

Letter 549
Arles, 10 October 1888

My dear Theo,

A letter from Gauguin, paying me heaps of undeserved compliments, and adding that he will not be coming till the end of the month.

And that he has been ill, and dreads the journey. What can I do about it...but after all, when you come to think of it, is it such a devastating journey when the worst lung cases undertake it?

When he comes, he will be welcome. If he does not come, well, it's his own lookout; but isn't it or oughtn't it to be clear that he is coming here for the very purpose of getting better?

And he asserts that he has to stay where he is to recover! The absurdity of it, really.

Thanks for your postal order for 20 francs. I put 35 francs for the dressing table and chest of drawers on my list of necessary purchases. Well now, I have just bought one at 14 francs, and paid for it, of course.

Send me an order for those 14 francs, I beg you.

I felt less hesitant about getting this piece of furniture because I want to be ready in case Gauguin should come sooner.

I enclose a copy of my answer to his rather too complimentary letter. Since he is not coming at once, I want all the more to try to have everything in good order, and in readiness for him when he does come. I have done a new size 30 canvas, and I expect to begin a new one this evening, when the gas is lit.

The one I have just done is another garden.

These days I always have the feeling that I am spending money, but every day too it astonishes me to find how I get it back from the house. Truly, it does you good to come home, and it gives you new ideas for work. Gauguin writes very nicely, but all the same he does not say why he is not coming at once. He says – “because he is ill,” but wasn't he coming here to recover? I thought that was precisely what we had in mind.

Anyway – let them do just as they please.

Ever yours, Vincent

[Reply to Gauguin's letter]

My dear Gauguin,

Thanks for your letter – far too flattering to me. So you are not coming till the end of the month.

Very good – since you really think that you will get better more quickly in Brittany than here.

I don't insist on it, only if your recovery is not very speedy in Brittany, remember that *we* claim to be able to cure you more quickly here than there. Come, everything is always for the best in this best of worlds, in which we have – according to good old Pangloss anyhow – the ineffable happiness of living. In this case I have no doubt at all that everything will be for the best. But is it absolutely true that the journey to Arles is as exhausting as you say? Nonsense, since the worst lung cases make it. You well know that the P. L. M.¹ exists for that.

Or are you more seriously ill than you say? I am afraid so, and if you can, either reassure me on this point, or else write definitely that you are ill and in a bad way. But you write about business, and talk about lithographs. This is what I think:

For you, me, Bernard and Laval to make lithographs at night is all right – I am sure of that, but I am not sure about their periodical publication so long as I am not better off. I have more than enough worry with the painting. There is always something to spend money on in lithography even if you do not buy the stone. That would not cost so very much – I do not say that – but then for publishing, however modestly, the four of us would be in for at least 50 francs each. And more besides...

Contradict me if you like, I don't insist on it, but still I say what I say. I have already had some experience with one attempt, but the “besides” that I add means that it would not last, and above all would never interest the public. And it will go on costing us money.

Even if it did cost us money, I am actually all for making the lithographs in question. But as for publication, on the other hand, even free of cost – never.

If it is at our expense and for our own pleasure and use, then I tell you again, I am for it. If you are thinking of something else, I am not for it; do not tell me that one costs as little as the other if it's a question of publishing.

Yours sincerely, Vincent

And do come as soon as you possibly can!

P.S. to Gauguin. If you are not ill, do please come at once. If you are too ill, a wire and a letter, please.

P.S. to Theo. Perhaps you will think the P.S. to Gauguin too curt, but let him say whether or not he is ill, and anyhow he will recover better here. Have you received my canvases???

1. The Paris-Lyons-Marseilles express.