

Letter 500  
Arles, 4 June 1888

My dear Theo,

Many thanks for your kind letter and for the 50-franc note enclosed. All the same, Gauguin must have written. The worst of it is this blasted journey; if we persuade him to do it and afterward it does not suit him, we'll be in the hole. I think I shall write him today, and send you the letter.

Now that I have seen the sea here, I am absolutely convinced of the importance of staying in the Midi, and of positively piling it on, exaggerating the colour – Africa not so far away. I am sending you by the same post the drawings of Stes-Maries. I made the drawing of the boats just as I was going to leave, very early in the morning, and I am working on the picture after it, a size 30 canvas with more sea and sky on the right. [F 1428, JH 1458]

It was before the boats cleared off; I had watched it all the other mornings, but they leave very early, I didn't have time to do it.

I have three more drawings of cottages which I still need, and which will follow these: they are rather harsh, but I have some more carefully drawn ones.

I'll send you a batch of paintings rolled up as soon as the marines are dry. Did you ever see such nerve as that of those idiots in Dordrecht? The arrogance of them – they will be good enough to condescend to Degas and Pissarro, without ever having seen a scrap of their stuff, mind you, any more than of the others. But it is a very good sign that the young ones are furious, perhaps it's a proof that there are older ones who have praised the stuff.

About this staying on in the South, even if it is more expensive, consider: we like Japanese painting, we have felt its influence, all the impressionists have that in common; then why not go to Japan, that is to say to the equivalent of Japan, the South?

Only it's bad policy to stay here alone, when two or three could help each other to live cheaply.

I wish you could spend some time here, you would feel it after a while, one's sight changes: you see things with an eye more Japanese, you feel colour differently. The Japanese draw quickly, very quickly, like a lightning flash, because their nerves are finer, their feeling simpler.

I am convinced that I shall set my individuality free simply by staying on here.

I have only been here a few months, but tell me this – could I, in Paris, have done the drawing of the boats in an hour? Not even with the perspective frame, and this one is done without measuring, just by letting my pen go.

So I tell myself that bit by bit expenses will be balanced by the work. I should like to earn a lot of money so as to get good artists down here, instead of leaving them shivering in the mud of the Petit Boulevard, as too many of them do.

Fortunately it is very easy to sell nice polite pictures in a nice polite place to a nice polite gentleman.

Now the great Albert<sup>1</sup> has given us the recipe, every difficulty has disappeared by magic.

One has only to go into the Rue de la Paix, stroll about ostentatiously for that express purpose – the complete art lover.

If Gauguin came here, he and I might go to Africa with Bernard when he goes to do his military service there. What have you settled about our sister?

Anquetin and Lautrec – I think – will not like what I am doing; there has been an article, it seems, in the Revue Indépendante on Anquetin, which called him the leader of a new trend, in which the Japanese influence is even more apparent. I have not read it but anyway the leader of the Petit Boulevard is undoubtedly Seurat, and young Bernard has perhaps gone further in the Japanese style than Anquetin. Tell them that I have done a picture of boats, that and the "Pont de L'Anglais" could go to Anquetin.. What Pissarro says is true, you must boldly exaggerate the effects of either harmony or discord which colours produce. It is the same as in drawing – accurate drawing, accurate colour, is perhaps not the essential thing to aim at, because the reflection of reality in a mirror, if it could be caught, colour and all, would not be a picture at all, no more than a photograph.

Good-by for the present. With a handshake.

Ever yours, Vincent

1. Goupil.