

GIGER IN NYC

Article by Shade Rupe
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In June, 1998, Grand Master Surrealist, HR Giger, spread his metallic wings and made way for the American city he finds most intriguing. He came to meet with friends, midwife the birth of his new offspring, and survey the site for a new Giger environment soon to grace the nightlife of New York City.

Breezing through the city, in witness to the massive changes always occurring in this real-life Gotham, Giger visited the Sony Theater in Lincoln Center, and took in the 3-D IMAX film playing there. Hopping a car, Giger travelled across the Brooklyn Bridge to visit his favorite American painter, shockmeister and spotlight prankster Joe Coleman.

Arriving at Coleman's home, a veritable museum of societal rejects and medical anomalies, Giger was greeted warmly with a hearty hug from his friend, and quickly began asking questions about this strange living environment he now found himself in, Joe Coleman's Odditorium. Coleman, well known for his Doctor Mamboozoo stunts, not to mention his biting the heads off of mice, has amassed quite a collection of bizarrities over the years. He spent the next few hours giving Giger a guided tour of his collection: a stuffed monkey hanging from the ceiling, various wax casts of human heads and hands, exposed innards of a baby in wax, a stuffed cat and muskrat, a deformed woman's head and a baby monstrosity in jars, a pig-faced woman in wax, and a portrait of Joe Coleman by notorious young-boy predator John Wayne Gacy, among other trophies.

The visit also offered Giger the rare opportunity to view Coleman's most recent work-in-progress, a self portrait of Coleman and his photographer girlfriend Whitney Ward, through the same magnifying eyeglasses that Coleman uses in the creation of his work, and to appreciate the painting in all its manic detail.

Next, it was on to visit with Voltaire and Paul Komoda to view their animation models and to discuss possible future collaborations. A renowned model-maker, Paul Komoda created the collectible figurines for the last Batman film, the recent figurines for the rock band KISS, and is now working on models for next year's Star Wars prequel, The Phantom Menace.

The next day, Giger visited his U.S. foundry, Polich Art Works in Rock Tavern, NY, to pick up the first cast of a new sculpture, Birth Machine Baby (9MM Giger, 1998, Limited Edition of 23,

bronze, 21" x 8-3/4" diameter, 60 lbs.), which he carried back to Zurich and now guards the entrance to the Giger Museum in Gruyeres, Switzerland. Giger also took this opportunity to discuss with the foundry his plans for constructing the large-scale sculpture of the whole Birth Machine painting for the museum.

A known reluctant traveler, Giger was lured to New York by Airbrush Action publisher Cliff Steiglitz to receive the magazine's Vargas Award, to be presented to him by his good friend Debbie Harry, at a dinner ceremony at the Meadowlands Hilton in New Jersey. Giger and Ms. Harry first worked together in the early '80s on the memorable album cover "KooKoo," which earned them both the honor of being listed in Rolling Stone magazine's 100 Best Album Covers Of All Time. Giger made a poignant acceptance speech and humbly received his prize.

Giger and his guests were comped to the \$75-a-head dinner, but as it turned out, there's no such thing as a free lunch, even for a Guest of Honor. On the return leg of his trip, Giger was left to upgrade his flight from coach to business class at his own expense after having been stranded in London's

Heathrow Airport by the magazine, instead of being booked on a direct flight to Zurich as promised. To add insult to 'award,' the Guest of Honor was also stuck with the bill for his hotel stay in New York. The October '98 issue of Airbrush Action features an ad for a videotape of the award ceremony, available for \$14.95. Giger can only hope that this is an effort to raise the more than \$2,000 it has personally cost him to accept the Vargas. Stay tuned for further developments on this story.

A much more rewarding experience was a very private party held in Giger's honor, on Manhattan's East Side, attended by Giger's inner circle of friends comprised of writers, fellow artists, photographers, and collectors.

A shy and private man, Giger was truly at ease at this informal and memorable gathering.

New York can expect a return visit from Giger before the year is out with much more public fanfare when the newly reopened Limelight nightclub in Manhattan inaugurates its VIP Room as the HR Giger Room.

To know Giger is to understand that he is a New Yorker who just hasn't moved here yet. As early as age 18, Giger set his sights on this center of

the universe in a painting entitled Dream of New York (1958). In 1981, in a later valentine to the city of his dreams, Giger produced a series of paintings that were published in his book, "HR Giger N.Y. City." This series of works incorporated machine templates procured by his friend Cornelius De Fries,

which Giger used as stencils to create the underlying structure of his personal vision of the city, a habitat of monolithic mazes of heavy machinery interlaced with oversized metallic cockroaches and deep-burrowing subway cars.

It is only fitting that New York now returns the compliment with a space that Giger will always be able to call home, and his fans will be able to visit for a deeper immersion in Giger's universe. Located at the Limelight nightclub at 6th Avenue and 20th Street in Manhattan, this VIP room in the upper reaches of the deconsecrated church offers a total Giger environment. Giger's relationship with the Limelight began in 1984 with an exhibition of paintings, "The Dune You'll Never See." Later, in 1993, Giger was a guest at a private dinner held at the club in the honor of his friend Timothy Leary. He returned a few nights later for a live concert by heavy metal group Carcass coinciding with the release of their album, "Life Support," which featured Giger's sculpture of the same name on its cover. The place held a fascination for Giger with its Gothic architecture of an old church, and catacomb-like rooms and maze of hallways. When approached, he was very receptive to the idea of a Giger Room in such a unique environment.

His design for the space is not only a gallery experience, but also offers intimacy and dark comfort for visiting creatures of the night.

A much larger collection of Giger's works resides proudly in his very own HRGiger Museum, located in Castle St. Germain in Gruyeres, Switzerland, which opened, for the most part on June 20, 1998. Giger believed that when he acquired the Chateau St. Germain the building would be empty. Instead he found an unwanted addition to his collection in the person of a tenant who has thus far refused to leave. This snag was never far from Giger's mind even during his New York visit. Throughout the week, Giger obsessively drew caricatures of the tenant that he was so unexpectedly saddled with. His hilarious drawings depict a zaftig woman occupying the museum; in one comic sketch she threatens to flatten the chateau with her generous derriere. She will "be on view" until next September, at which time her lease runs out, and the museum will gain a new wing. Currently on display at the museum are many of Giger's artworks from the '60s and 70s—large canvases breathing biomechanical life into this 17th-century

castle. The museum also houses his film design work for Alien 1 and 3, Poltergeist 2 and Species, the film which rekindled Giger's interest in model trains. The carnivorous train barely glimpsed in Species is now on permanent display at the museum. A work in progress, the HR Giger Museum, upon completion, will include a second Giger Bar and by the end of the millennium will feature the Castle Ride. Visitors to the museum will be seated inside a two-seat train wagon which will traverse the museum on monorail tracks. As the train moves through the exhibition spaces, paintings will be fastened to display panels to the right or left of the car. These panels will be pushed aside by the wagon as the visitors continue their journey. As soon as the car changes direction, a new painting can be seen by the headlights of the wagon. The ride continues back to the tower entrance and then follows a spiral rail which routes along the wall and through a gate to the next floor, which is absolutely dark, except for a short section where the visitors are exposed to daylight as they cross the veranda.

After returning to the tower by means of the lift, the wagon descends to ground level. The Giger Museum also houses the International Center for Fantastic Art, featuring Giger's own collection of paintings, sculptures, and photo-graphs including works by Gunter Brus, Ernst Fuchs, Dado, Andre Lassen, Salvador Dali, Arnulf Rainer, and Americans Joe Coleman and S. Clay Wilson.

To commemorate the opening of the HR Giger Museum, six newly printed posters of Giger's artworks have been published by Swiss poster company Wizard & Genius. W & G was the first company to publish Giger's work, ever, and make his work available to a world-wide audience over 30 years ago, with Birth Machine, Playmate and Genius. The six new posters, The HR Giger Museum Collection, reflect Giger's personal choices and are each imprinted with the museum's logo. The Magus, Giger's Necronomicon, Biomechanoid 75, and Birth Machine each measure 24" x 36", and The Trumpets of Jericho and The Way of the Magician each measure 23-1/2" x 31-1/2". The six posters may be seen at www.HRGiger.com. Ask your local poster shop to contact Idealdecor USA, Inc., 3180 Expressway Drive South, Central Islip, NY 11722. Telephone: 516.234.7777; Fax: 516.234.7798.

www.HRGiger.com, at 240 pages, is the largest and most comprehensive published collection of HR Giger's works, the essential book for the HR Giger collector, and an excellent primer for the new fan. Covering Giger's ascent from birth to his modern mastery of Surrealist technique, prime examples of Giger's additions to the world of

Fantastic Art are presented with hundreds of full-color reproductions, many previously unseen. Featuring a selection of photographs from his family album, www.HRGiger.com shows the evolution of the man behind the legend. From his earliest drawings and paintings, including his entire first portfolio, "A Feast For The Psychiatrist," and early experiments in oil, to his more recent works, www.HRGiger.com is an indispensable and detailed documentation of the artist's life and career. The complete painting series for the long out-of-print book, "HR Giger N.Y. City," is included as dividers between chapters showcasing his pre-airbrush work, the mystery shrouding the Giger Bar in Tokyo, his accomplishments as a furniture designer, selections from his own vast private art

collection, his visionary proposal for the Swiss Transit Tunnel, detailed plans for monumental projects in progress such as the HR Giger Museum, and the Zodiac Fountain.

Giger's deliberate choice of the unique title for this book is to further publicize his own official website, www.HRGiger.com, the home of the HR Giger Museum Membership Club, as well as the best resource for keeping up to date on the artist's latest projects, publications, limited-edition artworks, and the unfolding drama of the Alien Insurrection saga. There are many other Giger websites out there, but the only direct access is through www.HRGiger.com.

Just so you don't get lost, that's Giger with an HR, as in His Royal Gigeress!