

Dear Theo,

Your letter and the enclosure were very welcome, many thanks. And I was glad to see that you take things calmly, though I did not expect anything else.

Since I wrote you last I have been drudging very hard on that drawing of the refuse dump: it is a splendid scene. The first drawing of it has already undergone so many corrections; first it was white, then black in all kinds of patches, so that I copied it on a second sheet, because the first one was too overworked. And I am working on it anew. I must get up early in the morning for it, for then I get the effects I need. If I could only get it the way I have it in my mind!

Well, the second one is of the same size as the two former ones of the peat cutting and the sand digging, and it fits in the frame. For the moment it is looking rather good, but I am afraid I'll spoil it. But one must not be afraid of that either, otherwise one never succeeds. And meanwhile I made a large study of a seamstress besides.

But the asylum has been a disappointment in that they refused me permission to draw there – they said there was no precedent for it, and besides, they were in the midst of spring-cleaning, and new floors were being laid in the wards. Well, never mind, there are more homes for the poor, but in this one I know a man who posed for me regularly, and that would have made it easy for me to make sketches. Last winter I saw the old almshouse in Voorburg. It is of course much smaller, but almost even more striking.

It was toward evening when I was there, the old people were sitting on benches and chairs round an old stove, very characteristic.

Perhaps I'll try that one at Voorburg, since I have no permission here. I also spent a day at Scheveningen, and saw a beautiful scene there of men with a cart full of nets which had been tarred and were being spread out on the dunes. Someday I must certainly make a large drawing of that or of mending the nets. It is an improvement, Theo, having those stretchers and that frame for charcoal drawings, or whatever, for it is pleasant working with them. I think you are quite right in what you say about too much intercourse with painters not being good, but very much so. And for that reason I am glad Van der Weele is coming.

Indeed, one can have a deep longing sometimes to talk things over with people who know about one's craft. Especially if each works and seeks in the same spirit, it is possible greatly to strengthen and animate each other, and one is not so easily discouraged. One cannot always live away from one's native land, and one's native land is not nature alone – there must also be human hearts who search for and feel the same things. And only then is the native land perfect only then does one feel at home.

This now is the composition of the refuse dump. I do not know how much you can make out. In the foreground, women are emptying dustbins; behind them are the sheds where the dung is kept, and the men at work with wheelbarrows, etc. The first one I made of it was a little different; there were two other men in the foreground with sou'westers, which they often wear in bad weather, and the group of women was darker.

But that light effect is really there because the light falls from overhead between the sheds on the figures in the pathways. It would be a splendid thing to paint. I think you will understand all about it. I wish I could talk it over with Mauve. But perhaps it's better as it is, for it does not always help to get advice from somebody else, clever though he may be, and those who are cleverest are not always clever in explaining things clearly. I repeat, I hardly know myself what is best. In the first place, painting is not my principal object, and perhaps I will be ready for illustrating sooner all by myself than if somebody, who wouldn't think of illustrations at all, advised me. I get on best of all with Rappard.

Adieu, boy. All best wishes and thank you for your timely help.

Yours sincerely, Vincent