

Hidden Tapestry: Jan Yoors, His Two Wives, and the War that Made Them One

Debra Dean

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Jan Yoors achieved international fame as a tapestry artist in the bohemian New York scene of the 1960s, but that barely qualifies among the most interesting parts of his life. In *Hidden Tapestry*, Debra Dean dives into the artist's singular backstory and the equally compelling stories of his wives, Annabert van Wettum and Marianne Citroen. This is a well-researched, well-written, and unusual biography.

The story begins with Jan and Annabert meeting as young children in 1935, initiating a correspondence that would lead to marriage after their experiences in World War II, while Marianne and Annabert were childhood neighbors and best friends. While excerpts of their longing letters back and forth appear in the book, Jan's real life during wartime included a career in espionage and close brushes with death at the hands of the Nazis.

As a boy, he wound up living among the traveling Romani as something of an adopted son, and he enlisted their help in the resistance against the Gestapo. Jan's unique history made him a valuable operative, and his espionage experiences were perilous and thrilling.

His future wives' stories are compelling in their own right. Marianne, half Jewish by birth, spent the war separated from her widowed father as he went into hiding, and was later separated from different caretakers as the German occupiers cracked down. Annabert's life experienced less upheaval, but she still dealt with the starvation and oppression of Dutch life under Nazi rule.

Dean gives all three of these stories their due and provides plenty of detail about Dutch life during that time. While the wartime experiences are the most compelling, the story doesn't end there. The three protagonists ultimately lived together, with Marianne acting as a de facto second wife, and began their art studio together, reviving the tradition of tapestry and gaining fame in other media as well. There's a fascinating story here, and Dean tells it well.

JEFF FLEISCHER (March/April 2018)

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