

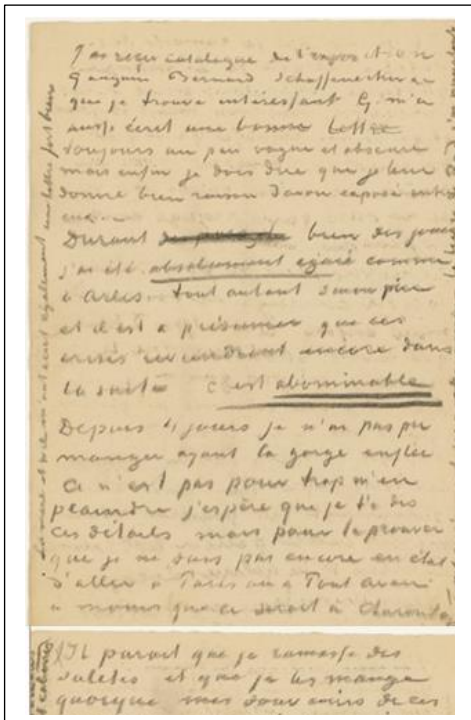
March 2024 Newsletter

A LETTER IN CHALK



Hello:

I hope this finds you well and reading a good book. I'm incorporating letters written in chalk as a plot point in my current novel-in-progress: *Saving Van Gogh*. Vincent Van Gogh tried to commit suicide by drinking turpentine and ingesting toxic paint. The doctors at the asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence removed all of his art supplies that were toxic, and for good measure, removed all the mirrors in his room for fear Van Gogh would use a glass shard to slit his wrists. Here is a letter written in chalk to his brother, Theo, describing his setback, along with the translation.



I've received catalogue of the Gauguin, Bernard, Schuffenecker &c. exhibition, which I find interesting. G. also wrote me a kind letter, still a little vague and obscure, but anyway I must say that I think they're quite right to have exhibited among themselves.

For many days I've been absolutely distraught, as in Arles, just as much if not worse, and it's to be presumed that these crises will recur in the future, it is ABOMINABLE. I haven't been able to eat for 4 days, as my throat is swollen. It's not in order to complain too much, I hope, if I tell you these details, but to prove to you that I'm not yet in a fit state to go to Paris or to Pont-Aven unless it were to Charenton.

It appears that I pick up filthy things and eat them, although my memories of these bad moments are vague, and it appears to me that there's something shady about it, still for the same reason that they have I don't know what prejudice against painters here.

I no longer see any possibility for courage or good hope, but anyway it wasn't yesterday that we found out that this profession isn't a happy one.

Here is one of his earlier works using chalk as a medium.

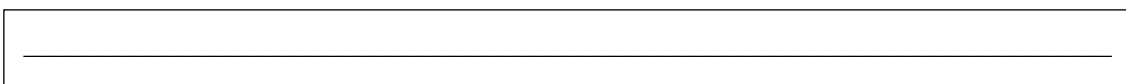


Road in Etten, Vincent van Gogh, 1881

For comparison, the drawing below was enclosed in a letter he wrote to his sister, Anna, sometime between July, 1884 and May, 1885.



Translation: This little church is a remarkable remnant of an old Augustinian foundation (Austin Friars) dating from at least 1354, if not from 100 years earlier. The Dutch congregation had held its religious services here since 1550, by virtue of a voluntary gift of Edward VI.





Here is a picture of a Trillium and Bloodroot blossom from our garden. The Spring ephemerals are such an encouraging sign.



Please mark your calendars:



This speaking engagement comes with breakfast! Saturday, May 18th, 10am, I will be reading excerpts from my book, "[A Promise Moon](#)," and discussing the Underground Railroad in Kentucky at the Jack Jouett House Historic Site, 255 Craigs Creek Rd. Versailles, KY 40383. The [Kentucky Humanities Speakers Bureau](#) is sponsoring this talk.

Thursday, June 6 at 6:30 pm, I will be speaking about "Let The Earth Breathe" at the Erlanger Branch, Kenton County Public Library, 401 Kenton Lands Road, Erlanger, Kentucky 41018. The [Kentucky Humanities Speakers Bureau](#) is also sponsoring this talk.

Tuesday, November 12 at 11:00 am, I will be visiting the Owl Creek Garden Club to speak about "Let The Earth Breathe." We are meeting at City Hall in Anchorage, KY, 1306 Evergreen Rd, 40223

I hope you've enjoyed this edition of my newsletter. If you haven't already, please take a moment to leave a review on Amazon. It is really helpful with sales. Here is the link to my latest book, "[Stealing Picasso](#)."

If you know of anyone who is looking for a speaker, the [Kentucky Humanities Speakers Bureau](#) is great about helping to subsidize appearances. I'm available as a speaker to talk about "[Stealing Renoir](#)," and how World War II was the largest art theft in history.

Or, if Kentucky history is appropriate for audiences, the [Speakers Bureau](#) will subsidize my appearance to discuss the findings from my research grant into the Underground Railroad in Kentucky.

The Speakers Bureau will also subsidize my appearance to talk about gardening with native plants and how this led to the publication of "[Let The Earth Breathe](#)." If you or anyone you know would like to schedule a talk, here's the [link](#).

I am now on the Indiana Historical Society's Speakers Bureau. Contact Jeannette Rooney @ jrooney@indianahistory.org to arrange a talk.

[Here is a link to my previous newsletters.](#)

Happy reading.

Stephen Allten Brown

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