



Have you ever stood in front of a Van Gogh painting wondering about the 19th Century world and the man who cut off an ear for his art? If so, you might want to see this extraordinary film, "Loving Vincent," directed by art connoisseurs and scholars Dorotea Kobiela and Hugh Welchman, and beautifully scored piano and strings by Clint Mansell. Following Vincent Van Gogh's curious death, and as though stepping into one of his paintings, we take a journey with the son of a postman, Armand Roulin (Douglas Booth), to deliver a letter of condolence to Theo, Vincent's younger brother and art dealer. Armand is a slacker and bar room brawler who has no interest in Van Gogh, or his father's need to express condolences to some weird artist. His father was a subject of Van Gogh's paintings that no one's even seen. Perhaps Armand is a little like youth today who are so jaded by having seen so many of Van Gogh's paintings everywhere - who cares? What's behind all those vibrant strokes across moonscapes and sunflowers? This film takes us on a journey, a truly artful mind trip to investigate and come to love the work of a genius we have looked at but perhaps never experienced virtually first hand. In that respect, this film is a long overdue gift to the world of Van Gogh admirers.

The mystery plays out a little like Akira Kurosawa's Rashomon, where after so many versions of what happened to Vincent, we are left to make up our own interpretation. In this film we can thank the scholars for giving us all the facts of a very fractured puzzle to put together our own picture. Did he shoot himself in the stomach? That is not what someone does who wants to commit suicide. The shot had to come from below, or since the bullet did not come out the back, it had to come from a distance. Why would Vincent claim it was self-inflicted? Was he protecting someone? Who? A village idiot? A lover's jealous lover? Or did his bi-polar psychological problems twist reality around so much to make himself the perpetrator of all his sufferings, even though they may have been inflicted upon him by others? And why did the military doctor who had removed many bullets from soldiers on the fields decide NOT to remove this one (in a hotel room), allowing it to sit there for two days creating a fatal infection?

After ten years, 125 painting animators, 65,000 oil-painted frames, incorporating 120 of Van Gogh's major works, we are finally given the chance to piece together a puzzle of Vincent Van Gogh's troubling life and curious death - using his paintings as the tool with which to look deeper and deeper into this artist's view of the world. The outcome is absolutely fascinating! You will get lost and then find yourself inside a Van Gogh painting looking out at the world with an artist's perception of where we are today, perhaps seeing our modern world with broad colorful brush strokes that define waves of light and a strong appreciation for the substance of life, and of course sunflowers, wheat fields, and postmen.