

Letter 505
Arles, 8 July 1888

My dear Theo,

Thank you for your letter and the 50-franc note enclosed. As for the Tanguy business, don't get mixed up in it. Only I beg you not to risk entrusting him with the new pictures, but withdraw them in answer to his presenting an account and asking for an advance.

Believe me, you have the Tanguy woman to deal with, and if not, and if he himself is behaving like this, then he is playing me false. Tanguy still has a study of mine which he himself expected to sell. At the most I owe him that, but I do not owe him a penny in money. To begin to argue about it would mean an argument with the old woman, which no mortal could stand. According to them (the Tanguys), Guillaumin, Monet and Gauguin must all owe them money – is that true or not? Anyway, if they do not pay, why should I pay? I am sorry I thought of getting paints from him again to please him. He can be sure that in the future I shall get no more. In dealing with the old woman, who is poisonous, it's deeds you want, not words. Do, I beg you, get back my new pictures. That is enough. Tanguy's zinc white at 40 centimes is just a little more expensive than Tasset's big tubes at 1.50 fr., which hold four times as much. Leave Tanguy the study he has of Asnières, a bank of the Seine – strictly speaking, it belongs to him, but kick him out afterward, and without mercy.

If you give them something on account, it would be acknowledging a debt that I make bold to deny. Never, so do not let yourself be caught. The only money I really owe is to Bing, in that I still have 90 francs' worth of Japanese stuff on commission. But when you think of how many people I have sent straight to Bing's, it is more profitable to him to let that go, and even if I were still on the spot to occupy myself with it, I'd rather increase the stock so as to be able to do more business with it.

And the real reason why I do not ask Bing for commission is that in case of any claim, I could bring it up. This is to let you know that any other claims are probably invalid. I am concentrating on making my pictures have some market value. You know that I have only one means of arriving at this end – and that is, by painting them. But I tell myself that if I can manage to do 50 studies at 200 francs this year, in a way I shall not have been very dishonest in having eaten and drunk as though I had a right to it.

Now this is pretty steep, because though I have at the moment about thirty painted studies, I do not value them all at that price. All the same, some of them must be worth it. But the cost of executing them leaves me very, very poor for all that; I should not harp on it if people like friend (?) Tanguy did not come along to ask for a settlement of a debt that is infinitely doubtful. Whatever money you might have to spare for that purpose, my Lord, I am in greater need of it here.

I stint myself in many things, not that I think that a hardship, but I think that the money which I shall need in the future depends rather on the vigour of my efforts now.

They made trouble at the post office, saying that the drawings which I was sending you were too big to be forwarded that way. I have two new big ones. When there are six of them I will send them in a roll by rail. I argue that if the studies have difficulty drying here in the heat, it would be a good deal harder for them to dry at your place, and so I delay sending them off.

I have scraped off a big painted study, an olive garden, with a figure of Christ in blue and orange, and an angel in yellow. Red earth, hills green and blue, olive trees with violet and carmine trunks, and green-grey and blue foliage. A citron-yellow sky. I scraped it off because I tell myself that I must not do figures of that importance without models.

Certainly it would be better to my way of thinking if Gauguin came here, with the winter coming on. Still no answer from Russell. Bock is staying with McKnight, and it seems that he is working very hard, but I have seen nothing yet. He is a young man whose appearance I like very much, a face like a razor blade, green eyes, and a touch of distinction. McKnight looks very common beside him.

After what you told me about him, I am going to see him this afternoon.

I read that Bing is giving a Japanese exhibition and publishing a review on Japanese art. Have you seen it? I find it dreadful sometimes not to be able to get hold of another batch of Japanese prints. Then better try to make some oneself. Have you read Loti's book *Madame Chrysanthème*? Very interesting.

I have exactly the same thing to tell you today as last Thursday, the end of the week will be very rough going. If you can send your next letter a day or two earlier, so much the better.

Have you been able to find that book of A. Cassagne's, the *A B C D of Drawing*? I really do need it.

Mourier certainly ought to buy one for himself. I'll write Russell again, though I think it would be better to wait for his reply. But anyway, I'll write this evening, and that is the real reason why I am going to see his

friends McKnight and Bock, so as to be able to talk about them and have an excuse for writing him before he replies.

If the four other drawings that I have in mind are like the first two I have done, then you will have an epitome of a very beautiful corner of Provence. It was very nice of Guillaumin to come to look, I am very much obliged to him, but on the whole I myself am dissatisfied with everything I do.

Why move about much? When I see the orchards again, shan't I be in a better condition, and won't it be something new, a renewed attack on a new season, on the same subject. And the same for the whole year, for harvesttime, and the vineyards, for everything.

I would like to send you the 30 studies now, in case this might make it easier to find the money for Gauguin's coming.

Well done, Schoeffenecker! And old Thomas really ought to buy 100 francs' worth from me or from Gauguin, and then we'd almost have it. What is Bing's exhibition like?

If you see their manager there, tell him that I am here, and that I ask them to leave my deposit alone, and that if I were there, I should exert myself more for him. The Lautrecs have just come, I think they are beautiful. Good-by for the present. I'll write again soon, but don't get into a panic over the Tanguy woman, for there's no justice in it, and it annoys me to find old Tanguy behaving like this. You may be sure that if I owed him the money, I'd say so, but it was on different terms, that is to say that I never pay in cash, but that he has a lien on the pictures, and even that only by agreement.

Ever yours, Vincent

You can count on it that Bernard will have the same problem with the Tanguys, only worse.