

Letter 163
The Hague, c. 18 December 1881

Dear Theo,

Perhaps you have been expecting a word from me to hear what I am doing these days. And I for my part have been looking for a word from you.

I still go to Mauve's every day – in the daytime to paint, in the evening to draw.

I have now painted five studies and two watercolours and, of course, a few more sketches.

I cannot tell you how kind and friendly Mauve and Jet are to me these days. And Mauve has shown and told me things which of course I cannot do at once, but which I shall gradually put into practice. But I must work very hard, and when I return to Etten I shall have to make a few changes; among other things, I must try to rent a large room somewhere so that I can have sufficient distance – otherwise it is impossible to draw the figure, except for studying certain segments.

I am consulting Mauve about this question and I will soon write you about it again.

The painted studies are still life [F 001, JH 081, F 001a, JH 082], the watercolours are made after the model, a Scheveningen girl [F869, JH 083; F 870, JH 084; F 871, JH 085].

Perhaps Mauve will write you himself some time soon.

But, Theo, now it is almost a month since I came here, and you must understand I have had a great many expenses. It is true that Mauve has given me several things, paint, etc., but I had to buy a great deal myself, and I have also paid the model for a few days. And I needed a pair of shoes, and in short, I haven't watched every penny I've spent. So I have overdrawn the 200-franc limit, as all told this trip has cost me 90 guilders. And now I think that Father is rather hard up himself for the moment, and I do not know what to do. Personally, I should like to stay here longer, even renting a room here, for instance at Scheveningen for a few months (and perhaps even longer); but the way things are, perhaps it is better for me to go back to Etten. I think Scheveningen and its types and figures so splendid. But the models are very expensive – 1.50 or 2 guilders a day, some even more. But here one comes in contact with painters, etc.

When I wrote Father this week for money, he thought it so very excessive that I had spent 90 guilders. But you will understand, I think, that this is not unreasonable, for everything is so expensive. But I hate to have to account to Father for every cent I spend, the more so because it is told to everybody, not without enlargements and exaggerations.

So I must say, Theo, that just now I am rather hard up here. And I am writing to tell you so. I have no money to stay, I have no money to go back. I shall wait here for a few days at all events. And I will do as you wish.

Do you think it better for me to stay here a little longer? I should be very glad to, and I would not go back until I had made some progress.

If you want me to go back at once, I will, but I must find a good room somewhere, somewhat larger than the little studio at home; then I can get along alone for some time, and go back to The Hague after a while. At all events, Theo, through Mauve I have got some insight into the mysteries of the palette and of watercolouring. And that will repay me for the 90 guilders the trip has cost. Mauve says that the sun is rising for me, but is still behind the clouds. Well, I have nothing to say against that.

Sometime I will tell you more about how kind and considerate Mauve has been to me.

So I shall wait a few more days for your answer. But if it does not come within three or four days, I shall ask Father for money to go back at once.

I have several things to tell, which will possibly interest you, about the manner of drawing after the model at Etten; but as I said before, I will write you about it again soon. Enclosed I send you little sketches after the two watercolours. I confidently hope that I shall be able to make something saleable in a relatively short time. Yes, I even think that these two would be saleable in case of need. Especially the one which Mauve has brushed a little. But I would rather keep them myself for a time in order to remember better some things about the way in which they were done.

What a splendid thing watercolour is to express atmosphere and distance, so that the figure is surrounded by air and can breathe in it, as it were. Now would you like me to make another set of watercolours for you here? I ask no better, but lodgings here, and the models and the paint and paper, etc., etc. – everything costs money, and I have nothing left. So at all events send me word by return mail, and if you wish me to stay, send me some money if possible.

I think I shall make better progress now that I have learned something practical about colour and the use of the brush.

And you can imagine that I hope Mauve will never have cause to regret his kindness. We will try to push ahead with some force. Well, adieu. At all events I count on your writing by return mail (address A. Mauve, Uilenboomen 198). Believe me, with a handshake in thought,
Yours sincerely, Vincent

These are the subjects of two painted studies: a terra cotta of a child's head with a fur cap; and a white cabbage with potatoes, etc., around it [F 001, JH 081].