

Lydia Corbett | Sylvette David

My Dance With Picasso

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Sylvette with Claude, Paloma and Picasso at their home La Galloise, Vallauris, 1954.

The Redfern Gallery is delighted to present *My Dance with Picasso*, the first exhibition of Lydia Corbett / Sylvette David's work at the gallery, bringing together paintings, drawings, and sculpture of an extraordinary artistic career.

Born in Paris in 1934, Sylvette David (also known as Lydia Corbett) spent her childhood between Provence and the Île du Levant, a small Mediterranean island off the Côte d'Azur. Raised by her mother, the painter Honor Gell, she developed an intuitive relationship with drawing from an early age. Immersed in the brilliant light, sea and landscape of southern France, these formative experiences established a lifelong visual language rooted in memory, nature, and a profound sense of place.

In the spring of 1954, while living in Vallauris in the South of France, the nineteen-year-old Corbett met Pablo Picasso. Captivated by her striking profile and distinctive ponytail, Picasso invited her to sit for him, producing more than sixty paintings, drawings, and sculptures over the course of just three months. This remarkable body of work—now known as the *Sylvette* series—became one of the most celebrated and concentrated explorations

of a single sitter in Picasso's career, revealing his extraordinary ability to reinvent form across various media. Corbett has always spoken warmly of their friendship, regarding Picasso not only as one of the twentieth century's greatest artists, but as someone who profoundly encouraged her own creative journey. Reflecting on their time together, she later told art critic Alastair Sooke, "I never thanked him enough. He immortalised me. I'm like the Mona Lisa. Amazing, don't you think?"

Although encouraged to paint by her father, the influential art dealer and painter Emmanuel David, it was only after raising her three children that Corbett devoted herself fully to her own artistic practice.



Lydia Corbett / Sylvette David, *Sylvette Reading*, 2019, Oil on board, 77 x 66 cm

"My Dance with Picasso celebrates not only an unforgettable artistic encounter, but a lifetime dedicated to creativity."

From her home at Dartington Hall Estate in Devon, she developed a deeply personal visual language inspired by memory, family, nature, and the landscapes that have shaped her life. Whether working in watercolour, ink, or in bold, expressive oils, her paintings—often likened to the dreamlike lyricism of Marc Chagall—transform autobiography into richly imaginative compositions imbued with colour, symbolism, and joie de vivre.

Now aged ninety-one, Lydia Corbett continues to paint with remarkable energy and optimism. *My Dance with Picasso* celebrates not only an unforgettable artistic encounter, but a lifetime dedicated to creativity, inviting visitors to discover an artist whose own voice has flourished across seven decades while remaining inseparable from one of the most remarkable stories in modern art.

Corbett's remarkable story and continuing artistic practice have recently attracted renewed international attention. She was featured in *The Wall Street Journal* and, most recently, in the September 2026 print issue of *The World of Interiors*. As the last living muse of Picasso, Corbett offers a rare personal connection to one of the defining figures of twentieth-century art; yet these recent features also bring renewed attention to her own distinctive body of work and the extraordinary life of creativity that followed their encounter in Vallauris more than seventy years ago.



Lydia Corbett / Sylvette David (b.1934), *Young Ladies with Horse*, c.1989, Watercolour and ink on paper, 40.5 x 51 cm

Join us this November for two special events celebrating the extraordinary life and work of Lydia Corbett.

Private View:

Tuesday 3 November, 6-8 pm

Corbett in conversation with Isabel Coulton:

Wednesday 4 November, 4-6 pm



Lydia Corbett / Sylvette David, *Sylvette in the Studio Vallauris* 1954, 2022, Acrylic on board, 91 x 61 cm

About The Redfern Gallery

Founded in Old Bond Street in September 1923, The Redfern Gallery is one of the longest-established dealers of Modern British and Contemporary art in London. Today, The Redfern Gallery represents over 30 contemporary artists and artists' estates.

Now situated on Pall Mall, spread across two floors, the gallery regularly stages major exhibitions with accompanying catalogues.

For many artists and collectors, The Redfern has been a trusted and innovative contributor to the art world for over 100 years.

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