

Sunday, September 18, 2011

## The Stanley Kubrick Archives

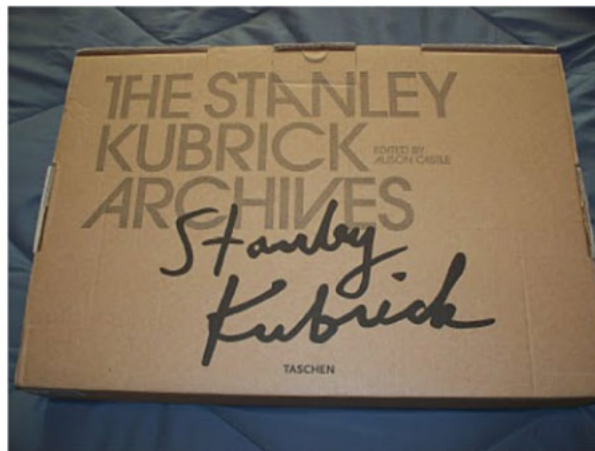
As my "Summer of Kubrick" started in April, I realized that I was long overdue in purchasing *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*. I'd heard amazing things about the book. Taschen is one of my favorite publishers. They release artsy specialty books, focusing on photography, cinema, erotica, art, and fashion. They do brilliant work, but their books can often cost over \$1,000 due to the care that goes into making them. They have a way of getting direct access to archives that have been locked for decades, publishing new images of Marilyn Monroe, *The Godfather*, *Taxi Driver*, the works of Kubrick and Bergman, and so much more.

And once you hold the books, you see this rare material presented in a quality that no other publisher has matched. Whether it's a release of rare archived material, a collection of high-class erotica, a presentation of a classic artist's complete works, or an architectural study, you can immediately see why the books cost so much.

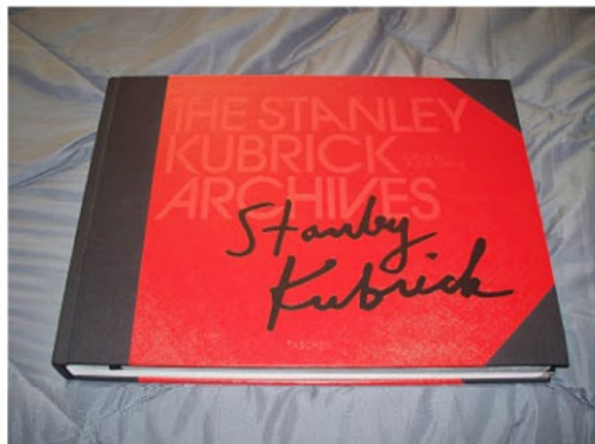
Luckily, Taschen understands that most people can't afford these books, so they release later versions that are more affordable. They'll release a high-end First Edition, followed by a less ornate Second Edition that's affordable.

Early in the summer, I picked up the Second Edition of *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*. It was stunning. But I secretly hoped to get my hands on a copy of the First Edition - which is now valued at around \$800, after selling out almost immediately when it was first published. And this week, I was able to get a copy at a price so low, I still can't believe it happened. I thought I'd share a few pictures of this treasure.

The first thing you notice about this book is that it's *massive*. When opened, it spreads to almost 3 feet in length, and it's so heavy, it bends in the middle if you hold it from the sides (it must be at least 20 pounds). In fact, Taschen had the good foresight to include a carrying case with a handle on top:



Once you open it, here's the actual book.



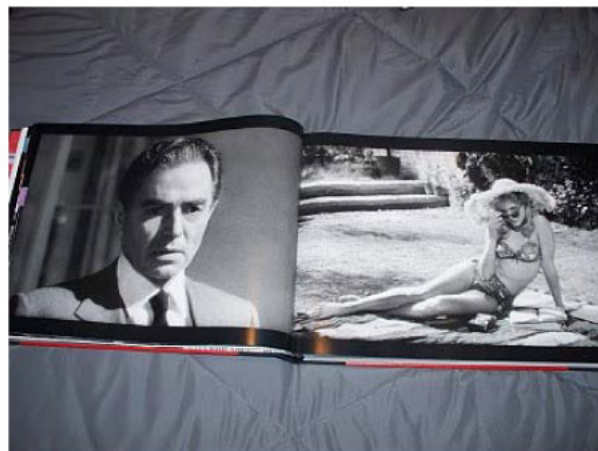
Stanley Kubrick died in 1999. Throughout his life, he was very reclusive with his work.

Once a film was finished, he destroyed the deleted scenes, leaving only the film as he completed it, to prevent studio muddling. He also kept the original prints in his personal home archive. When he died, his estate allowed Taschen total freedom to these archives. The inside covers feature a life-size portrait of the reels.



Kubrick was famous for constantly working with aspect ratios (the image's width). Some of his films are filmed in pure widescreen, some are almost square, and others are in between. Many of the later DVD releases altered these to fit TV displays - back in the days of square TVs, they cropped the wide ones, and now that TVs are widescreen, they're trimming the square ones to fit. Ever since Kubrick died, there's been a huge debate over the correct ratios for certain films. And now, Taschen has opened his personal collection, presenting the correct aspect ratios for each film. The entire first half of the book features nothing but stunning transfers of frames from every one of Kubrick's films, directly from his personal prints. They even placed tabs at the ends of the pages for quick reference to each film.

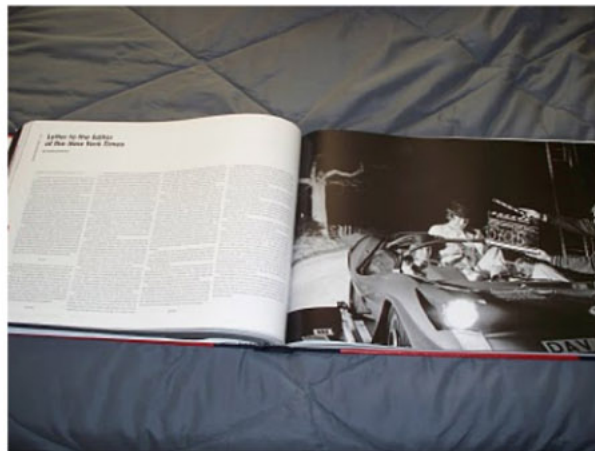
*Lolita*



*2001: A Space Odyssey*

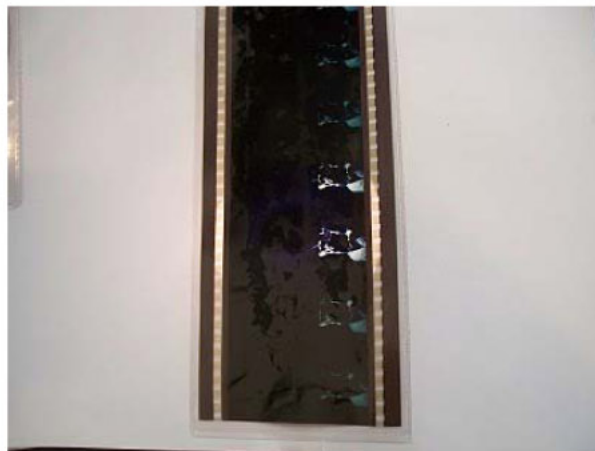


The second half of the book repeats the process, but instead of showing frames from the films, they present the written portion of the archives, featuring a look at how each film was made. It's going to take a very long time to get through it all, and I can't wait. It's the most comprehensive look at a director I've ever seen.



The First Edition is different in several ways from the Second. It's bigger. The paper quality is more glossy and heavy. The pages are tabbed. And in the front of the book, there's a special page with an audio CD of interviews with Stanley, along with a priceless piece of history - 12 frames of film from the original 70mm print of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, from the private collection of Kubrick himself.

My camera flash kept reflecting on the outer sleeve, so the pictures didn't turn out well, but here it is.



I've owned a lot of cool film memorabilia in my life, but this ranks among the most special, rare, and reverent to me. This belonged to the man himself. It came from his home. When he made the film, he handled this, ran it through his projector, and worked with it. When Kubrick's estate gave Taschen access to his archives, it was a rare, exciting moment. For his family to take it one step further and actually give his fans the original copy of his masterpiece is special in ways that can't be written. Ask me to see it next time you visit. There's something wonderful about having it in your hands.

One of the reasons I got such a great price on the book is that the seller didn't specify which scene these frames contained. He just said it was "dark space". I figured it would be an uninteresting black frame of empty space, but for the price, it was still worth it. So you can imagine my excitement when I opened the book and found footage from the most pivotal scene in the film! Midway through the second act, the HAL 9000 computer makes an error. When Dave and Frank plan to switch him off, HAL convinces Frank to make a repair on the outside of the ship, and then cuts his oxygen line and hurls his body into space. Dave takes a pod out to retrieve the body, and HAL cuts off the life support to the remaining hibernating crew. My frames contain that haunting, silent moment when Dave's pod returns to the ship, with Frank's body in its arms.

"Open the pod bay doors, HAL."

"I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that."