

"I feel a power in me which I must develop, a fire that I may not quench, but must keep ablaze, though I do not know to what end it will lead me, and shouldn't be surprised if it were a gloomy one."

Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo in November 1882



VINCENT VAN GOGH

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“I mean painting is a *home* ...”

Vincent to Theo, June 1885

The Bridge at Langlois with Women Washing, March 1888
(detail; see page 131)



“But I must continue on the path I have taken now. If I don’t do anything, if I don’t study, if I don’t go on seeking any longer, I am lost. Then woe is me.”



“They say – and I am very willing to believe it –
that it is difficult to know yourself – but it isn’t easy
to paint yourself either.”

Vincent to Theo, September 1889

Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear, January 1889





“I cannot help it that my pictures do not sell.
Nevertheless the time will come when people
will see that they are worth more than the
price of the paint ...”



“... it’s my constant hope that I am not working for myself alone. I believe in the absolute necessity of a new art of colour, of design and – of artistic life. And if we work in that faith, it seems to me there is a chance that we do not hope in vain.”

Vincent to Theo, Arles, March 1888

“The more ugly, old, vicious, ill, poor I get, the more I want to take my revenge by producing brilliant colour, well arranged, resplendent.”

Vincent to Wil, Arles, September 1888

Willows at Sunset, Autumn 1888
(detail; see page 131)



“I am a man of passion, capable of and
subject to doing more or less foolish things,
which I happen to repent, more or less,
afterwards.”

Vincent to Theo, 1879/80

The Dance Hall, late 1888
(detail; see page 131)





“But I find in my work an echo of what struck me, after all. I see that nature has told me something, has spoken to me, and that I have to put it down in shorthand. In my shorthand there may be words that cannot be deciphered, there may be mistakes or gaps; but there is something of what that wood or beach or figure has told me in it, and it is not the tame or conventional language derived from a studied manner or a system, but rather that from nature itself.”

Vincent to Theo, autumn 1882

“And yet I see a light in the distance so clearly; if that light disappears now and then, it is generally my own fault.”

Vincent to Theo on 5 July 1876

Harbour Workers in Arles, August 1888
(detail; see pages 70/71)

