

JR

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'Paper & Glue' Review: A Sequel of Sorts to 'Faces Places'

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CRITIC'S PICK

'Paper & Glue' Review: A Sequel of Sorts to 'Faces Places'

JR, plying his art of making and displaying gigantic portraits, carries on, this time without the inimitable Agnès Varda.



An aerial view of the prison at Tehachapi, Calif., with a supersize image of a group of inmates, as seen in "Paper & Glue," a documentary by the artist JR. Credit...MSNBC Films

By Lisa Kennedy

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In "Paper & Glue," a young Hispanic man stands in the yard of a sprawling prison in Tehachapi, Calif., talking about taking part in a photographic project by the French artist JR.

With a group of fellow prisoners, he posed for and then helped paste up the impressive result of their work, which spanned the expanse of the yard. Drone footage shows the

men looking up out of a huge group portrait to meet the gaze of the eye in the sky. After helping dismantle the temporary display, the prisoner says with a hint of melancholy, “The process is what matters.”

This handsome documentary confirms that sentiment repeatedly as the artist-director recounts two decades of his travels. In 2017, JR was half of the delightful tag-team of “[Faces Places](#),” the Oscar-nominated documentary he and the groundbreaking director [Agnès Varda](#) made in the French countryside. “Paper & Glue,” while not as tender a romp, is a sequel in spirit. Faces and their places continue to matter. JR’s always-on sunglasses remain a coy trademark (after all, his own work relies on people showing their faces), but it’s clear strangers respond to him. The incarcerated men laugh at his stories. The women of Morro da Providência, a favela outside Rio de Janeiro, make introductions that ease his entry into their community. The French filmmaker Ladj Ly looks to him to help with a school for budding artists in a Paris suburb. A young mother in Tecate, Mexico, allows him to snap photos of her infant. In 2017, an enormous image the baby’s beatific face towers above the fence at the United States border with Mexico. Her thoughts about JR’s work are so celebratory yet nuanced, she could be his gallerist.

Paper & Glue

Not rated. In English, Portuguese, French and Spanish, with subtitles. Running time: 1 hour 34 minutes. In theaters.