

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS

**AGNES VARDA**

*Valentine Schlegel par Agnès Varda*

**November 5 – December 19, 2020**

Espace II

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri 75004 Paris



Agnès Varda  
Sculpture of Valentine Schlegel photographed by Agnès Varda in 1958 on the beach of Sète  
© Estate Varda  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Coinciding with Photography Month in Paris, Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present an exhibition around Agnès Varda and the sculptor Valentine Schlegel at its rue du Cloître Saint-Merri location. Photographs by the former and ceramics by the latter converse in this hanging that pays tribute to the fertile emulation that united these two friends.

Born in 1925, Valentine Schlegel met Agnès Varda, three years her junior, who had just left her native Belgium with her family during the war, in Sète, which formed the backdrop for their friendship and artistic awakening. Agnès Varda and Valentine Schlegel, “*born on the beach*,” shared an early and unconditional love for the sea and a free, outdoorsy life that marked their youth in Sète and their future art. As young women, the two friends found themselves gravitating around theater circles: from 1947, Valentine Schlegel began working as prop master for the Festival d’Avignon, alongside decorator Léon Gischia. In turn, Agnès Varda became a photographer for the festival and for the Théâtre National Populaire, an experience that allowed her to familiarize herself with what would become one of her preferred mediums. And so, naturally, Valentine Schlegel, clad in a sailor blouse and sailor pants, was given, by the young filmmaker, the artistic direction of her first film, *La Pointe Courte*, shot in 1954, in Sète, the fishing village that was dear to them.

*“Another family adopted me: the Schlegels.  
I spent all my summers with them.*

*The parents and their three daughters lived on a balcony overhanging our boat.*

*Behind those three closed shutters...the three sisters.*

*Andrée became an artist and married Jean Vilar.*

*The second, Suzou, was my guide and initiated me to music.*

*I met Linou, the third, in 3ème (9th grade), and for ten years, we traveled and discovered together, and we painted the town red.”*

Agnès Varda

While Agnès Varda became a pioneering photographer and Nouvelle Vague filmmaker, a multitalented artist who led many lives, Valentine Schlegel devoted herself to sculpture and, in particular, to ceramics. Deeply influenced by her origins in Provence and around the Mediterranean, she often gave her plates the shape of shells and the fireplaces she would later make the volumes of wind-blown sails. In the 1950s, she developed a series of vases on which her sister Andrée Vilar painted motifs from antiquity. Directly inspired by nature, the artist continued her work by making curvy ceramics with anthropomorphic and vegetal shapes, evoking the rounded and supple works of Jean Arp or Henri Moore. In 1959, Valentine Schlegel sold a vase to some friends, but they were unable to find an adequate spot for it. So, she decided to cover their fireplace with plaster and to create new volumes and spaces. This marked the beginning of work that would become a true signature of hers and that she would continue making for private clients, until the early 2000s.

In the 1950s, Agnès Varda photographed her friend at work, in the different studios she occupied, and documented her artistic production. This exhibition presents a series of previously unreleased images, which Rosalie Varda selected from a large photographic archive: views of works resembling still lifes, where the photographer's eye elegantly espouses the sensual and organic volumes of her friend's ceramics; and more intimate portraits imbued with the nostalgic feel of happy memories. Thus, we cross paths with Valentine Schlegel at the beach, playing around with sculpted utensils, which she stages as though they are curiosities deposited by the seafoam, or Rosalie Varda as a baby, placed inside a fireplace that appears to have been molded to her diminutive size.

Rosalie Varda, who is also showing, for the first time, several Valentine Schlegel ceramics from her own collection, remembers :

*"Agnès left us in the spring of 2019. About 20 years earlier, I don't remember exactly when, Agnès had given me plates, serving dishes, bowls, a salad bowl, a vase, a teapot, wooden utensils, many small sculptures, objects, and a hollow sculpture of a pregnant woman, fondly signed within "Rosalie's house." [...]*

*Linou, so free, so wild, was an artist inspired by nature and by its elements.*

*She first chose ceramics, in order to sculpt very fluid vases.*

*A collector of knives and popular objects, she loved to make her own things herself, like her leather sandals or her belts. She created white plaster fireplaces with curves that exude infinite tenderness. I remember her solar energy, her sometimes brusque character, her kitchen where she would crack walnuts for me, while talking about everything and nothing. With hands that were so fine and beautiful. Together, we would knead the beautiful red earth, we made coils, we made bowls. We laughed...*

*I loved to have naps in her hammock.*

*I loved her little house. It was a bit Rosalie's house." »*



Agnès Varda  
Linou with a knife of her own collection - Vase and plate, rue Daguerre, Paris, Circa 1955  
© Estate Varda  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels



Agnès Varda  
«Teapot and cigarette» Agnès loved Larousse encyclopedias, she has always kept them. This still life is funny, it reminds us that Agnès smoked a lot in her life» Rosalie Varda  
© Estate Varda  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

### Born in Sète in 1925, Valentine Schlegel lives in Paris.

She attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montpellier before settling in Paris to focus on ceramics. The artist conceived of her works like sculptures in and of themselves, directly inspired by nature. Her ceramics, with their simultaneously primitive and sophisticated forms, made Valentine Schlegel one of the most important ceramicists of the 1950s.

### Born in Belgium in 1928, Agnès Varda died in 2019, in Paris.

Having gotten her start as a photographer for the Festival d'Avignon and the Théâtre National Populaire in the 1950s, Agnès Varda became one of the most internationally renowned French filmmakers, a pioneer of the New Wave, with her first film, *La Pointe Courte*, in 1954. In 2003, at the Venice Biennale, she began a new life as a visual artist. Her work combines, alternates and operates a mise-en-abîme of her vision and her practice of photography, cinema, video, and space.

*La Maison de Rosalie, Valentine Schlegel – Agnès Varda* was published on the occasion of this exhibition by Sébastien Moreu and Atelier Daguerre (2020).

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Fabrice Hyber  
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November 5 - December 19, 2020

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*Le Village*  
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Rosson Crow  
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#### Brussels

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Lu Chao  
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