

Letter 553  
Arles, 14 October 1888

My dear Theo,

A letter from Gauguin telling me that he has sent you some pictures and studies. I'd be very glad if you could find time to write me some details of what they are. With his letter was one from Bernard, saying that they had received the canvases I sent, and that they are going to keep all seven. Bernard will send me another study in exchange, and the three others, Moret, Laval, and a young man will also send me portraits, I hope. Gauguin has my portrait and Bernard says he would like to have one like it, though he already has one of me, which I exchanged with him some time ago for the portrait of his grandmother.

And I am pleased to hear that they did not dislike what I have done in figure painting.

I have been and still am nearly half-dead from the past week's work. I cannot do any more yet, and besides, there is a very violent mistral that raises clouds of dust which whiten the trees on the plain from top to bottom. So I am forced to be quiet. I have just slept sixteen hours at a stretch, and it has restored me considerably.

And tomorrow I shall have recovered from this queer turn.

But I have done a good week's work, truly, with five canvases. If that somewhat takes it out of one, well, it's natural. If I had worked more quietly, you can easily see that the mistral would have caught me again. If it is fine here you must take advantage of it, otherwise you would never do anything.

Say, what is Seurat doing? If you see him, tell him from me that I am working on a scheme of decoration which has now got to 15 square size 30 canvases, and which will take at least 15 others to make a whole, and that in this work on a larger scale, it is often the memory of his personality and of the visit we made to his studio to see his beautiful great canvases that encourages me in this task.

I wish we had the self-portrait of Seurat. I told Gauguin that if I urged him to make an exchange of portraits it was because I thought that Bernard and he were sure to have made several studies of each other already. And since that was not so and he had done the portrait expressly for me, I did not want it as an exchange, as I thought it was too important for that. He wrote to say that he was determined I should have it in exchange, his letter is again very complimentary; as I don't deserve it, we will say no more.

I am sending you an article on Provence which seems well written to me. These Félibres are a literary and artistic society, Clovis Hugues, Mistral and others, who write fairly good, sometimes very good, sonnets in Provençal and sometimes in French.

If the Félibres stop being unaware of my existence someday, they will all come to the little house. I would rather this did not happen before I have finished my decorations. But since I love Provence as unreservedly as they do, I perhaps have a right to their attention. If I ever insist on that right, it will be so that my work may remain here or in Marseilles, where as you know I should so much like to work. Because I believe that the artists of Marseilles would do well to continue what Monticelli began.

If Gauguin and I were to write an article in one of the papers here, that would be enough to get in touch with them.

A handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent