

MICHELANGELO

LOVE & DEATH

PRODUCER **PHIL GRABSKY** | DIRECTOR **DAVID BICKERSTAFF**

From the Producer:

I was surprised recently to read a poll of who is considered the greatest artist of all time. It wasn't Monet, nor Leonardo, nor Van Gogh. It was Michelangelo. As a child, I remember watching the Hollywood film *Agony & Ecstasy* which has a really very surprising start – a short documentary about the life of Michelangelo, before the main fictional film began about the relationship between Michelangelo and Pope Julius II. I remember feeling the Sistine Chapel looked impressive but I didn't then, nor subsequently, have him ranked in my own mind as the greatest artist ever. Nor did that change when I actually went as an adult to visit the Sistine. The seemingly endless queue and crowds took the edge off what, to me, was an overwhelming ceiling and walls. It was certainly impressive as one man's achievement but I wasn't awed. However, I then went in to the Vatican church to see his statue, the *Pietà*.

Then I understood. It was literally breath-taking – I simply forgot to breathe so impressed was I by the art in front of me. Just how did an ordinary human being carve such a beautiful work from a block of mountain stone. In that moment I decided one day I had to make a film about the artist behind the art. That moment has now arrived. This film is not based on any specific exhibition (as half of the Exhibition on Screen films are) but on my and my team's desire to make a broad biographical film about this extraordinary man. And to show you as much of his art as possible – and explain the whys, whens and whats.

I think I have always fallen in to the Leonardo camp when weighing up who was the greatest of the three Renaissance masters. But this film – directed by my good friend and fabulous director David Bickerstaff – gave me the opportunity to look again at familiar works like the *Pietà*, the *Sistine Chapel* and indeed lesser known works like *The Crouching Boy* at the Hermitage and even the Laurentian Library and its amazing staircase. My conclusion – having worked on this film and watched it many times – is that it is impossible really to choose between Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael – we should just feel enormous gratitude that events conspired to produce them and their work. I leave you to make up your own mind whether Michelangelo – after watching this film – edges to the top spot, but he doesn't really need to as long as there were a few moments as you're watching when you are so stunned by the quality of his art that you might, just for a second, forget to breathe.

Phil Grabsky

"Filmed in luminous close-up... a fascinating look at one of the greatest artists of all time"

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