

Letter 368
Nuenen, c. 15 May 1884

Dear Theo,

I have waited too long to answer your last letter, and I will tell you why. Let me begin by thanking you for your letter and the 200 francs enclosed. And then I want to tell you that today I just finished arranging a spacious new studio I have rented.

Two rooms – a big one and a smaller one adjoining.

That kept me pretty busy these last two weeks. I think I shall be able to work much better there than in the little room at home. And I hope you will approve of the step I have taken when you see it.

For the rest, I have been very busy painting the large study of the weaver I told you of [F 30, JH 479], and I have also started to paint the little church steeple, you know [F 40, JH 507].

What you write about the Salon is very important. As to what you say about Puvis de Chavannes, I am very glad to see his work thus, and I perfectly agree with your appreciation of his talent. As to the colourists, after all I think the same as you do about them. I can become quite absorbed in a Puvis de Chavannes, but for all that I should feel exactly the same as you do in front of a landscape with cows by Mauve, and paintings by Maris and Israëls.

As to my own palette, you will not find the silvery tones in my work done here, but rather brown ones (bitumen for instance and bistre), which I do not doubt some people will disapprove of.

But you will see for yourself when you come here.

I have been so busy painting that lately I haven't made a single drawing. Van Rappard writes me that he will come by the end of this week; I am very glad.

Moreover I think he will come back this year for a longer time.

He is bringing a number of my drawings with him, which I will then send on to you at once.

After some time, perhaps I shall agree with you that last year's change has improved my position, and that it has been a change for the better.

But I shall always regret that at the time I had to give up a thing which I should have liked to carry through.

I think that Mother is getting on very well; yesterday she came in her Bath chair to see my new studio.

Recently I have been getting on better with people here than I did at first, which is of great importance to me, for one decidedly needs some distraction, and if one feels too lonely, the work always suffers from it; however, perhaps one must be prepared for it not to last.

But I feel quite optimistic about it, it seems to me that in general the people in Nuenen are better than those in Etten or Helvoirt; there is more sincerity here, at least that is my impression after having been here for some time.

It is true the people here look at things from a clergyman's point of view, but in such a way that I, for my part, don't feel any scruple in putting up with it.

And the Brabant of one's dreams, reality almost comes very near it sometimes.

I admit that my original intention of settling in Brabant, which came to naught, again has a strong attraction for me. But knowing how such a plan can fail, we must wait and see whether it would prove an illusion or not; well, for the present I have enough to do. I again have space enough to be able to work with a model, but there's absolutely no saying how long it will last.

Well, goodbye, the Salon will certainly give you a lot of work, but for all that, it will be an interesting time too.

Once more, thanks for what you sent, which indeed I really needed because of this change. I hope you will approve of it when you see how I have arranged things. Goodbye, with a handshake,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

Love from all at home, they ask you to write to them.