

Dear Theo,

At the moment I write you, I have almost spent my last guilder. Well, I hope to hear from you soon, but considering what you wrote me lately, I think it very possible that perhaps you will not be able to send the usual amount on the twentieth. In that case I beg you to send as much or as little as you can spare, even if it is only a small part of it. I have a model coming Friday afternoon, a man from the workhouse, and I wouldn't like to send him away without his money.

I had some extra expenses because my paint box got broken when I had to jump from a high bank and collect my belongings as quickly as possible in order to get out of the way of a horse which had bolted outside the Rhine railway station, where they load coal.

It is very beautiful there. I had to ask permission to paint there, as it is not public ground, and I hope to work there often now.

On that occasion I painted the heaps of coal where the men were at work and where a horse and wagon stood.

Then I made another study of a little almshouse with a bleaching green and sunflowers.

It is beautiful outside now – the leaves have all kinds of bronze colours – green, yellow, reddish – everything warm and rich.

How I wish you could see all my studies together. The studio already has a different aspect since your visit. I have had many expenses, that is true, but the walls are now full of painted studies.

That little almshouse and those heaps of coal were so splendid that I couldn't keep my hands off them, though I had intended to draw this week because of the expenses. I should love to have the kind of things in my studio – it is what I am working for – which remind me of the country every morning when I see them. So that I know immediately what to do that day – and at once feel like doing some particular thing or going to some particular spot.

As to sending you a painted study someday, I haven't the slightest objection; but before I do, we must agree on a few things.

Somebody like Mauve – or any other artist – certainly has his particular colour scheme, but nobody can get this all at once, and it doesn't show in studies made in the open air, even with painters who are much more experienced than I. Especially Mauve's studies, which I personally like very much, just because of their soberness and because they are done so faithfully. Still, they lack a certain charm which the resultant pictures possess in such a high degree.

With me, for instance, it is such that the marine I recently brought home is already quite different in colour from the first or second I did. So you should not yet judge my palette from what I might send you now. And if I myself would rather wait until it has become riper before I send you anything, it is because I believe that my colour will change a great deal, and the composition, too.

So this is the first reason; and the second is that studies done in the open air are different from pictures which are destined to come before the public.

In my opinion, the latter result from the studies, yet they may, in fact must, differ a great deal from them. For in the picture the painter gives a personal idea; and in a study his aim is simply to analyze a bit of nature – either to get his idea or conception more correct, or to find a new idea. So studies belong more to the studio than among the public, and must not be considered from the same point of view as the pictures. Well, I think you will look at it the same way, and take these things into consideration of your own accord.

But write me sometime what you want me to do, and know that I will do what you think best – I'll either send them or I won't.

But what I should like best of all is for you to see everything together. Is there any chance of your coming again this winter? If so, I should certainly prefer not to send anything. Enfin. But I will certainly pay attention and keep in mind whatever you may say about the work's saleability, and do not think I underrate your opinion.

I consider making studies like sowing, and making pictures like reaping.

I believe one gets sounder ideas when the thoughts arise from direct contact with things than when one looks at them with the set purpose of finding certain facts in them.

It is the same with the question of the colour scheme. There are colours which harmonize together wonderfully, but I try my best to make it as I see it before I set to work to make it as I feel it. And yet feeling is a great thing, and without it one would not be able to do anything.

Sometimes I long for harvest time, that is, for the time when I shall be so imbued with the study of nature that I myself can create something in a picture. However, analyzing things is no trouble to me, nor is it something I dislike doing.

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It is already late. I have not slept well these last few nights. It is all that beautiful autumn scenery that I have on my mind, and the desire to profit by it. But I wish I could sleep at the right time, and I try my best, for it makes me nervous; but there is no help for it. How do you feel? I hope you do not have too many cares, for that doesn't improve one's health. I think if I were not in the open air so much and found less pleasure in my painting, I should soon become melancholy. But being in the open air and working with animation are things which renew and keep up our strength. It is only at times when I am overtired that I feel thoroughly miserable, but for the rest I believe I shall regain my health. Adieu, a handshake in thought, and write me what I should do – send you a painted study or wait. And know that I think of you every day and believe me,
Yours Sincerely, Vincent