

Letter 467  
Arles, c. 9 March 1888

My dear Theo,

This morning, at long last, the weather changed and turned milder – and likewise I have already had an opportunity to learn what a mistral is: I have been for several walks in the country hereabouts but it is quite impossible to do anything in this wind. The sky is a hard blue with a great bright sun which has melted almost all the snow, but the wind is cold and so dry that it gives you gooseflesh.

But all the same I have seen lots of beautiful things – a ruined abbey on a hill covered with holly, pines, and grey olives.

We'll have a try at that soon, I hope.

I have just finished a study like the one Lucien Pissarro has of mine, but this time it is oranges [F 378, JH 1340 or F 395, JH 1363]. That makes eight studies so far. But this doesn't really count, because I haven't yet been able to work in any comfort or warmth.

The letter from Gauguin which I meant to send you, and which I thought for the moment had got burned with other papers, I have since found, and am enclosing it. But I have already written direct to him, and sent him Russell's address, also Gauguin's to Russell, so that if they like, they can deal with each other direct.

But how difficult for many of us – and assuredly we ourselves are among the number – the future is! I firmly believe in the ultimate victory, but will the artists themselves gain any advantage from it, and will they see less troubled days?

I have bought some coarse canvas here, and had it prepared for mat effects. I can get everything now almost at the same prices as in Paris. Saturday evening I had a visit from two amateur artists, a grocer who sells painting materials as well, and a magistrate who seems a nice fellow, and intelligent.

Worse luck, I can hardly manage to live any cheaper than in Paris, I must figure it at 5 Fr. a day.

I have not yet found any sort of small place where I could have private board and lodging, but all the same something of the kind must exist.

If the weather is milder in Paris too, it will do you good. What a winter! I dare not roll up my studies yet because they are hardly dry and there are some bits of impasto which will take some time to dry.

I have just finished reading Tartarin on the Alps, which amused me hugely.

Has that confounded Tersteeg written you yet? All to the good if he has. If he doesn't answer, he will hear of us all the same, and we shall see to it that he can find no fault with our actions. For instance, we will send a picture to Mrs. Mauve in memory of Mauve, with a letter from both of us, in which, supposing Tersteeg does not reply, we shall not say a word against him, but we will manage to convey that we do not deserve to be treated as if we were dead. But indeed, it is not likely that Tersteeg will have any prejudice against us on the whole.

Poor Gauguin has no luck. I am very much afraid that in his case convalescence will last even longer than the fortnight which he has had to spend in bed.

My God! Shall we ever see a generation of artists with healthy bodies! Sometimes I am perfectly furious with myself, for it isn't good enough to be either more or less ill than the rest; the ideal would be a constitution tough enough to live till eighty, and besides that, blood in one's veins that would be right good blood.

It would be some comfort, however, if one could think that a generation of more fortunate artists was to come.

I wanted to write you at once that I am in hopes winter is really over, and I hope that it is the same in Paris.

With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent