

Letter 559
Arles, c. 6th. November 1888

My dear Theo,

Gauguin and I thank you very much for the 100 Fr. you sent and also for your letter.

Gauguin is very pleased that you like what he sent from Brittany, and that other people who have seen them like them too.

Just now he has in hand some women in a vineyard, altogether from memory, but if he does not spoil it or leave it unfinished it will be very fine and very unusual. Also a picture of the same night cafe that I painted too.

I have done two canvases of falling leaves, which Gauguin liked, I think, and I'm working now on a vineyard all purple and yellow [F 495, JH 1626].

Then I have an Arlésienne at last, a figure (size 30 Canvas) slashed on in an hour, background pale lemon, the face grey, the clothes black, deep black, with unmixed Prussian blue. She is leaning on a green table and seated in an armchair of orange wood [F 489, JH 1625].

Gauguin has bought a chest of drawers for the house, and various household utensils, also 20 metres of very strong canvas, and a lot of things that we needed, and that at any rate it was more convenient to have.

Only we have kept an account of all he has paid out, which comes almost to 100 francs, so that either at the New Year or say in March we can pay him back, and then the chest of drawers etc. will naturally be ours.

I think this is right on the whole, since he intends to put money by when he sells, till the time (say in a year) when he has enough to risk a second voyage to Martinique.

We are working hard, and our life together goes very well. I am very glad to know that you are not alone in the flat.

These drawings by de Haan are very fine. I like them very much. Yet to do that with colour, to manage so much expression without the help of chiaroscuro in black and white, damn it all, it is not easy.

And he will even arrive at a new type of drawing if he carries out his plan of passing through impressionism at a school, considering his new attempts in colour merely as studies. But in my opinion he is right over and over again to do all this.

Only there are several so-called impressionists who have not his knowledge of the figure, and it is just this knowledge of the figure which will later on come again to the surface, and which he will be all the better for. I am very anxious some day to get to know de Haan and Isaäcson. If they ever came here Gauguin would certainly say to them – go to Java for impressionist work. For Gauguin though he works hard here is still homesick for hot countries. And then it is unquestionable that if you went to Java, for instance, with the one idea of working on colour, you would see heaps of new things. Then in those brighter countries, with a stronger sun, direct shadow, as well as the cast shadow of objects and figures, becomes quite different, and is so full of colour that one is tempted simply to suppress it. That happens even here. Yet I will say no more on the importance of painting in the tropics, I am already sure de Haan and Isaäcson will feel the importance of it.

In any case, to come here some time or other would do them no harm, they would certainly find some interesting things.

Gauguin and I are going to have our dinner at home today, and we feel as sure and certain that it will turn out well as that it will seem to us better or cheaper.

So as not to delay this letter I will finish up for today. I hope to write again soon. Your arrangement about money is quite right.

I think you will like the fall of the leaves that I have done.

It is some poplar trunks in lilac cut by the frame where the leaves begin.

These tree-trunks are lined like pillars along an avenue where to right and left there are rows of old Roman tombs of a blue lilac. And then the soil is covered, as with a carpet, by a thick layer of yellow and orange fallen leaves. And they are still falling like flakes of snow. And in the avenue little black figures of lovers. The upper part of the picture is a bright green meadow, and no sky or almost none [F 486, JH 1620].

The second canvas is the same avenue but with an old fellow and a woman as fat and round as a ball [F 487, JH 1621]. But if only you had been with us on Sunday, when we saw a red vineyard, all red like red wine. In the distance it turned to yellow, and then a green sky with the sun, the earth after the rain violet, sparkling yellow here and there where it caught the reflection of the setting sun.

A handshake in thought from both of us, good bye for the present. I will write again as soon as I can, and to our Dutchmen too. [The two artists staying with Theo.]

Ever yours, Vincent