

My dear Theo,

I'm dropping you another line to tell you that, on reflection, I think it would be better simply for me to just get a rug and a mattress and make a bed on the studio floor. It will be so hot all summer that this will be more than enough.

When winter comes we can see whether we have to get a bed or not.

As for the bed at your place, I think that as far as conversation and company are concerned, having a painter to stay with you is good for both the painter and yourself. So that even when Koning leaves there may well be someone to take his place. Anyway, why don't you keep the bed with you?

It is quite possible that as far as the house is concerned, I might find something even better either in Martigues, by the coast, or somewhere else. Only, what is so delightful about this studio is the garden opposite. But we would do well to wait before doing any repairs to it or furnishing it half decently – it would be wiser – especially as, if we should get cholera here in the summer, I might up and go to the country. This is a filthy town, with all its old streets!

The women of Arles about whom there's so much talk, isn't there – do you want to know my real opinion of them?

They are, no question about it, truly charming, but no longer what they must once have been. They are more often like a Mignard than a Mantegna, because they're now in decline. That doesn't prevent them from being beautiful, very beautiful, and I am talking here only of the type in the Roman type – rather boring and ordinary – but what exceptions there are! There are women like a Fragonard and – like Renoirs. And some that one cannot label with anything that's been done in painting so far.

The best thing one could do here, from all points of view, would be to make portraits of women and children. Only I don't think that I am the man to do it, I'm not enough of a M. Bel Ami for that.

But I should be extremely happy if this Bel Ami of the Midi, which Monticelli was not, but tried to be – who, I'm sure, is on his way, though I know it isn't to be me – I should be extremely happy, as I say, if a kind of Guy de Maupassant of painting came along to paint happy pictures of all these beautiful people and things round here.

As for me, I shall go on working, and here and there something of my work will prove of lasting value – but who will there be to achieve for figure painting what Claude Monet has achieved for landscape? However, you must feel, as I do, that someone like that is on the way – Rodin? – he does not use colour – it won't be him. But the painter of the future will be a colourist the like of which has never yet been seen. Manet was getting there but, as you know, the impressionists have already made use of stronger colour than Manet has.

I can't imagine this painter of the future living in small cafés, setting to work with a lot of false teeth, and going to the Zouave's brothels, as I do.

But I'm sure I am right to think that it will come in a later generation, and it is up to us to do all we can to encourage it, without question or complaint.

Will you please tell Guillaumin that Russell wants to come and see him, and intends to buy another of his pictures? I am writing Russell today. I heard yesterday from McK. and the Dane that there is never anything good in the shop windows at Marseilles, and they think there is absolutely nothing doing there.

I should very much like to look around a little myself, but being in no way anxious to fly into a rage, I shall wait till my nerves are steadier.

In the very letter I had addressed wrongly I again said something about Bonger. It is probable that he dares to say so much because at the moment the Russians are having so much success at the Théâtre Libre, etc. But this is no reason, is it, to try and make use of this success in order to denigrate the French? I have just reread Zola's *Le [Au] Bonheur des Dames*, and it seems to me more beautiful than ever.

Now it is news indeed that Reid is back. I told Russell that as I was the one to introduce him, I felt it more or less my duty to explain the cause of the quarrel. That Reid was ambitious, and that, being short of money like all of us, he was beside himself when it was a question of earning money. That I looked upon these as involuntary acts (and consequently he was not responsible, but to be excused for them) committed by an overwrought nervous system.

But that in Reid's character the vulgar merchant predominates over the distinguished artist. This does not mean getting even with Reid, but isn't it right to tell the truth? I feel sure that now it isn't any better, but rather worse.

That friend of Russell's, McKnight, is a dry sort of person and not too sympathetic either – so much the worse if I should have the two of them against me. Yet I have not said anything about McKnight, though I suppose he has no more heart than Reid. If he could find his own painting, it would do him good, and it is not impossible that this will happen. He is still young, twenty-seven, I think.

Supposing you agree, we need be in no hurry to fix up the studio. It will do well enough as it is meanwhile, and if I sleep there, as I've said, it will cost me nothing, I save 30 francs at the hotel and I pay 15 for rent, so that there is clear profit.

With a handshake for you and Koning; I have another drawing.

Yours ever, Vincent

I saw a heap of boxes for my purpose in the market and am going back to take measurements. Was the subject of the De Groux which you mention the same as that in the Brussels gallery, the "Bénédicté"? It's true what you say of Braekeleer. Have you heard that he suffered from a disease of the brain which left him impotent??? I have heard this, but wasn't it only temporary? You talk of another one of his which I do not know.