



# H.R. GIGER

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS

The Father of Biomechanics reflects upon his "baby," the terrifying *Alien* creature, his art, tattooing and his vision of tomorrow!

**THOUGH** his art has been shown in more than 190 exhibitions around the world, you'll have more luck finding his exquisitely airbrushed visions in magazines (*Heavy Metal*, *Penthouse*), on record covers (Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Debbie Harry, Steve Stevens, Carcass), and brought to three dimensional "life" in movies (*Alien*, *Poltergeist II*, *Alien 3*). So when you think of the artist who created the magnificent, savage inter-galactic beasts that made your heart palpitate as you watched them come to life on the silver screen, you've been touched by the unofficial portrait photographer of the Golden Age of Biology!

Born Hans Rudi Giger (though don't ever call him that) on February 5, 1940, he is the artist who has combined the terrors from within and beyond mere human understanding with the blatancy of what was, is and might yet be.

In the smoky psychic landscape where fear hunkers and horror grows rampantly like blood-fed crabgrass, H.R. Giger vacations with a sketch pad, recording it all with unerring taste, precision and coolly detached matter-of-factness.

Giger paid a rare visit to NYC to preside over the opening of a prestigious show of his art at the Alexander Gallery and also made a brief visit to a New Jersey tattoo convention to receive an award and much adulation. He seemed nonplused at the attention, fascinated by the act of tattooing (he'd never seen it done

before), and pleased by the "life-of-their-own" that his biomechanical creations have taken on. With his tattoo book, *H.R. Giger Under Your Skin*, coming out in the near future, he has moved closer and closer to the tattoo community. While immersing himself in the "texture" of tattooing, so to speak, he has come to view that art with respect, admiration and awe, and he has been meticulously searching for quality photographs of every tattoo inspired by his work for his forthcoming book. He was also recently a judge at a Swiss tattoo convention.

Now hear what he has to say about tattoos, his Watch *Abart* exhibition, the film industry, his projects in the works (like the sci-fi thriller *Species*) and more!



INTERVIEW BY GENEVIEVE T. MOVIE AND LOU STATHIS

pdf created by [www.littlegiger.com](http://www.littlegiger.com)





**ITA:** Are you enjoying yourself here in New York?

**HRG:** Yes, very much.

**ITA:** When was the last time you were in the States?

**HRG:** That was in 1986 when I had the occasion to go to Los Angeles during the pre-production of *Poltergeist II* to see how my designs for the movie had been executed.

**ITA:** Were you pleased with what they did with your work?

**HRG:** Hmm. What they showed me was very different from what I did. I walked through and said, "Great! *Primo!* Wonderful!" I felt like a teacher in school. Everybody was in their little rooms waiting for me. I could see

that they had worked very hard and it was already done. It was too late to change anything. I would only make them crazy by criticizing. It was probably best that I handled it that way.

**ITA:** That was very diplomatic of you.

**HRG:** I'm not always a diplomat.

**ITA:** You had problems with *Alien 3*?

**HRG:** Yes. That was a mistake, in a way. While I was working on my idea for *The Mystery of San Gottardo*, Gordon Carroll contacted me about doing *Alien 3*. I told him that I was working on a new creature and I could probably combine it. I had imagined that because I had done the first *Alien*, this time I would have a little more freedom to be able to bring in some

new ideas. But that was completely stupid to think.

**ITA:** Naive of you?

**HRG:** Very naive!

**ITA:** Did they want you to do something very specific?

**HRG:** Yes, they told me exactly what I had to do and didn't even give me a chance to show them *San Gottardo*. They said, "No, we don't need it." My story was a comedy, theirs was definitely *not*. Gordon Carroll asked if I was interested. Yes, why not? Then it was, "Do that, do that and that!" just like when I started *Alien*. First I should only do creatures, then later on I could do more and more. I had hoped that it would be true, and develop the same way with *Alien 3*.

**ITA:** But it didn't?

**HRG:** It didn't. After one month of work it was over. I heard nothing from them after I completed my designs. I gave all my energy to this and put all my other projects aside, because the *Alien* is my baby.

**ITA:** You haven't had very good luck with film projects.

**HRG:** No. It only worked out well once with *Alien*.

**ITA:** It's amazing that it's only now, two years later and mostly from your own interviews, that we discover that



you designed the creature in *Alien 3*. Normally such news would be highly publicized.

**HRG:** Yes, I would think so.

**ITA:** I never read any of the usual interviews with you when the film *Alien 3* came out and the screen credit only said "Original Alien Design by H.R. Giger."

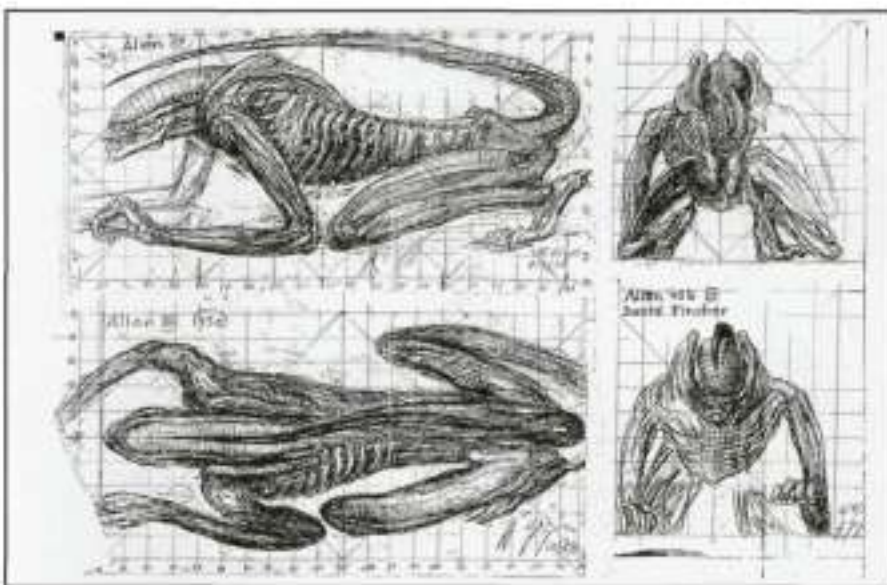
**HRG:** In my contract for *Alien 3* it states exactly how I should be credited and the studio broke that contract by crediting me with "Original Alien Design by H.R. Giger." It looks like I didn't work on the film at all. When I first saw this at a Fox screening of the film in Geneva I was shocked, horrified! We contacted 20th Century Fox and they said it was too late for changes. I also realized that my name was missing from the credits at the end.

**ITA:** What could have been the studio's explanation for screwing up the credit for the designer who had previously won the Oscar for creating the same creature?

**HRG:** We received many excuses, but never a satisfactory explanation. We are still waiting for that.

**ITA:** What exactly did you do for *Alien 3*?

**HRG:** My contract required that I provide new designs for an aquatic face hugger, a baby Alien, a full-grown Alien and some Alien skin, all of which I did. I did all my work at home in Zurich, making detailed sketches in pen and ink, and faxed them to director David Fincher every day. I was asked to make it look less humanoid and more like a beast. My new creature was more erotic and much more elegant and beastly than my original. It was a four-legged Alien, sort of like a lethal panther. It had skin that was designed to make musical notes, and how the Alien felt would be expressed



(opposite page) Top photo © Willy Spiller, 1992, bottom photo of Bambi Alien © Kelly A. Brill, (this page) The Alien III you never did see, the original version modeled by Giger himself in the basement of his home. The special effects team on the film decided they could do better.





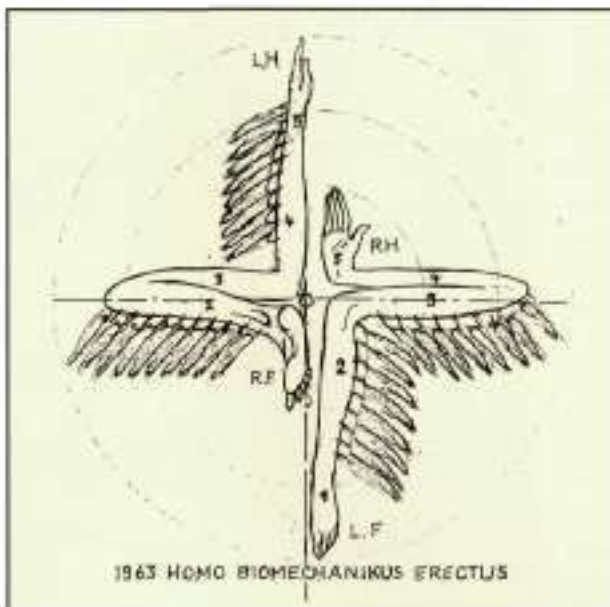
by sound. I assumed that all of my changes and improvements would be used.

**ITA:** Weren't they?

**HRG:** I was told by the creature effects team that they had some ideas of their own for the Alien and that they would make their own interpretation based on my sketches. I wondered why the director was listening more to them than to me. I invited all of them to visit me in Switzerland, but I heard that they didn't want my input. When I talked to them I found them to be very nice, very kind, but I am sure they believed they didn't need me.

**ITA:** Weren't they hired to execute your designs?

**HRG:** I thought so, but obviously they didn't. I found out much later that they were convinced it was their job to redesign the *Alien 3* creature and accepted my "contributions" believing that all my efforts were based on my huge love for the matter. I now believe the director was playing a game with both sides to get the best result for the movie. In the end they used many of my ideas, but what was finally in the movie was very much different from what I imagined *Alien 3* to be. In a way, they went back to my designs for the original Alien, and that



was disappointing.

**ITA:** The *Baby Alien* sculpture I saw at the exhibition at the Alexander Gallery was great, but it wasn't in the movie.

**HRG:** Unfortunately it wasn't. This was my "Bambi" Alien, very cute and very frightening at the same time. With my assistants in Zurich, I also built the life-size *Alien 3* creature at my own expense, which I offered to David Fincher but he didn't want it, only photos of it. Because of this, it was not the same. It is still my creature, but it could have been more special.

**ITA:** What finally happened?

**HRG:** After strong pressure from my lawyers and my agent, Leslie Barany, 20th Century Fox finally made the

corrections on the videocassettes and the laser disks and then on the master print so it reads "*Alien 3* Creature Design by H.R. Giger," but it was too late for me and too late for the audience that saw it in the theaters. I was not asked for any interviews, but the creative team of Mr. Woodruff and Mr. Gillis was.

**ITA:** They also got the Oscar nomination for Special

*Pages from Giger's work-in-progress. The Mystery of San Gottardo. This one will cost Hollywood an arm and a leg!*



Effects, didn't they?

**HRG:** Yes. Normally I would have also been nominated since I received the Oscar for the exact same work in *Alien*.

**ITA:** Whose responsibility is it to decide who is nominated?

**HRG:** The director.

**ITA:** I thought these things only happened in the movies.

**HRG:** No, not only. But hopefully it will be different with the new film I'm working on, *Species*, for MGM. Frank Mancuso Jr., the producer, seems more sensitive to my work.

**ITA:** Anything you can tell us about it at this point?

**HRG:** Not very much except that I tried to do some new things, something aesthetic, not just another ugly creature. It is too early to know what the final results will be, how much of what you see in the movie will be mine. In film collaboration, with so many people involved, everyone has their own ideas. In truth, it is difficult for Hollywood to trust, totally, the ideas of an outsider, which, of course I am. But one never knows.

**ITA:** Who is the director of *Species*?

**HRG:** The director is Roger Donaldson and some of the actors are Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen and Forest Whitaker. It is a science-fiction thriller about a genetically engineered being.

**ITA:** Earlier you mentioned an idea you were working on, *The Mystery of San Gottardo*. What is it?

**HRG:** It's a further development of an image I've used in my work over the last thirty years. *The Mystery of San Gottardo* is about a race of creatures, my Biomechanoids, part organic, part machine. A new life form, they are reduced human beings. The human form is cut up into three separate entities, meaning the torso with attached head and no limbs, a left arm joined to a right leg and a right arm joined to a left leg. These constructions, the combined arms and legs, are my Biomechanoids. They have the personality and memories of the original



human beings. They remember being slaves and they never want to go back and be reattached to the slave holder. On the other hand, the torso would like to have its limbs back, and that's a problem. Also, if the body had problems, like addictions to drugs or alcohol, the Biomechanoids would inherit these problems and would need to find other ways to satisfy these cravings. Without a mouth, it's very difficult to drink. I felt that it was a good thing to show how human beings are. It's very satirical.

**ITA:** A metaphor for human behavior?

**HRG:** Yes. It would be funny. And

this creature—I always want to say creature, but they are not—these human beings, these Biomechanoids, they are much more elegant than human beings are. A simple aesthetic form, just an arm and a leg. They have a basic biological structure. They have no intestines or hearts. No organs whatsoever. They have no digestive disorders, heart problems or respiratory illness. They never get sick or old. Their needs are simple, just some sugar water for circulation of blood. There isn't any stomach, it goes direct-

Photo © Willy Spiller, 1992.





ly into the system intravenously. They just need a small electric current to get the machines inside of them working. They receive oxygen through a kind of gills. They give each other sexual pleasure by using vibrators to stimulate the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet and sometimes make love to each other forming a chain.

**ITA:** So this will be funny, a black comedy. Do you find much of what you do funny?

**HRG:** Yes. But other people probably do not.

**ITA:** Let's talk about what you saw at the Ink-Credible Tattoo Convention in New Jersey (in '93) where you were presented an award as the "Father of Bio-mechanica."

Have you ever worked on skin, on a living body?

**HRG:** I've painted on living bodies a few times, but I have never made a tat-

too. I would be afraid to, there's no room for error. I prefer to work on paper. If it didn't come out as good as I would hope, I would feel badly. But I'm fascinated by artists who have the expertise to do that, it's really quite amazing. Tattoo, as a medium of expression, offers possibilities that no other art form can match.

**ITA:** How did it feel to see your face tattooed on someone's leg?

**HRG:** (laughs) Somewhat embarrassing. It's quite humorous to see your face tattooed on someone. To do that, you must be in love with the person or a very big fan of somebody. I can only hope his girlfriend will not misunderstand my face on his leg!

**ITA:** He's a tattoo artist (Paul Ivanko) and he told me it was a tribute to you for all of the inspiration your art

has given him.

**HRG:** That's wonderful.

**ITA:** And how do you feel about seeing your paintings as tattoos?

**HRG:** It is the highest compliment someone can pay to you as an artist to wear your work their whole life long. It's like a living museum, much like a kiosk (a street fixture invented in Berlin in the 1920s to display posters). They are living posters, making the artist more prominent. A form of advertisement. In that respect they are

much more effective than paintings could be. It gives me immense joy to feel the enthusiasm of my fans. By this, I mean that it gives me the energy to continue working.

**ITA:** Are tattoos of your work ever better than the original paintings themselves?

**HRG:** It's possible, yes. Particularly if the tattoo conforms to the

contours of the body, the shape of the muscle, like we saw (*Humanoid I*) on tattoo artist Andrea's leg. That's wonderful. It's even better if it's done that way. It adds an extra dimension to the work when the body is used not only as a flat surface. There can be a relationship between the artwork and where it is placed on the body, sometimes in a humorous or meaningful juxtaposition. Normally a canvas doesn't move, but on the body those possibilities can be explored. It can become art in motion.

**ITA:** It seems appropriate to use your work as tattoos, as what you do does reveal the mechanical level of life that functions beneath the biological sur-



*Giger's visit in 1993 to NYC tattoo convention. Photos © Steve Bonge.*



face. Tattoos can be used to highlight those under-the-skin mechanisms.

**HRG:** Yes, it goes in the direction of what I do. Apparently, people like the look of transparent tattoos, looking within the body and seeing beneath the flesh. Tattooing can suggest this as a kind of *trompe l'oeil*. My biomechanical work, when used in tattoo art, does this. I like biomechanical tattoos very much, even when they are not directly from my work. They come very close to looking like actual modifications of the body. I have always been fascinated by life beneath the surface and the inner mechanism. I am trying to use this concept of transparency in my new film design work.

**ITA:** What is the origin of your biomechanics?

**HRG:** I first developed the idea of biomechanics in the early 1960s while I was in school. My designs were always a combination of technical elements and Art Nouveau. I realized that *biomechanics* would be a good name to identify this style. The concept of biomechanics is not entirely new. There is the same quality in some of the fantastic drawings of Da Vinci, Dali and even some of the Great Masters. In Bosch paintings there are combinations of machines and animals, strange biomechanical monsters.

**ITA:** Which of your works best lend themselves to tattoos?

**HRG:** It seems that the *Li* paintings and also the *Passages* and *Spell* series are the most repeated of my images in tattoos. Probably because of the axial symmetry of the design, which works well when it is done on the center of the back or on the chest. These are the most obvious and natural choices, since the body is also axial. Many of my paintings are like that.

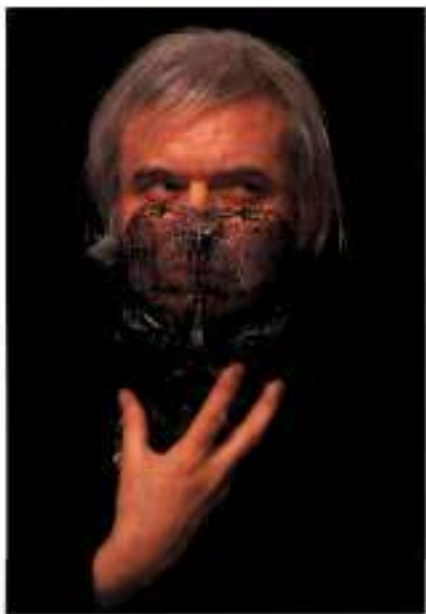
**ITA:** Which painting would you like to see as tattoos?

**HRG:** The red babies (*Landscape*



(above) Work #251, *The Spell*, 1974.  
(center) Tattoos by Antti Rossi, *Fireline Tattoo*, Finland. (bottom) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, *East Side Inc.*, NYC.





'69) or *Under the Earth* or *Phal-lulujah*, which is an old oil painting. Many of them have their own framing elements. That would look good. Ink sketches are also good, like in the book *Biomechanics*. To cover the arm or the leg with biomechanical textures, same as I have done in my paintings, would be great. In a way, in my paintings, many of the figures already have tattoos. That is another way to see it. Another way would be to combine different details from several paintings in a new design.

**ITA:** Do you think that artists whose works are used for tattoos should be paid royalties?

**HRG:** No, it's an advertisement.

**ITA:** You don't feel like your imagery should just be yours, and people should have to pay to use it?

**HRG:** No. It's a third generation of using. A reproduction of a reproduction done by someone else. It's not the same.

**ITA:** Had you ever seen a tattoo being done before you went to the New Jersey convention?

**HRG:** No, I hadn't and I was very impressed, particularly about how quickly tattoos are applied.

**ITA:** Tattoo artist Andrea refers to her clients who get tattoos of your paintings as "Giger collectors."

**HRG:** Yes. In a way, they are my most important collectors. When

XIV) covering the body would be crazy! Three to four centimeters each head. It would look like a disease. Or the triptych of the babies, penises and skulls (*Landscape XVIII, Landscape XIX and Landscape XX*) on one back. The penises on top around the neck, the babies in the middle and the skulls on the ass. I like it when one type of image moves into the other, not stopping with hard edges but using abstract biomechanical elements from other paintings to join or to frame them.

**ITA:** Any others?

**HRG:** *The Female Magician*, not just the head, but the whole thing. Or Lilit from the cover of *Necronomicon II*, the whole painting or just the head, big. Or *The Crucified Serpent* (Work #3275) for someone who wants a special cross. The *Erotomechanics*. No, they are probably too strong! Some of my earlier ink drawings, the *Birth Machines* and *Biomechanoids* (1965-

(this page, above) Photo © Dana Frank, 1993. (below) Work #251, Li II, 1974. (opposite page, top left) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, East Side, Inc., photo by Richard Todd. The tattoo is based on Work #516, Victory V (Satan), 1983 (shown underneath). (top right) Tattoo by Filip Leu, Lausanne, Switzerland. (bottom left) Tattoo by Patty Kelley, Avalon Tattoo, San Diego, CA. (bottom right) Work #207, Landscape XIV, 1973. Tattoo by David Nicholi, Ink FX, Cleveland, OH.









somebody buys my paintings, one hopes that it is because they love it and not just for an investment. With my tattoo collectors, one can be sure that they want to live with it forever. Certainly they won't sell it.

**ITA:** If you were to get a tattoo, what would it be?

**HRG:** Probably an "X" on my arm, so the doctor would know where to draw the blood.

**ITA:** For the last half year, you've been assembling the tattoos of your paintings for a book.

**HRG:** Yes. It was a surprise to find out that so many of my paintings also exist in another art form, which is what tattooing is. Now I'm curious to see and collect all of them. This book will be a "thank you" to my "living canvasses" and



(this page, top) Work #557, Future Kill I, 1984. Tattoo by Jonathan Shaw, Fun City Studio, NYC. (center left) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, East Side, Inc., NYC. (center) Work #324, Satan I, 1977. (center right) Tattoo by Kevin Buckstrup, Tattoo Paradise, Lake Worth, FL. (bottom left) Tattoo by Steve, Tattoos by Steve, UK. (bottom right) Work #215, Landscape XVIII, 1973. (opposite page, top left) Work #261, Passage Temple (Life), 1974 (detail). (top right) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, East Side, Inc., NYC. (bottom left) Tattoo by Luiz Segatto, Tattoos By Lou, Miami Beach, FL. (bottom right) Work #600, The Redeemer, 1983-1987.









(top left) Work #85, Birth Machine, 1967. (top right) Tattoo by Chris Delany, Electric Ladyland Tattoo, NJ, photo © James Stiles. (bottom left) Tattoo by Chris Delany, Electric Ladyland Tattoo, NJ, photo © James Stiles. (bottom right) Poltergeist XXII (The Vortex), 1985.

their tattoo artists. It will be wonderful to have them together in one collection. A new book of Giger paintings which *I* didn't have to paint! I would also like to thank the tattoo community for publicizing this project, as well as the magazines, especially *International Tattoo Art*, for their continued announcements. It has been a really great help.

**ITA:** What kind of response have you been getting?

**HRG:** It's been excellent! We've received a lot, and new material comes in every week. The book, I think, will be as much of a revelation to me as it will be to readers and fans of my work. The earliest tattoo we have so far was done in 1975, before I became known for *Alien*. Also, we got a tattoo of my most recent design, the new skull logo I painted for Danzig. Last year at the Danzig concert in Zurich I saw a tattoo of my painting *Illuminatus 1*. It was done better than my original. We didn't get a photograph of it and I don't know who the person was. If anyone reading this can find him, please let him know I very much would like a photograph of his tattoo!

**ITA:** Speaking of Danzig, why do you have a lawsuit against him?

**HRG:** Our agreement for the use of my 1976 painting *The Master and Margarita* and the new painting I made of the Dagger logo was only for use on the CD, cassette and album cover, not to sell on merchandising products. Later we found that sales of posters and T-shirts with my work were made without my permission, in violation of my copyright.

**ITA:** Didn't you just do a cover for the English group Carcass?

**HRG:** They bought the rights to my new sculpture, *Life Support*, which was in the Watch Abart exhibition, for



(top left) Work #379, Alien I, Facehugger, 1978. (top right) Tattoo by René Mannich, Slams Tattoo, East Germany. (center left) Tattoo by Agony. (center right) Work #352, Smoking Chair, 1977. (bottom left) Work #560, Portrait Barbara M. II, 1983. (bottom right) Tattoo by Rose Tattoo, France.









their new album, *Heartworks*.

**ITA:** In your early days as an artist did you ever imagine the possible influence your work would have on people?

**HRG:** No, I couldn't have imagined it. I don't think any artist ever does.

**ITA:** How did your Watch Abart Exhibition come about?

**HRG:** Mr. Acevedo, the director of the Alexander Gallery and Gil Chaya, a Swiss collector, had purchased several of my paintings at an auction and from a collection in Paris and then contacted me to ask if I'd like to have a show in New York. I said I didn't think it would make much sense because I had already done exhibitions in New York and I didn't have any new paintings. They said they would buy up what was available in the market. Then they came to my exhibit at the Gallery Humus and bought more of my work and also some additional



(opposite page, top left) Tattoo by Marcel Tattoo, Paris, France. (bottom right) Work #110, Phallelujah, 1968-1969. (top center) Work #264, Passage Temple (Way of the Magician), 1975. (top right) Tattoo by Chris Delany, Electric Ladyland, NJ. (center) Photo © Dana Frank, 1993. (bottom left) Work #255, Biomechanoid III, 1974 (detail). (bottom center) Tattoo by Steve, Micky Sharpz Tattoo Studio, Birmingham, England. (this page, top left) Tattoo by Thomas Hanke, Living Colors Tattoo Studio, Germany. (top right) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, East Side, Inc., NYC. (center) Work #250, Li I, 1974. (bottom) Tattoo by Anil Gupta, Kaleidoscope Tattoo, NYC.







paintings from collectors. I felt more and more guilty because they spent a lot of money for all of these paintings.

**ITA:** Why did you feel guilty?

**HRG:** Because I thought if we did this show with only these older paintings—some of them twenty years old and the newest from 1986 or 1988, it would look like a retrospective. Critics would not review it because the work had already been seen. So I had to do something. Four years ago, I'd stopped working with an airbrush. I have been busy with design projects like the Giger Bar and film design for *Alien 3*. This returned me to three-dimensional design and ink drawings like I did in the 1960s. I had also started working on my Zodiac Fountain and my Swatch project. Together, with some of this new work, we decided to make the new show.

**ITA:** Was Swatch involved in this exhibition?

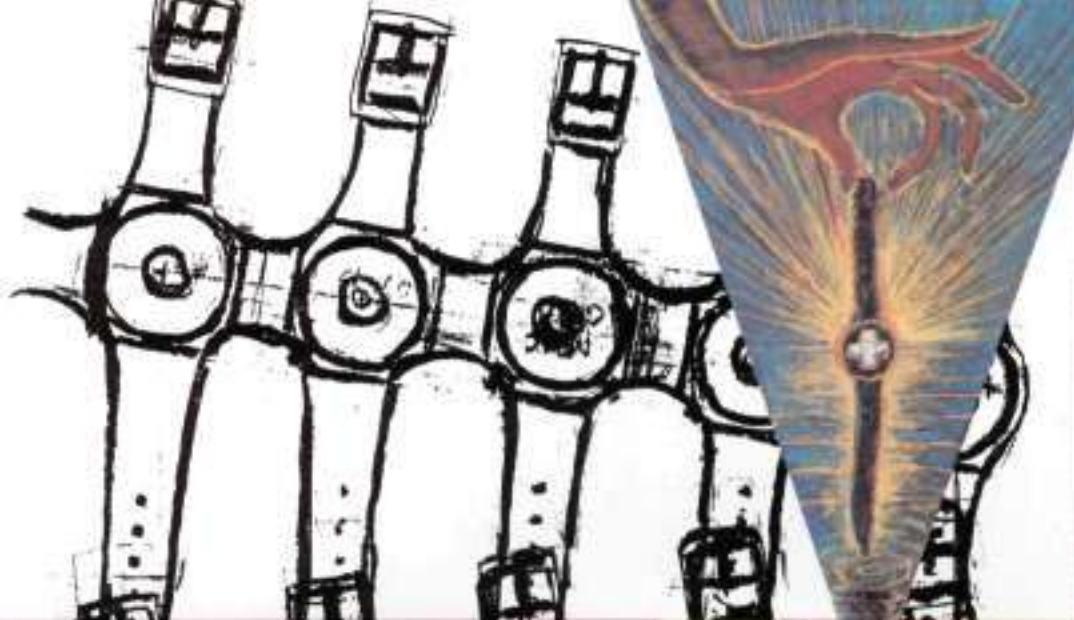
**HRG:** Not the Swatch company, only the Swatch watch. I have always been fascinated by the Swatch, an absolutely perfect object of design and function, so I was very happy when, three years ago, I was requested to design some watches for them. Finally an agreement couldn't be reached on a contract, but I continued on my ideas, anyway, for around a year and a half. (Giger is currently working on his own limited edition watches.)

**ITA:** In which medium?

**HRG:** At first, I did a series of oversized Maxi-watches which were shown at the Hilt Gallery in 1991, and all along I continued to do my ink drawings, some strange watch ideas, my Watch Abarts. (*Abart* is German for variation or deviation.) My watch for

(top left) *Female Torso*, 1993, photo © Rotem, 1993. (top right) *Cast aluminum, Giger Mask II*, edition of 5, 1993, photo © Louis Stalder, 1993. (center right) *Polyresin, cast aluminum and rubber, Harkonnen Capo Chair*, original, photo © Steve Bonge, 1993. (bottom right) *Female torso*, photo © Rotem. (bottom left) *Giger Mask II*, photo © Louis Stalder, 1993. (center left) Photo © Willy Spiller, 1992.





H.R. Giger's  
WATCH ABART '93



Alexander Gallery, N.Y.C.  
Galerie Bertram, Burgdorf



WATCH ABART '93

(top left) Chainswatch drawing.  
(top center) Darkwatch pin drawing.  
(top right) Exhibition catalog cover.  
(left center) Cast aluminum Winter Crosswatch, 1993, photo © Louis Stalder.  
(center) HRG with Rusty Maxiwatch, photo © Willy Spiller, 1992.  
(center right) Winter Crosswatch drawing.  
(bottom) Crosswatch with point of nail, Crosswatch, Crosswatch with head of nail, each an edition of 23, silver, photo © Kelly A. Brill, 1993.









glued them together to get the Crosswatch and then I gave it to a foundry and they made them in rubber. I made several different types, some with the point of a nail, other with the head of a nail, coming out of the center. And then I had the idea that by connecting several Crosswatches they could be made into a Chainwatch, which can also be worn on the arm. In this way, I created many of the sculptures for the exhibition.

**ITA:** What is the symbolism of the nail?

**HRG:** The tip of the nail directed inward represents masochism or threat, the tip of the nail directed outward signifies defense, aggression or sadism.

**ITA:** Must have been a little heavy for Swatch.



lovers, The Crosswatch, a watch with four straplets in the shape of a cross, is unwearable. Since it's no longer functional, it becomes art. I work at home, in my bed, so I had a little machine to cut the watches into pieces, then I'd

(opposite page, top left) Work #269, Biomechanoid 75, 1975. (top right) Tattoo by Tin-Tin, Paris, France, photo © Robin Perine, 1994. (bottom left) Tattoo by Bernie Luther, Vienna, Austria. (bottom right) Work #489, Humanoid I, 1970. (this page, top left and center) Tattoo by Andrea, East Side, Inc., NYC. (center left) Tattoo by Dave Fleet, Abracadabra Tattoo, So. Wales. (center) Work #472b, Debbie II, 1981. (center right) Tattoo by Steve, Mickey Sharpz Tattoo Studio, Birmingham, England. (bottom left) Work # 489, The Tourist I, 1982 (detail). (bottom right) Tattoo by His Jorgensen, Tattooworld, Denmark.







(top) Work #496, *The Tourist VIII*, 1982. (top right) Tattoo by Snakeyes, Fun City Studio, NYC. (center, left) Tattoo by Randy Janson, Avalon Tattoo Studio, San Diego, CA. (center right) *Danzig IV*, 1992, Giger's version, painted for *How the Gods Kill*. (bottom left) Tattoo by Agony. (bottom right) Work #32, *At The Doctor*, ink drawing, 1965. (opposite page, top left) Tattoo by Rose Tattoo, Paris, France. (top right) Work #276, *The Magus*, 1975 (detail). (bottom left) Work # 216, *Landscape XIX*, 1973 (detail). (bottom right) Tattoo by Andrea, East Side, Inc., NYC, photo © Robin Perine, 1994.

**HRG:** I showed Swatch everything. I sent them the exhibition catalog which we were working on, with the idea that they might want to be involved with the show with some sort of financial support. Instead of getting money, we got problems. They said that if we brought the catalog out as it was, there would be a lot of complications. We couldn't use the word Swatch in the title of the exhibition or in the titles of the sculptures. So we took away the "S." Swatch Abart became Watch Abart, the Swatchguardian became the Watchguardian, the Swatchcube became the Watchcube, and so on. They weren't amused by my little jokes, like Swatchholax, Suicide-swatch and Orgasmiswatch.

**ITA:** Did they think you were making fun of their product?

**HRG:** Yes, but it wasn't like that. I mean, they were just jokes.

**ITA:** I guess they don't have a sense of humor.

**HRG:** No, not at all. Certainly not the black humor. I was very depressed about it because I expected a little more interest in it. But they were all serious, as if everybody in the company had personally invented the Swatch. Still, I have great respect for Nicolas Hayek, founder of the Swatch company and savior of the Swiss watch industry. One of my sculptures is done in homage to him.

**ITA:** What's the reaction to your work in Switzerland? Do they regard you as a great artist or someone they're ashamed of?

**HRG:** Somewhere in between. When I did my earlier work, before I worked for the cinema and got the Oscar (for *Alien* in 1979), I was taken seriously. After the Oscar they thought, *that's cinema, that's Hollywood shit*.

**ITA:** So you were taken more seriously in the '70s?

**HRG:** Yes, and I told this to the producer before I decided to do the movie. He said that the film would get me worldwide recognition. But what is that, when I want to be taken seriously? For a time, the museums even











stopped buying my paintings. And there always are those people who say that you can't make real art with an airbrush because it is used a lot for illustrations.

**ITA:** So there's distinction because of how the art is done?

**HRG:** Yes. It also happened with my sculpture, *Female Torso*. Because it was made of polyresin and rubber, the gallery didn't include it in the exhibition. The metal casts are often regarded more highly as art—but that's stupid. I think the form is more important than the material. You can't cast from nothing. The original sculpture done by the artist, whether in plaster, polyresin or rubber, is more authentic than the casts made from it. They were afraid it wouldn't be taken seriously as art. It was the last piece created, the culmination of many of the other concepts in the exhibition, beginning with the Crosswatch, the Chainwatch and then the arms, legs and heads. In the end it became the whole figure. While we were working on the catalog, and even after, I was still creating new sculptures and that's why this piece never appeared in the catalog. I had planned to cast an edition of *Female Torso*, but there wasn't enough time. Instead we only used it for the exhibition poster. It is interesting that, just after the exhibition was over, the



original *Female Torso* was the first to be sold.

**ITA:** I want to get back to something that you'd mentioned earlier, that you hadn't painted in four years, but it is the work you are best known for....

**HRG:** Yes, that's true. I have painted for over twenty years—I can do it again—and maybe it will look different. The last paintings I did were kind of three-dimensional. These were the *Pump Excursions*, a suicide that looks

like an Indian playing the flute. He is sitting with the barrel of a pump-action shotgun in his mouth. I have such a gun at home. I did this painting four times, twice in black and white and twice in color. The color versions are different in textured relief. Since then I have also used the airbrush a few times on lithographs, but I did this in the old manner in which I worked between 1966 and 1969 on my *Atomic Children*, cyberpunks wearing virtual

(opposite page, top left) Tattoo by Peter Nyberg, Viking Tattoo, Sweden. (top center) Tattoo by Mick Tattoo, Zurich, Switzerland. (top right) Tattoo by Johnny "Junkfood" Niesten, Heerlen, Holland. (center right) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, East Side, Inc., NYC. (bottom right) Tattoo by Susan Duffy, Apocalypse Tattoo, Hoboken, NJ. (bottom center) Tattoo by Wayne Kendrick, Baton Rouge Tattoo Co., LA. (bottom left) Tattoo by Gregory Christian, Tennessee Mtn. Studio, Johnson City, TN. (center left) Tattoo by Patty Kelley, Avalon Tattoo Studio, San Diego, CA. (center) Cover, *Alien Monster I* (Giger's *Alien*), Work #106, 1978. (this page, left) Work #372, *Alien III*, 1978. (right) Tattoo by Guido Varesi-Fritschi, Varry's Tattoo Shop, Switzerland.





reality headpieces. I spray on transparent paper which is used by architects, and then I scratch away at it with a razor blade. I also use a paper with a special coating that's a little stronger. I can scratch away at it six or seven times without making a hole in it.

**ITA:** I've been told that you're afraid of blood. Is that true?

**HRG:** No, I like running blood. That was the reason I created this sculpture, *Home Killer*, 25 years ago, which is an hourglass filled with blood running over a head at its center. I believe that this piece stemmed from memories when I was in Catholic kindergarten. The nuns were always showing us pictures of Jesus, more precisely Jesus bleeding and how the blood ran over His face. They told us that this was because of the pain that we cause Him, because we are so evil. Twenty-five years later, when critics asked me why I liked running blood so much, I realized that this was the reason. I was very amused to remember this.

**ITA:** What was the rest of your childhood like?

**HRG:** Very safe. Very quiet. I had other kinds of problems. I had a great deal of pain with my teeth, my ears....

**ITA:** Medical problems?

**HRG:** Yes. My father spent a great deal of money to fix my teeth. Probably thousands. A lot of illness. I had little accidents, things like that. Mostly from fighting with other boys.

**ITA:** Did you dream much as a child?

**HRG:** Yes.

**ITA:** Nightmares?

**HRG:** Yes, like every child. My parents went out to the cinema often. Maybe three times a week, and the lights in the house were turned off. I had to stay in the dark.

**ITA:** Did you see things in the dark?

(top left) Work #326, Sergius Golowin, 1977. (top right) Tattoo by Andrea, East Side, Inc., NYC. (center left) Tattoo by Luiz Segatto, Tattoos by Lou, Miami Beach, FL. (center right) Poltergeist VII and VIII, 1985. (bottom left) Work #344, Mirror Image, 1977. (bottom right) Tattoo by Bill Baker, Canada.



the illustration was, I couldn't look at it. It was the same when I first saw the drawings of Hieronymus Bosch. For me, they were like photographs of hell.

**ITA:** And how old were you when you first saw them?

**HRG:** I was probably five or six years old. It was during World War II when I saw them in a book, and I thought they could only have been photographed in earlier times. I think that, through seeing some of these pictures, I became the artist I am.

**ITA:** Did you feel isolated from the chaos and war in Switzerland?

**HRG:** I only remember that we had to go to a holiday house in the mountains, because it was feared that Hitler would



**HRG:** Oh, yes. All kinds of things. There were certain stories that made strong impressions on me. My mother always told me this one story about a person who went out to learn to conquer their fear. It was a fairy tale, probably a Hans Christian Andersen story. Horrible people, freaks. They were bowling with bones and skulls. Later on when I read the book myself, and I came nearer to the page where

(top) Work #561, *The Trumpets of Jericho*, 1983-1987 (detail). (bottom) Tattoo by Mike Ledger, *Peter Tat-2*, Hempstead, NY. (center left) Tattoo by Mike Austin, Canada. (center) Work #358, *Illuminatus I*, 1978 (detail). (center right) Tattoo by Luke Atkinson, *Ratattoo*, Stuttgart, Germany.







come through Switzerland, and my father was an officer in the army, a medic. He had a pharmacy and was a doctor. So he sent me, my mother and her sisters up to this holiday house with Betty, my cousin. There were a lot of children in this little house in the mountains. I was only about three or four years old, but I have memories of this.

**ITA:** Could you hear planes flying overhead?

**HRG:** No. They were talked about, though. I remember the sirens and the blue lights. During the night we had to black out so that the Allied forces wouldn't bomb the town. We were very close to the border.

**ITA:** Do you believe in God?

**HRG:** Not too much.

**ITA:** Do you believe in a separation between good and evil?

**HRG:** Good and evil, they exist, but you can't separate them. It's like microcosm and macrocosm, balancing complements of a whole. Mostly, it's very personal. What is good for one, for another is evil.

**ITA:** Is evil a concept or a physical reality?

**HRG:** Evil always requires an action. It has to do with living creatures, even if they have no personality. I have pity for the suffering of all creatures or human beings. That, I cannot accept. •



*EDITOR'S NOTE: In order to bring you the most comprehensive interview with H.R. Giger possible, part of this interview was conducted in person during Giger's visit to New York by Lou Stathis and follow-up interviews were conducted via telephone and fax by Genevieve T. Movie. LAB2KAB, UNDERMYSKIN4EVER.*

*(opposite page, top left) Work #311, Giger's Necronomicon, 1976. (inset) Work #212, Front Entrance Hall, 1972-1973 (detail). (top right) Tattoo by Andrea Elston, East Side, Inc., NYC. (bottom left) Tattoo by SuzAnne Fauser, Creative Tattoo, Ann Arbor, MI. (bottom right) Work #307, The Master and Margarita, 1976 (detail). (this page) H.R. Giger with Pump Excursion paintings, photo © Willy Spiller, 1992.*

## IT'S STILL NOT TOO LATE!

ITA has the pleasure of giving you a preview of some of the work to be included in the book *H.R. Giger Under Your Skin*. For inclusion of your tattoo in the book, please send high-quality color transparencies (preferably taken by a professional photographer) against a dark or solid background. Include close-ups of the tattoo and, if possible, at least one shot with the person's face in the photo. Please include written information for each tattoo, the painting it is derived from, the names of the tattoo artist, the shop, the "collector" as well as the name of the photographer. Be sure to include all their addresses and telephone numbers. It will be assumed that publication rights are granted for all materials received. All photos will carry the © copyright of the photographer.

Also send Giger-inspired flash or anything painted with Giger's designs, i.e. motorcycles, cars, clothing, etc.

Send your contributions ASAP to: Leslie Barany Communications, 121 West 27th Street, Suite 202, New York City, NY, 10001, USA (PHONE #212 627-8488 FAX 212 463-7983)