

# WARNING!

## TRAVELOGUE OF

# TERROB

### H.R. GIGER MUSEUM AND BAR Gruyère, Switzerland

by Liisa Ladouceur



**G**ruyère is pretty. Too pretty. The tiny, walled village has only one street and 300 inhabitants, but its setting high in Switzerland's Alpine hills – verdant pastures where cows and farmers make the famous cheese – is postcard perfect. Not at all where you'd expect to find a bunch of face-hugging, acid-bleeding aliens lurking in a medieval castle.

And yet, just past the souvenir cowbells there it is: the H.R. Giger Museum. Housed in the 400-year-old Chateaux St. Germain, it is the largest collection of Giger art in the world. And if that's not enough incentive to make the trip, across the street is the Giger Bar, truly the coolest drinking spot ever.

Switzerland's most famous creator of futurist fantasy art was born in Chur and lives in Zürich, but Gruyère is the country's number one destination for his fans. Arriving in the morning during off-season, my traveling companions and I have the foggy place to ourselves. There's no need for a map, just park at the bottom of the hill and wander up the pedestrian-only street until you reach the massive aluminum sculpture of The Birth Machine and enter with glee.

Inside, three floors of black-painted rooms are filled with drawings, sculptures and furniture from throughout Giger's career, from huge 1970s airbrushed paintings to new work. First, a room devoted to the beloved *Alien*, including a full-size model and an entire wall of ink sketches of ideas for *Alien 3*. Most striking is a small, silver metal sculpture of Bambi Alien III that never made it to celluloid. Behind a curtain is the Red Room, containing the artist's most blatantly sexual work (women penetrated by machines, what else). Some of the exclusive sketches are crude in more ways than one, and the only other visitors in the place – a couple with a child – gave this section a pass.

A venture upstairs will leave film buffs awestruck, for the second floor is home to the black Harkonnen dining room set from *Dune*, large models from *Species*, paintings created for *Poltergeist II*, along with drawings from his *Mystery of San Goltardo* graphic novel, his *Tarot of the Underworld*, the mic stand designed for Korn, and his 1980 Visual Effects Oscar for *Alien*. The third and final floor houses the artist's own private (and stunning) collection of Martin Schwarz, Tibetan funeral art and more.

After perusing the lobby's exclusive jewelry, prints and snowboards (and the *Alien*-themed bathroom doors!), we head across the street to the Giger Bar. Newly opened in 2003, it looks like a movie set or a futuristic fetish hangout, but feels like stepping into Giger's world, a place where buildings grow from bones. We seat ourselves in a couple of Harkonnen chairs and stare up at the vertebrae-covered ceiling – talk about creature comforts! It's not the vision of Switzerland on the travel brochures, but it is much creepier and cooler!

The H.R. Giger Museum and Bar is open year-round and admission costs 10CHF (about \$10 CDN). See [www.hrgiger.com](http://www.hrgiger.com) for details. Gruyère is an easy one hour drive north from Geneva or two hours south from Zürich. (Stop off at Chateau de Chillon in Montreux to see where Mary Shelley dreamed up *Frankenstein*.) Public transportation via train and bus is available. See [www.rail.ch](http://www.rail.ch). ☞



Photos by Deane Hughes