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ARTISTS JANE AND LOUISE WILSON INVESTIGATE KUBRICK

Kubrick's unfinished film *Aryan Papers* is explored by Jane and Louise Wilson in an exhibition at the BFI

Text by [Stephanie Cotela Tanner](#) | Published 17 February 2009



Stanley Kubrick's unfinished *Aryan Papers* was adapted from Louis Begley's 1991 novel, *Wartime Lies*, based upon the story of a young Jewish boy hidden by his aunt. The project was abandoned in 1993, at which point it was already into the pre-production stage. Instead, Kubrick went on to direct *Full Metal Jacket*. But why did he abandon this project after years of research, time and energy? Did he feel that his colleague Steven Spielberg already stole the show with *Schindler's List*? Or was he too much of a perfectionist to satisfactorily depict the pure truth surrounding the horrific events that took place during the time of the Holocaust? Turner Prize nominees, Jane and Louise Wilson explored the Stanley Kubrick archives during their artist residency at the University of the Arts in London. The result of their research is a short film featuring an interview with actress Johanna ter Steege, who was chosen for the lead role in *Aryan Papers*. This work is currently being exhibited alongside the BFI's selection of Kubrick films.

DD: What attracted you to this project?

J&L: The script interested us. There was such a strong female leading role and that really struck us. The fact that the project was unfinished also appealed. There was a massive amount of information, Kubrick had been researching this film since the 1970s.

DD: What led to your exploration of wardrobe research still and period stills?

J&L: We didn't have access to moving images, but we did get to examine the script and Kubrick's copy of the book, *Wartime Lies*. Part of Kubrick's research was written on notes pinned onto the wardrobe items, it was fascinating to us that the costume design was already in place, which was another indication that the film was so far into pre-production.

DD: Besides the leading actress, Johanna ter Steege, who were the intended lead actors and where was *Aryan Papers* going to be shot?

J&L: No, we don't know of any other actors. Maybe he only got as far as the leading role. The location is not confirmed but there is evidence to suggest that it could have been shot in North Holland, Ireland or the Czech Republic.

DD: Your work tends to investigate the darker side of human experience, what inspires you to probe such heavy subjects?

J&L: Cindy Sherman said, 'In horror stories or in fairytales, the fascination with the morbid is a way to prepare for the unthinkable.' It's a difficult question to answer. Being inside our own work is what interests us, when we are caught up in the work we don't think of it as heavy and dark.

"Unfolding the Aryan Papers" by Jane and Louise Wilson at the BFI until 26th April. The accompanying film by Jane and Louise Wilson, commissioned by Animate Projects and the BFI online now.











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