

# I, CLAUDE MONET

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY PHIL GRABSKY

## From the Director

Monet is one of those artists who you just seem to have known all your life. His name is so familiar. Most people interested in art – and I’d argue that should be everyone! – know that his painting *‘Impression, Sunrise’* gave name, almost accidentally, to the most famous artistic movement in history – the impressionists. But sometimes I like to stop and ask myself: what do I really know about him? I remember doing this with Mozart and then, over a three-year production period, discovering someone very far removed from Tom Hulse’s wonderful (and woefully inaccurate) portrayal in *Amadeus*.

Thus it was that when we were in production for another film *‘Painting the Modern Garden – Monet to Matisse’* I decided it was time to look a bit closer at Monsieur Claude Oscar Monet. I have always argued that, as a director, the first step should be to read your subject’s correspondence. Mozart, Matisse, Muhammad Ali – whoever it is – I always want to read their own words first. If I think we then need to also hear from experts and to have a written narrative as well then so be it - but start with the correspondence. One naturally has to be a little cautious: not every letter can be taken at face value, many have disappeared thus leaving gaps. However, who has done the transcriptions and translations – what might they have missed or indeed added?

How would you or I be portrayed if someone only used our letters (and, these days, our emails and texts) to reflect our lives? Well, that was the challenge I took on with Monet. Very quickly it became clear that, in an effort to provide a fresh look at a much-loved name, I needed to use only his own words - from 3300 letters - and see who emerged. Would we encounter a more rounded, more nuanced, more comprehensible individual than the slightly caricatured bushy-bearded old man of Giverny? My answer is a definite yes.

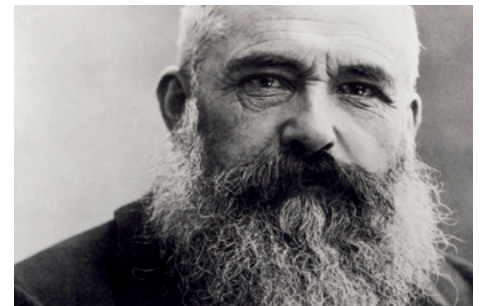
**Phil Grabsky**

**“Intense and intimate”**

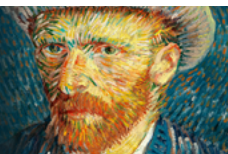
The Observer

**“Elegant and graceful”**

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