

HR Giger in 2012,
photographed by *Bizarre*
in his home in Switzerland



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HR GIGER

PART 2

ANNIE BERTRAM, ANNIEBERTRAM.COM

Are you're still reeling after reading our exclusive interview with Swiss surrealist **HR Giger** in *Bizarre 195*, gird your loins for the second instalment of our audience with the master of darkness. And if you were sharp enough to send in a query for HR Giger via *Bizarre's* Facebook, Twitter or email address, read on because we might just answer **YOUR** question... →

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alking through HR Giger's gallery - the Museum HR Giger in Gruyères, Switzerland - is a sharp reminder of how important the Swiss surrealist's work is, and how his dark visions over the past 50 years have helped shape everything that *Bizarre* readers hold dear.

From his biomechanical works that see man merging with machine - and which, in turn, have inspired new tattoo styles and extreme body art - to his stunning designs for the film *Alien* that helped redefine big screen scares and paved the way for cinematic monsters that were more than

a man in a rubber suit, HR Giger's visions have had a profound effect on alternative culture, the shockwaves of which will be felt for generations to come.

In this second part of our exclusive interview with HR Giger - where he spoke to *Bizarre* from his Gruyères gallery - the surrealist painter, sculptor and illustrator talks more about his work, his life, and his fears for the future of humanity.

If you enjoyed our interview with HR Giger, make sure to pop along to *Bizarre's* Facebook page to discuss what he said, and generally talk about the effect his work has had on your life. Or, if you want to share your thoughts about our audience with HR Giger in *Bizarre's* Junk Mail section (see p28), drop us a line at Bizarre@blackthorncommunications.com.

In the past, you've referred to the Alien as your "baby" - how do you feel seeing your original designs defiled to create toys, action figures, videogames and other merchandise? Does it annoy you when toy-makers bastardise your visions and transform your Alien into a snake, a flying monster or whatever?

Sarah Rapley, via email

“ Given my humble beginnings and the fact that hardly anybody took notice of my work during the



early years, I mainly find it hugely flattering and satisfying that some of my designs have attained such an incredible level of popularity. Flawed applications do annoy me, however, while seeing good ones is a true pleasure! ”



You've expressed your love for making sculptures in many interviews. Do you still produce a lot of sculptures today?

Is it still as rewarding?
Jon Reynolds, via email

“ Yes, some three-dimensional versions of my designs are currently being made. It is fascinating, but also very demanding, due to the subtlety of shapes, details, dimensions, and proportions. Moreover, creating such sculptures is far from rewarding financially, due to the high production cost. It is far more a passion than financially viable. ”



You once said that the famous 'Birthmachine' artwork (right) was your comment on overpopulation. Is that

still an issue that still troubles you today?

What other global issues concern you currently? Are these worries reflected in your recent work?

Beverly Houston, via email

“ Of course that is still an issue today. Probably more so than ever before.

As I stated last month, I do feel quite troubled about the current state of affairs on this planet with regard to the behaviour of human beings towards each other, towards the other creatures sharing this planet with us, and towards the environment. And those issues, of which there are many, will only become more pronounced as the earth's population increases. Greed and war, to me, really are the two main topics. It seems to me that greed is the reason for what is currently taking place in the world ”



Are there any artists currently working that you have deep respect for? You've spoken in the past about your love of artists such as Ernest Fuchs and Fredrich Kuhn - are there any other artists, past or present, →



PICTURE (LEFT): MATTHIAS BELZ

ABOVE 'Landscape XIV', 1972-73, 70x100cm, acrylic on paper on wood

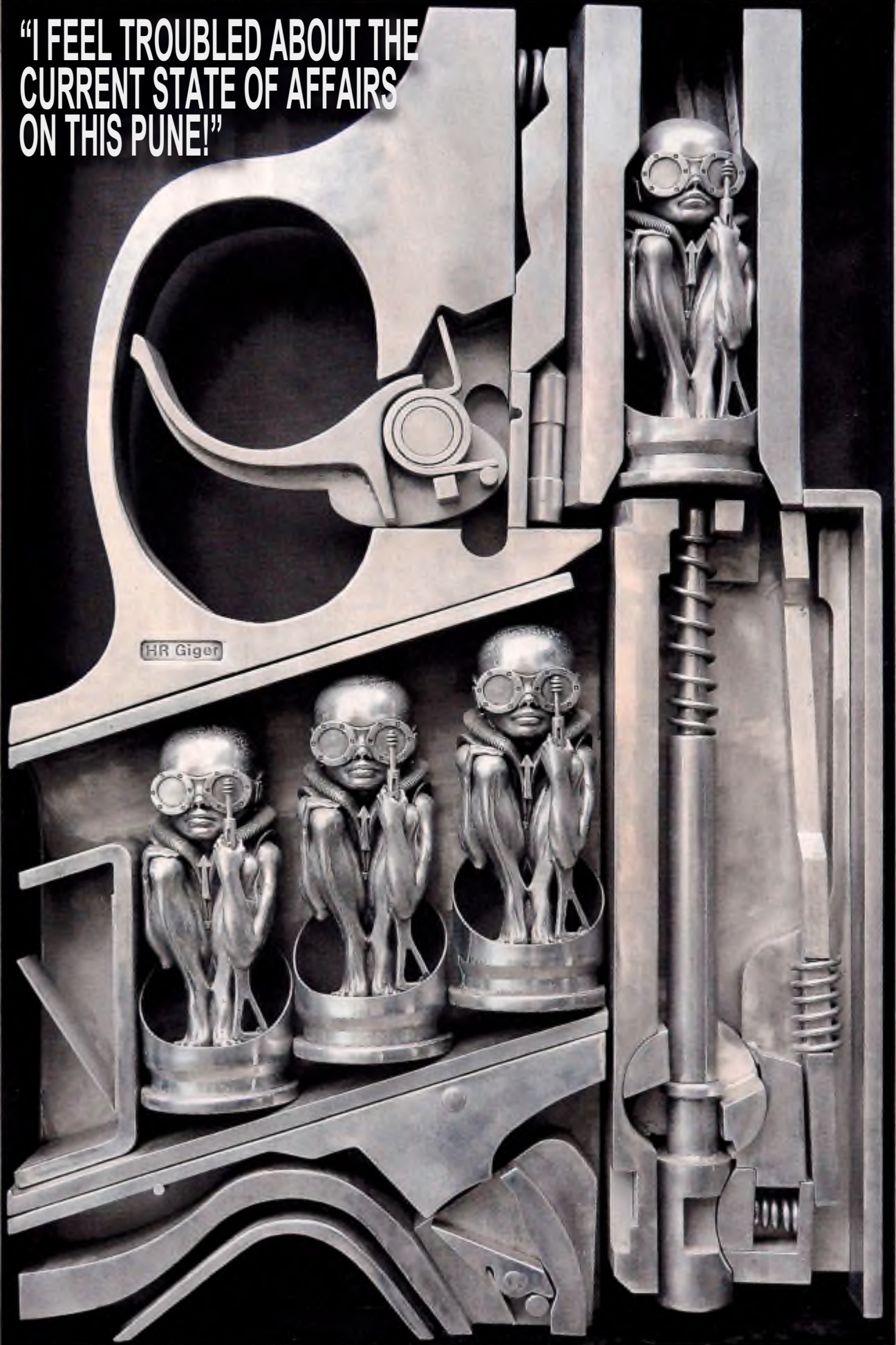
LEFT A photograph taken inside Museum HR Giger in Gruyères, Switzerland, where work from all period's of the artist's career is displayed

RIGHT A detail from one of the amazing artworks in HR Giger's home

FACING PAGE 'Birth Machine', 1999, 200x140x25cm, aluminium. Edition of seven



**"I FEEL TROUBLED ABOUT THE
CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS
ON THIS PUNE!"**





when I discarded the airbrush in favour of sketching drawing, I no longer listened to so much music while working. ”



Tragically, some of your most famous paintings have been stolen and are seemingly lost forever. Do you still think about those works? Do you think you'll ever see them again?

Sally Lightfoot, via email

“ Of course, one never stops thinking and wondering about these works. And, of course, I do maintain some hope that I will be lucky enough to still see them recovered one day. ”



The Alien is one of the most famous movie monsters, and it's also the only classic movie creature to be credited to one artist - you! Does that make you proud as the Alien will live forever, and your name will always be attached to it?

Lynn Fowler, via email

“ Of course that's something I feel very flattered and proud about As I stated earlier, I had rather humble beginnings and was very much ignored or even shunned by mainstream society for quite some time. When I began working with Ridley Scott, it was quite simply impossible to predict that *Alien* would become such a popular and influential film. I was mainly attracted to the collaboration by the fact that it would enable me to have my work featured on yet another platform, one I hadn't exploited fully yet. ”



Your work has been reproduced so often, and has been an inspiration for so many artists working in different parts of the globe, that it could be argued that your art/style has transcended your name and that people copy your work without really understanding where it came from. Does it make you happy that your work has become an art 'style' in itself, or are you annoyed as you should be making more money/getting more credit for your creations?

Penelope James, via email →

who affect you on such a profound level? And, if so, what is it that affects you so much about their work?

James Cheung, via email

“ Ernst Fuchs is not only a friend, but somebody I have deeply admired for many years. There are many other artists for whom I feel profound respect. And I have, of course, admired certain artists of the past; Hieronymus Bosch or Salvador Dalí are perhaps the most important of them. Also, I have always felt deeply inspired by music and literature. ”



The sorts of music bands who obsess over your imagery today tend to play loud, aggressive, difficult rock music.

What sort of music do you personally like to listen to when you're working? Do you still listen to a lot of soundtracks?

Cathy Burns, via email

“ It has actually been my experience that if you approach such music with an open mind and give yourself some time to truly listen to it, you will find that a number of these 'loud, aggressive, difficult' rock bands actually also create some very beautiful, fragile, and intricate music, far from the clichéd perception of the general public.

I personally love to mainly listen to modern jazz music, as I have since my youth. Miles Davis or Oscar Peterson, for example, are among my favourite jazz musicians. ”



I've heard that you prefer silence when you work. Is that because music is distracting, or because you don't want any other external factors to influence your art?

Ivy Stanshall, via email

“ When I still used to work with the airbrush, I always did so while listening to jazz music. Later,



ABOVE 'Victory VIII', 1983, 70x100cm, acrylic on paper on wood

LEFT (TOP) 'Beggar', 1976, 58x58x75cm, bronze. Edition of six

LEFT (BOTTOM) 'Necronom 2005', 1990-2005, 110x78x220cm, polyester, metal

RIGHT The biomech interior of the Giger Museum Bar at Museum HR Giger in Switzerland

FACING PAGE 'Chidher Green', 1975, 200x140cm, acrylic on paper on wood



PICTURES (LEFT): MATTHIAS BELZ



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“SOME OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY WORK ORIGINATES FROM TRYING TO COPE WITH FEAR”



“As an artist, you are not quite so selfish that you would be tempted to place such supreme importance in this.”



Why do you think your work is so popular in Japan? What is it about your work that strikes a chord with Japanese audiences?

Chris Hough, via email

“The Japanese society has long been driven by a far stronger sense for the visual and for the surreal. It is, on one hand, a society deeply rooted in traditionalism and rigidity, but, at the same time, a society extremely eager to visualise everything in the most pronounced terms. I also have often noticed an inherent curiosity to explore what the surreal and the future could possibly look like.”



It feels as if a HP Lovecraft renaissance is on the cards, and that people are sick of zombies and vampires in the media

and need something deeper and more intelligent. Do you think the stars are aligned, and the time is right for a Lovecraft revival and Cthulhu to rise? Obviously, your work was influenced by Lovecraft in your early days - does his work have any influence on your work today?

Dr Blackthorn, via email

“It no longer really has an influence, since I no longer paint. But there was a period in my life, during the 1970s, when Lovecraftian ideas had a significant impact on many aspects of my work. My friend, Swiss writer Sergius Golowin, had quite a lot to do with that. His suggestions in this regard had a considerable effect on both my paintings and their titles.”



Your work has been embraced by fetishists across the world, and your imagery has been incorporated into many kinky sex games! How do you feel having inspired lots of filthy sex?

Jon Roundhay, via email

“I don't know if I really have, but if I did, I suppose that's a good thing. After all, 'filthy' sex has, in turn, also served to inspire me at times.”



Looking back on your career, is there one thing above all else that you're particularly proud of?

Will Jones, via email

“I do feel flattered by the recognition my art has attained from people all over the world. To me personally, however, it is simply my work that is important. Anything else connected to it is of no importance to me. It is nice to be recognised as an artist of course, but this was never the reason I created my art, nor was it ever a driving factor.”



Do you still suffer from night terrors, or have they subsided with the passage of time? If you're free of nightmares, what drives your darkest works today?

Melinda Ross, via email



“ I no longer suffer night terrors. I do still dream vividly, however, and I love dreams. Dreams are an enrichment of my life. Carmen and I always share the dreams we each experience. ”

In the past, when you were having night terrors, you've said that art was a kind of therapy that helped you cope with nocturnal visions. Does art still have a therapeutic value for you today?

Paco Rivera, via email

“ As I no longer actively create new art, this is no longer quite that applicable to me. What was crucial to me, and, as it seems, to many other artists, is that creating art really does have a therapeutic effect. Moreover, I have often experienced that some of the most extraordinary work originates from trying to cope with fear, pain, suffering, or other traumatic experiences embedded in the artist's mind. ”

I suffer from bad dreams, and use them to create my own art. Of all the night terrors you've had, is there one particular nightmare that has stuck with you?

CJ Fifer, via email

“ There are many. In a lot of cases, recurring dreams eventually led to the creation of some of my most poignant works. I frequently wrote about this in my books, such as in the *Necronomicon*. An example of this is the 'Passagen' series of paintings of the late 1960s and early 1970s. ”

You've spoken in the past about your love for David Lynch's film *Eraserhead*. To my mind, it still looks as fresh and exciting today as it did in 1977. Have you watched *Eraserhead* recently? Does it still excite you? Have any other films affected you so deeply?

Stuart McDavid, via email

“ No, I'm afraid I have to disappoint you. I haven't seen the film in recent years. It is a very unique film, however, unlike any other. No other film has affected me quite like it. ”

Who buys your original works? Is it mostly fans, or do you attract collectors who buy your art as an investment?

Eleanor Houlston, via email

“ It all of the above. From friends of mine who have worked with me or have been at my side for

many years, to fans who wish to make a once-in-a-lifetime purchase, to true collectors. And in case of collectors, the motivation to buy a painting can have many reasons, from a pure enjoyment of art to a mere calculating investment. ”

In the book *HR Giger ARh+*, you talk a lot about how important women are in your work, and how as a child you were always lusting after the opposite sex. Do you still feel the same way today? Do women still have an important role in your life and work? Or have other influences displaced women from your work?

Lisa Farrell, via email

“ It is true; women have been a major inspiration for me throughout my life. And a certain fascination for the vast power of femininity has of course never left me. But nowadays, I am in a long-standing and very happy relationship with my wife, Carmen, whom I adore deeply. ”

Is your old painting chair still alive and working? I saw a documentary about you once, which spoke about this old chair where you'd done most of your work.

Anna Oliver, via Facebook →



FACING PAGE (TOP)
 'Necronom II', 1976,
 70x100cm, acrylic
 on paper on wood

FACING PAGE (BOTTOM LEFT)
 'Mitra Mask',
 1964-71, 100x40x
 25cm, fibreglass

FACING PAGE (BOTTOM CENTRE)
 'Harkonnen Table', 1982, 74x275x
 177cm; 'Harkonnen Capo Chair', 1981, 180x100x
 65cm; 'Harkonnen Chair', 1981, 150x100x
 65cm, polyester, metal,
 glass, rubber

FACING PAGE (BOTTOM RIGHT)
 'Alien Head',
 1978/2011, 86x47x
 24cm, polyester, wood

LEFT 'The Witnesses',
 1988, 100x70cm, acrylic
 on paper on wood

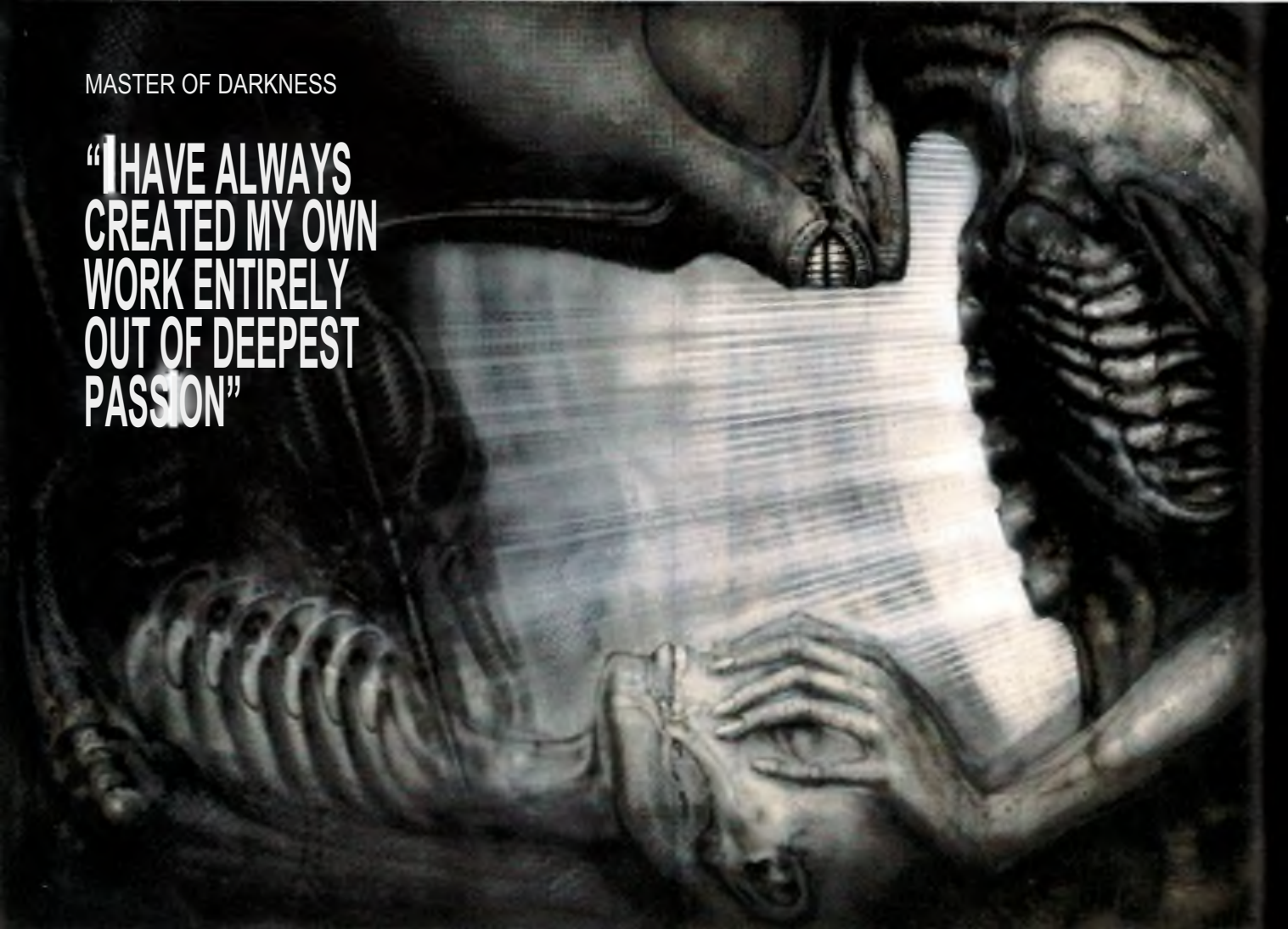
RIGHT (TOP) HR Giger's
 latest sculpture.
 'Saxophonist 2012',
 2012, height 46cm,
 bronze. Edition of 250

RIGHT (BOTTOM)
 The Giger Museum
 Bar at Museum HR
 Giger in Switzerland



ALL PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE AND FACING PAGE: MATTHIAS BELZ

**"I HAVE ALWAYS
CREATED MY OWN
WORK ENTIRELY
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ABOVE 'The Shiner', 1983-87, 70x100cm, acrylic on paper on wood

RIGHT (TOP and BELOW) Photo taken in HR Giger's home

BELOW 'Alien Monster V', 1978, 140x140cm, acrylic on paper on wood

FAR RIGHT At home with HR Giger



“ It still exists in my old workshop, although in a slightly dilapidated state. ”



After your involvement with *Alien*, what do you think about the evolution of your original *Alien* design by different artists?

Michael Tharme, via Facebook

“ I was always a bit disappointed by what I perceived as a lack of care, attention, and passion in how some of my designs were evolved. It seemed to me, from a distance of course, as if corporate and commercial interests ranged far higher on the scale of importance than the dedicated and plausible evolution of the designs. In my eyes, some of these designs lost much of what I had originally tried to infuse into them. ”



Have drugs influenced you as an artist?

Max Hodges
via Facebook

“ Although I tried LSD, it has never had a significant effect of my work. ”



You said in an interview in 2009 that money was one of the biggest concerns in your life - is cash still a worry?

William Pryce, via email

“ I have been fortunate enough to always have been able to generate sufficient income. Moreover, my financial needs for my daily life have never been excessive. It has to be said, however, that fame or financial gains have never been of any importance to me. I have always been deeply fascinated with art due to its beauty, and I have always created my own work entirely out of deepest passion. ”



This interview would not have been possible without the help and hard work of Tom Gabriel Fischer, and HR Giger's wife, Carmen, to whom *Bizarre* would like to express its deepest gratitude. Thanks also to Matthias Belz for his help in supplying the incredible artwork and photos in this feature. Make sure you check out the website for the Museum HR Giger at Hrgigermuseum.com