

Letter 417
Nuenen, mid July 1885

Dear Theo,

The last time I wrote you I was in such a hurry. Right now I need all my time, because I am working a full two hours from here. What I want is to have some more beautiful hovels far away on the heath. I have four now, as large as the two I last sent you, and a few smaller ones. They are not yet dry, and I think I shall give them the finishing touches in the studio. But then I want to send them to you together with some figure studies, to show the latter to Serret. But now I want to tell you that for the present, as there are about six rather large paintings, I intend to make only small ones. Especially because according to what Raffaelli and Mantz and others' articles say, at the last Salon and in general there were a great many enormous canvases. Though I have not read this in one of the articles, this Salon might perhaps be called "Le Salon des marchands de couleur."

I should like to send you this lot before you come here, because otherwise so much time will be lost. And then I shall take up quite different subjects again.

I think that you will see from the things I brought from the heath that it is very characteristic there. The interiors are splendid, and now I have made some friends there among the people, with whom I am always welcome.

How did it go with the money this month? I hope a little better than you expected, for it worried me when you wrote that you were hard up yourself. I had to pay so much in the beginning of this month and have only just 5 guilders left. And it is still a long time before the end of the month.

And next month I shall again have much to pay. I cannot and may not do otherwise than spend relatively much on models.

It is the same here as everywhere, people do not like to pose, and if it weren't for the money, nobody would.

But as they are for the most part very poor, and especially many weavers are out of work, I can somehow manage to get them. But painting what I want, and especially improving the figures, is a question of money.

Did you read in Sensier's book that when Millet had the good fortune to inherit some thousand francs, instead of using it to make himself a little more comfortable – indeed, he was poor enough – he immediately set out on a trip to his native village, in order to paint the peasants there again, and it swallowed up his whole legacy, and Millet was right.

Others did the same – for instance, Paul Dubois, who spent his whole patrimony on models, and was for a time quite melancholy because of money worries.

But I haven't any legacy to expect – and I cannot do as I should like.

But pardon me when I say that, if Serret and you – and very rightly too – want to see other qualities in my figures, I shall have to spend more on my models. I do not know how people manage to fill the Salon with yards and yards of canvas. Well, among those cottages there are a few that I have painted in a much brighter tone; but I repeat, however much I may like grey pictures, more and more I appreciate the people who also paint the more gloomy effects beside the silver-grey colour scale.

What I shall do now – if the month turns out a little better than you expected, and if you can send something extra, however little – is to send you the four pictures. Otherwise – I shan't have the money to send them. But in that case I will send them as soon as I have the money for next month, and, at all events, before that time, the figure studies to show Serret.

But I hope you will bring those figure studies back when you come. For I am going to add others which I need for painting.

I shall want them for figures that are definitely not larger than, for instance, a span and even less – so that everything in it will become even more concentrated.

Goodbye, with a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent