

Cezanne  
et Moi

GUILLAUME CANET

GUILLAUME GALLIENNE  
FROM THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

# Cezanne et Moi

A FILM BY *DANIÈLE THOMPSON*

*ALICE POL*

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WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF  
*SABINE AZÉMA*

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## Synopsis

*They loved each other with the ardor of thirteen-year-old boys. Rebellion and curiosity, hopes and doubts, girls and dreams of glory – they shared it all. Paul was rich, Emile poor. They left Aix-en-Provence for Paris and quickly became part of the art scene in Montmartre and Les Batignolles. They hung out in the same places, slept with the same women. They spat on the bourgeoisie (who spat back). They went skinny-dipping, drank absinthe, starved, only to overeat. Sketched models by day, caressed them by night... Traveled thirty hours by train just to watch a sunset... Now, Paul is a painter and Emile, a writer. Glory has passed Paul by. But Emile has it all: fame, money, the perfect wife, whom Paul once loved. They judge each other, admire each other, confront each other. They lose touch, meet up again, like a couple who cannot stop loving each other.*

*Interview with*  
*Danièle Thompson*





**HOW DID YOU COME ACROSS THE IDEA TO MAKE THIS FILM, WHICH SEEMS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS - MOSTLY COMEDIES - IN YOUR FILMOGRAPHY?**

Fifteen years ago, I read an article about how Cézanne and Zola were friends since childhood, before eventually growing apart. I must admit that I had never heard about this rift. It intrigued me. So I started reading biographies about them. I reread texts by Zola which I had forgotten, looked at paintings by Cézanne which I didn't know. There was a dramatic element to their falling out which went beyond mere anecdote. Each time I finished a film, I wanted to try to take up their story but was told "No, do a comedy. It's what you know how to do." So I did a comedy, then another, and another. Until *IT HAPPENED IN SAINT-TROPEZ*, which was not the hit I'd hoped for. The reaction to that film destabilized me a bit. So, out of pure pleasure, I submerged myself in the lives of Cézanne and Zola, not knowing whether I'd find subject matter for a film. I read and read, took tons of notes. I was absolutely fascinated by everything I read, by everything I learned.

**WHY?**

Because I was entering the hearts of these people, I was entering their youth. When we talk about Cézanne, Hugo or Renoir nowadays, we imagine remarkable old men with white hair. But I discovered young men on the way to becoming something. Men in their intimacy, in their daily lives which were anything but remarkable. They weren't legends, they weren't icons, just young men with friends, problems, dreams, weaknesses and hopes...

They didn't live that long ago, and we have plenty of texts and testimonies that are rich and vibrant. With the help of Jean-Claude Fasquelle, whose grandfather was Zola's editor,

I met Martine Leblond-Zola, Emile's great-granddaughter. I submerged myself in what Cézanne and Zola wrote and what was written about them. I followed the paths they trod, both literally and figuratively. I consulted Zola's manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Seeing words crossed out by his own hand was so moving. I went to museums, observing with a fresh eye the paintings that connected me to the texts, taking pictures of the ones that spoke to me, on the walls, in books, on the internet. I compiled albums with all these images and documents. I felt like I was living in the nineteenth century. Cézanne and Zola became my family. Then one day, I felt ready to undertake the adventure. I decided to tell their story as I imagined it. My albums took on a life of their own. I started writing. At first I just wanted to write a synopsis, but I soon realized I was writing the film.

**WHAT IS IT THAT TOUCHES YOU THE MOST IN THIS STORY? IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CÉZANNE AND ZOLA?**

Everything. The story has many levels to it and that's what fascinates me. It's about two friends who throughout their lives try to remain the childhood friends they once were, but no longer are. It's as strong as a love story, if not more so. Like they say in the film, friendship is harder than love. Because there are no reference points, no rules or precise definitions. Stories of friendship can be very deep, painful and ambiguous too. Because after their teen years, they started sharing money, women, obsessions, ambition, the difficulty of wanting to be an artist. It's the second aspect that moves me. It's truly the heart of the subject. How do you accomplish your destiny as a writer or painter and stay friends? What is it like when one succeeds and the other doesn't? When one can admire the other, but not vice versa. What's interesting are these destinies which crisscross.

A son of poor parents who becomes a wealthy bourgeois, established and recognized. And the son of wealthy, bourgeois parents who becomes marginalized by his poor, bohemian lifestyle. He made nothing from his painting, lived with a woman he wouldn't marry. His only obsession is his art. And just when one wonders if his inspiration hasn't run dry, the other finally starts getting noticed and making a name for himself. One writes his greatest work from 25 to 50, and the other finds his way as the precursor of modern art, at the age of 50. Their lives went in opposite directions.

**DO YOU NECESSARILY BECOME A "PRISONER OF THE TRUTH" WHEN YOU TAKE ON FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO REALLY DID EXIST?**

Yes, of course. As I was doing research, I wondered whether I could take enough liberties to make a film. But it turns out that one of the most plausible explanations of their growing apart is Zola's book *The Masterpiece*. Zola's inspiration was Cézanne, their youth and friendship, their obsessions and discussions. But he also did what novelists do with the truth: he took liberties with their lives, with the art scene, creating situations that weren't entirely true, if at all. If he could take those liberties, so could I. For example, Cézanne introduced Zola to the woman who would become Zola's wife. Rumor had it that she might once have been Paul's mistress. So I said to myself: "All right, she was!"

**THE FILM'S MAIN THREAD IS THE "LAST ENCOUNTER" BETWEEN CÉZANNE AND ZOLA IN MÉDAN IN 1888. DID IT REALLY TAKE PLACE?**

Maybe!(laughter) Something wild happened when I was working on the script. Even though Zola's 1886 novel *The Masterpiece* marked the end of their friendship, and the last known letter

from Cézanne to Zola, the one read aloud in the film, in which he "thanks" him for the book, also dates from 1886, I decided to make 1888 the film's central reference point. It was an important year for both of them. Cézanne's father died, which meant that Paul suddenly had money. And a few months before his father's death, Paul finally married Hortense. Meanwhile in the Zola household, 1888 marked the arrival of Jeanne, the young laundry maid. This was major upheaval. Emile was so orderly, and here he falls in love and starts leading an almost official double life. So I imagined, despite what all the historians think, that they met in 1888, and that Cézanne came to Médan one last time for a last explanation. When the script was almost finished, I went to Aix to see the places I had described without having really seen them. There I met Michel Fraisset, the curator of Cézanne's last workshop, the one he used last for years of his life and which anyone can visit. It's a very moving place, with its wicker baskets (only the apples date from today), his smock, dotted with paint. He asked me: "Do you know Cézanne's last letter to Zola?" "Yes, the one all the historians talk about." "No, a letter that was sold at Sotheby's three months ago." I was reeling. "No, I never heard about it."` A letter had been sold at Sotheby's for \$17,000 three months prior (two years ago). A letter from 1887 in which Cézanne thanks Zola for *The Earth*, his next novel after *The Masterpiece*. The letter ends with "I am going to come see you." In 1887! A full year after the last known letter. Isn't that extraordinary? My dramatic license was suddenly plausible. What I imagined may really have happened! That said, even if they did see each other, we don't know what they said, so the screenwriter's inspiration necessarily comes into play. But an imagination that owes a lot to Zola's texts, Cézanne's letters, Zola's responses, various people's testimonies, the memoirs of Vollard, the art dealer who helped establish Cézanne's reputation... it was fascinating to blend it all together, to juggle real-life stories with the dialogue I gave them.

**IN FACT, YOU DON'T TAKE SIDES WITH ONE OR THE OTHER...**

I fell in love with both of them! As Guillaume Gallienne says: "Cézanne is really "charm-mean!" He's a pain in the ass who always goes too far. These are two artists for whom their obsession with work, the work they want to accomplish takes precedence over everything else.

**HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT ZOLA MISUNDERSTOOD CÉZANNE, EVEN THOUGH HE DEFENDED THE AVANT GARDE OF THE TIME, THE IMPRESSIONISTS, MANET...**

Between the ages of 26 and 30, Zola was a marvelous art critic. He defended the Impressionists when everyone else spat on them. He dedicated an article to Cézanne, but did not mention him in the article! He loved his friend, he cheered him on, and he figured he would make it, but in his heart he thought he'd never make it. Furthermore, as time went by, Zola's tastes changed, they became more academic, more conformist (just look at his house, full of dusty antiques!), and at the age of 48 - old age at the time! - he wrote an article in which he thoroughly repudiated the Impressionists. Moreover, you need to realize that it was only in the last ten years of his life that Cézanne painted what would make him part of history, and at the beginning of that period (Zola died four years earlier than Cézanne), they no longer saw each other. Moreover, Cézanne - like all their artist friends at the time, other than Pissarro - was anti-Dreyfusard. Even if they did meet, would Zola have understood Cézanne? Was he still open to that? What he was writing then had nothing to do with what he wrote when he was 25. Cézanne only began to be more or less recognized at the very end of his life. When Zola died, his wife Alexandrine sold everything, and his Cézannes went for next to nothing. When Caillebotte died and left his entire collection to the Musée du Luxembourg, they took everything except... the Cézannes. They

didn't want them! That is why all the most beautiful Cézannes are abroad.

**WHEN WRITING, DID YOU WONDER WHICH ACTORS WOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY THESE REAL PEOPLE?**

I tried not to think about it! It would have stopped me in my tracks. In fact, I had to find actors who could resemble them more or less, who could look forty, and at the same time juvenile enough to play younger characters, and who were actors with whom we could finance the project. That's a lot of issues. I only started thinking about it toward the end of the writing, and the first actor I thought of was Guillaume Gallienne. Since AVENUE MONTAIGNE, I really wanted to work with him. I saw him as more of a Zola, because I imagine him more intellectual than down-to-earth. I gave him the screenplay to read. He called me and said: "I want to play Cézanne". And added: "If you like, let's do a reading, and you'll see if I can really be Cézanne." That's what we did, and I never again had any doubts. He can play anything! So I had to find my Zola, and Cécile Felsenberg, who is both their agents, advised me to give the screenplay to Guillaume Canet. He said yes right away.

**IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT MAKES CANET THE IDEAL ZOLA AND GALLIENNE THE IDEAL CÉZANNE, TODAY?**

For me, the ideal actor is the actor I want, and who wants to make the film as much as I do. If an actor says: "I'm not sure, I don't really feel it..." I immediately drop him. I believe deeply in instinct, and I don't like the idea of having to convince them. In this case the enthusiasm of the two Guilllaumes was immediate. It's true, there aren't many character roles in France, and that must have sounded exciting to them... They both brought me a lot. I was lucky and delighted to have the two of them for this film.



**ITS TRUE YOU FORGET THEM VERY QUICKLY, YOU NO LONGER SEE ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE CHARACTERS THEY PLAY. THEY ARE TWO ACTORS WHO DO NOT SEEM TO COME FROM THE SAME SCHOOL. HOW DID YOU WORK WITH THEM?**

Well, a lot of the screenplay is based on their differences. But actually, I decided to forget about that while I was working with them. They were my two actors, and I saw very well what I could get out of the one and the other. What really pleased me is that when they saw the finished film, separately, they were truly amazed by each other, as if they had so thoroughly become their characters that they didn't notice it on location. And what is more, they are both directors in their own right. I didn't want to think about that too much either, or it could have blocked me. In fact, I had two actors who were good listeners, who were both nervous about taking up such a challenge. They both wanted to do their best, they both always wanted to do one more take. They both gave me the feeling that they had perfect confidence in me, and I felt very good in their company.

**IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE GREATEST ASSET OF ONE AND THE OTHER?**

The both have an immense actor's instinct. Guillaume Canet instinctively felt that he had to play his 'iconic' character very simply and soberly. On the other hand, Guillaume Gallienne instinctively felt that he was dealing with a madman – today Cézanne would be classified 'bipolar'. He would fly into furious rages, and a few seconds later seem to have forgotten all about them. Even though they had different educations, even though they come from different "milieux", have had different careers, and play very different characters, they both have the same discipline, the same tastes, and indeed the same obsessions with their work.

What I felt they both had, aside from their very obvious talent, was their considerable experience, their great concentration and great desire to achieve what I wanted from them. Neither one of them came on set whistling. They both have endurance, perseverance and obstinacy in their search for what they need to do, which is magnificent and rare.

**THEIR NAMES ARE BOTH GUILLAME. WASN'T THERE A RISK OF YOUR INSTRUCTIONS GETTING CONFUSED WHEN THEY WERE TOGETHER ON SET?**

I thought of that a lot before the shoot and it did worry me a little. But once they were on set, there were never any misunderstandings. They always knew whom I was talking to (laughter).

**WAS THIS FILM HARD TO FINANCE?**

These days no film is easy to finance. Especially a "period" film, a film that is different from your run-of-the-mill projects, and from my own previous films, which can frighten the decision-makers. But the man of my life, Albert Koski, labored personally and passionately to make this film possible. It was a great joy to work together on this atypical project that was so close to both our hearts. And he was able to embark Pathé on the adventure, and others too who participated in the production. And he was also able to communicate to the crew enthusiasm equal to his own.





**THE STRUCTURE OF THE FILM IS RATHER SCATTERED, ALMOST “IMPRESSIONIST”. WAS THAT ALREADY THE CASE IN THE SCREENPLAY?**

Yes, with the encounter in Médan that serves as a ‘main thread’, except that... in the end it’s no longer the same scattered effect! Once we were editing the scenes that we shot, the finish was no longer exactly the same. I worked a lot with my editor, Sylvie Landra, for about six months. What we did was almost a rewrite of the film. That is the mystery – and beauty of the editing process.

**YOU FILMED A LOT ON REAL LOCATIONS...**

We shot most of the scenes that were supposed to take place in Paris in Moulins – after all, it was much simpler! But yes, we did shoot quite a bit in the places where the story actually did happen. And shooting in places so steeped in history was very emotional, not only for the actors, but for the rest of the crew as well. Thanks to Martine Leblond-Zola, we were authorized to shoot in Zola’s garden at Médan... and in the laundry room, where Zola watches Jeanne iron. We could have shot inside the house too, but there is a train that goes by every four minutes! We also shot in Cézanne’s father’s house, at Jas de Bouffan – we recreated the frescos he had painted, and that today are in the Petit Palais, and they decided to keep them! It is soon going to be restored and made into a museum. On the upper floor, where Cézanne painted, they have reconstructed his atelier, where we see him paint Vollard’s portrait – in fact, the portrait was actually painted in Paris. He didn’t build a new atelier until he inherited his father’s money, the Atelier des Lauves, which was then in the middle of the country, but is today in the middle of town. We were permeated by all those places. Not to mention the Bibémus quarries that have remained exactly the same as when Cézanne knew them. His hut too has remained intact. His pots and brushes are still there. He often slept there to

be able to catch the light of dawn. It is a magical spot. All that was obviously very moving – and inspiring.

**EXACTLY. IN A FILM LIKE THIS, LIGHT IS VERY IMPORTANT. HOW AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK WITH JEAN-MARIE DREUJOU?**

This was a very different film from the ones I had made. I wanted to call myself into question, to change crews. Jean-Jacques Annaud had spoken to me about Jean-Marie, whose work I liked a lot. I met with him. We got along very well right off the bat. And aside from his talent, he is a marvelous man – and that is important, because you’re very close to your director of photography on a shoot. We spoke a lot. I showed him all the documentation I had collected. I didn’t want the light to be “Cézanne-like”. I didn’t want people to say “That looks like a Cézanne.” I watched some films again that had marked me and that took place in the same period. Pialat’s VAN GOGH; Renoir’s LE DÉJEUNER SUR L’HERBE obviously; Tavernier’s A SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY; Jane Campion’s THE PIANO and PORTRAIT OF A LADY. And also Christopher Hampton’s CARRINGTON, even if it does take place a bit later, because I remember the air of intimacy inside the house, as compared to images filmed outside. I wanted the light to be different in Paris, Médan, and Provence. That didn’t take much effort. The light in Provence is one of the most beautiful in the world. And especially since we had magnificent weather...

**WHAT KIND OF INSTRUCTIONS DID YOU GIVE YOUR OTHER COLLABORATORS ABOUT COSTUMES, SETS, AND MAKE UP?**

I spoke about the project with Catherine Leterrier, who created the costumes, from the first day I worked on it, because I like her a lot and she has tons of talent. I showed her all the documentation I

had gathered. Photos of dresses, ensembles, ambiances. Very well-dressed girls, and others more casually. A color. A hat. A street... And I shared those albums with the entire crew, with Jean-Marie Dreujou, with Michèle Abbe, the set designer, with Dominique Colladant, in charge of makeup and aging effects. Those albums inspired us all during our preparation and shoot. They were fascinated by the job, even though we had to try to pinch pennies on everything too. I shot for only eight weeks and two days, which is not much for this kind of film. We all wanted to make something that wasn’t carved in stone, that looked lively and natural, as if the story were taking place today... With people whose hair and makeup are not perfect, who sometimes look a little disheveled... The same was true for the music. I didn’t want period music. I asked Eric Neveux for music that had to do with a feeling. I didn’t want anything imposed from the outside, contemplative... I wanted it to be in tune with the emotions, when it had to be there. Eric Neveux’s score is very beautiful, very elegant. He understood what I wanted to tell, above and beyond the instructions I gave him. I loved working with him. When I sent him the film in Los Angeles, he spoke about it with a great deal of enthusiasm and emotion. For example, in the last scene, where Cézanne has just heard his friend denigrate him... I didn’t want any despairing music over that ending. And Eric immediately evoked what that return to those mountains and landscapes of Provence meant for someone who belonged to them. He was returning to his work, to his destiny as an artist, to what he truly was. We both wanted a tonality of hope. This story of a friendship – which is almost a love story – was both painful and magnificent.





*Interview with*  
*Guillaume Gallienne*





#### DANIELE THOMPSON IMAGINED YOU A MORE LIKELY ZOLA, BUT YOU WANTED TO PLAY CÉZANNE...

I had the feeling that I had already played Zola a little. I got the impression that Zola's mission was somewhat the same as Pierre Bergé's in Jalil Lespert's YVES SAINT-LAURENT. Being the one who takes some distance, who is wise, who takes the rap. On the other hand, Cézanne, "c'est moi". Why? His relations with his father, his rich kid aspect, his angry young man aspect... Danièle was surprised. I told her, let's make it simple, we'll do a reading and we'll see, either it works or it doesn't. I went to her place and, before beginning to read, she said: "With the accent of course". With the accent? What accent? The Aix accent, Cézanne spoke with the accent of Aix. As much as I can do northern accents, Russian, German, English... Southern accents! I didn't say anything and I went for it, I did it as I felt it, except that after a short moment, I had the impression that I was doing so much of an accent that I no longer heard what he was saying. All I heard was the accent. "Less", Danièle said. And that's what I love about Danièle, nothing is ever complicated, no obstacle is insurmountable. In her house in the South, on her desk, there is a paperweight that reads 'Please disturb!' That's the Danièle, I love it! At the start of our collaboration, she told me: "You talk to me about anything you like anytime you like". And I took her up on it. I think that she the person with whom I've spoken most about intimate things.

#### HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

It's those eyes! Her eyes shine with intelligence, curiosity, youth, experience, but without ever moralizing, without anything ever conventional... We laughed a lot together, maybe because we have a certain culture in common, common references. We're marvelously complicit about many things.... First of all, she has known the theater since childhood, and it's not because you feel

touched by serious, indeed grave things that you necessarily have to look sad and sinister, it's not because you have good taste that you are necessarily a stupid bourgeois. Finally, we have another point in common: we don't like pigeonholes and labels. I love how she can always put things into perspective, she understands actors down to the slightest detail, things that seem to be nothing at all, but that can be a hindrance. "In that case, don't bother your head with that!" And that's it. She knows how to lighten the atmosphere! On the shoot, she gave me the beautiful gift of not automatically cutting. She would let the camera roll. So, I tried, and I tried and I tried, and after a while, all I had to do was to be me. That was something that has happened so rarely in my life as an actor. There were some moments of grace that I will always remember. And often in scenes where I'm painting, by the way.

#### HOW DID YOU PREPARE TO PERSONIFY CÉZANNE?

Danièle had me meet one of her friends, a painter from Marseilles with magnificent wrinkles, beautiful eyes and a lovely smile: Gérard Traquandi. The first time I went to see him in his studio – seven or eight months before the shoot – he took a canvas, an easel, and said to me: "Cézanne was like this, with his brushes, his palette, and that's it... So here, have some cobalt blue... and paint that." I had looked at some photos of Cézanne at work. I saw how he held his brushes. I began to paint, and he said: "You have a problem, you want to fill in too fast". I heard what he was saying, because that's something I can be reproached with as an actor too. "Roger and out." "Empty, don't fill in, don't start with anything, start with what you see..." I worked regularly with Gérard. We went to the Musée d'Orsay too. "And what do you think of this painting? A daub, isn't it? Yes, you're right, but you can already see the humility". He would say things like that, things that I liked and that guided me. Thanks to him, with him, I looked at Cézanne's painting a lot. I really took the time to savor it, and especially to



try and understand it – which was not obvious, because for me his approach to his art was more mathematical than literary. In fact, I found my way to Cézanne thanks to color. Gérard told me that he spent his time working the entire scale, from blue to yellow... that helped me enormously. And thanks to my wife too, who is a colorist, I was able to understand, I was able to appreciate Cézanne's modulations... That impressed me, and allowed me to understand painters who came after him. I read quite a lot too. Cézanne and Zola's correspondence too...

#### AND THE MASTERPIECE TOO, I IMAGINE?

No! I hated it. I had hardly begun it and I gave up. On my radio show, I did an entire Zola cycle, with *L'Assommoir*, *Germinal*, and *The Kill*, but not *The Masterpiece*.

#### YOU FELT EXACTLY THE SAME AS CÉZANNE, IN FACT...

In any case, I did not want to be influenced by Zola's view of Cézanne. I wanted to enter the story through Danièle's vision. In fact, I never like to do too much research. I'm more into feeling. And so during my vacation before the shoot, I rented a house near Aix. I saw my friend Bruno Raffaelli, who like Cézanne comes straight out of the same milieu, the grande bourgeoisie of Provence. And he told me something beautiful: "I thought about your film while walking in the pine forests and I thought: 'It's no wonder Cézanne hated the Impressionists', look at those lines... It's all nothing but lines that run on, intersect and collide! The opposite of Impressionism. With what he had before his eyes, he obviously couldn't stand them". And when I asked him about the accent, all he said was "Think of Alain Françon. Elegance!" What good advice! Then, as for preparation, there was of course the work with Dominique Colladant on makeup – that is the only thing I

asked for on this film, that Dominique work with us. And all the reflection about costumes with Catherine Leterrier. How all of a sudden, she would take an old scarf, and bang, that was it! I need to steep myself in that sort of stuff. Finally, it was exciting to look for the voice, the way of moving, holding still, which do not stay the same throughout your life. That was a thrill. And then the teamwork on location.

#### WHAT TOUCHES YOU THE MOST ABOUT CÉZANNE?

What he is looking for. What he is interested in is not a territory, it is landscape... And that terrible feeling of knowing that he was right, but without yet knowing how to do it right. He was very aware of his talent and his powerlessness to sublimate it. It drove him crazy. He was not sure of himself, but he was sure of his art. That is simultaneously fabulous and painful. He will succeed, thanks to his stubborn effort, but primarily to his intransigence against himself. You feel all that in his painting. His evolution is flabbergasting. He goes from a layer of paint a few centimeters thick in the beginning, to practically nothing at the end. I think that's what touches me most, because that's what I aim for too: I look for calm, I look to reduce. I'm not there yet, but I try... So that's it, that's what touches me the most about him.

#### HOW WOULD YOU SAY HE IS CLOSEST TO YOU?

His intransigence. Which is not necessarily considered a virtue – until you're dead! So long as you're alive, it's pretty hard on others and yourself. In fact, it conceals suffering, frustration, a feeling that you're not understood. You're rarely satisfied... Like Cézanne, I can also at times be prey to dark thoughts. When that happened, Danièle and I had a code name: "black dog": Churchill's expression for his moments of depression. She understood. She left me alone.

She didn't hold it against me, and especially because once I began to act, the state of depression vanished.

#### DID YOU WORK WITH GUILLAUME CANET BEFORE THE SHOOT?

We did a read-through with Danièle. We also very simply talked about how our characters developed. "What do you think about this? How will you be able to do that?" It was all simple and natural. Guillaume and I have known each other since we were nineteen. One of my best friends played with him in "La ville dont le prince est un enfant" at the Théâtre Hébertot, and we were at the Cours Florent at the same time, although not in the same class. We even did a weird short subject together at the Mercure in Honfleur, where we caused a lot of trouble! So there is something rock-hard between us. We didn't need to create the proximity between the characters, or their tenderness. It was all already there.

#### WHAT IN YOUR OPINION WAS HIS GREATEST ASSET FOR PLAYING ZOLA?

We are very different from one another. Guillaume is a boss. He is used to leading a team, to going fast. But here we were partners. It was something different. Guillaume seems to work at creating his character laboriously, whereas he is anything but laborious. I'm a little bit the opposite. I love the process, and afterwards, the result... What was touching about Guillaume, is that there is something that I believe is very personal, as regards what he has experienced, what encouraged him to accept the role. As if he really wanted to say what Zola says... What is it that makes people love you one day and spit at you the next? And the doubts that plague you... As if there was something fundamental for him and the rest of world about this sense of mission where politics and human emotion

come together... I love that about Guillaume. And then there is the work that he has been doing in the cinema for some time now, where he internalizes things more. And that mirrors Zola, at least in terms of the couple he forms with Cézanne. It was very interesting because, all of a sudden, that left me wider latitude. But that didn't mean I could ham it up. We had to be careful about becoming too theatrical, even if Cézanne does himself overdramatize at times, but I needed more space. The character of Cézanne is very colorful, and your partner must never feel that you're monopolizing the show. But when Guillaume listens to you, he listens! It's as if you were the only person in the world. That's very rare and very pleasant. And what is more, he has unbelievable charm. As soon as his eyes light up, once you can tell that, despite his modesty, he is hooking up with you, he's irresistible. Whenever Zola lets down his guard, whenever let's himself go, you begin to feel him vibrate...

#### WAS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO SHOOT IN THE PLACES WHERE CÉZANNE LIVED AND WORKED?

In the beginning I didn't think so. I thought that it was totally insignificant. That you might say "How moving", but that it didn't change much. And then one day, in the pine forest, after looking at the pines, and wondering about how Cézanne painted them, and trying to understand how you express the wind and not the tree – which is what Cézanne said: "I want to paint the wind". I could tell that I was beginning to feel moved by things that never touched me before. It was no longer a cliché, this was something that I was feeling myself, about myself. Above and beyond the places, the mood on location counted for a lot. Danièle had a lot to do with that, of course. Never any explosions, never any mood swings. Pure joy! The tone was warm, luminous, enthusiastic... I also loved working with Alice Pol – I literally fell head over heels, I have rarely seen such generosity in an actress. Everything belongs to her the minute she walks into a room... And with Isabelle





Le Gaulois



Candelier too, with Sabine Azéma, even if I don't have many scenes with her, with Déborah François. And with all the members of the crew: Jean-Marie Dreujou, Dominique Colladant, who was right on top of everything, Nicolas Cantin on sound, the continuity girl, the dressers, the editor who, when she came on set, reassured me about my accent, because she is from Marseilles, Florian Genetet-Morel of the production company, Albert Koski, our producer. They were all so kind and encouraging. They were heartwarming...

#### **WAS THERE A SCENE YOU WERE PARTICULARLY NERVOUS ABOUT?**

Yes, just that one scene in which I read a passage from *The Masterpiece* and break down in tears, and say: "This title, *The Masterpiece*, doesn't mean a thing!" I could tell that my emotion was coming at the beginning of the text, and not at the end, where I was supposed to weep. I asked Danièle what touched her about this text. "The calanques, the fountains, all that..." So I asked her to send me some brain waves, to think of that for me while we shot the scene. She was a little surprised, but she must have done it, because the scene went very well, and I was overcome with emotion at the end of the take...

#### **HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT ZOLA, WHO WAS RATHER OPEN TO MODERNITY, COULD HAVE MISSED OUT ON CÉZANNE'S GENIUS? THE LAST SCENE WHERE HE CONDEMNS HIM FOREVER IS TERRIBLE?**

It's horrible, but at the same time, did you see how I leave, how I walk? He is not at all struck down, he is filled with rage... They do not really fall out until Cézanne receives his father's money. They know better! Guilt about success for the one, bitterness about the lack of success and jealousy for the other, and finally,

the two of them blame each other, it's crazy! When I read Zola, there are moments of absolute genius, unbelievable sentences, but I don't think that he was able to understand Cézanne. Zola needed naturalism, 'true-to-lifeness', research, while Cézanne's truth went much farther than what we see, he was into other feelings. In fact, the two of them did not share the same preoccupations, and their paths diverged more and more...

#### **YOU EVEN HAVE TO WONDER HOW THEIR FRIENDSHIP LASTED AS LONG AS IT DID...**

You always need witnesses. It's good to have witnesses, even if they can be disturbing. With them around, you can't cheat. You can't pull the wool over your own eyes. So it's important to keep your witnesses, and to put up with them at times. But what struck me most when I saw the film, is that I have rarely seen a female filmmaker who loves men so much. Danièle truly loves them. In any case these two here, with all their flaws, in all their sublime, grotesque, and touching moments. We all recognize ourselves in the many facets of the one or the other. Especially since beyond Cézanne and Zola there is something universal about friendship, brotherhood, relations that go back to our childhoods – changes en route are terrible! Besides, in the film, the characters call each other Paul and Emile more often than Cézanne and Zola. When the screen went black at the end of the first screening, I remembered how Kirsten Dunst said to Sophia Coppola after having seen MARIE ANTOINETTE: "Now I can stop working".

#### **THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID TO YOURSELF?**

No, I was the opposite. When the lights went back up, I turned to Danièle and said: "Now I can begin to work".

#### **WHY?**

Because I don't think I ever acted as well in my life. You're not supposed to say that, but I'm saying it anyway! (laughter) And so I asked Eric (Ruf, the administrator of the Comédie-Française) to cut it out with "Lucretia Borgia". "Stop I want my balls back!" For the first time I truly loved myself as a man. I'm finished playing women: I just finished the season, and the show will start up again in the autumn, but without me. I liked myself in YVES SAINT-LAURENT, it was a bit more virile than what I had done before, but it was especially the relationship between Bergé and Saint-Laurent that I liked. What I also like about CÉZANNE ET MOI is that I play someone older than my age, but that at the same time there is still a trace of childhood in his face, in his eyes. Those eyes that shine behind the cataracts have always deeply moved me. I always liked that. And all that gave me confidence for the future... It did take me some time to get over the shoot, the adventure. I dreamed a lot about it afterwards. Traces of the troubles we explored have lasted longer than I would have thought... The anger that agitates Cézanne, his tenacity in going to the bitter end with what he feels, his sense of being right where everyone else is wrong, his isolation which still doesn't alter his combative character... I guess you don't dig into all that with impunity.

#### **IF YOU COULD KEEP ONLY ONE MOMENT OR ONE IMAGE OF THE ENTIRE CÉZANNE ADVENTURE?**

I couldn't choose... perhaps that moment when I told Danièle "send me some brainwaves"... perhaps also those moments when she didn't cut. And also that scene toward the end in which I paint in the pine forest. All of a sudden, there was a gust of mistral, a burst in the sky, something mysterious that made me forget to act. I left, forgetting my cane. "Ah shit! My cane!" And I went back for it... It was

magical, like a state of grace... I also like what he says to Volland: "I've made some progress, haven't I?" It's funny, I don't at all identify with Cézanne, I feel light years away from him, but I like him a lot"



*Interview with  
Guillaume Canet*



**WHAT APPEALED TO YOU IN DANIELÈ THOMPSON'S PROJECT WHEN YOU READ THE SCREENPLAY?**

The screenplay actually. It was very well written. I liked the unstructured aspect that set it apart from traditional biopics. And I especially liked the story that goes beyond even Zola and Cézanne. I discovered their relationship, their friendship and then their quarrel. I saw endearing characters rather than emblematic figures. I first saw Emile and Paul, and I liked that. There was a story that could fascinate people today. And a theme that touched me personally, because in my last film I was confronted with harsh criticism and audience indifference. It was a very violent experience. And that is what was at the core of Danièle's project. I thought that the way her film expressed self-doubt, soul-searching, passion for one's own work, whether it be pictorial or literary, what the characters go through, was accurate and magnificent. "What do you think? Do you think that I never wake up in the middle of the night to change a comma?"

When you create, when you write, when you paint, when you make films, those are things you go through every day. You know those situations, feelings, and self-questionings. Moreover, I fell head over heels for the character of Zola. I must admit that I was not much of a connoisseur of his work – other than *The Masterpiece* which I had actually read. I also read *Germinal*, and a few classics they make you read in high school, and which I read in fact rather tediously. I never wondered about the nature of the man Zola, and here all of a sudden I discovered someone who felt rather close to me...

**HOW?**

Someone with a particular itinerary, from a milieu light-years away from his aspirations. His earthy aspect, a little gruff, a peasant... The way that Charles Péguy describes him when he first sees him leaving his house is rather funny. He describes him as a peasant

from some random province, a surly, bear-like man, but who little by little becomes likeable. That could sound a little like me, who on first sight can come across as a little reserved. I am also sensitive to Zola's loyalty to his friends, his uprightness. In short, I could identify with lots of colors, lots of aspects, and that was exciting. And I must say that my first meeting with Danièle was decisive.

**WHY?**

Beyond the fact that Danièle is charming, pleasant and fascinating, I found her so taken up with the subject, that I could see the importance the project had for her. She had had it in mind for a long time, she had pondered it, she had thought about it a lot. I was flabbergasted by all the research she had done. And I was thrilled by the way she spoke about movies, about her theme, their creation, and about her own confrontation with the critics.

**WE HAVEN'T OFTEN SEEN YOU PLAY CHARACTERS WHO REALLY EXISTED, OR PLAY CHARACTER ROLES, DID YOU HAVE TO WORK DIFFERENTLY THAN USUAL?**

I had lately done that in several movies: IN THE NAME OF MY DAUGHTER, NEXT TIME I'LL AIM FOR THE HEART, THE PROGRAM, but this was different. Zola is an icon, a very well known figure. I was worried for a while because I did wonder if I would make a credible Zola. I had to find a new process, a new way of using my voice, I had to gain some weight, age... I began by steeping myself in the character and his times. I read or reread a good part of *the Rougon-Macquart*, I reread *Germinal*, I dissected *The Masterpiece* inside and out, because that is most plausible source of their quarrel, and it is an essential element in the explanatory scene that serves as the main thread of the film. I also read what his contemporaries had to say about him, like



Péguy. I even again watched some films about the Dreyfus Affair. Then I wanted to follow my usual procedure as an actor. I often take inspiration from animals. It may sound strange, but for me it's an important part of the process. They say that man is a rational animal, and that's because he still has animal instincts. And so I try to find an animal that might be close to my character, and I let myself be inspired. When I looked at photos of Zola, there was something that struck me: his beard. The thick, corrosive, and abrasive look of his beard. We find the same thing in his way of working, of searching, investigating, denouncing, and because of his beard and his determination, indeed obstinacy, I thought of... a fox terrier, with its kind of beard and its very dense coat. I also imagined a bear, for its calm strength... besides, as for the bear, I pestered the makeup and hair departments. I was adamant, to the point of telling Danièle that if they didn't find the beard, I couldn't do the role!!! I tried tons of them. And never liked them. They were too soft, too feathery. I wanted thick, like Jean Yanne. A thick beard like a Jex scouring pad. And once they had the beard down, I had the character down. I knew how to place my jaw, how to stand, etc. And then there was all the rest that did: the weight, the costumes – magnificent! – by Catherine Leterrier... And even if I did read Zola's books because I needed to steep myself in the context, to become aware of what inspired him, what he was denouncing... what interested me was the man more than the oeuvre. What excited me was to play the man as he was, someone with whom people today could identify.

#### WHAT ABOUT HIM TOUCHES YOU MOST?

That discrepancy between the oeuvre and the man, the writer who continues to vituperate, to confront the truth of his day, and the man who was becoming respectable, and who had trouble coming to terms with that... And his uprightness and resolve, to which I am very sensitive. He was always sure of himself. During the

Dreyfus Affair, of course – which took place after the events of our film – where he fought the good fight to the bitter end. But also with his wife, whom he didn't want to leave when he fell in love with Jeanne. And of course his loyalty to Cézanne in spite of it all.

#### WHY DO YOU THINK THEIR FRIENDSHIP LASTED SO LONG DESPITE THEIR DISPUTES AND CLASHES?

I think they were examples for each other. Cézanne was very much inspired by Zola's determination and passion, whereas in the beginning he was a bit more of a dilettante, a little more flighty. And Zola was very much inspired by Cézanne, he even stole his life, as he himself said when *The Masterpiece* appeared. They very much nourished each other. Then their paths diverged. The one's success and the other's lack of success and recognition have much to do with that. And still, they were bound by something very, very profound. That is proper to childhood friendships. There is often something indissoluble about them. You may not always feel up to it, but you cannot escape it. When at the beginning of the film Zola says "I could have done without this visit today", he means it, but at the same time, he misses Cézanne. He knows very well that they are going to argue, that they will speak their minds, but he knows that their friendship is a part of him, of his past. They are probably the only ones to say to each other what they are going to say, as if each were the other's prop, the other's mirror.

#### DID YOU WORK WITH GUILLAUME GALLIENNE ON THE PREPARATION?

We did some readings with Danièle, we talked a bit about our characters, but we did the essential work alone. Guillaume and I have known each other for a long time, we met at the Cours Florent, he was good friends with Thierry De Perretti who played with me

in "La ville dont le prince est un enfant" at the Théâtre Hébertot, we played together in NARCO by Gilles Lellouche and Tristan Aurouet, we hung out with the same crowd, so we know each other really well, without being particularly close. On location, it was if we got to know each other again, and that came in handy, with what we had to play. It nourished the film a lot.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS HIS GREATEST ASSET FOR PLAYING CÉZANNE?

Maybe, and I'm taking the risk of displeasing him! (laughter) - his fragility, his constant search for himself, which enriched the character a lot and made him touching. Cézanne is an uncontrollable person, he is always on the razor's edge, he can blow up at any moment, decide to leave Paris on an impulse and go back to Aix! Guillaume is a little like that! Cézanne, despite appearances, is more vulnerable to others' opinions than Zola. He has less social stature and less perspective than his friend. And Guillaume's own palpitations, sensitiveness, fragility, make that aspect very touching. When I saw the film, Guillaume surprised and amazed me. During the shoot, I didn't always understand what he was doing, especially with that raw sensitivity of his. When I saw the film, I suddenly saw what he had been able to build out of the fragility of this character as we went along... always frayed and a little explosive. I've known for a long time that he's a great actor, but on the set I didn't always realize how right what seemed over the top would seem.

#### WAS IT INSPIRING TO FILM IN ZOLA'S GARDEN IN MÉDAN?

Yes, it was unbelievable, and luckily for me, we began the shoot in the house at Médan. When I arrived on the set, Zola's great-granddaughter, a charming woman who now takes care of the house and museum, was there, and in her eyes I could see her

immense surprise, as if she were thunderstruck, as if she had seen a ghost. (laughter) "He's beautiful! You're beautiful! This is crazy, he's HIM! Your look, the way you walk, the way you talk, is unbelievable". She was very moved, and during the entire first day she never stopped photographing me! Wide angle, close up... She showed me the interior of the house, where we didn't shoot, because of the passing trains! She brought me into Zola's office, which has remained intact, and which is obviously permeated by all that he wrote there. I took a picture of the fireplace and its Latin inscription: "sine die, sine linea", (no day without a line). It was moving. When shooting in the garden, to think that he would walk there every day was very inspiring... And then, Cézanne's stone house, his cottage... A real movie set, although this one wasn't one! And the quarries that have remained the same... The place is magnificent. You understand why he stayed there. The light is so beautiful, with crazy color variations all through the day...

#### ZOLA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CÉZANNE IS AT THE HEART OF THE FILM, BUT YOU ALSO GET A STRONG SENSE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER AND WIFE...

Zola had a very particular attitude to women. He lost his father when he was fairly young, he was raised by his mother, and focused all his affection on her, who did the same for him. Then his love for his wife Alexandrine is in a certain sense the prolongation of that love. Besides, he imposes his mother on her. As he said to her: "I am not ready to live totally with a woman, without my mother." I was very struck by a book that inspired me quite a lot. Letters to Alexandrine... you can see how much he loved her, but without any fire or passion. He writes her multiple details, but he never takes fire. I tend to think that he did not discover physical love until very late, when Jeanne, the young laundress came into his life. She aroused his desire, she awoke his senses...







Of course I was surprised when Danièle told me that Isabelle Candelier would be playing my mother. She can't be more than ten years older than I am! But it worked out very well, especially since you often see us together when I play Zola young. I very much liked how she played the character, a very strong and very sensitive woman, funny even, a woman who does not hold back, who has an established place in the family, with a good mix of authority and finesse. I also liked working with Alice Pol, who plays Alexandrine. I love the scene in which she turns me on in front of the fireplace. Awesome. With simultaneous deftness and depth. She puts across all the ambiguities of their relationship, sometimes with nothing more than her eyes... all the feelings of this woman who has temperament, who can sense that her husband's love is entirely sincere, albeit it at the same time a little platonic, and who knows that she will always love him, and always support him... And Freya Mavor, who plays Jeanne, is fantastic too, even if she has so little dialogue. She manages such heady stuff in very few scenes. I love the scene in the laundry room in which I watch her, and she turns around and looks at me, and I feel like I've been caught red-handed!

#### **WHAT DO YOU EXPECT OF A DIRECTOR, SINCE YOU ARE ONE YOURSELF?**

That he sticks to his desires, to his ideas. I expect him to make me vibrate, to make me want to act for him, to make me want to be up to what he imagined when he chose me. There is nothing more exciting on location than to play for a director. I love it. I realize that when I choose to do a film, it's always as a member of the audience – will I want to see this film? Will I want someone to tell me this story? On the other hand, once I've decided to do it, my relationship with the director is the only thing that counts. I then embark on a process of collaboration and sharing that I adore. I had that on my first films, with Téchiné, with Anger, Frears and with

Danièle. She's made a beautiful film, and I loved working with her and for her. She gives you little information, but when she does, it's precise, clear, in your face even. She knows exactly what she wants, even if she remains open to all propositions. And then, she had put together a fabulous crew, with Jean-Marie Dreujou, the director of photography – it was a wonderful encounter, not only does he light very well and is full of ideas, but he is passionate, he knows how to look at actors. The prop man Ludovic Guillé, whom I hired for my next film, by the way, the technicians, the production staff... Danièle was able to instill her own enthusiasm in all of them.

#### **WHEN YOU SAW THE FILM, WHICH SCENES TOUCHED YOU MOST?**

Strangely enough, and I still don't know why today, I was very touched by the scene in which I am young and bring back the sparrows, and my mother says: "Do you miss him?" and I change the subject and go out to get some coal, and when opening the door, I run into Guillaume with a hare and a bottle of olive oil: "You're going to like this one", and they fall into each other's arms. Even when shooting it, I felt a surge of emotion at the end of the take that I didn't see coming. And the same thing happened when I saw the film. I was also very touched by Guillaume's look at me at the end when he hears me say about Cézanne: "An aborted genius". And also the scene in the evening, when I go down to talk to him on the pontoon.... And obviously, the long scene in the study in which Zola suddenly lets down his guard. That scene was both pleasant and unpleasant to shoot, because I was unable to control the emotion that I had been holding back during entire shoot. Here I was submerged... And I really like the shot that Danièle chose, because you can tell that I'm fighting against the emotion, and it's just too strong for me.

*The women in Cézanne  
and Zola's lives*

BY DANIELLE THOMPSON





**ALEXANDRINE ZOLA**  
*Alice Pol*

Madame Zola is a fascinating character. You could make a movie about her. She was a young girl born into poverty, an unwed mother who gave up her baby at birth, and who lived from hand to mouth. She became the perfect housewife, a respectable bourgeoisie who spent her whole life caring for her husband and his work. And who was able nevertheless to rise up above the notorious Jeanne affair, the laundrywoman with whom Zola fell in love, and with whom he had two children, whereas they were never able to have any. Worse yet, she learned it all from an anonymous letter! Zola was able to persuade her to remain and to accept his double life: he wrote in the morning, joined his mistress and children for lunch, spent the afternoon with them, and came home for dinner and slept with his wife. Even if she travelled a lot then, she still took care of everything. She lived through the Dreyfus Affair with him. For all, she was Madame

Zola, the model wife of a world-famous writer. She never wanted to see Jeanne again, even though she had liked her a lot when she was in their service, but she did see her children. After Zola's death, she approached Jeanne and offered to adopt the two children, so that the Zola name would not die out. I noticed Alice Pol in Danny Boon's SUPERCONDRIAC. She is a very good actress. She also impressed me because she's a real woman. She's beautiful, but not too much so. She has real personality, real sensuality, without any artifice. Her lust for life comes through in the way she acts. She stayed in the back of my mind, and when I began casting CÉZANNE ET MOI, I thought of her for Alexandrine. And especially because she can play a young girl, and once transformed, a mature woman with something matronly about her.



**HORTENSE CÉZANNE**  
*Déborah François*

Unlike the Zolas who are a very close-knit couple, and who will remain so, whatever happens, the Cézannes are a bizarre kind of couple. Let's say that Paul tolerates Hortense more than he loves her. They had a son whom he loved dearly, but that was never what counted most in his life. He hid her existence from his father, and for a long time refused to marry her. There is not much written about her, and so in a certain way I felt a little freer. I made her an awkward woman, not very astute, or very tactful, but touching because she was not very popular. On the other hand, Cézanne painted lots of portraits of Hortense, in which she is almost always in blue, so Catherine Leterrier and I decided to dress her in blue. But there are no nude portraits of her. And so I imagined that they were part of the paintings that Cézanne destroyed! There's something beautiful about a woman posing nude for a painter... Especially since that can show to what

degree painters can be real tyrants, true torturers, and their wives martyrs, condemned to sit motionless for hours... I always liked Déborah François very much. She is beautiful and, at the same time, she has a kind of veiled look, there's something mysterious in her eyes that touches me deeply. I asked her to audition, to play a scene I had written on purpose, a scene of revolt, much the same as in the film, in which she no longer accepts being treated like an object, and she was great – and unbelievably in key. And, which also counted, she can look 20 just as well as 35. She has a very interesting combination of youth and maturity.



**JEANNE**  
*Freya Mavor*

Jeanne, the young laundrywoman who was to wreak havoc on Zola's heart and life, was a difficult role to cast, because the film only shows their encounter, and not the life in common that followed. She's a very important character, but it was almost a silent role. I was afraid that it would scare away all the actresses I would offer it to. I was totally bowled over by Freya Mavor in Joann Sfar's film, *THE LADY IN THE CAR WITH GLASSES*

AND A GUN. I thought she was magnificent. And I was both amazed and delighted that she accepted to play a character with no dialogue. She was right, her silent presence is impressive... Freya has the same simplicity, the same sensuality, the same youth as Jeanne – all those things that set the heart of the 'old' 48 year-old Zola on fire...



**EMILIE, ZOLA'S MOTHER**  
*Isabelle Candelier*

Emile and Paul had their love for their mothers in common. I found it interesting to take advantage of the bond that mothers necessarily feel with their son's best friend. When children grow up, when they become "old", their childhood friends become "old" too, but there always remains a special indulgence, a kind of tenderness... Hidden within the old gray-haired man there is still the little boy who used to come for late afternoon snacks. I thought it was nice to play on that, because that is also part of the story of the friendship between these two boys. Emilie, Zola's

mother, and Alexandrine, his wife, did not get along at all. That made him suffer, because he worshipped his mother. Besides, he always wanted her to live with them, which was a source of conflict – even if Alexandrine took good care of her during the last months of her life. Cézanne's mother did not always understand her son or his aspirations, but he was her son, and she had simpler, more affectionate relations with him than her husband, who was very harsh...





**ANNE-ELISABETH, CÉZANNE'S MOTHER**  
*Sabine Azéma*

I have loved Sabine (Azéma) for a long time. She made several films with my father. I loved working with her on SEASON'S BEATINGS, and it was a great pleasure to work with her again. Especially since for the secondary roles, like Tanguy or Vollard, I needed actors who can make their mark on the film the moment they appear. Who take over the scene, who appropriate the dialogue. Whenever Laurent Stocker or Christian Hecq appear, the scene immediately comes to life. It's the same with Sabine.

And Isabelle Candelier too. I liked her work a lot, but I didn't know her personally. She wasn't really old enough to play Guillaume Canet's mother! But I sent her the screenplay anyway, and when we met, I knew she could be Zola's mother, and that she would be able to look at Cézanne with great tenderness. She has tremendous gentleness, modesty and subtlety.





# *The sources of inspiration*

*Danièle Thompson carried out a great deal of research  
before directing the film. Here are some examples.*



**SELF-PORTRAIT**

*Paul Cézanne Self-Portrait 18  
1873/1875 Musée d'Orsay*





# **PORTRAITS OF ZOLA**

*There are many photos of Emile Zola.*



# **GUILLAUME CANET**

*In Emile Zola's actual office at Médan.  
(under renovation until the opening of the Zola-Dreyfus museum in 2017)*





**LETTER SENT 22 APRIL 1866**

*To the Comte de Nieuwerkerke, Superintendent of the Beaux-Arts.  
(Zola wrote part of it with his friend Paul)*

“Monsieur, I recently had the honor of writing to you about two paintings that the jury has refused. (...)

I would only like to reiterate that I cannot accept the illegitimate judgment of colleagues to whom I have never entrusted the task of appreciating me (...) I would like to appeal to the public and be shown nevertheless (...)

Let the Salon des Refusés be reopened. Even were I to find myself alone, I ardently desire that the crowd knows at least that I no more want to be confused with the gentlemen of the jury than they seem to want to be confused with me...

I trust, Monsieur, that you will agree to break your silence.

It seems to me that any reasonable letter merits its response.”

*Paul Cézanne*



*The band arrives at the official salon, the artists are in high spirits,  
handing a bottle round.*



**A PHOTO OF EMILE ZOLA**  
*Greeting his guests at the door  
to the house in Médan.*



*Filmed at the identical location: Paul and Hortense arrive  
for their last visit at the Zola's.*



**A RARE DOCUMENT**  
Emile Zola in his study in Paris,  
rue de Bruxelles.

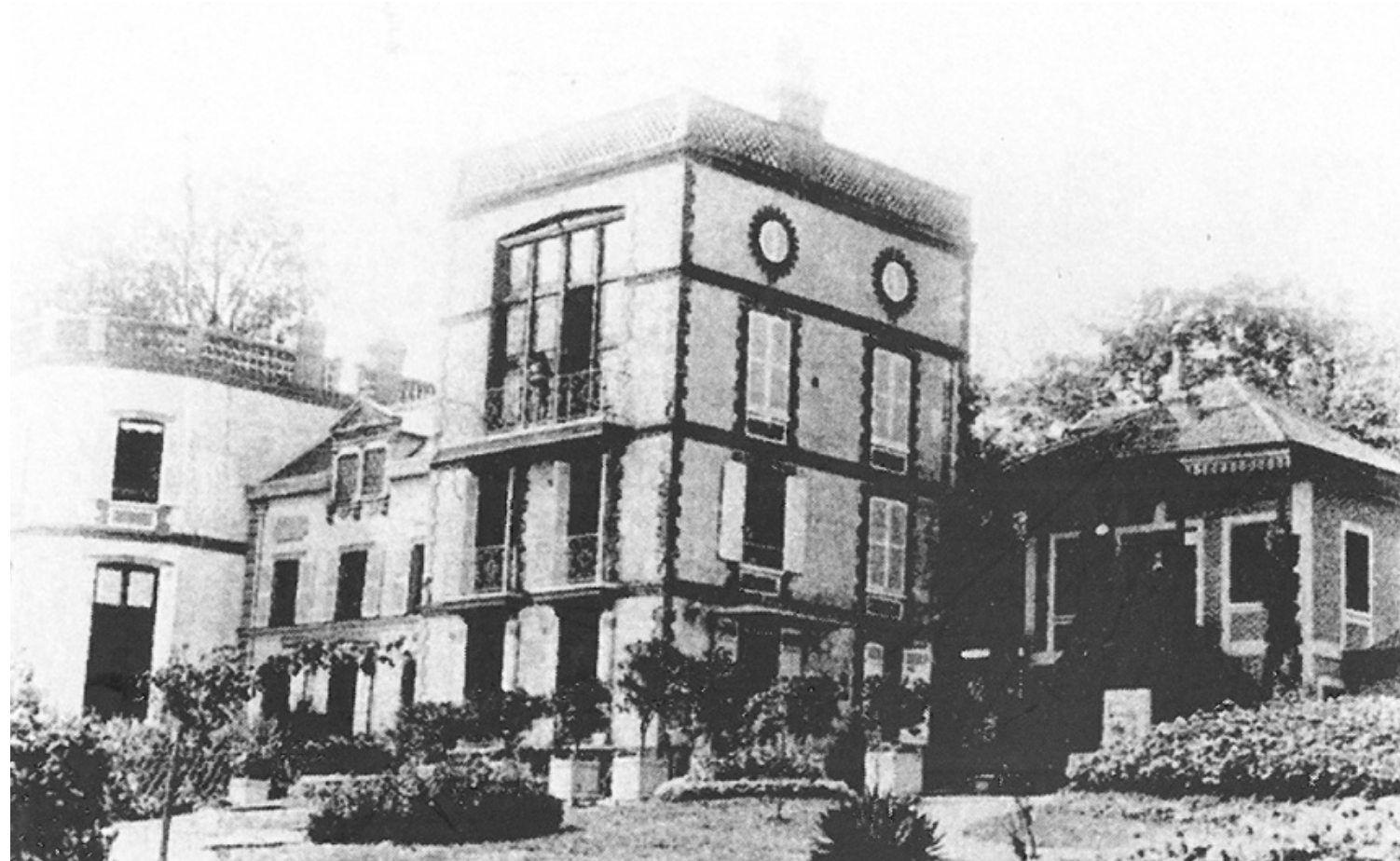


*“Emile goes to sit at his desk. He picks up  
a fountain pen to incite Paul to leave”.*



### HOUSE IN MÉDAN

*Scenes were shot in the garden and in the laundry room of the Zola house in Médan.  
A moving and magical moment thanks to Martine Leblond-Zola,  
the author's great-granddaughter, and to the generosity of Pierre Bergé,  
who has undertaken the renovation of the house.*



*“In front of the house in Médan, Alexandrine, Hortense and Eugénie  
spread sheets to dry on the lawn.”*



*Caillebotte was a source of inspiration.*

---

**CANOTIER COSTUME**

*A copy of the costume in "Oarsman in a Top Hat" 1878, Private collection, Paris, worn by Frédéric Bazille in the film.*



*For the picnic scene, an homage to Jean Renoir.*



**HORTENSE, MUSE AND WIFE**  
*La belle endormie, played by Déborah François who poses endlessly  
 for her husband Paul Cézanne.*



*Danièle Thompson showed Déborah François this pastel by Degas.  
 Nude Reclining Woman, 1886/1888 – Paris, Musée d'Orsay*



Cast

<b>GUILLAUME CANET</b>	<i>Emile Zola</i>
<b>GUILLAUME GALLIENNE</b> <i>from the Comédie-Française</i>	<i>Paul Cézanne</i>
<b>ALICE POL</b>	<i>Alexandrine Zola</i>
<b>DÉBORAH FRANÇOIS</b>	<i>Hortense Cézanne</i>
<i>with the participation of</i> <b>SABINE AZÉMA</b>	<i>Anne-Elisabeth Cézanne</i>
<b>GÉRARD MEYLAN</b>	<i>Louis-Auguste Cézanne</i>
<b>ISABELLE CANDELIER</b>	<i>Emilie Zola</i>
<b>FREYA MAVOR</b>	<i>Jeanne</i>
<i>with the participation of</i> <b>LAURENT STOCKER</b> <i>from the Comédie-Française</i>	<i>Auguste Vollard</i>

<b>A FILM BY</b>	<i>Danièle Thompson</i>
<b>SCREENPLAY</b>	<i>Danièle Thompson</i>
<b>PRODUCER</b>	<i>Albert Koski</i>
<b>COPRODUCER</b>	<i>Alain Terzian</i>
	<i>Romain Le Grand</i>
	<i>Vivien Aslanian</i>
	<i>Nadia Khamlichi</i>
	<i>Gilles Waterkeyn</i>
	<i>Bastien Sirodot</i>
<b>ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS</b>	<i>Florian Genetet-Morel</i>
	<i>Ardavan Safaee</i>
<b>LINE PRODUCER</b>	<i>Michel Schmidt</i>
<b>PRODUCTION MANAGER</b>	<i>Jacques Arhex</i>
<b>ORIGINAL MUSIC</b>	<i>Eric Neveux</i>
<b>CINEMATOGRAPHY</b>	<i>Jean-Marie Dreujou, AFC</i>
<b>EDITING</b>	<i>Sylvie Landra</i>
<b>COSTUMES</b>	<i>Catherine Leterrier</i>
<b>SET DESIGNER</b>	<i>Michèle Abbe</i>
<b>SFX</b>	<i>Dominique Colladant</i>
<b>HAIR</b>	<i>Ghislaine Tortereau</i>
<b>SOUND</b>	<i>Nicolas Cantin</i>
	<i>Alexandre Fleurant</i>
	<i>Vincent Arnardi</i>
<b>FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR</b>	<i>Denis Bergonhe</i>

Crew

<b>A COPRODUCTION</b>	<i>G Films</i> <i>Pathé</i> <i>Orange Studio</i> <i>France 2 Cinéma</i> <i>Umedia</i> <i>Alter Films</i>
<b>IN ASSOCIATION WITH</b>	<i>Sofitvcine 3</i> <i>La Banque Postale Image 9</i> <i>Cinéma 10</i> <i>Cofimage 27</i> <i>uFund</i>
<b>WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF</b>	<i>Canal+</i> <i>Ciné+</i> <i>France Télévisions</i>
<b>WITH THE AID OF</b>	<i>the Tax Shelter of</i> <i>Federal Gouvernement of Belgium</i> <i>and of the investors of Tax Shelter</i> <i>of the Region</i> <i>Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur</i>





