

Letter 230
The Hague, 11 September 1882

Dear Theo,

I have just received your letter and the enclosed 50 fr., for which my warm thanks. A few small watercolours are again enclosed.

As you will remember, when you were here, you spoke about my someday trying to send you a little drawing of a "saleable" nature. However, you must excuse my not knowing exactly when a drawing is, and when it is not, that kind. I used to think I knew, but now I perceive daily that I am mistaken.

Well, I hope this little bench [F 952, JH 194], though perhaps not yet saleable, will show you that I am not averse to choosing subjects sometimes which are pleasant or attractive and, as such, will find buyers sooner than things of a more gloomy sentiment.

I enclose with the little bench another one as a pendant [JH 195], also a part of the wood. I struck off the little bench after the larger watercolour I am working on, in which there are deeper tones, but I do not know whether I shall succeed in finishing it well [JH 196]. The other sketch is after a painted study.

Now I should like to hear from you if this little drawing is more or less the kind we spoke about. I send it to you because I should not want you to think I had forgotten, but later I hope to send you some better things. You remember I wrote you in my last letter that I was going to the potato market.

I brought home many sketches that time, it was extraordinarily intriguing – but it may serve as an example of The Hague public's politeness towards painters that suddenly a fellow from behind me, or probably from a window, spat his quid of tobacco onto my paper. Well, one has trouble enough sometimes. But one need not take it so very seriously; those people are not bad, they do not understand anything about it, and probably think I am a lunatic when they see me making a drawing with large hooks and crooks which don't mean anything to them.

Recently I have also been very busy drawing horses in the street [F 952, JH 193]. I would love to have a horse for a model sometime. Yesterday, for instance, I heard someone behind me say, That's a queer sort of painter – he draws the horse's ass instead of drawing it from the front. I rather liked that comment.

I love to make those sketches in the street, and as I wrote you in my last letter, I certainly want to reach a sort of perfection in it.

Do you know an American magazine called Harper's Monthly? There are wonderful sketches in it. I myself know it only slightly. I have seen only six numbers, and possess but three of them. But there are things in it which strike me dumb with admiration, including "Glassworks" and "Foundry," all scenes from factories. And also sketches of a Quaker town in the olden days by Howard Pyle. I am full of new pleasure in those things, because I have new hope of making things that have soul in them myself.

What you write about the money you lent and did not get back is indeed a calamity. I still have to pay for some colours, and have to buy more, so that by September 20 I shall certainly be short. But I am going to vary the work a little, and try to make both ends meet. But please remember that a little extra money will help me make extra progress – more than would otherwise be the case.

One needs so many things and everything is so expensive. But, at all events, I am doubly thankful to you, and feel I am so much luckier than the others because of the money I receive from you; and I assure you that I try very hard to make progress.

Today I shall again go to the usual Monday market, to try and make some sketches when they are pulling down the stalls.

Adieu, good luck in everything, write me soon and know that I always love to read a description like the one of Montmartre.

I am messing around so much with paint that there is even paint on this letter. I am busy with the large watercolour of the bench.

I wish it would turn out well, but the great trouble is to keep the correct form together with depth of tone; and it is very difficult to keep clear.

Once more adieu, a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

Thank you very much for sending me the money when you yourself are so very hard up. I doubly need it because autumn will be over so soon, and it is the most beautiful season for painting.