

Letter B 15
Arles, c. 18 August 1888

My dear Bernard,

I want to do figures, figures and more figures. I cannot resist that series of bipeds from the baby to Socrates, and from the woman with black hair and white skin to the woman with yellow hair and a sunburned brick-red face.

In the meantime I am mostly doing other things.

Thanks for your letter. This time I am writing in a great hurry and greatly exhausted.

I am very pleased you have joined Gauguin.

Ah! I have another figure all the same which is an absolute continuation of certain studies of heads I did in Holland. I showed them to you one day along with a picture from that period, "The Potato Eaters"; I wish I could show you this one. It is still a study, in which colour plays a part such as the black and white of a drawing could not possibly reproduce.

I wanted to send you a very large and very careful drawing. Very well! It turned out quite different, though it is correct. For this time again the colour suggests a blazing air of harvest time right in the South, in the middle of the dog days, and without that it's another picture.

I dare believe that Gauguin and you would understand it; but how ugly people will think it! You know what a peasant is, how strongly he reminds one of a wild beast, when you have found one of the true race.

I also have "Men Unloading a Sand Barge" – that is to say, there are two boats of a violet-kind of pink in veronese green water [loaded] with grey sand, wheelbarrows, planks and a little blue-and-yellow fellow [F 449, JH 1558].

All of it seen from the quay above it, looking down at a bird's-eye view. No sky; it is only an attempt or rather a quick study, done during the full violence of the mistral.

I am also attempting dusty thistles with a great swarm of butterflies whirling over them [F 447, JH 1550; F 447a, JH 1551].

Oh! that beautiful midsummer sun here. It beats down on one's head, and I haven't the slightest doubt that it makes one crazy. But as I was so to begin with, I only enjoy it.

I am thinking of decorating my studio with half a dozen pictures of "Sunflowers," a decoration in which the raw or broken chrome yellows will blaze forth on various backgrounds – blue, from the palest malachite green to royal blue, framed in thin strips of wood painted with orange lead.

Effects like those of stained-glass windows in a Gothic church.

Ah! my dear comrades, let us crazy ones take delight in our eyesight in spite of everything, yes, let's!

Alas, nature takes it out of the animal, and our bodies are despicable and sometimes a heavy burden. But it has been like that ever since Giotto, that man with his poor health.

Ah! and what a feast for the eyes all the same, and what a smile of the old lion Rembrandt, with a piece of white cloth around his head, his palette in his hand!

How much I would like to spend these days in Pont-Aven; however, I find comfort in contemplating the sunflowers.

A hearty handshake, till soon again.

Sincerely yours, Vincent