



# *H.R. GIGER*

*On Tattoos and Tattooing by George Petros*

The word "GIGER" evokes apprehension. It transcends the mere moniker of the artist who rules the biomechanical universe; it's routinely used to describe futuristic fear and threatening creatures. But the artist himself is in fact quite human. H.R. Giger, beloved progenitor of the Alien, calmly contemplates the state of creation and his place within it. He's always amazed at the way folks decorate themselves, especially when it comes to that ancient, ever-evolving art-form, tattooing. The skin is the body's largest organ, and a great place to advertise one's inclinations. With great modesty the master states, "I don't have much to say about tattoos," yet his fantastic art adorns the hides of people all over the world. His trademark biomechanical style compliments the fragile epidermis, adding powerful and sometimes scary components to the physiological equation. When one wears the work of Giger, it's as if magical metals permeate the body, imparting strength and indestructibility, and perhaps immortality as well.

His images fluctuate between life and death, between living flesh and living machines - a perfect match for legions of modern primitives who see their hides as works of art and seek that special something with which to tell the world, "Don't fuck with me." A Giger tattoo suggests membership in a secret society, inspired by the most terrifying forces imaginable. It's a true badge of honor. Get one today, before it's too late!



BIOMECHANOID 2002. Copyright H.R. Giger  
175cm x 50cm x 60cm  
Ltd. Ed. 6 in aluminum, 6 in fiberglass.  
Photo: Copyright 2002 MEGAN RUSH

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GP: Lotsa people have tattoos of your art.

Giger: True, and I'm quite proud that they choose my stuff. That's nice. When people do tattoos of my art, the closer they come to the original, the better. When tattoo masters do their own versions of my stuff, I like that also. If someone mixes details from my various paintings, as well as something new done in the biomechanical style, that's also fine. I like the surprise. Why not? Of course if it is badly drawn, then I don't like it so much and feel sorry for the person who has it.

GP: What makes for a great tattoo?

Giger: If the image is simple and not rigid. It's not good if it doesn't fit the body landscape; The size and placement should complement the surface of the skin. The tattoo should move with the body. Like on the arm, for example, the image should change with each movement. Sometimes a tattoo should have different levels, so that it looks like there's technical stuff under the skin—tubes, pipes, things like that, revealing another level underneath, giving the impression of being strong inside, like a machine, and not so weak.

GP: People wish they were machines.

Giger: Yes. Or they want to show that they're robots, without feelings. Immune to pain and illness. It gives them a sense of strength.

GP: Do you like to design tattoos?

Giger: Once I was asked to design a tattoo, and I made a small joke. I designed something showing the points where a doctor gives injections, or takes blood, so they'll always find the right spot where the veins are. I also added the markings for the blood type. My own blood type is RH-positive. One of my books, published by Taschen, has that title.



Voice of America, (c) 1968 H.R. Giger, painted fiberglass, 85 x 75 x 20cm



Biomech Construction Worker

(c) 2001 H.R. Giger, pencil on paper, 30 x 21cm



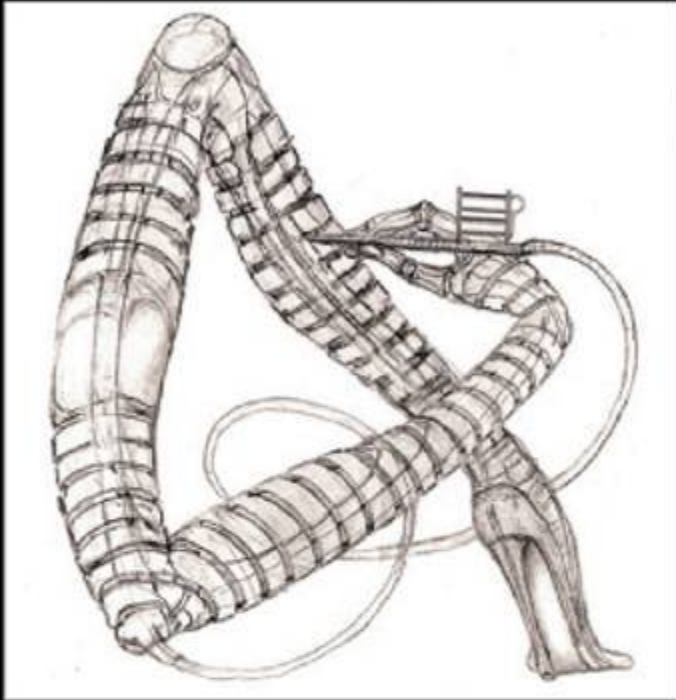
Biomech Painter

(c) 2001 H.R. Giger, pencil on paper, 30 x 21cm



*"In the future, people may have holographic tattoos,  
or 3D, or moving images."*

*-H.R. Giger*



Biomech -Tattooist, (c) 2001 H.R. Giger, 30 x 21cm



Biomech Construction Worker  
(c) 2001 H.R. Giger, pencil on paper. 30 x 21cm

GP: There's a new book out, on Taschen again.  
Giger: Yes, in their Icon series. I heard it's doing very well. I heard that in Paris, stores are selling a thousand copies in one week. Must be because it's the most affordable book I ever did. The first printing of thirty-five thousand copies is nearly sold out. It's in three languages. It's called, H.R. GIGER.

GP: What are you working on these days?

Giger: I'm finishing up the Zodiac Fountain in my garden. It's a very big project, thirteen sculptures altogether. I started working on it more than ten years ago, but it's nearly finished now. One of the last signs, Aquarius, is in the foundry waiting to be cast in aluminum. That's my personal sign, I was born on the fifth of February.

GP: You love to sculpt, right?

Giger: Yes. All my airbrush paintings have always been like plans for my sculptures. The sculpting is the finishing of the image. The paintings are like a plan for three-dimensional objects, just like with the Alien.

GP: Who sports tattoos of your stuff?

Giger: Sometimes it is a surprise. I've made a few friends with people through their having my art on them. I'm fascinated with them. One who has become a good friend is an Austrian who has one of my "Passages" paintings on his chest. That was a series of paintings I did in the Seventies. He now has many of my other images on him as well.

GP: When tattooed people die, should their skin be preserved?

Giger: Only if the individual wants it to be; it should be their decision what happens to their own skin. Especially people tattooed all over, including their face—they should be able to decide if, after they die, they will want to become a kind of sculpture. There might be a cast of the body made and then covered with skin, and illuminated from within. Why not? Or having certain parts preserved, like panels of a painting—

GP: Would you like to own someone else's skin?

Giger: No, not really.

GP: In years to come, how will tattooing change?

Giger: In the future people may have holographic tattoos, or 3d, or moving images, possibly, tattoos with certain parts illuminated. I don't know.

GP: Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts with us.

Giger: Thank you too, and good night.



- **H.R. Giger on his Biomechanoids**
- **The H.R. Giger Museum**
- **H.R. Giger Under Your Skin**

The new Taschen / Icon book, H.R. GIGER  
Cover photo by H.R. Giger (c) 2001

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*My Biomechanoids, the main characters of "The Mystery of San Gottardo", are organism with no heads, each reduced simply to an arm and a leg. The twins' brains - or rather, their replacement (computers run via electricity and a nutrient solution) - which control everything are located at the juncture where the left upper arm seamlessly connects to the right upper thigh. Biomechanoids have gills and small circulatory systems which are cleansed through sweating. These organisms have sensors and communicate with each other tetepathically. With humans they sign like deaf-mutes.*

*Every Biomechanoid was once a normal human being until divided into three beings when the extremities were removed. The main part, the torso and head, is the most unhappy of the three, because it has to spend the rest of its life as an amputee in a rolling cart and usually serves only as a Biomechanoid trainer. It does so, hoping one day to be reunited with its extremities. The two arm-teg constructs, on the other hand, are ecstatic to not have to heed the brain anymore, since they were sick of their existence as slaves". ~ H.R. Giger*

- From the new book, H.R. GIGER, published in the TASCHEN I ICONS series

Since 1998 the HR Giger Museum in the medieval Chateau St. Germain, in the historic walled city of Gruyeres, Switzerland, has been the permanent home to many of the artist's key works. The museum houses the largest and most impressive collection of Giger's artwork dating from the early 1960's through the present day, plus Giger's own private art collection of the works of other artists. The museum is a work in progress and soon a new Giger Bar will be completed on the castle grounds. To learn more about the artist and his current projects, visit his official website. [www.HRGiger.com](http://www.HRGiger.com).



(c) 2000, HR Giger Ltd. Ed. 500, giclee print, 30 x 21cm



Construction in progress at the new H.R. Giger Museum Bar

Photo: (c) 2002 Mogan Rush

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Giger is interested in getting good quality photos of any of his artwork tattooed on you. He's assembling a book documenting his paintings, sculptures, sketches and film designs, or even himself, as tattoos. Florida skin art is among the world's finest! Please send photos or discs of Giger tattoos to: Needles Ink. 107 Dunbar Ave. suite A, Oldsmar. FL 34677. Be sure to include the name & contact info of the tattooed individual: same info for the artist and photographer, and any facts or fictions pertaining to the tattoos. Needles, Ink. will dutifully pass it along to HRG!*