

Wheat Field with Cypress. 1889.

By Cheye Bieber

“Vincent, a critic by the name of Joseph Isaacson has contacted me in regard to your paintings.”

“I already know the quality of my work, Theo. I do not need a critic to inform me of my shortcomings.”

“No, Vincent. He rather enjoys your paintings. He asked me to let him have certain pictures to keep in his home for a while, including the mountains and the wheat field.”

“Why would he want such a thing?”

“He says that he admires your use of form and color and that your paintings exude immense life.”

“Nonsense. My paintings are nothing of the sort.”

“You mustn’t regard your work so poorly, Vincent.”

“I believe they are poor quality, as do the critics.”

“But Vincent, you must listen to me. Joseph wants to write about your paintings in the Dutch papers. He is publishing a series of articles about young artists and would like to feature you. He truly thinks you are magnificent. Here, look at the letter he wrote me.”

He allows us to perceive, once again, that tangible, wildly rushing, pulsing life that shakes us down to our bones. He is a unique pioneer. He stands alone to struggle in the great night. His name, Vincent, is for posterity.

“Why, Vincent, this is a very good review.”

My paintings will never amount to anything. They are not actually good. Terrible. I painted them. I do not create good paintings. They will never be good enough. Revolting. I will never be good enough. I am going to live the rest of my life being a failure. Discontent. I’m never going to be happy. Even if I do make something of myself, I still will not be happy. I will never feel pride. Failure. No one will ever feel pride for me. My family is embarrassed of me. Die. I am a burden to them. Wretched. Their lives would be better if I did not exist. I hate my life. I hate myself.

“Vincent, what are you thinking?”

“Theo, hand me a quill and paper. I must write to Mr. Isaacson at once. I cannot with good conscience let him tarnish his reputation by writing about me in his article.”

“But Vincent, why will you not let him feature you?”

“He would mislead the readers. He is simply a liar.”

“Why ever would he lie? What has he to gain?”

“I don’t know what his intentions are, Theo. All I know is that he is wrong.”

“Vincent, he thinks your paintings could become great classics.”

“That, Theo, is how I know he is a liar. There is one thing that I am absolutely certain of, that I shall never do important things.”

“Joseph Isaacson thinks your paintings are important!”

“Well, he is wrong!”

“I think your paintings are important!”

“Well, you are wrong!”

“No, Vincent, *you* are wrong!”

Everyone’s lives would be better if I were gone.

“Will you stop listening to the voice in your head for five minutes and listen to what other people have to say about your artwork?”

I will never amount to anything.

“There are many people, Vincent, who think your paintings are good.”

No one thinks highly of me.

“Do not be foolish enough to let this opportunity go to waste.”

I will be unhappy for the rest of my life.

“Vincent, let Mr. Isaacson write about you. Please.”

“...”

“Vincent.”

“Alright.” *Worthless.* “But he must not go beyond a few words.”

Inspiration

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