A film written and directed
by AGNÈS VARDA and JR

1H29 / FRANCE / 1.85 FLAT / 5.1

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Agnès Varda, whose unique cinematic vision since the 1950s has earned her a loyal following of enthusiastic cinephiles around the world, and the iconic photographer/muralist JR, boasting over a million followers on Instagram, have more in common than one might imagine.

Both share a lifelong passion for images and how they are created, displayed, and shared. Agnès chose to explore her passion through cinema and documentary, JR through his emotionally arresting open-air photo installations.

When JR, a long-time fan, went to meet Agnès at her home on Rue Daguerre, they both knew immediately they wanted to work together. VISAGES VILLAGES (FACES PLACES) documents their heartwarming journey through rural France and the unlikely, tender friendship they formed along the way.
Painting of very ancient miners and ancient miners in Bruay-la-Buissière.

VISAGES VILLAGES (FACES PLACES)
Conversation between AGNÈS VARDA and JR
based on an interview by Olivier PERE on January 31, 2017.

Olivier Père: How did this film come about? Why did you want to make this film together?

JR: Let’s start at the beginning.

Agnès Varda: My daughter Rosalie thought it’d be nice for us to meet. We liked the idea.

JR: I made the first step. I went to see Agnès, at Rue Daguerre. I photographed the legendary façade of her place, where she’s lived a hundred years. And I took photos of her with a cat.

AV: Your grandma’s a hundred, not me. Not yet. The next day, I went to see him at his studio. I took portraits of him, and quickly realized he wasn’t going to remove his sunglasses.

JR: We met again the next day and the day after for tea.

AV: I immediately sensed we’d do something together.

JR: At first we talked about a short film…

AV: … A documentary.

JR: And my habit of listening to them and spotlighting what they say, would lead to something.

JR: We engaged life too, since the film’s also the story of our encounter.

JR: Wherever we are, we can tell pretty quickly whether we’re going to make a connection.

AV: One thing I like about you is how fast you work.

JR: As soon as we meet someone, you’re already imagining what we could do with them. For instance, the postman in Bonnieux whom I knew and wanted you to meet because I like postmen. I like letters and stamps. You communicate essentially on the web and get 20,000 ‘likes’ when you post an image, and here you agreed to turn that postman into a village hero, in giant format.

JR: Three stories tall.

AV: He was proud to be so big. From there we drove to Alpes-de-Haute-Provence.

JR: And someone told us about the factory near Château Arnoux.

AV: I knew the guy from the local movie theater, Jimmy. I’d presented Yagabond there.

JR: He showed us the factory.

AV: It’s a little dangerous (an upper-tier Seveso industrial site). We were curious and went to check it out.

JR: They played along with us for a group photo. Some of the other places I assumed I was introducing you to, but it turned out you’d already been there years before. I was inspired by photos you took a long time ago.

AV: The collages in the film are the fruit of our collaboration.

JR: That’s true.

AV: Like the big goat with horns. I took that picture when we were location scouting.

JR: We spent a lot of time with Patricia, the woman who kept her goats’ horns instead of burning them off at birth like everyone else.

AV: People are intense when it comes to their work and words. That woman grew very impassioned about goats and their horns, her conviction was impressive.

JR: And in the North too we heard some powerful things.

AV: The mines are all gone today, but we met a woman, Jeannine, who’s the last inhabitant in a row of miners’ houses. She talked about her father who was a miner, and the former miners shared some beautiful stories about a world we know little about. It was interesting to hear them talk with such fervor. We were touched by Jeannine.

JR: You delve deep when you interview people. I was captivated to see you lead those conversations.

JR: Agnès wanted to get me out of cities.

AV: That’s right, because you’re truly an urban artist. And I love the country. We quickly hit on the idea of villages. That’s where we’d meet people, and that’s what happened. We took off in your photo truck.

JR: The truck’s the actor in the film, always putting on a show.

AV: But this was our project and we set off in it together.

JR: We quickly hit on the idea of villages. That’s where we’d meet people, and that’s what happened. We took off in your photo truck.

JR: We got to know each other on the road through the project and the amusing experience of working as a duo.

JR: Of miners’ houses. She talked about her father who was a miner, and the former miners shared some beautiful stories about a world we know little about. It was interesting to hear them talk with such fervor. We were touched by Jeannine.

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JR: We met people and came up with some ideas there.

JR: We took a lot and try out ideas. Then we envisioned a feature film.

AV: That’s when Rosalie took the reins to produce it.

JR: You said, ‘Let’s do this.’

OP: The film is a journey through France but also through memory, both personal and collective. Of workers, farmers and villagers.

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JR: That’s true.
AV: You spoke to them a lot too.

JR: Of course, I’ve always loved doing that in my projects, like I’ve always seen you do in your films, with your own special approach that’s so gentle and delicate… and feminist too.

AV: Ah, I am indeed a feminist!

OP: Women are very present in the film. You show their importance in the agricultural milieu and the working class.

AV: Yes, JR and I both agreed it’s important and makes sense to let women have their say.

JR: That was Agnès’ idea. When I showed her all the photos of the dockworkers in Le Havre, she said, ‘Where are the women?’ So I called the dockworkers back and asked, ‘Could your wives come to the port?’ They said, ‘Listen, they never have, but maybe this is the chance.’ It was pretty crazy to have them discover the port through this project.

AV: Three interesting women with something to say, it was great. I was pleased to see them in the spotlight, ‘for once,’ as one of them said.

The dockworkers helped out by putting huge containers at our disposal. We used them like legos to build towers, make totems. You have to see it, words don’t do justice. What an adventure!

JR: We should also mention the dockworkers were in the middle of one of their biggest strikes. I’m still amazed they gave art such a place of honor, regardless of what was going on.

AV: It’s the idea that art is for everyone. The dockworkers agreed to help us because they were keen to participate in an artistic project.

JR: One of the factory workers said, “Art is meant to surprise us!” We disrupted them, but they accepted us. There were serious and complex events going on in France and around the world, yet we were committed to our project and the people we met understood that.

AV: A modest project in a period of widespread chaos.

OP: And in fact, your film is soothing.

AV: They also liked our good cheer and the way you’d tease me. We were intent on being ourselves and involving them in our project.

OP: You develop powerful relationships with the people you meet. You also remember the dead and pay homage to them during your travels: Nathalie Sarraute, Guy Bourdin, Cartier-Bresson.

AV: Yes, I knew them. Evoking them means placing them back in the present. It’s the result that is present. I passed Nathalie Sarraute’s house by chance, and that made me happy, but what we were interested in is the local farmer down the street who farms 2,000 acres on his own.

JR: Another place we filmed was an abandoned village. The place had a past, and we had our photo truck. We held a party with the locals. It’s got a funny name: Pirou-Plage.
AV: And that night there were hundreds of faces up on the walls. We left the next day. We learned since that the village has been demolished. Everything is changing.

JR: We don’t work solidly; our days are specific.

AV: That’s what I’ve always loved with documentaries. You spend a few days with people, you become friends then you lose touch with them, just like the way you depict them with large ephemeral images that will vanish from the walls. We know these moments are magical. The moment of meeting people, the moment of filming, pasting that will vanish from the walls.

JR: Right, we tried to show what’s happening to your eyes. I wanted to see for you, better than you who sees blurry… especially far away. I photographed your eyes very close and showed them from far away. And your toes too!

AV: Oh yes, my toes. I got a chuckle out of your ideas. Your constant teasing, but also the way you invented images of our friendship. It’s true, we share the desire to explore places and forms.

JR: I’d like to talk about something that seems important. Everyone we met taught us something. And vice versa.

AV: When we tell the garage mechanic about the goats with no horns, he says, “Oh, that’s amazing. I’ve learned something new. I’ll tell people about it.”

JR: From one person to another, from one idea to the next. Actually, the film’s a collage.

OP: The entire film’s a collage. With JR pasting giant photos on the walls and Agnès carrying out a cinematicographic collage, with rhymes and visual riddles.

AV: I really like the idea that the editing process is a montage, a collage with plays on words and plays on images that take hold so we don’t have to say “chapter 1, chapter 2.” Sometimes I would visualize the montage as a series of words that rhyme [in French]: faces, places, collages, sharing… JR: That’s what I’ve always loved with documentaries. You spend a few days with people, you become friends then you lose touch with them, just like the way you depict them with large ephemeral images that will vanish from the walls. We know these moments are magical. The moment of meeting people, the moment of filming, pasting that will vanish from the walls.

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JR pasted a photograph of Guy Bourdin that Agnès Varda took in 1954 on a bunker fallen from the cliff.
Bruay-la-Buissière, Pas-de-Calais (62)

JEANNINE CARPENTIER

« I’m the last survivor in this row of miners’ houses! I said I’d be the last to go and here I am. »

Bruay-la-Buissière, Pas-de-Calais (62)

YVES BOULEN - Former miner

« After that I did coal. Gosh, that was very very very hard. I suffered a heck of a lot. »

Bruay-la-Buissière, Pas-de-Calais (62)

DANIEL VOS - Former miner

« He’d get undressed, all but the hat, the ‘barette’, which was the last thing he’d take off before getting in the tub. And my grandma would wash his back. That’s how it was. »
AMAURY BOSSY - Engineer
« My role is to prevent accidents from happening. It’s exciting to have a meaningful job. »

CLAUDIE FAIERT
Communications manager
« Cinema’s part of our history here in Château-Arnoux-Saint-Auban, and a lot of factory people go to the cinema. »

DIDIER CAMPY COMTE
« It’s my last day of work. I’m taking early retirement. In a way, I feel like I’ve reached the edge of a cliff and tonight I’ll be leaping off it. »

MARIE-DOLIVET, JEAN-PAUL BEAUXON and their great-grandparents
« Her name was Emilie, and his was Emile. Ah, it’s a very beautiful love story. »

VINCENT GILS - Bell-ringer
« The former bell-ringer, who rang bells brilliantly, taught me how to play church bell music. »

NATHALIE SCHLEHHAUF - Mother of two
« Everyone said, ‘Oh, the photo’s so pretty.’ So that was nice. But I’m rather shy, so it made me pretty uncomfortable. »

USINE ARKEMA, Château-Arnoux-Saint-Auban, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence (04)

Bonnieux, Vaucluse (84)
Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer, Seine-Maritime (76)

CLAUDI FERCHAL - Mayor

« JR: I discovered this bunker that had fallen from a cliff during a long motorcycle ride between Saint-Aubin and Sainte-Marguerite. Mayor: I love the way it planted itself on the beach like a work of art. »

A Neighbor

« This morning I came to check the level at high tide. The water came up about 2.6 meters from the ground. »

Goult, Vaucluse (84)

PATRICIA M ERCIER - Goat breeder

« If you want to do this in a way that respects the animals, then if the goats have horns, they keep their horns. Sure, they fight. Human beings fight too. »

Carrefour des Granons, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence (04)

ABDESLAM OULD-JA - Mechanic

« It’s the same old problem here on the planet, always producing more, more, more. Is that why they remove the goats’ horns? Goats were born to have horns, not to be hornless. »

Bonnieux, Vaucluse (84)

JACKY PATIN - Postman

« A postman’s important to a village. It’s true, I’m a link. Not long ago, I’d bring Mrs. Fournier her bread each day. I’d deliver her bottled gas. »

Bonnieux, Vaucluse (84)

PONY-SOLEIL-AIR-SAUVAGE-NATURE - Artist

« I was born in the shadow of a star. My mother, the moon, gave me her coolness. My father, the sun, gave me his warmth and the universe to live in. Imagine that. I have so much in this life, don’t I? »
Chérence, Val-d’Oise (95)
Clemens Van Dungen - Farmer
« In the past, a 500-acre farm would employ at least three or four people. Today, I’m all alone and I farm 2000 acres. Alone. »

Pirou, Manche (50)
Michel Letouze - Family Man
JR : « A half-built, abandoned village that’s become a ghost town. »
Michel : « I knew this place when I was small. As a kid, I watched the houses fall into ruin over time. They were never finished, it’s strange. »

Terminal de France - Port du Havre, Seine-Maritime (76)
Nathalie Maurouard, Sophie Riou et Morgane Riou
AV : « The idea is for you to be like three big statues, three totems, up there, entering this world of men and finding your place. »
Nathalie : « A place of honor, for once! »
Pasting of baguette eaters in l’Escale.

AGNES Varda

Agnès Varda was born in Ixelles, Belgium in 1928 and grew up alongside four brothers and sisters. In 1940, her family moved to the south of France to escape the war. She spent her teenage years in Sète then moved to Paris where she studied at the École du Louvre and took evening classes in photography at the École de Vaugirard.

Varda became a photographer for Jean Vilar when he founded the Avignon theater festival in 1948, then for the Théâtre National Populaire at the Palais de Chaltot in Paris. She held her first personal exhibition in 1954 in the courtyard of her home.

That same year, Varda made the move to cinema without any formal training. She founded Ciné-Tamaris (a cooperative) to produce and direct films, and in 1955 made her debut feature film La Pointe Courte, which earned her the title “Grandmother of the French New Wave.”

In 1961, she married filmmaker Jacques Demy. They raised Rosalie Varda-Demy, costume designer. In 1975, they founded Cinémathèque Varda, which documented and featured Rosalie’s legacy. Jacques Demy (deceased in 1990) and together they raised Rosalie Varda-Demy, costume designer. In 1975, they founded Cinémathèque Varda, which documented and featured Rosalie’s legacy.

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Repopulated ruins in Pirou-plage.

JR was born in 1983 near Paris and currently splits his time between both France (Paris) and the US (New York). In 2001, he found a camera in the Paris Metro and began documenting his adventures in the subway and on rooftops, then pasting the pictures on outdoor city walls. This marked the beginning of his work with monumental black and white photos.

JR exhibits freely on the walls of the world, attracting spectators. He pastes photos in the public space to reveal the faces and stories of people who aren’t visible, from the French slums to Turkey, from Times Square to the Pantheon in Paris, from the ghettos of Kenya to the favelas of Brazil. When pasting, community members take part in the artistic process, and there is no stage to separate the actors from the spectators.

Since he remains anonymous and doesn’t explain his huge portraits, JR leaves room for an encounter between the subject/protagonist and the passerby/interpreter. This is the essence of JR’s work: asking questions.

**FILMOGRAPHY**

**FILMS RELEASED BY JR**

2010 *Women Are Heroes*
2015 *Les Bosquets*
2016 *Ella*

**FILMS RELEASED WITH JOSE PARLA**

2012 *Wrinkles Of The City: Havana, Cuba*

**FILMS RELEASED ABOUT THE WORKS OF JR**

2008 *Face de GMAX*
2013 *Inside Out: The People’s Art Project* (par Alastair Siddons)
2015 *Wrinkles Of The City: Istanbul* (par Guillaume Cagniard)

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2005 *Carnet de rue par JR.* self published, Paris
2006 18 millimètres, Portrait d’une génération. JR et Ladj Ly, Éditions Alternatives, Paris
2007 *Face 2 Face.* JR et Marco Berrebi, Éditions Alternatives, Paris
2008 *Les Surcos de la Ciudad*, Municipalité de Carthagène, Maroc
2009 *JR, 28 millimètres: Malheurs de la Providência*, à compte d’auteur
2009*11 *Women Are Heroes / Elhera*, à compte d’auteur
2011 *Women Are Heroes*, JR et Marco Berrebi, Éditions Alternatives, Paris
2013 *Arteviva en Tunisia*, JR et Marco Berrebi, Éditions Alternatives
2012 *Wrinkles of the City, Shanghai*, Drago Editions
2013 *Wrinkles of the City, Los Angeles*, Drago Editions
2015 *Wrinkles of the City, Havana, Cuba, JR et José Parli, Damiani, Bologne*
2017 *Inside Out Japan*, Drago Editions
2018 *Wrinkles of the City*, Éditions Alternatives, Paris

**EXHIBITIONS & INSTALLATIONS - SELECTION**

2004 *Cité des Bouquets, Montremonfl*, Paris Portrait of a Generation
2006 *Au Panthémone de la Photographie*, Paris Espace des Blancs Manteau, Paris
2007 *Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Separation wall/Security fence* Fisheye
2010 *Museum of Contemporary Art Biennal of San Diego, Veyve* Untamed *Contemporary Art Biennal, Shanghai* The Wrinkles of the City Springmann Gallery, Düsseldorf
2012 *Cuba* The Wrinkles of the City *Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong* Patterns *Journal Images, Veyve*
It is in JR’s truck that Agnès Varda and JR have traveled in France from places to places, from faces to faces.
Matthieu Chedid, aka -M-, was born in 1971 in Boulogne-Billancourt. From an early age, he took a passionate interest in music: that of his father Louis Chedid, jazz greats and Jimi Hendrix, of course.

In 1997, his first album *Le Baptême* revealed -M- to the public, a superhero artist with hair styled into the shape of an -M-.

*Je dis aime* appeared in 1999.

In 2003 came *Qui de nous deux*, a concept album where -M- and his musicians create an experimental sound with songs.

Performing and experimenting are -M-’s specialty. He has often appeared on stage in larger than life performances that include humor, spoof and moments of grace. -M- never fails to give off good vibrations in concert. The double live album *Le Tour de -M-* was released in May 2001 and is a display of the emotion and energy -M- and his whole team give off on stage.

*Mister Mystère* was released in 2009, followed in late 2010 by a live CD and DVD documentary of the tour, *Les Saisons de passage*.

With Patrice Renson, -M- wrote and composed the lyrics and music to the animated feature *A Monster in Paris* directed by Bibo Bergeron.

2012 brought *Îl*, another catchy, playful opus that renewed pop/rock codes with infectious humor, and included the track "Mojo." A two-year tour followed.

In 2014 a new chapter began: the Chedids decided to embark on the incredible adventure of a family tour. Louis, Matthieu, Joseph & Anna Chedid, four separate entities gathered on stage by a common theme, music-words, and culminating in a concert at the Palais Garnier. And, unlike the usual order of studio album, tour then live album, the Chedids chose to close their adventure with a studio recording, released in October 2015.

In 2016, twenty years after his first collaborations with African musicians and trips to Mali, the unstring Matthieu Chedid pursued his relationship with Africa and more specifically Mali. He laid most of the musical groundwork for the album *Lamomali* in his living room with father and son kora virtuosos Toumani & Sidiki Diabaté (Toumani has won two Grammys and his son Sidiki already fills stadiums in Africa). The album also features renowned singer Fatoumata Diawara (widely known through the seven-time César Award-winning Timbuktu in 2015) as well as numerous guests from every horizon to create links between Paris, Bamako and the world. -M-’s Malian adventure comes to fruition with the release of the album in April 2017, and a tour in June and July with the Afro-pop Orchestra.

-M- has already won ten Victoires de la Musique Awards.
Written, directed and commented by
AGNES VARDA and JR
original soundtrack
Matthieu Chedid aka -M-
executive producer
Rosalie Varda
associate producer
Emile Abinal
co-producers
Charles S. Cohen
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Nichole Fu
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and National Center of Cinematography and the moving image
photography
Claire Duguet (Bonnieux, Reillanne, Usine), Nicolas Guichet (Paris, Usine, le Nord, Valentin Vignet (BnF, côte Normande), Romain Le Bonniec (Vexin, Le Havre, Pirou), Raphael Minnesota (Musée du Louvre), Roberto De Angelis (Cuisine, Suisse), Julia Fabry (2e caméra)

sound
David Chaulier (Bonnieux, Reillanne, Usine, BnF, côte Normande), Alan Savary (Yves, Musée du Louvre, Le Havre, Pirou), Pierre-Henri Thiebaut (Paris, Suisse), Morgane Lanniel (Rue Daguerre)

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