

## BAPHOMET'S LAMENT AN INTERVIEW WITH H.R. GIGER

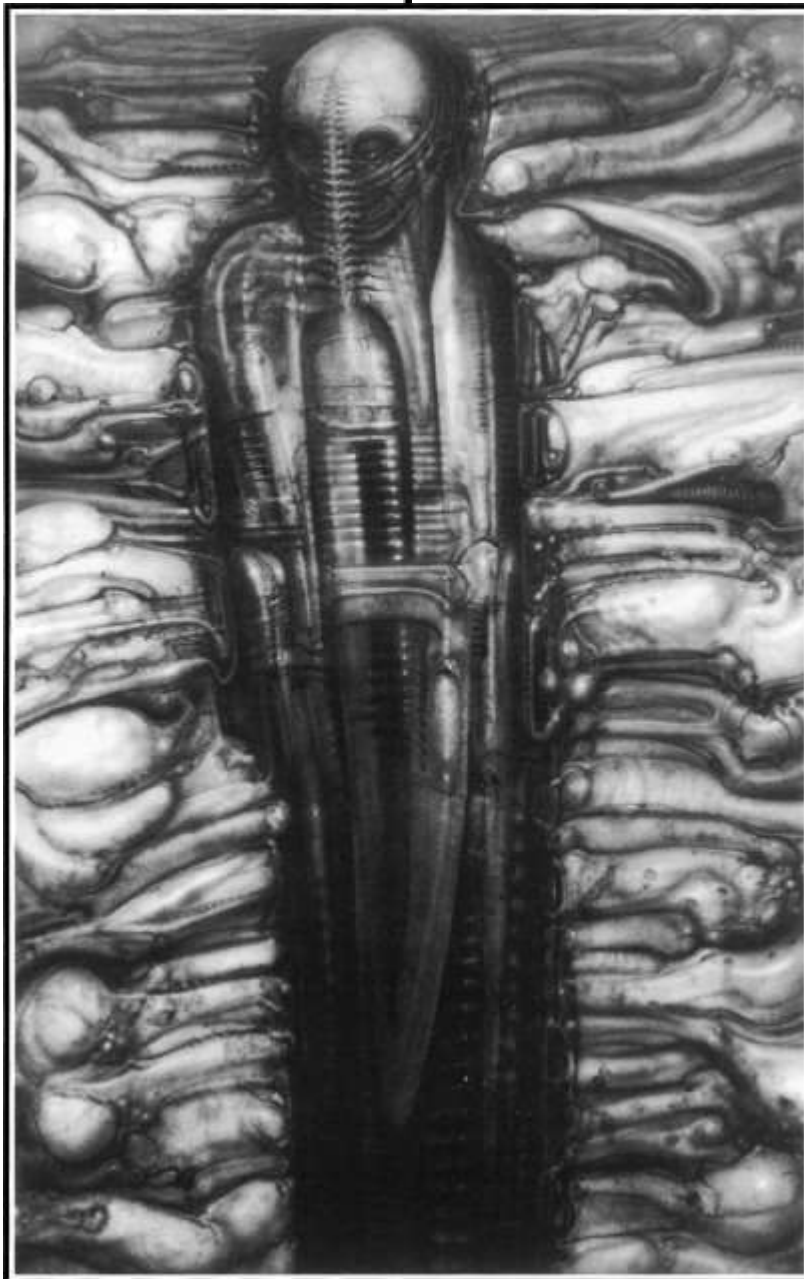
by R.F. Paul

By now I'm sure everyone who hasn't been hiding under a rock for the past twenty-five years is familiar, if not with the name, then at least with the art and film design work of H.R. Giger. He is, of course, most widely known for his work on the original *Alien* (1979), directed by Ridley Scott, and for which he won an Oscar. He is the author/artist of *Necronomicon* (1976), *Giger's Alien* (1980), *New York City* (1981), *Necronomicon II* (1985), *Biomechanics* (1988), *Film Design* (1994), *Giger's Species* (1995), [WWW.HRGIGER.COM](http://WWW.HRGIGER.COM) (1997), and most recently *The Mystery of SanGottardo* (1999). He has worked on numerous films, though nearly all of them, with the exception of *Alien*, he has disliked. Hollywood, namely Fox Studios, has repeatedly ripped Mr. Giger's designs off in a great many science fiction films, including *Alien Resurrection* (1997), which lacked the decency to even mention his name in its credits. This dismal situation has spread to other genres and 'creative' fields as well, including look-alike Giger art in tattoos, on album covers, pinball machines, and video arcade games.

It seems his innate and penetrating airbrush style and biomechanical motifs have, for better (to his fans) or for worse (to his bank account), sunk permanently into the collective and com-

mercial psyche of the world. This can most vividly be seen (rip-off or homage, you be the judge) in last year's blockbuster sci-fi action hit, *The Matrix*—specifically in the scene where Neo awakens into 'reality'. Where will it end? Why have not every leading horror, sci-fi and avant-garde filmmaker come crashing through his doors? David Lynch? David Cronenberg? Dario Argento? Alejandro Jodorowski? Peter Greenaway? One would think Giger and his vision would have been gobbled up by these folk long ago.

So what is the problem? Sad to say it is easier and more cost effective for the Hollywood machine to simply rip Mr. Giger and his design styles off than to actually *hire* the man himself. Unfortunately, as the following disclosure reveals, this trend has not yet reversed itself and probably won't in the near future. If there are any self-respecting attorneys out there reading this (ha!) and want to come to Giger's defense, please contact his agent, Mr. Leslie Barany.



**How do you feel about turning sixty? [Giger's birthday is February 5, 1940]**

Oh, I don't really care! It's just another day. I've no celebrations planned.

**I've heard that you no longer use the airbrush and that you no longer paint. In what medium do you now prefer to work?**

Yes. I gave up the airbrush about nine years ago. I work mostly with pencil now on paper roughly 30 x 21 centimeters. Or I work with a grease pencil for lithographs. And with the grease pencil I can work on a very shiny paper and then later I can remove bits here and there with a razor blade. So these pieces are a little bit like the paintings I did between 1964 and 1968 [see **Giger's first NECRONOMICON**

and/or WWW.HRGIGER.COM for examples]. I also do drawings with felt pens or with ballpoint pens and, of course, I have my sculptures.

**What is the subject matter of this new work?**

Many of the sketches are construction plans for my museum. For example, most recently, I designed the entrance-foyer roof, which resembles the art-nouveau entrances to Paris subways, and a stairway in front of the museum. My crew and I recently finished a three-dimensional 'Birth-Machine', inspired by the old 1967 painting "Work #85", with the same name, a cutaway view of a loaded Walther pistol with four small figures crouching in the bullet chamber, each holding a gun of his own. It is also known as the Bullet-Baby sculpture. One of the bullet-babies sits outside guarding the Giger Museum. The Bullet-Baby sculpture is the same size as the projectiles in the original painting and rests inside the cut-away of a 9mm Luger casing perched on the explosive charge. This Birth-Machine baby has appeared repeatedly through the years in many of my paintings. This sculpture is an expression of my feelings towards over-population and is a recurring theme in a great deal of my work.

**You wrote in the first NECRONOMICON that you hated working in oil. Have you since done any new experiments in oil?**

No, not at all. Between 1969 and 1971, I did a homage to Samuel Beckett [see Giger's first NECRONOMICON] and some of the "Passages" paintings in oil and that's it.

**I'd like to discuss some of the influences on your work. Let's begin with Lovecraft . . .**

Yes: Lovecraft. I have an old friend, Sergius Golowin, who's a writer of myths and fables— sort of a specialist in them. He knows a lot about magick. In the late '60s, he gave me a book by Lovecraft and turned me on to the name

**Necronomicon** — The Book of the Dead. And he told me that my entire corpus of work could easily be pages out of the **Necronomicon**. Now, while I very much admire Lovecraft's work, his main influence upon my own was simply the name of Alhazred's grimoire, the **Necronomicon**. There is a funny story concerning Sergius, who used to tell everyone he knew that the walls of my home were covered with paintings from the **Necronomicon**, which at the time was not true at all, but which since, of course, became true as I began to cover them. The "Passages" and "The Spell" are demonstrative examples of turning my walls into a sort of Lovecraftian temple.

**Aleister Crowley...**

Well, if you are interested in magick and the occult, then the name Aleister Crowley should be at the top of your list, though I must say that I tried to study his books and his system of magick and I found it quite difficult to understand him. But I was always interested in what kind of paintings

he painted, though it took many years before I was actually able to see a few of them. I have a copy somewhere of the catalogue that was produced for the Crowley Art Exhibition that was held in London back in 1998, as well as the catalogue for an exhibition that was held in 1932 in



**No. 312, Biomechanoid Landscape**

# AN INTERVIEW WITH H. R. GIGER

Berlin. Most of the works I've seen are portraits of his friends and they look to me very evil! The ladies that he painted are terrible looking, which I don't like too much since all of my ladies in my paintings are beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. To me, anyway!

## Austin Osman Spare ...

He is, of course, wonderful. He was and is a genius.

## Stanislas Szukalski ...

Yes, yes... I have seen his work and think it exceedingly fine. He sculpts like Ernest Fuchs paints.

## Speaking of Ernest Fuchs, he and yourself and Max Ernst are my favorite artists.

Oh, thank you very much. I would have to say that Ernest Fuchs has been my greatest and deepest inspiration and that he is the greatest artist alive today. And as a technician he is absolutely fantastic. He knows his materials inside and out. If I had seen his work when I was young, I never would have begun to paint myself. He is a master and is a close friend of mine, I am very happy to say.

## What do you think of Mati Klarwein?

He is absolutely great. I know him also; very well. It is a shame that his work is mostly out of print. I'm afraid that's true of most surrealist painters and artists. And I would probably be in the same boat if it wasn't for Taschen and Morpheus International.

## Do you listen to music when you work? What kind of music do you like?

Well, ten years ago or so, I mostly listened to jazz, my favorite musician being Miles Davis. Some rock as well. But nowadays I listen to a lot of film soundtracks. I really love the soundtrack to Coppola's *Dracula*. I'm also a big fan of Puff Daddy (laughs), especially the tracks on the most recent *Godzilla* soundtrack.

## What about electronic music?

No, not too much. I like Aphex Twin though. *Come to daddy* is very good. Very amusing. I like the music very much on *The Fifth Element* soundtrack. I'm a fan of the Propeller Heads. As for my work, I do not paint or draw to music. I love silence!

## Speaking of films, are you currently working on any movie projects?

Yes: Many small projects. I'm building the torture machine for an adaptation of Franz Kafka's short story "In the Penal Colony". I'm finding this project very difficult at the moment, as the construction of this machine poses some interesting design problems! I have read the story many, many times now, but still don't think that I've quite got it right. But I've completed a lot of preliminary sketches and I think this machine will definitely be something for my museum after the film is produced. In fact, I made

it a contractual agreement that I get the machine after filming is finished. I am very excited about this. I may be involved as set and art designer on Bill Malone's next movie, one which was planned years ago, called *The Mirror*, for which I hope to build three dimensional sculptures of "The Spell" paintings.



No. 616, The Witnesses

**Who would you most like to work with on a film?**

Oh, there are many directors, including some of the young new ones, but one would definitely be David Cronenberg. But I as can't be assured that my work will be best represented and executed, it prevents me from accepting a lot of film work. That and a well earned disillusionment with the movie industry in general. Also, I no longer like to travel so that makes working on most films somewhat difficult. I am very comfortable at home and have everything I need here in Zurich.

**Have you recovered any of the stolen paintings that are posted on your web site?**

No, not recovered. Though I was recently contacted, via my website, about the large *Alien* painting, you know, the one of the adult alien in profile, yes? This person writing said that his friend in Australia had this painting and that he got it from someone in London, who got it somehow after the *Alien* movie shoot. So, anyway, it looks like it's now in Australia, at the present, beyond my reach.

**Do you think you'll get it back?**

I don't think so. They want to keep it. And I refuse to buy back a stolen painting! I had another *Alien* painting stolen, one that I like a lot better than the side view adult alien. It's a painting of a part of the crashed alien spacecraft. It is one of my favorites and I would also, very much, like it back. If a real Giger fan, an honest one, should happen to know where these paintings are, I hope they will contact Leslie, my agent, at <[www.hrgigeragent.com](http://www.hrgigeragent.com)>. They will be well rewarded, you can be sure, after the paintings are recovered and hanging in the Giger Museum where they belong!

**Is there any chance that *The Mystery of San Gottardo* and *The Tourist* will ever be filmed?**

**The Tourist:** Not likely. You know *The Mystery of San Gottardo* was published as a book by Taschen. I hope that a film will be made once the English language edition has been published, since it was originally written as a film idea.

**The only edition I've seen has been in German.**

Yes, only in German. But I think it is very nice. Good quality paper and reproduction, don't you think?

**Yes, it is a very beautiful book. But I think it would have sold better, especially here in America, if it had been published in English.**

Yeah, sure, I agree. But Taschen said they wouldn't publish it in English if the German edition didn't do well, which it didn't. I think they only sold about 9000 copies or so in the first year and then the remaindered copies were sold at half price, without asking my permission. It makes me angry, especially since Taschen owns both the French and the English rights to the book, which were translated by friends of mine. They could do other editions at any time but I don't think they will because of the risk involved. I think the reason it didn't sell so well was because there aren't any airbrush paintings in it, nor is the artwork like anything I've done before. I think that most people don't recognize the work as mine. It has too much text for normal people as well. Hopefully, though, Taschen will eventually publish it in

English and in other languages as well.

**How do you feel about the occult in general and have any magical orders contacted you?**

Because of my painting "Cthulhu Rising", the Esoteric Order of Dagon made me an honorary member: Frater Alien. But that's about it. Most recently a fan named Joe Pulver wrote a novel, eventually published by Chaosium called



**No. 307, Master and Margeritha**

# AN INTERVIEW WITH H.R. GIGER

**Nightmare's Disciple.** In his first draft, I was a character who was killed and my body mutilated. Through my friend and agent, Leslie Barany, I received a pre-publication copy of this novel and was very upset about it because I didn't want anyone out there, some psycho maybe, to get any ideas about killing me in this way! So I told Mr. Pulver to please remove my name and character from his story or give me another role or something. Anyway, he did as I asked, and replaced my character with another fictional airbrush artist, whose work happens to be inspired by mine. He gets killed in my place, which made me happy! As for the occult, I am very wary of it in terms of actual practice and would never join any groups. It informs my work in much the same way that my dreams do. It is just one side of it.

**You've said in numerous interviews that you paint what you fear. What does H.R. Giger fear most at the present time?**

Yes, I have said that. But I also and mostly paint what I like! As for now, my fears are very stupid - money problems, you know? I have a lot of debts and not enough money because of the costs involved in maintaining the Giger Museum in my castle. I am often reminded that it is not my castle but the bank's! These fears are stupid, you know, very, very munda-

dane. I hate it that I have to deal with this money centered problem. It is stressful and makes me worry a lot. And I haven't yet found a way to handle these fears. I just need a lot of money - that would be the best thing!

**Speaking of money, did you ever file a lawsuit against Fox?**

No. You know something is moving at present in this direction but, up until now, a lawsuit has not been filed officially. We've been in contact with Fox through our lawyer, but nothing happened. We have to do something about it, because Fox treated me very badly over the years. And in the last Alien movie [*Alien Resurrection*] they didn't even mention my name anywhere in the credits. Not to mention

the fact that they never asked for approval to utilize my designs. They have no right to do this without crediting me and paying me to do so. Fox had never specifically acquired the copyrights to my pre-existing paintings, "Necronom 4 and 5", the two works upon which the adult alien design is clearly based upon. I am certain if it goes to court that I will be the winner. At the present, unfortunately, things are at a standstill. Our lawyer is not aggressive enough, or perhaps is not the right person for the job.

**What was the inspiration behind "The Spell"?**

I did some work under the influence of magick — magick literature - and, at that time, I had recently visited Dali in Cadaques and I did the "Second Celebration of the Four", which was all about the death of my girlfriend Li, a ceremony to remember her, and this was the only thing I've done really in terms of a genuine magickal ritual. I did a portfolio on this with overworked photos and, at this time, I think 1976, I did the last paintings of "The Spell". Everything that I know about witchcraft and magick I put into the paintings that make up "The Spell". But in a way, I painted these paintings without any thing in particular in mind, without thinking, just pure inspiration from the gut. Or maybe from the heart!



No. 276, The Magus

**What was the inspiration behind "The Magus"?**

Keith Emerson playing the organ. A homage to Keith Emerson.

**I'm also quite fond of "Chidher Grun", based on Gustav Meyrink's novel, *The Green Face*.**

Oh, yes. Though I don't like the snake so much. It looks more like a worm and I don't like the way it came out. But the face is nice and the left figure is Li. This painting, as well as "The Magus" and "Master and Margherita" are now in the collection of a friend in Germany.

**"Master and Margherita" is one of my favorite paintings by you.**

Yes, thank you. And one of mine, too.

**Are there any women in your life at present?**

Yes, Carmen, who's been my girlfriend for the past three and a half years. She is an editor and translator and is engaged in holotropic research. She is also an astrologer.

**What do you look for in a woman?**

Everything! For me women are like goddesses, some of them anyway (laughs).

**What do you think of the work of Thomas Ligotti?**

I only just started to read his stories recently. They are very nice. I like them very much. He possesses a wonderful sense of the grotesque and nihilistic.

**How did you come to work on the German edition of Ligotti's *In a Foreign Town, In a Foreign Land*?**

A mutual friend named Helmi Sigg told me about this editor, Frank Festa, and made the introduction. He sent me several books by Ligotti, knowing that I greatly admire this sort of literature. So, about a year ago, I agreed to contribute some art to this project. I like to do small editions of things, you know, signed and numbered and so forth and I think this book is wonderful. Though I think our joint signatures should be at

the front of the book instead of at the end. But that is my only complaint.

**Did you do original paintings or drawings for this project?**

No. The cover is my painting, "Lovecraft over New York". And inside the book are myriad small ink drawings and end chapter wing-ding-type sketches from the early '60s. And the lettering throughout the book is beautifully stenciled.

**How did the Giger Museum start? How did you come to procure the castle in which it is housed?**

The idea for it came after I had a show in a chateau in Gruyeres in the early '90s. Gruyeres is in the middle of Switzerland, in its 'French' part, and, of course, is also the name of a cheese! One of the specialties of Switzerland is the fondue. Gruyeres is famous for its dairy farmers and the over all high quality of its milk and cheese. Anyway, I liked this village from the beginning. It's situated on some small hills; on the top of one of these is a castle. On another is to

be found mine - Chateau St. Germain. Now, at the time that I had this show in Chateau Gruyeres, which was very successful by the way — close to ten thousand people came over the four months that it was held. The director, Barbra Gawryziak, convinced me that the chateau would be a perfect place for me to install a Giger museum. During this time I had a sponsor, a banker from Zurich, who wanted to aid the museum project, and I published my book called [WWW.HRGIGER.COM](http://WWW.HRGIGER.COM), which contains the first photos of this chateau. Ten days before the chateau in question was to be auctioned, my 'sponsor' pulled out of the project. And, so then I was alone and decided to pay for it myself, which was probably not the best idea I've ever had! (laughs) But I bought it and it was quite a lot of money. At the moment, it takes up a lot of my time, because I have to look after it and ensure that in the next season it attracts more people and eventually will



No. 275, Chidher Grün

become well known and self-sustaining. I still want to install a small train, included in my original design, that will journey through the castle, transporting in little wagons all the visitors. There's a description of how it should look and work in [WWW.HRGIGER.COM](http://WWW.HRGIGER.COM).

**So, it's a little like your childhood 'ghost-train'?**

Well, no, not really, but I know what you mean. It will operate by pushing through various doors and walls that bear my paintings, and so the effect will sort of be like going through a haunted house train ride in certain rooms. But the train is nowhere near completion as it will cost

# AN INTERVIEW WITH H.R. GIGER



**No. 85, Birth Machine**

between two and three million francs to do it right. So, presently, what I'm working on is the bar for the museum, which is located in the west wing of the chateau. And because there was a tenant there who did not want to leave, I had to wait to begin work until December of last year, when I was able to remove him and another lady who blocked further work on the entrance. These two people wound up costing me a lot of lost time and money. I was so annoyed by it that I did a lot of very nasty drawings of this lady. She was terribly fat and so I drew several caricatures of her sitting on top of the entire chateau, and asphyxiating the castle. I have done twenty or thirty drawings of her and finally she is gone. Now I have been able to start work on the new entrance and with the bar as well. The bar will take some time as it is being fashioned out of a mixture of concrete and fiberglass so it is in keeping with the look of the stone environment. Everything, including the tables and chairs, will be made out of this material.

**Will these additions be completed this year?**

That depends on the money. I hope we can finish it before the budget runs out.

**Did you design the Giger Room in the Limelight Club in New York?**

Yes. Originally I had designed the birds that occupy the Giger Room for the entrance area of the museum. These birds resemble a mutated saxophone with very long heads and have bat wings. In the Limelight Club, these birds hang from vaulted ceilings. My artwork lines the walls and I have placed many sculptures in niches throughout the room. The artworks on display in the VIP Room are all limited edition sculptures on loan from my museum in Gruyeres, Switzerland.

**I've heard that presently a biography is being written about you. Who is writing it?**

A German writer named Herbert Hurka. I met him about a year ago in Basel, almost by accident. I like the way he writes very much. He has written several other books about the arts and media so I asked him to write my biography. We've been working on it jointly now for the past six months, usually by telephone. The biography will also have a complete catalogue of my drawings printed in miniature along the sides of each page. It is not your typical, standard biography, either, since he is very much interested in exploring the meaning and symbolism of my paintings.

**Will this biography be published this year?**

Yes, before Christmas.

**For years now I've tried to locate copies of your early films and films made about you for German and Swiss television, such as *HR Giger's Necronomicon* and *The Celebration of the Four*. Are these films still available?**

Unfortunately, no. They are all out of print.

**That is too bad. It would be a great thing if you could collect all of these short films and re-release them on a single tape or on a series of tapes.**



**No. 618, Carmen I**



**No. 40, Noracyclin**

Yes, that is a good idea. But again, it comes down to money, I'm sorry to say. A man named James Cowan has been working on a film about me for years and years now, called *Brother of Shadows*. If this is ever released then maybe something could be done about these earlier films and interviews.

**How did you come to work with the writer Akron on *The Baphomet Tarot*?**

I met Akron about ten years ago; a really amazing fellow who talks like a machine-gun! He used to be the drummer for the German rock band Amoun Duul and has always had a long interest in things occult. When I met him he suggested that we work together to design the 'Underworld' Tarot. I mainly used existing paintings for this deck.

**Who's idea was it to use older paintings for the Tarot?**

It was Akron's.

**And he didn't want you to design a Minor Arcana?**

Oh, well, maybe he did, but I didn't have the time to do something on that large a scale, much less paint new designs for the Major Arcana. The only original material I did was published in the German edition of Akron's Tarot book that accompanied the deck. These were chiefly pencil and ink drawings which are very much demonstrative of the

work I currently do. There will be a new edition of the deck published soon by Taschen.

**Will this new edition have an English translation of Akron's original German book?**

No. Though there will be additional material to the little booklet that was included in the first English edition of the deck. Please understand that Akron's original book contained a lot of fantasy in it, and I don't know how much of it was actually useful for the analysis of the cards themselves. I know that he likes this book very much, but I have a problem with having to read so much! His book is very long. It's like the **Bible**, you know? (laughs) Have you read it?

**Well, I can't read German, so no.**

That's okay then, because you see, it has kept its secrets (laughs).

Official H.R. Giger web site:

[www.hrgiger.com](http://www.hrgiger.com)



**No. 341, Witches' Dance**



# AN INTERVIEW WITH H.R. GIGER



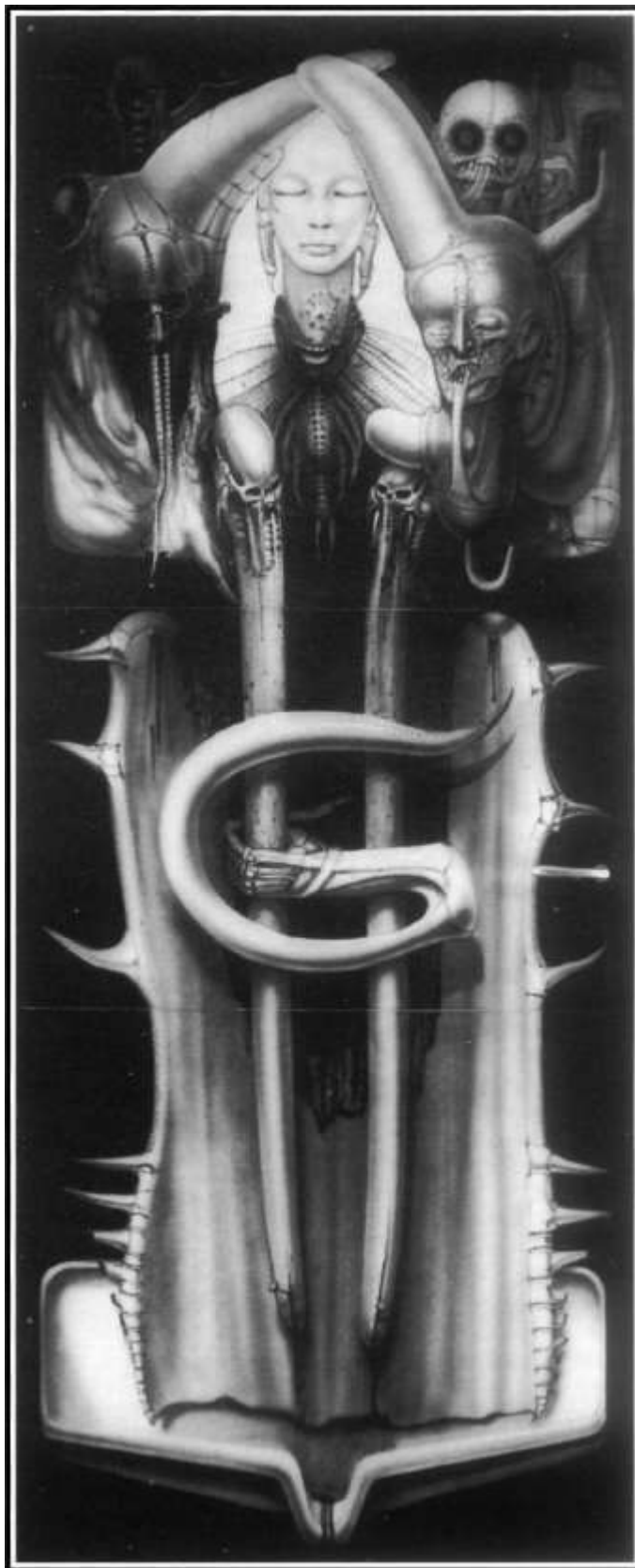
H.R. Giger in the entrance of the Giger-Bar, 1992

Most of Giger's books, as well as fine quality posters, prints, calendars, lithographs and other Giger related merchandise may be ordered via snail-mail in the United States from Morpheus International, 9250 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, California 90212. However, if you want the money to go directly to Giger, These same items and many more collectables can be ordered from Giger's own website.

My deepest regards and thanks go out to Thomas Ligotti and Helmi Sigg for making this interview possible. Thanks also to Leslie Barany, for tightening up the facts, and for simply being there.



Watchguardian, Head V



No. 213, Kitchen Door