

Letter 498a  
Arles, 29 May 1888

[Letter to A. H. Koning, reprinted from the evening issue of the Amsterdam newspaper *De Telegraaf* of Tuesday, November 28, 1933. See also letter 571a.]

My dear friend Koning,

Having heard from Theo that you are going back to Holland, I want to write you a few farewell words. I take it you have managed to see the impressionists at Durand Ruel's. You'll have quite a lot to tell those fellows in Holland about what you've seen in Paris.

I was much pleased to hear from Theo that you are in good health. We can hardly do without it in our kind of work. Tomorrow I am going to Saintes-Maries on the seacoast to have a look at the blue sea and the blue sky. And to try to get an idea of the figures. For I suppose that all at once I shall make a furious onslaught on the figure, which I seem to be giving a wide berth at the moment, as if I were not interested in it, although it is really what I aim at.

In the meantime I am getting rather sunburned. People here are sunburned yellow or orange, and now and then red-ochre.

It rather surprises me that I have not yet heard whether the exchange of our pictures will come off – I hope it will.

I have just finished a drawing, even larger than the first two, of a cluster of straight pines on a rock, seen from the top of a hill. Behind this foreground a perspective of meadows, a road with poplars, and in the far distance the town. The trees very dark against the sunlit meadow; perhaps you will get an opportunity to see this drawing. [F 1452, JH 1437]

I did it with very thick reeds on thin Whatman paper, and in the background I worked with a quill for the finer strokes.

I can recommend this method to you, for the quill strokes are more in character than those of the reed.

I am very pleased to hear that you have been able to see my first consignment; I hope there will be some marines in the next one, and after that ... the figure.

This is what I am aiming at, only it seemed to me that walking and working in the open air would be better for my health, and I did not want to start on the figure before feeling stronger.

Well, old fellow, I know I shall often think of our meetings in Paris, and I do not doubt we shall hear from you as soon as you are back in Holland. It is an excellent thing that you are returning in good health and good spirits.

If you come back next year, do come and have a look here too. I wish you could see the colour here.

I am very anxious to see the region I am going to visit tomorrow and to see the sea. At present there are bullfights almost every Sunday. Last Sunday a bull jumped the hoarding and made a rush at the spectators' seats, but the arenas here are built so high that no harm can be done. On the other hand, once in a neighboring village a bull jumped out of the enclosure, broke through the ring of spectators, injuring several of them, and after that rushed through the village.

At the end of the village, which is built on a rock, there is an enormously high, steep cliff; in his fury the bull rushed on, and – got smashed down below.

A cordial handshake in thought.

Yours sincerely, Vincent