

Viva Varda!



Exhibition curator: Florence Tissot

With the artistic collaboration of Rosalie Varda

**With the gracious authorisation of Ciné-Tamaris and Agnès Varda's estate:
Succession Varda**

Exhibition presented at La Cinémathèque Française

Wednesday 11 October 2023 to Sunday 28 January 2024



Illustration:

Uncle Yanco (Oncle Yanco) (1967), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris

Viva Varda!

Paris: Wednesday 11 October 2023 to Sunday 28 January 2024

Roaming exhibition dates: from February 2024

Exhibition produced by La Cinémathèque française
with the collaboration of Ciné-Tamaris and Succession Agnès Varda



Document for internal use only.

The iconography proposed in this document is indicative of the works that will be presented in the exhibition. The use of visuals is subject to the approval of the copyright holders and responses from the lenders contacted for the loan of works.

By default, unless otherwise mentioned in the legend, all Agnès Varda photographs and installations are © Succession Varda.

Unless otherwise stated, the films are by Agnès Varda.

The portraits drawn of Agnès Varda are signed by Christophe Vallaux © Ciné-Tamaris.

The photos with badge are from Agnès Varda's short film, *Uncle Yanco* (*Oncle Yanco*) (1967) © Ciné-Tamaris.

Contents

Contents	4
I- Presentation of the exhibition	6
Agnès Varda (1928 – 2019)	8
II- Synopsis	9
III- Exhibition structure	11
1. Here and there: Varda and images	11
2. Cinematic Writing (Cinécriture)	15
3. The families of Agnès	19
4. Inquisitive globetrotter	29
1. Feminist, happy and free	36
IV- Biographical information	41
Biography of Florence Tissot	41
Biography of Rosalie Varda	41
Biography of Agnès Varda	41
V- Filmography	43





Presentation of the exhibition

“I never choose just one version of things. I find it unfair to show so much sunshine and colour without also showing the darker shadows and the faces within an anonymous crowd.”

Agnès Varda.

“The photographer, filmmaker and artist, Agnès Varda (1928-2019), spent 70 years creating a personal work which was fundamentally rooted in its time. Her filmography boasts over forty short and feature-length films between fiction and documentary, including her greatest hits, *Cléo from 5 to 7* (*Cléo de 5 à 7*) (1962), *Vagabond* (*Sans toit ni loi*) (which won a Golden Lion in 1985) and *The Gleaners and I* (*Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*) (2000). Varda is a major internationally-renowned French director and one of the rare women of her generation to have had a successful career as a filmmaker. She is also one of the few directors who can be identified by the general public. The youngest associate her with the artist JR, with whom she was still on the road in 2016-2017 (*Faces Places* (*Visages villages*)), while others know her as a trailblazer of the New Wave movement with *La Pointe courte* in 1955. The themes of feminism, ecology and marginality transect her films, making the work very relevant to the modern day.

Varda was a hard worker and an artist of conviction. Her talent can be seen in her debut as a photographer in the 1950s, through her rigorous frames, attention to detail and composition. From dark room to Rolleiflex, Leica and later iPhone, some of her photography work still remains to be discovered and will be displayed throughout the exhibition. In the early 2000s, cinema was no longer enough for her. She ventured into museums, which were then increasingly opening up to the 7th art, thereby demonstrating her extraordinary ability to capture the zeitgeist in its aesthetic, thematic and political dimensions.

Throughout her life, she mixed and collaborated with very varied figures, including actors like Catherine Deneuve, Michel Piccoli, Sandrine Bonnaire and Jane Birkin; singers like Jim Morrison (whom she met in Los Angeles) and Madonna (who was interested for a time in a remake of *Cléo from 5 to 7* (*Cléo de 5 à 7*)); artists and photographers like Brassai, and, of course, Jacques Demy. This diversity reflects a work in perpetual motion, spanning an exceptional length of time, and which also lends itself for exhibitions as she embraced different forms and media. Although Agnès Varda started her career as a photographer and reinvented herself as a visual artist at the age of 70, her key focuses and motifs kept coming back over many decades. We will therefore opt for a thematic rather than a chronological exhibition, leaving us with multiple possibilities given the diversity of her work.

Today, Varda has left us with work that cannot be categorised, where unique stories, obsessions, humour, fun and colours come back time and time again, often using very modest resources. We would like the exhibition to respond to her world through a joyful and warm atmosphere, expressed through hanging mobiles by Calder (whom Varda photographed with his family), the works of René Magritte and the *Nanas* by Niki de Saint-Phalle (which appear in her films) and *The Seasons* by Arcimboldo (rediscovered by the 20th century surrealists) with one painting included in the exhibition. This could be a way of considering her network of cultural influences while also creating a fun and colourful graphic exhibition route. Examples could include the sunny colours of *Lions Love (...and lies)* (1969) or the vibrant and pastel colours of *Le Bonheur* (1964), inspired by the Impressionists.

Finally, Varda likes to awaken the gaze. “You don’t have to show things. You just have to give people the desire to see”. Her creation remained centred on pleasure, discovery and transmission. Her facetiae, the literary quality of her comments filled with spirited words, her incredibly recognisable voice and her exceptional talent as an exegete could be demonstrated through quotations, extracts from interviews and her person, which was caricatured so frequently, thereby giving visitors a friendly presence.”



Agnès Varda (1928 – 2019)

The photographer, filmmaker and artist, Agnès Varda, spent 70 years creating a personal work which was fundamentally rooted in its time. She was a trailblazer of the New Wave movement and one of the rare women of her generation to have had a successful career as a filmmaker.

Her filmography boasts over forty short and feature-length films between fiction and documentary, including her greatest hits, *Cléo from 5 to 7* (*Cléo de 5 à 7*) (1962), *Le Bonheur* (which won the Louis Delluc Prize in 1965), *Vagabond* (*Sans toit ni loi*) (which won a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1985) and *The Gleaners and I* (*Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*) (2000).

Her early interest in painting and literature, along with her experience in theatre, strongly shaped her conception of the seventh art. A globetrotter and artist of conviction, Varda also paid close attention to the world and social upheavals. The themes of feminism, ecology and marginality transect her work, making it very relevant to the modern day.



Illustration:
Agnès Varda on the set of *The Creatures* (*Les Créatures*) (1966), photograph by Marilou Parolini © Ciné-Tamaris

Synopsis

1. HERE AND THERE: VARDA AND IMAGES
2. CINEMATIC WRITING (CINÉCRITURE)
3. THE FAMILIES OF AGNÈS
4. INQUISITIVE GLOBETROTTER
5. FEMINIST, HAPPY AND FREE



Illustrations:
Le Bonheur (1965), photograms © Ciné-Tamaris
Daguerréotypes (1975), photograms © Ciné-Tamaris
Jane B. for Agnès V. (Jane B. par Agnès V.) (1988), photographs by Sylvie Scala © Ciné-Tamaris
The Gleaners and I (Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse) (2000), photograms © Ciné-Tamaris

Exhibition structure

Here and there: Varda and images

“I prefer dreaming to psychology. I like jumping from one thing to another, having fun and taking chances, moments of emotion, furtive feelings and things that pass quickly.”

Agnès Varda

This first part welcomes visitors with the very familiar figure of Agnès Varda. It introduces them to the multiple registers of images with which she played her entire life, including self-portraits, photographs, painting, along with her love for incongruous associations and cats.

The director with her two-tone hairstyle became known to the public thanks to the many interviews she gave following her initial success at the Cannes Film Festival in 1962. Today, she comes across as an accessible and popular figure, a role model for younger generations, because the director made herself a character in film by using her image and voice.

She appeared in *Jane B. for Agnès V. (Jane B. par Agnès V.)* (1988) through the theme of the artist and their model. By reinterpreting classic paintings with Jane Birkin, she passed on her love of art history, which she had discovered as a young student at the École du Louvre. In *The Beaches of Agnès (Les plages d’Agnès)* (2008), she features as the producer of her own film in the Ciné-Tamaris production company in Rue Daguerre. This street was both a living and working space. She photographed Brassai here in 1954 for the television, before regularly filming its retailers and atmosphere over the following decades (*Daguerréotypes*, 1975). It was where her and Jacques Demy’s family home was located, which was both a private living space and the set of numerous films.

Varda often took photographic self-portraits, such as her *Self Portrait in Venice with some of Gentile Bellini’s men (Autoportrait à Venise parmi quelques hommes de Gentile Bellini)* (1960). In the 1950s, in parallel to her activity as a senior reporter, she took more personal shots (self-portraits, nudes, still lifes, etc.), showing an appetite for humour and collage, which she kept to herself. A selection of 27,000 mostly never-before-seen negatives is presented here for the first time, but from this period, we only know the photographs she took for the Avignon Festival and the Chaillot National Theatre. After this, Agnès Varda often mentioned photography in her films, especially in her short film, *Ulysse* (1983), where she showed behind the scenes and Henri Cartier-Bresson’s decisive moment. By commenting on a photograph taken several years earlier, Agnès Varda freely navigates through time, between fixed and moving images.

“The tool of any autoportrait is the mirror. You can see yourself in it. Turn it in the other direction, you see the world.”



Illustrations:

Etruscan mosaics that Agnès Varda used as inspiration for her *Mosaic Portrait (Autoportrait mosaïque)* © ARR
Mosaic Portrait (Autoportrait mosaïque), photograph (1949) © Succession Varda
Self-Portrait in Venice with some of Gentile Bellini's men (Autoportrait à Venise parmi quelques hommes de Gentile Bellini),
 photograph (1960) © Succession Varda
Agnès in front of her self-portrait in Venice (Agnès devant son Autoportrait à Venise), photograph, JR (2017) © Ciné-Tamaris
 and Social Animals
Broken Portrait (Autoportrait brisé), photograph (2009) © Succession Varda
The Seasons, Summer, painting, Giuseppe Arcimboldo © 2013 RMN-Grand Palais / Michel Urtado

Agnès Varda's photography studio and laboratory
Rue Daguerre in the 1950s



In 1949, aged 21, Agnès Varda became a photographer. She developed this activity in parallel to her films until the late 1960s. Alongside her day job as a senior reporter, she took portraits of her friends and artists, and continually photographed herself using her Rolleiflex or her dark room. She posed in her studio in Rue Daguerre and in nature or museums alongside works of art. These many self-portraits demonstrate both formal and personal research.

Illustrations:
Photographs © Succession Varda



“Three words are important to me: inspiration, creation and sharing. Inspiration is why we make films. What’s the theme? What’s the idea? What’s the circumstance? What’s the lucky chance that means that a desire takes root and we work to make a film. Creation is how we make the film. With what equipment? With what structure? Alone or not? In colour or not? And the third word is sharing because you don’t make films to watch them alone. You make films to show them to others”

Illustrations:

Diary of a Pregnant Woman (L’Opéra-Mouffe) (1958) © Ciné-Tamaris

La Pointe courte (1955) © Ciné-Tamaris

Cléo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7) (1962), photographs by Liliane de Kermadec © Ciné-Tamaris

Cinematic Writing (Cinécriture)

“I coined this word “cinécriture” (cinematic writing) and now I use it to describe the work of a filmmaker. It refers to the work of the screenwriter who writes but does not film and the work of the director who stages it. This can be the same person.”

Agnès Varda

Varda defended “free cinema” and her status as an “*auteur*”, while simultaneously building reflexive and complex female leading characters, who were still rare in the early years of cinema.

Agnès Varda’s first steps into cinema were neither the result of academic learning nor experience as an assistant slowly climbing the ladder on set, as was the case for all aspiring directors. Nor did Varda come up with her first film in reaction to other filmmakers, as most cinema-loving filmmakers did throughout the New Wave movement. In 1954, at the age of 26, Varda opened the door to contemporary cinema with *La Pointe Courte* by borrowing form and structure from literature. She tells the alternating story of a couple (played by Sylvia Monfort and Philippe Noiret) and a neighbourhood of fishermen in Sète.

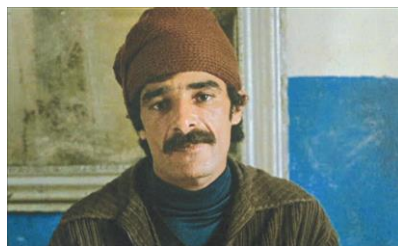
The documentary modernity of the natural backdrops, the theme of a couple in crisis and the importance of the places on the actions of the characters struck many important figures. André Bazin and then François Truffaut, Nathalie Sarraute and Marguerite Duras hailed her first film – edited by her friend Alain Resnais – a forerunner of the French New Wave, and an echo of non-realist Italian cinema, which was perceived in France at that time as one of the most innovative post-war genres. *Diary of a Pregnant Woman (Opéra Mouffe)* was filmed in 1958 while Agnès Varda was pregnant with Rosalie, confirming her refusal to adopt a psychological approach and her capacity to use documentary images to portray a fictional character’s mental state.

“Cléo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7) is the portrait of a woman within a documentary about Paris, but it’s also a documentary about a woman and a rough portrait of Paris.”

With *Cléo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)* (1962), Varda once again developed an innovative formal and narrative structure with existential problems, this time experienced by a beautiful blonde singer whose fear of illness awakens her to the world around her. Cléo transforms *in real time* from 5am to 6:30am from a woman “objectified by the gaze of others” to a fully-fledged person who finally sees others.

Twenty years later, the director once again raised the question of cinematographic language, or *cinécriture* as she preferred to call it, with *Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi)* (1985), which received great critical and public acclaim. This feature-length film starring Sandrine Bonnaire refuses classic narration. It is fictional with a documentary texture, painting a hollow portrait of Mona, an independent and enigmatic vagabond through those who have met her. With music by Joanna Bruzdowicz, thirteen journeys (from left to right) break up the narrative of this character who is filled with such freedom that it eventually killed her.

All these films are emblematic of a work across multiple territories, with a special attachment to the women who lived there. What happens to the characters is not as important as what connects them to the world.



Illustrations:
Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi) (1985), photograms and photographs from set and filming © Ciné-Tamaris

*“Mona’s anger kept her alive.
But saying no to everyone
would eventually lead her to
her death.”*



“These series of photographs are moments in time. I have already made lots of films but never with scenes of violence. Except one time in Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi). It was the story of Mona, a vagabond, played by Sandrine Bonnaire, who was revolted, furious, dirty and in danger, like many people alone on the road.

I was aware of a very ancient custom, re-enacted once a year in the village of Courmonterral near Montpellier. For a few hours that day, monsters called “paillasses”, dressed in wild animal skins and straw-stuffed top hats, attack passers-by with old rags soaked in wine sediment. In my film, the very violent scene when they attack Mona barely lasts a minute or so. First I watched the scene in slow motion and then I chose to isolate images in frames. The images shown are frames of 1/24 of a second captured in this film sequence. It’s worth looking at them closely. I realised that nothing was left of the film, the narrative, the paillasses or Mona, but a flurry of movement and colours. They are simply fragments of moments of violence, more reminiscent of painting than cinema.”

*Agnès Varda about the photography installation **Instants Arrêtés (moments in time)** (2012)*

Illustrations:

Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi) (1985), photograms and photographs from set (various photographs) © Ciné-Tamaris
Photography installation *Instants Arrêtés (moments in time)* (2012) © Succession Varda



Illustration:

On the set of *One Hundred and One Nights (Les Cent et Une Nuits de Simon Cinéma)* (1995), photograph by Nathalie Eno © Ciné-Tamaris

The families of Agnès

“At the Festival of Tours in 1958, I presented Along the Coast (Du côté de la côte). Jacques Demy presented Le Bel Indifférent. He was not indifferent to me.”

Agnès Varda

This section looks at Varda’s films through the idea of a puzzle or a cinema with multiple drawers.

Let’s play with the 7 imaginary families of Agnès, which correspond to her different lives: **theatre**; **New Wave**; **Jacques Demy, her other half**; **Rosalie, Mathieu and other children**; the **large family of cinema** (iconic actors and anonymous people); the **visual arts**; and, of course, **animals**.

The family of theatre. Agnès learnt photography by spending her summers at the Avignon Festival with Jean Vilar. She met him in Sète where Agnès’ family sought refuge following the wartime exodus of 1940, living on a sailboat moored in the city’s port. Varda later became the official photographer of the Chaillot National Theatre (*Théâtre National Populaire - TNP*) and took the portraits of Jean Vilar, Maria Casarès, Gérard Philipe and others.



Illustrations:

Photographs by Agnès Varda at the TNP:

Maria Casarès, Jean Vilar, Silvia Monfort, Gérard Philipe, Jeanne Moreau © Succession Varda
Agnès Varda in her laboratory © Succession Varda

The family of New Wave. Agnès met most of the New Wave crew in 1958 through Jacques Demy. After the success of *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*) in 1959, Jean-Luc Godard recommended Demy to Georges de Beauregard who was looking for young filmmakers capable of making innovative and cheap films. After directing *Lola*, Jacques then introduced Agnès to the producer, through whom she was able to make her second feature-length film, *Cléo from 5 to 7* (*Cléo de 5 à 7*). By helping one another, strong friendships were born, especially with Jacques Rivette, Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina.

However, from the start, the director distanced herself from the film-loving journalists of *Les Cahiers du cinéma*. She explains how they ignored her after a screening of *La Pointe Courte*: “They were quoting thousands of films and proposing goodness knows what to Resnais... I was there by anomaly. I felt small, ignorant and I was the only girl in the boy’s club of Les Cahiers”. Critics tended to attribute the original narrative structure of *La Pointe Courte* to Alain Resnais’ editing, even though Varda had innovatively blended two heterogenous stories in her screenplay. In 1959, the magazine celebrated *Hiroshima, My Love* (*Hiroshima mon amour*) as the first film that alternated two different stories, thereby forgetting Varda’s daring trailblazing work and symbolically erasing her creativity.

From the second half of the 1960s, when the history of New Wave was starting to be written, Varda was given the nickname of “grandmother” while Jean-Pierre Melville or Jean Rouch (despite being ten or so years older) were considered brothers or fathers of the New Wave. Associating Varda with a more distant and perhaps even more passive figure, was part of a certain unconscious misogyny within the group.



The only female director of the New Wave cleverly reinterprets René Magritte’s photomontage *Je ne vois pas la (femme) cachée dans la forêt* (*I do not see the (woman) hidden in the forest*).

Illustrations:

Agnès Varda and Jean-Luc Godard on the set of *Cléo from 5 to 7* (*Cléo de 5 à 7*) (1962), photograph by Liliane de Kermadec © Ciné-Tamaris

Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais and Jacques Demy in 1964, photograph by William Klein © William Klein
 Front cover of *Les Cahiers du cinéma* no. 130, April 1962 © ARR

Je ne vois pas la (femme) cachée dans la forêt (*I do not see the (woman) hidden in the forest*), photomontage (1929), René Magritte © ARR

The Beaches of Agnès (*Les Plages d’Agnès*) (2008), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris



“I was perhaps the first in the New Wave to say that we had to shoot cheaply, quickly and with total freedom of expression, and that we had to try to break down somewhat the realism of the films of that time.”

Illustration:
Agnès Varda in the USA wearing a “Jean-Luc Godard” badge © ARR



Illustrations:
On the set of *The Young Girls of Rochefort* (*Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*) (1966), photographs by Jacqueline Louis © Ciné-Tamaris

Jacques Demy and her other half. With him, Agnès formed a mythical and atypical couple, a far cry from the director and his muse. They were two filmmakers proposing innovative films, who shared their life but did not work together. Agnès never involved Jacques in the writing and directing of her films. But without hesitation, she wrote the song in *Lola* for him when he couldn't and she came onto some of his sets and took photographs. After his death in 1990, she made three films drawing on her grief as a living material. *Jacquot de Nantes* (1991) is the story of a cinematographic vocation that was born in early childhood. In *The Young Girls Turn 25* (*Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans*) (1993), Agnès returned to the city of Rochefort to recall happy memories of filming. Finally, in *The World of Jacques Demy* (*L'Univers de Jacques Demy*) (1995), she gathered tributes from his co-workers and friends.



Illustrations:

Catherine Deneuve on the set of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (*Parapluies de Cherbourg*) by Jacques Demy (1964), photograph by Agnès Varda © Ciné-Tamaris

Agnès Varda with Jacques Demy who received the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival in 1964 © ARR

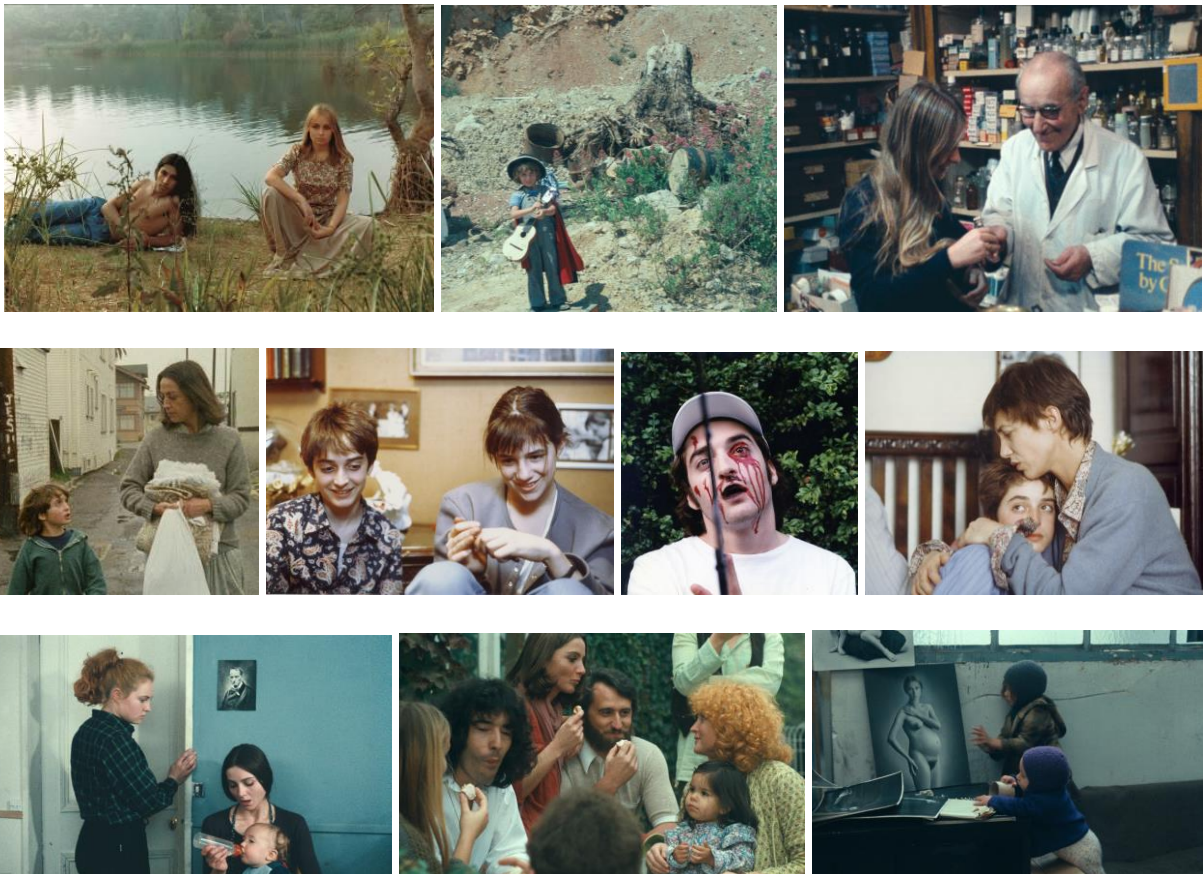
Agnès Varda and Jacques Demy, photograph by Rosalie Varda © Ciné-Tamaris

On the set of *Jacquot de Nantes* (1991), photograph by Daniel Guibert © Ciné-Tamaris

On the set of *Model Shop* (1969) by Jacques Demy © ARR

Rosalie, Mathieu and the children of cinema. Like other artists, Agnès Varda liked to film her children to celebrate a memory or mark a moment in time. Beyond this affectionate gesture, all emotion and fragments of life became matrices of creation for her as she deliberately blurred the lines between fiction and documentary. Her children embodied a new generation or a time of life in around ten films. Rosalie Varda (Marie) symbolises future feminism in *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* (*L'une chante, l'autre pas*) (1977) and Mathieu Demy (Martin) witnesses a couple falling apart in *Documenteur: An Emotion Picture* (1981), which is Agnès' most personal film. But there is fiction with other children of cinema. In *Kung-fu Master* (1987), Varda once again filmed her son Mathieu (Julien) as a teenager who loves video games. In this story written with Jane Birkin, the actress acted alongside her own children, Charlotte Gainsbourg (Lucie) and Lou Doillon.

Fictional film once again mixed with family film in 2011 in *Americano* directed by Mathieu Demy. Thirty years later, he played Martin again, as an adult, using extracts from *Documenteur: An Emotion Picture* as flash backs for his character.



Illustrations:

- Rosalie Varda in *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* (*L'une chante, l'autre pas*) (1977), photograph by Robert Picard © Ciné-Tamaris
 Mathieu Demy in *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* (*L'une chante, l'autre pas*) (1977), photograph by Robert Picard © Ciné-Tamaris
 Rosalie Varda in *Daguerréotypes* (1975), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris
 Mathieu Demy and Sabine Mamou in *Documenteur: An Emotion Picture* (1981), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris
 Charlotte Gainsbourg and Mathieu Demy in *Kung-fu Master* (1987), photograph by Sylvie Scala © Ciné-Tamaris
 Mathieu Demy in *One Hundred and One Nights* (*Les Cent et Une Nuits de Simon Cinéma*) (1995), photograph © Ciné-Tamaris
 Jane Birkin and Mathieu Demy in *Kung-fu Master* (1987), photograph by Sylvie Scala © Ciné-Tamaris
 Children in *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* (*L'une chante, l'autre pas*) (1977), photographs from set © Ciné-Tamaris

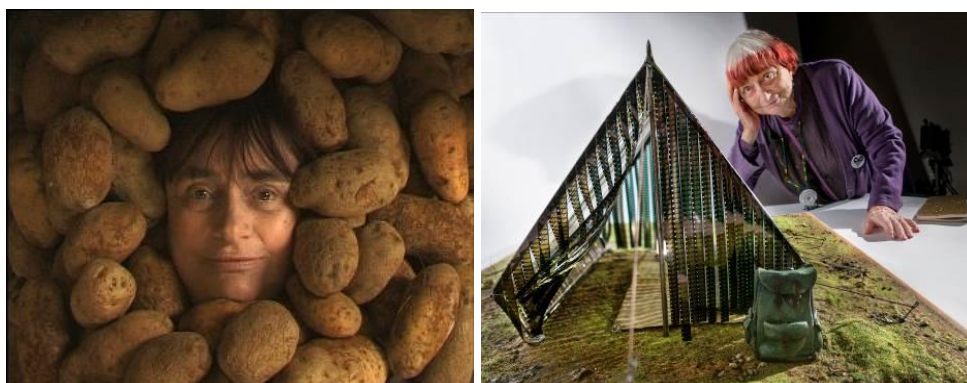
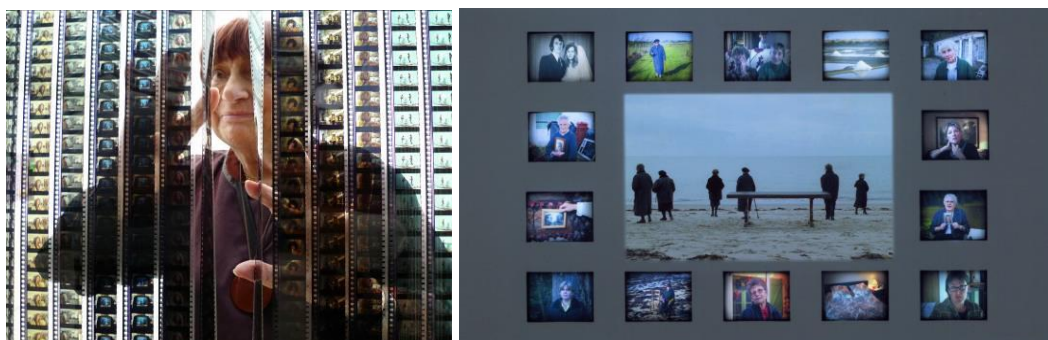
Large family of cinema and anonymous figures. Agnès worked with professional actors but also lots of anonymous figures. These included the famous Michel Piccoli and Catherine Deneuve in *The Creatures* (*Les Créatures*) (1966), but also Marcello Mastroianni who acted in *One Hundred and One Nights* (*Les cent et une nuits de Simon Cinéma*) (1995) alongside a myriad of iconic actors: Jeanne Moreau, Hanna Schygulla, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon, Julie Gayet, Mathieu Demy, Fanny Ardant, Gérard Depardieu, Robert De Niro, Anouk Aimée, Gina Lollobrigida, and more. To celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of cinema, Agnès revisited scenes with them that she had loved.



Illustrations:

One Hundred and One Nights (*Les Cent et Une Nuits de Simon Cinéma*) (1995): Jeanne Moreau, Hanna Schygulla Michel Piccoli, Catherine Deneuve, Robert de Niro, Julie Gayet, Marcello Mastroianni, Romane Bohringer, Gérard Depardieu, photographs by Nathalie Eno, Arnaud Borrel © Ciné-Tamaris
Gallery of anonymous figures filmed in *Diary of a Pregnant Woman* (*L'Opéra-Mouffe*) (1958), *Daguerréotypes* (1975), *The Gleaners and I* (*Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*) (2000), *Faces Places* (*Visages Villages*) (2015) © Ciné-Tamaris

The family of contemporary art: In 2003, curator and art critic Hans Ulrich Obrist invited Agnès Varda to exhibit at the Venice Biennale of Art. She designed the video installation *Patatutopia* which she presented dressed as a potato. This was followed by many exhibitions, including *L'Île et Elle* at the Fondation Cartier in 2006. While continuing to make films, Agnès Varda drew from her past work to create new works in the form of objects and installations. At a time of digital copies, she was especially known for her cinema shacks. The roofs and walls were made by assembling film rolls that were no longer needed in the projection booth, but which she recycled to create new emotions.



Illustrations:

Agnès and *The Shack of Cinema*, photograph by Julia Fabry (2012) © Succession Varda

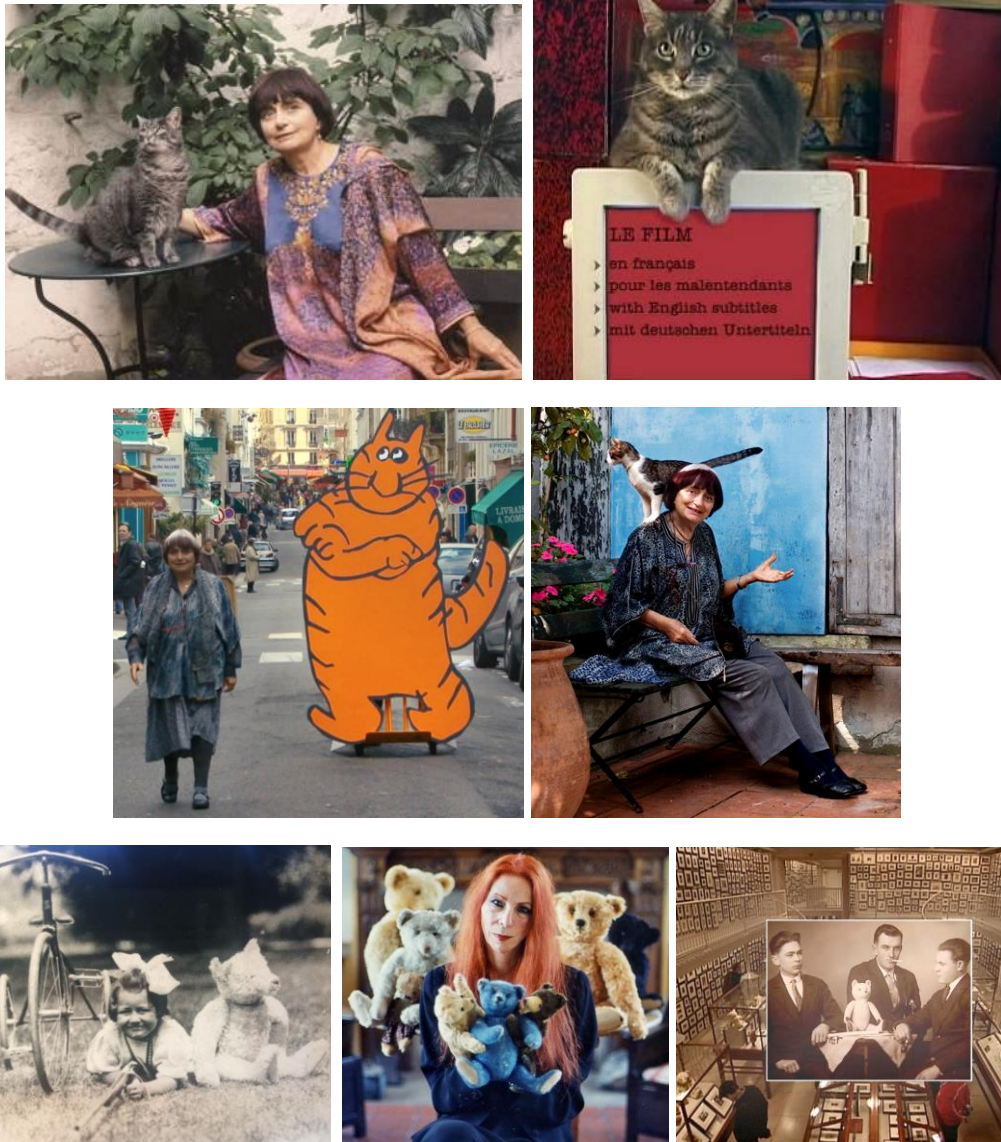
Installation *Les Veuves de Noirmoutier* (2005) © Succession Varda

Patatutopia (2003) © Succession Varda

Agnès in front of a mock-up of the tent from *Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi)* (2017) © Succession Varda

Agnès in front of the greenhouse from *Le Bonheur*, photograph by Julia Fabry (2018), courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia © Ciné-Tamaris

Cats and bears. Like her friend Chris Marker, cats regularly appeared in Agnès' photographs and films, especially the famous Nini and Zgougou (to whom a tomb has been dedicated). In the early 2000s, bears were added to Agnès' bestiary after discovering a collection by Canadian artist Ydessa Hendeles. This encounter led to the creation of *Ydessa, the Bears and etc.* (*Ydessa, les ours et etc.*) (2004).



In *Ydessa, the Bears and etc.* (*Ydessa, les ours et etc.*), Agnès Varda gives her perspective on a collection of photographs that all have bears in them. These were dreamlike places for the former photographer who was fascinated by the effects of speech on image and image on speech.

Illustrations:

Agnès and Zgougou, photograph © Ciné-Tamaris

Zgougou, DVD menu for *The Gleaners and I* (*Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*) (2000) © Ciné-Tamaris

Agnès and Chris Marker's cat Guillaume in Egypt in *The Beaches of Agnès* (*Les plages d'Agnès*) (2008) © Ciné-Tamaris

Agnès and Nini, photograph © Ciné-Tamaris

Ydessa, the Bears and etc. (*Ydessa, les ours et etc.*) (2004), photograms © Ciné-Tamaris



Illustration:
The Gleaners and I (Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse) (2000), photograph by Didier Doussin © Ciné-Tamaris

Inquisitive globetrotter

“I do not accept some stupid schemes. And I enjoy observing cultural traditions.”

Agnès Varda

This part highlights the social and nomadic nature of Agnès Varda’s films. From her experience as a photographer, Varda retained an appetite for documenting the world, its political upheavals and cultural changes. She was close to Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard (with whom she shared a political conscience and a taste for the traditional arts) and travelled to China in 1957 and to Cuba in 1963 as a photographer.

In 1967, she took part in the collective adventure *Far From Vietnam (Loin du Vietnam)*, a series of short films that criticised American imperialism. Her contribution was not selected for the final edit (along with those by Michèle Ray and Ruy Guerra) and her footage was lost. In 1970, the French Radio and Television Office (ORTF) commissioned *Nausicaa* (1970), which was a narrative that alternated fiction based on her Greek origins with stories from refugees about the Greek junta. The film was censored by the French State which was in the midst of an arms deal with Greece.

Varda’s very prolific filmography in the 1960s and 1970s is a testimony of an incredible artistic and poetic effervescence spanning the Cuban Revolution with *Salut les Cubains* (1964) in which she photographed Fidel Castro and the socialist freedom movement, and the American Civil Rights movements for which she filmed their demands in *Black Panthers* (1968). She also captured the hippie movement and American counter-culture with *Viva*, Andy Warhol’s superstar, the avant-garde filmmaker Shirley Clarke, and the two authors of the musical *Hair*, James Rado and Gerome Ragni (*Lions love (... and lies)*, 1969). Returning to California in the early 1980s, Agnès Varda looked at (now extinct) mural art by various communities in Los Angeles (*Murals Murals (Murs murs)*, 1982) who expressed themselves outside of museums.

In all these films, Varda was first and foremost involved as a filmmaker; a position that remained unchanged over the following decades when discussing other social issues such as the exclusion of poor people or waste in *The Gleaners and I (Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse)* (2000). In this film, the filmmaker asked the crucial question of ecology while defining her cinema as somewhere between dreams and rigorous orchestration. She retained a curiosity for “museum paintings” and took us into a world of anonymous gleaners and amateur artists like herself.

Agnès Varda spanned many decades that witnessed social changes and significant technological advances. The light video camera that she bought at the turn of the century gave her new freedom. “*Small digital cameras were an opportunity for me to film differently. I was able to do more personal and intimate things. These small cameras meant that I could approach people in precarious situations.*” Agnès’ perspective – which was political and always focused on others, while remaining inextricably linked to continuous aesthetic revival – was embodied in 2017 in *Faces Places (Visages Villages)*.



In 1957, during Mao Zedong’s brief period of political openness, known as the “Hundred Flowers Campaign”, Agnès Varda travelled across China for two months with a French delegation. Armed with her Rolleiflex and Leica M3, she took thousands of photos.



“I was invited to Cuba in 1962 at a time of enthusiasm for Cubans and excitement about this revolution among the political left. I took hundreds and hundreds of photographs with the intention of refilming them and animating them.”



Agnès Varda returned to Cuba in spring 1963 and after several weeks away, she gave a black doll to her blonde daughter, which can be seen as a desire to share her openness to the world.

Illustrations:

Photographs taken in China (1957) © Succession Varda
 Photographs taken in Cuba (1963) © Succession Varda
 Nazaré, Portugal, photograph (1956) © Succession Varda
 Travellers, Marseille, photograph (1958) © Succession Varda
 Agnès Varda and Rosalie Varda (circa 1964) © ARR



Black Panthers is a short documentary film made in Oakland (California) in 1968 during protests linked to the arrest of their leader Huey Newton, whom Agnès Varda interviewed in prison. Armed with a 16 mm camera on loan from militants from Berkeley University, and posing as a journalist from “French Television”, Varda documented a specific moment in the troubled history of America’s Black population.



In *Murals Murals (Murs murs)*, Varda shoots the many mural paintings of Los Angeles, which no longer exist. Whether a collective dream or personal vision, these images tell the story of the Californian city and its different communities.

Illustrations:

Black Panthers (1968), photographs © Ciné-Tamaris
 Photograph of a protest against the Vietnam War, Agnès Varda (1968) © Succession Varda
 Photograph taken in San Francisco, Agnès Varda (1968) © Succession Varda
Murals Murals (Murs murs) (1982), photographs © Ciné-Tamaris



Illustrations:

Viva, Agnès Varda and Shirley Clarke on the set of *Lions Love (... and lies)* (1969), photograph © ARR

Lions Love (...and lies) (1969), poster © Ciné-Tamaris

Lions Love (...and lies) (1969), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris

Love-in in California (1969) © Succession Varda

Photograph of badges belonging to Agnès during her American period (late 1960s) © ARR

Cover of *interVIEW* magazine, first issue from November 1969, magazine © ARR

On the set of *Lions love (...and lies)* (1969), photograph by Jeffrey Blankfort © Ciné-Tamaris

One inquisitive mind meets another



In 2015, the 87-year-old filmmaker met a 32-year-old artist. He belonged to the Instagram generation and she was New Wave. While he hid his eyes behind black sunglasses, she was slowly losing her sight.

This improbable encounter led to a road trip across the French countryside, resulting in the 2019 film *Faces Places (Visages Villages)*. Throughout this adventure and their growing friendship, Varda and JR photographed anonymous faces and filmed workers talking. This was mixed together with Agnès' memories, like her fascination for mural paintings in Los Angeles, the photographs she took in the 1950s and her past friendship with Jean-Luc Godard. Like a final ode to imagination, JR photographed small parts of Agnès (her toes and her eyes), blowing them up out of proportion and sticking them onto a tank wagon travelling across the countryside.



Illustrations:

Faces Places (Visages villages) (2017) co-directed by Agnès Varda and JR, photographs from filming © Ciné-Tamaris and Social Animals

“I think that the only quality we need to develop for documentaries is to love what we film.”



“Agnès took me into her world. Although we both narrate the film, it’s all in Agnès Varda’s style and she did the editing. For Agnès, poetry and cinema and not only to be found in cinema, but in life itself. That’s how she experienced it and it had a profound effect on me. What’s more, the truth is that we didn’t actually choose the ending. It was imposed on us by the freedom we gave ourselves to throw bottles into the sea and leave poets to retrieve them.” JR

Illustrations:

Faces Places (Visages villages) (2017) co-directed by Agnès Varda and JR, photographs from filming © Ciné-Tamaris and Social Animals



Agnès Varda in front of JR's “magical” photographic truck

Illustration:
Faces Places (Visages villages) (2017) co-directed by Agnès Varda and JR, photographs from filming © Ciné-Tamaris and Social Animals

Feminist, happy and free

“I do not know when I understood that it was not just a matter of being free, but that the fight of women would be collective or nothing at all.”

Agnès Varda



In the early 1960s, Agnès Varda photographed Delphine Seyrig in her courtyard and then on the set of *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*). They became friends and were even closer during the 1970s when they shared and came up with feminist projects.



Illustrations:

Delphine Seyrig, photograph by Agnès Varda © Succession Varda
 Delphine Seyrig and Agnès Varda interviewed by Swiss television in 1972, photogram © ARR
 Delphine Seyrig and Agnès Varda at a feminist protest © Carlos Santos, Agence Gamma, Rapho & Keystone
 Agnès Varda and lead camera operator Nurith Aviv on the set of *Daguerréotypes* (1975) © ARR
 The “Manifesto of the 343” published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, magazine cover (1971) © ARR
One Sings, the Other Doesn't (*L'une chante, l'autre pas*) (1977), photograph by Robert Picard © Ciné-Tamaris
Women Reply (*Réponse de femmes*) (1975), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris
Women Reply (*Réponse de femmes*) (1975), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris
Quelques femmes bulles, directed by Marion Sarraut, written and performed by Agnès Varda (1978), photograph by Carlos Freire © Ciné-Tamaris

“Changes to women had always interested me. I didn’t see why they couldn’t do difficult things. I rebelled against the idea that someone could give me a role, suggest that I got married and had a quiet job.”

Agnès Varda’s feminism manifested itself first and foremost through her free and fighting spirit, and in her personal, family and professional life choices. In 1954, she created a cooperative to make *La Pointe Courte*, which went on to become her production company, Ciné-Tamaris. Varda was her own producer, not always by choice but in order to keep control of her films and avoid making too many concessions.

However, the filmmaker did receive support on many occasions, especially by female producers such as Mag Boadard. In *Le Bonheur* (1965), which they made together, Varda gave an innovative depiction of the couple, while refraining from judging their relationships. This film in warm tones is like a “beautiful fruit filled with maggots”, leaving a chilling impression. On its release in cinemas, the director’s failure to take a moral standpoint shocked audiences and resulted in her being condemned by the Catholic Church. Her third feature film was given an age rating of 16.

Varda’s feminist sensitivity was manifested in her desire to “shed the clichés” and myths surrounding women. In *The So-Called Caryatids* (*Les Dites cariatides*) (1984), commissioned for television by the Franco-American producer Teri Wehn-Damisch, Varda becomes a *flâneuse*, in the spirit of Charles Baudelaire, observing Parisian buildings. She looks back on the history of the maidens of Karyai, who were immortalised in stone by their victors to leave a trace of their humiliation. *“I noticed that statues, like literature, repeated clichés. Atlases are statues of men, represented in positions denoting effort and strength, while the Caryatids seem to be bearing the load with charm and grace. It’s funny because buildings weigh the same for everyone!”*

Of all her films, *One Sings, the Other Doesn’t* (*L’une chante, l’autre pas*) is the feature film that most openly signifies her commitment to women’s rights. It tells of the joy of sisterhood and collective happiness in the struggles for the legalisation of abortion. In 1971, Varda herself signed the Manifesto of the 343. For a time, she participated, most notably alongside Delphine Seyrig, in feminist actions and projects, as illustrated by her short film *Women Reply* (*Réponse de femme*) in 1975, or by the fact that she and Jacques allowed their house to be used for illegal abortions.



Illustration:
The Beaches of Agnès (*Les plages d’Agnès*) (2008), photogram © Ciné-Tamaris

Sisterhood was then strongly embodied through the special bond between Agnès and her daughter Rosalie, who produced and accompanied her in all her last films, right up to *Varda by Agnès* (*Varda par Agnès*) in 2019. The 91-year-old filmmaker proposed an in-depth look at her images using film extracts and “lessons from cinema”. By sharing certain keys to understanding her work, she demonstrated a wish to pass this on, along with incredible endurance, a certain level of control over her work and the ability to project herself within her own posterity. This documentary concluded the journey of a strong woman juggling the many roles of photographer, director, artist, occasionally producer and also exegete of her own work.



Through this, Agnès Varda’s career came to a close with great openness to others, especially her peers and other female directors. In 2018, on the steps of Cannes Film Festival, her feminist commitment took on an especially sensational and jubilant dimension with an initiative organised by Collectif 50/50. 82 women, including Agnès Varda who had recently won an Honorary Palme d’Or in 2015 and an Honorary Oscar in 2017, demanded greater gender equality and diversity. “*We want things to change*”, declared the filmmaker alongside Cate Blanchett and Ava DuVernay.

Since 2021, prizes have been awarded to many female directors at prestigious ceremonies, including Chloé Zhao for *Nomadland* at the Oscars, Julia Ducournau for *Titane* at Cannes Film Festival, Audrey Diwan for *Happening* (*L’Événement*) at Venice Film Festival, and Carla Simón for *Alcarràs* and Claire Denis for *Both Sides of the Blade* (*Avec amour et acharnement*) at the Berlinale. In March 2022, Maggie Gyllenhaal won best Feature, Best Director and Best Screenplay for *The Lost Daughter* at the Independent Spirit Awards of Los Angeles. This recognition marks a new more inclusive and richer era that does not forget the many women directors, who, since Alice Guy, have often been erased from history or received insufficient recognition.

To conclude the exhibition, we could propose a number of short stories from figures who knew, loved or spent time with Agnès Varda. They would have 1 minute to spontaneously describe this multi-faceted artist who was always focused on the next generations.



Illustrations:

Varda by Agnès (*Varda par Agnès*) (2019), photographs from filming © Ciné-Tamaris
Agnès Varda with her awards, *Varda by Agnès* (*Varda par Agnès*) (2019), photograph from filming © Ciné-Tamaris

“I am not taking this Palm from anyone as there is no competition, but I receive it as a Palm of resistance and endurance.”



Honorary César in 2001



Honorary Palme d'Or in 2015



Honorary Oscar in 2017

Agnès Varda is one of the rare female filmmakers who successfully established an enduring career. It was a long road in a field where women directors have not always been granted much space. Varda’s close connection with viewers and students finally led to her being recognised by her peers from the 2000s.



The symbolic climb up the Cannes Film Festival stairs in 2018 was organised on the initiative of Collectif 50/50. 82 women in cinema called for greater gender equality and diversity. The number 82 corresponds to the number of women who had been shortlisted for the Cannes Film Festival Palme d’Or since its first edition in 1946, compared to 1,688 men. *“The stairs of our industry must be accessible to all. Let’s climb!”* concluded Agnès Varda and Cate Blanchett, President of the Jury that year.

Illustrations:

Agnès Varda receiving an Honorary César in 2001, photograph © ARR

Agnès Varda receiving an Honorary Palme d’Or at Cannes Film Festival in 2015, photograph © ARR

Agnès Varda receiving an Honorary Oscar in Los Angeles in 2017, photograph © ARR

Agnès Varda and Cate Blanchett during the protest on the stairs at Cannes Film Festival, 2018, photograph © ARR

Protest on the stairs at Cannes Film Festival, 2018, photograph © ARR



Illustration:
Agnès Varda surrounded by caricatures by Christophe Vallaux © Ciné-Tamaris

Biographical information

Biography of Florence Tissot

Florence Tissot has co-curated numerous temporary exhibitions at La Cinémathèque Française, including *Maurice Pialat*, *Jean Cocteau et le Cinématographe*, *François Truffaut*, *Chris Marker*, *Vampires* and *CinéMode par Jean Paul Gaultier*. She regularly has articles published in cinema catalogues and magazines.

Biography of Rosalie Varda

Rosalie Varda is a costume designer for cinema, theatre and opera. She has worked with Jacques Demy, Samuel Fuller, Jean-Luc Godard, Agnès Varda, Mathieu Demy, Yves Robert, Bruno Bayen, Alain Françon, Jean-Claude Auvray, Robert Fortune, Karine Saporta and Antoine Bourseiller. Since 2008, she has managed the family business, Ciné-Tamaris, which distributes films by Agnès Varda and Jacques Demy, where she also works as artistic director for exhibitions and books. She produced the film *Faces Places (Visages Villages)* (2017), co-directed by Agnès Varda and JR, along with Agnès Varda's final film, *Varda by Agnès (Varda par Agnès)* (2019). Alongside her work at Ciné-Tamaris, she collaborated with the Cannes Film Festival between 2001 and 2020 before being appointed Senior Advisor at mk2 films for the distribution of heritage films.

Biography of Agnès Varda

Agnès Varda was born in Ixelles (Brussels) on 30 May 1928 and was a French photographer, director and visual artist. She lived in Belgium with her four brothers and sisters before the war caused the family to move to the South of France in 1940. She spent her teenage years in Sète and then in Paris where she studied photography at the École du Louvre and the École de Vaugirard. She married filmmaker Jacques Demy (who passed away in 1990), with whom she raised Rosalie Varda-Demy, costume designer and, later, artistic director, and Mathieu Demy, actor and director.

Photographer

Varda was a photographer when Jean Vilar launched the Avignon Festival, created in 1948, and then for the Théâtre National Populaire (TNP) group, of which Gérard Philipe was an emblematic figure. She created her first personal exhibition in 1954 in the courtyard of her house on Rue Daguerre in the 14th *arrondissement* of Paris, followed by a number of photographic reports in China, Cuba, Portugal and Germany. Throughout her travels and through the people she met, she created portraits of unknown and famous people from her era.

Filmmaker

In 1954, four years before the New Wave movement, without any training or assistance, Agnès created the Ciné-Tamaris company (a cooperative) to produce and create her first feature-length film, *La Pointe Courte*. Her best-known films include *Cléo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)* (1961), *Le Bonheur* (1964), *Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi)* (1985), *Jacquot De Nantes* (1991), *The Gleaners and I (Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse)* (2000), *The Beaches of Agnès (Les plages d'Agnès)* (2008), *Agnès Varda: From Here to There (Agnès de-ci de-là Varda)* (2011), *Faces Places (Visages Villages)* (2017, co-created with the artist JR). Her complete cinematographic works received an

Honorary César in 2001, the Académie Française René-Clair Award in 2002, an Honorary Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2015, and an Honorary Oscar in 2017.

Artist

In 2003, at the Venice Biennale of Art, Agnès Varda launched her career as a visual artist. Her installations were mainly exhibited at the Venice and Lyon Bienalles, the S.M.A.K. in Ghent, the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain and the Galerie Martine Aboucaya in Paris, the CRAC in Sète, and the 41st edition of the Basel Art Fair.

Filmography

- 1955 *La Pointe Courte*
 1958 *Ô saisons, ô châteaux* (short film)
 1958 *Diary of a Pregnant Woman (L'Opéra-Mouffe)* (short film)
 1959 *Along the Coast (Du côté de la côte)* (short film)
 1961 *The Fiancés of the Bridge Mac Donald (Les Fiancés du pont MacDonald)* (short film)
 1962 *Cléo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)*
 1964 *Salut les Cubains* (short film)
 1965 *Le Bonheur*
 1965 *Elsa la rose* (short film)
 1966 *The Creatures (Les Créatures)*
 1967 *Uncle Yanco (Oncle Yanco)* (short film)
 1969 *Lions Love (...and lies)*
 1968 *Black Panthers* (short film)
 1970 *Nausicaa* [TV]
 1975 *Women Reply (Réponse de femmes)* [TV]
 1975 *Daguerréotypes*
 1977 *The Pleasure of Love in Iran (Plaisir d'amour en Iran)* (short film)
 1977 *One Sings, the Other Doesn't (L'Une chante, l'autre pas)*
 1981 *Documenteur: An Emotion Picture*
 1982 *Murals Murals (Murs murs)*
 1983 *Ulysse* (short film)
 1983 *One Minute For One Image (Une minute pour une image)* [TV series]
 1984 *7 p., cuis., s. de b., ... à saisir* (short film)
 1984 *The So-Called Caryatids (Les Dites cariatides)* (short film)
 1985 *Vagabond (Sans toit ni loi)*
 1986 *You've Got Beautiful Stairs, You Know (T'as de beaux escaliers, tu sais)* (short film)
 1987 *Kung-fu Master!*
 1988 *Jane B. for Agnès V. (Jane B. par Agnès V.)*
 1991 *Jacquot de Nantes*
 1993 *The Young Girls Turn 25 (Les demoiselles ont eu 25 ans)*
 1995 *One Hundred and One Nights (Les cent et une nuits de Simon Cinéma)*
 1995 *The World of Jacques Demy (L'univers de Jacques Demy)*
 2000 *The Gleaners and I (Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse)*
 2002 *Two Years Later (Deux ans après)*
 2003 *Le Lion volatil* (short film)
 2004 *Ydessa, the Bears and etc. (Ydessa, les ours et etc.)* (short film)
 2008 *The Beaches of Agnès (Les plages d'Agnès)*
 2011 *Agnès Varda: From Here to There (Agnès de ci de là Varda)* [TV series]
 2015 *The Three Buttons (Les trois boutons)* (short film)
 2017 *Faces Places (Visages villages)*
 2019 *Varda by Agnès (Varda par Agnès)*

