

I am absent-minded and could not direct my own life just now.

But let's leave that alone as much as possible. How are things going, are you back?

I must tell you that I think you may find M. Salles' letter still addressed to Rue Lepic.

How are things at home? I think Mother must have been pleased.

I assure you that I am much calmer now that I can tell myself that you have a companion for good. Above all, do not imagine that I am unhappy.

I feel deeply that this has been at work within me for a very long time already, and that other people, seeing symptoms of mental derangement, have naturally had apprehensions better founded than my unfounded certainty that I was thinking normally, which was not the case. So that has much softened many of the judgements which I have too often passed with more or less presumption on people who nevertheless were wishing me well. Anyhow, it is certainly a pity that with me these reflections reach the stage of feeling rather late.

But I want you to think all that over and to consider the step we are taking now, just as I spoke of it to M. Salles, this going into an asylum, as purely a formality, and in any case the repeated attacks seem to me to have been serious enough to leave no room for hesitation.

Besides, as to my future, it is not as if I were twenty, since I have turned thirty-six.

Really, I think it would be torture for other people as well as for myself if I were to leave the hospital, for I feel and am, as it were, paralyzed when it comes to acting and shifting for myself. Later on – well, let's wait and see.

I should like to ask you loads of things about Holland and about these days. Poor egoist that I have always been and still am, I can't get the idea out of my head, although I have already explained it to you two or three times, that it is really for the best if I go into an asylum immediately. Things may come out right perhaps in the long run. Anyway, my very poor excuse is that painting narrows your ideas about other things, perhaps you cannot be doing your work and think of other things at the same time. It's hard enough, come to think of it, for the job is pretty thankless and its usefulness is certainly questionable. There remains, however, the idea of an association of painters, of lodging them in common, some of them; though we did not succeed, though it is a deplorable and melancholy failure, the idea is still true and reasonable, like so many others. But we won't begin again.

Understand clearly that we must get absolutely the simplest board and lodging, 80 francs ought to be enough and can be, M. Salles says. Rey warns me about St. Rémy that it is as well to remember that a good many of the patients are fairly well off and some of them spend a lot of money. Which often does them more harm than good. I can well believe it.

And I think that in my case nature by herself will do much more for me than any remedies. Here I take nothing. I may still have to pay 11.87 fr. in installment for the furniture – at least they sent me a bill for it – besides the rest of the rent which I still owe the landlord. And I must send you my collection of pictures before going to St. Rémy. I have one case already packed.

I would like to write you about something else, but my mind is taken up with arranging this business, and I can't find the ideas I am seeking, so as to write you about several things at once.

Goodbye for now. I hope you and your wife have had a good journey.

Ever yours, Vincent