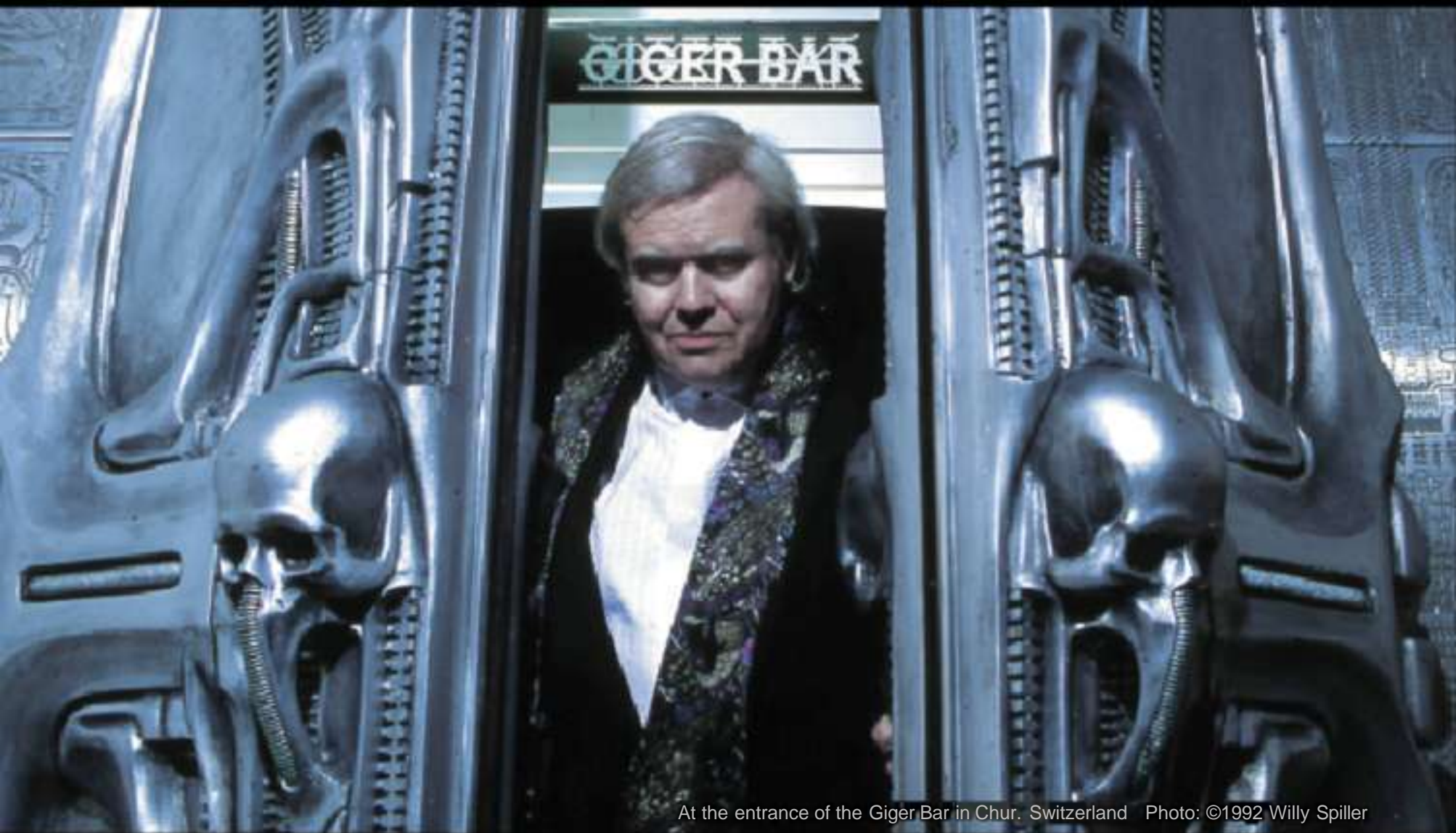


WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF H.R. GIGER



At the entrance of the Giger Bar in Chur, Switzerland Photo: ©1992 Willy Spiller

Giger's work intellectually probes some of the most profound concerns of the future of our species and its ends. Through the allure of his paintings, the viewer is tempted to entertain the possibilities of his sublime, almost prophetic, projections, overpopulation, the frightening mutations of organism with machine, and the inherent dangers of cloning. Giger's works appear as transpersonal monuments towering far above the atmosphere of human understanding, silently testifying to the tumults of the progression and ends of the human condition, unearthed from the remotest depths of the subconscious and translated into the diverse patterns of acrylic on canvas. Giger's markings point toward higher truths, yet his art is as much of a mystery to the artist himself as it is to the viewer. When asked about the significance of a particular painting Giger replies, "I have not, myself, ever analyzed why they out one way or the other. It's something quite strange for me to see my own paintings. It comes as a surprise to me, just like it is for anyone else. The finished painting is a mystery. Most of my paintings are done intuitively, without conscious planning or thought".

by Vincent Castiglia

H.R. GIGER

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

By Javier M. de Pisón

The womb-like interior of the otherworldly environment that is the H.R. Giger Museum Bar is a cavernous, skeletal structure covered by double arches of vertebrae that crisscross the vaulted ceiling of an ancient castle. The acute perceptual sensation of being in this extraordinary setting recalls the Biblical tale of Jonah and the whale, lending the feel of being literally in the belly of a fossilized, prehistoric beast. But the the "Harkonnen" chairs, with their spinal cord backs topped by pelvis bones, and the stone floor plates engraved with strange hieroglyphs all suggest that somehow you have been transported into the remains of a mutated future civilization.



Biomechanoid 2002. aluminum sculpture
Photo: © 2002 Kelly M. Brill



Mordor VII. 1975
Acrylic on paper on wood
100 x 70 cm

TATTOO



Alien Monster IV. 1978
Acrylic on paper
140x140 cm

The bar, as well as the Giger Museum, which houses this unique architectural installation, is the unmistakable work the Swiss Surrealist H.R. Giger. Known for his Oscar-winning designs for Ridley Scott's classic "Alien" film (1980), Giger has left behind his airbrush paintings of the 70's and 80's to create a series of three-dimensional spaces in which his aesthetic views, literally, come to life. If in his paintings he has vividly illustrated the genesis of what he sees as the next steps in the evolution of mankind — the symbiosis of man and machine into new forms of beings — in his new sculptural and architectural works he makes you part of them.

To build his museum, the artist renovated a 400-year-old medieval castle, Chateau St. Germain, high atop a hill in the picturesque Swiss town of Gruyères. The four-story building, a labyrinthine structure with two-meter-thick walls, is now home to the most comprehensive permanent display of the Giger's artwork, spanning his 40-year career. The years of arduous renovation work has not diminished Giger's perseverance, nor his meticulous eye for detail. A good example of this is the intricate bronze banister flanking the stone steps leading up to the entrance of the museum, cast in the shape of the "Alien" creature's tail.

There is a truly organic feel in the wing of the castle that houses the Museum Bar, with its bone-colored furniture and awe-inspiring interior design. Giger used a rock-like synthetic material to cast the bar elements to preserve the atmosphere of this ancient chateau, which is a landmark historical building.

The Museum Bar, which took four years to com-



The H.R. Giger Bar. Gruyeres. Switzerland
Photo: © 2002. Wolfgang Holz

plete, opened its doors in 2003. "At the beginning of the project," explains Giger in his Zurich atelier, "I was fascinated with concrete, because I felt that an antique building such as this needed stone, aged stone, so I used a mixture of cement and fiberglass to achieve a rock gray color for most of the interior elements. But it didn't work when we tried to use it for the ceiling because the cast arches weighed too much."

The cast concrete surfaces of the bar furnishings have been polished to the point that they are skin soft to the touch. It enhances the impression of being inside a once living creature, of sitting on something, perhaps, less than alive, but very warm and enveloping just the same.

The artist states proudly, "I built much more on this bar with my own hands than any of the other ones I had designed, previously," referring to the, now closed, Giger Bar in Tokyo, and the very-much open one in Chur, Switzerland, the city of his birth and where an upcoming two-month retrospective, (this time limited to his pre-Alien artwork) will take place this summer at the Bundner Kunstmuseum.

From the start of his artistic career, Giger has confronted the traditional ambivalence of man towards the scientific advances that can alter the nature of the human body. This issue has now acquired a real urgency and prompted a moral and philosophical debate by recent experiments in genetic engineering, such as the possibility of cloning human beings. The detailed depiction of his "Biomechanoid" beings in his classic, translucent airbrush works originated in the late 1960's, but in his latest sculptures and installations they have acquired a new and eerie physical form. Giger's art consistently provokes a strange perturbing feeling because he continuously touches on profound issues that resonate in all of us and, in many instances, seems to anticipate our future not only as individuals but also as a species. His intellectual concerns on this level are matched only by the impact of his highly original works, his constant experimentation with different media, and an ever more polished execution.

Etienne Chatton, founder of the International Center of Fantastic Art of Gruyeres, considers Giger the most important artist alive today for his premonitory works. "He is the only artist who has seen the dangerous allure of genetically modified beings, and has linked it to our underlying fears", says Chatton. "Giger's Biomechanoids were conceived well before today's scientific advances." Another recurring theme in Giger's oeuvre is his concern with overpopulation, a



Nighttime projection on the exterior wall of the Giger Museum. Photo: ©2002 David Jahn



Front desk in foyer of the Giger Museum with Guardian Angels
Photo: ©2001 Louis Stalder



threat to overcome, in order to insure the survival of mankind. His now classic painting "Birth Machine" (1967) depicts the cutaway of a pistol in which the bullets are crouching mechanical-looking babies. In 2000, Giger recreated "Birth Machine" as a two-meter metal sculpture that greets visitors at the entrance of the Giger Museum. A lone "Birth Machine Baby," a "detail" from the larger sculpture, stands guard several meters away, and much like the royal guards in front of Buckingham Palace, poses with visitors all day.

"The idea for the museum," explains its director, Carmen Scheifele, "originated with a large exhibition of Giger's work in the upper castle of Gruyères, commemorating his 50th birthday. Giger discovered that this little town received a million visitors a year who come here for the year-round postcard look of the surrounding snow peaked mountains, and the region's green valleys, rivers and lakes." Following in the tradition of artists such as Salvador Dalí, who created his own museum in Spain, the Giger Museum is a work of art in itself, a large-scale permanent installation of separate environments, an ever-evolving project, which the artist has been working on for more than ten years.

"I am aware it is unusual for an artist to open his own museum," says Giger. "My reasons for that decision were practical. First of all, there is a continuous demand by collectors and admirers of my art to see the original creations on display. Galleries and museums could only exhibit some of my art for a couple of months a year. Most of the time the majority of my paintings sat all in storage all year



Alien Monster 1, 1979
Acrylic on paper
140x140 cm



Exhibition rooms with airbrush paintings. Photo: © 2001 Louis Stalder



Death in a Mosetrap. 1992. Acrylic on paper. 100 x 70 cm



Staircase landing on 1st floor with oil paintings. Photo: © 2002 Alf Battig

1 - Zodiac Sign Virgo, 1993, Aluminum, 80 x 70 x 40 cm, Photo: © 1994 Louis Stalder

2 - America, 1968, Painted fiberglass, 85 x 75 x 20 cm

3 - Zodiac Sign Pisces, 1993. Aluminum, 115 x 70 x 65 cm, Photo: © 1994 Louis Stalder

4 - Tattoo Biomechanoid, 2004. Rusted metal, 13 x 13 x 17 cm, silver tattoo gun. Ltd. Ed. 500. HRGiger.com, Photo: © 2007 Amanda Dutton

5 - Life-Support, 1993, Aluminum, 90 140 x 20 cm, Photo: © 2005 Vincent Castiglia



1



2



Knickenfiwnk, 1988, Acrylic on paper
100 x 70 cm

round. And now that my art is on permanent display, I can control their environment and ensure that the rooms and surroundings are suitable." Since it opened in 1998, the H.R. Giger Museum has nearly doubled in size. The top floor now houses the artist's own private art collection, which includes over 600 works by Salvador Dalí, Ernest Fuchs, Dado, Bruno Weber, Günter Brus, Claude Sandoz, Francois Burland, Friedrich Kuhn, Joe Coleman, Sybille Ruppert, André Lassen, and among many others.

Four exhibition rooms in the adjoining wing of the building house the Museum Gallery where, on a rotating basis, Giger curates one-man shows for artists in his collection.

The museum also houses Giger's film design work for "Alien," "Poltergeist 2," "Alien 3" and "Species." "Films fascinate me," Giger once said, "because I believe they have surpassed painting as a way of communication." The mythological proportion and cult following of the "Alien" movies, whose creature is based on his paintings, "Necronom IV" and "Necronom V," both created two years before Ridley Scott had stumbled upon them, are due in great part to his powerful designs.

As an artist, Giger is responsible for, single-handedly, creating an astonishing and original new aesthetic in the universe, one that provokes profound questions regarding the future of mankind. Through his artwork, he has dared us to meditate upon the biological evolution of our species. If Giger's work is disturbing, it's because from his visionary vantage point Giger forewarns us of the inherent dangers of our own upcoming mutations which, as he paints it, will not be a pretty sight. As he once summed it up, "I paint what frightens me."



H.R. GIGER

WITH GIGER IN PRAGUE

by Vincent Castiglia

A visionary artist who needs no introduction, H.R. Giger has awed viewers with his creative genius for decades and will continue to leave the onlooker thunderstruck for ages to come. His Biomechanical visions have served as an infinite reservoir of inspiration for filmmakers and artists alike.



The poster on the side of a Prague tram announces visiting Alien.
Photo: © 2005 Leslie Barany



Inked by Giger, one way or the other.
Photo: © 2005 Vincent Castiglia

The father and son.
Photo: © 2005 Leslie Barany

To many of us, H.R. Giger is the creator of some of the most revered and memorable artworks of our time. Tattoo artists spanning the globe, myself included, take great pride in reproducing his timeless imagery on skin, worn by collectors as psychic armor, as long as they should live. It was a tattoo, the biomechanical spine decorating the back of my head and neck, which brought me into contact with Giger's circle of friends and ultimately lead to my meeting with the man himself in the Czech Republic, where the Giger Gang was converging to visit a major retrospective of the artist taking place at the Technical Museum of Prague. Part of the plan was a side trip to the International Tattoo Convention of Prague, taking place, fortuitously, at the same time. I tried to envision the moment throughout the long flight from New York but nothing could have prepared me for the midnight visit to Giger's hotel room and the experience of sitting with him on the

edge of his bed while, with his wife Carmen, he studied the pages of my tattoo portfolio. This was the first of many memorable moments from our subsequent days together.

Visitors to the tattoo convention flocked to the signing table and waited patiently for their turn at a few precious minutes of Giger's time. The line for his "John Hancock" did not subside, as Prague proved to house an exceedingly vast fan-base for the artist. Even while we sat for lunch in a park near the Technical Museum his presence did not go unrecognized. He graciously complied when a young woman approached him for a much-coveted autograph, offering her arm instead of a piece of paper. This scene was repeated many times throughout the trip. One collector at the convention, in the middle of a session on the back of his head and still oozing serum from the half-finished Giger tattoo, had his neck autographed by Giger, intending on

TATTOO



Hoppla II (St. Gallen Necktie). 1996
Fiberglass and steel. 100 x 40 x 35 cm
Photo: © 2005 Ryszard Wojtynski



Photo: © 2005 Leslie Barany



Female Head. 2001
Aluminum. 52 x 13 x 32 cm
Photo: © 2005 Ryszard Wojtynski

Guardian Angel. 1997. Fiberglass with rust powder
100 x 140 x 50 cm. Photo: © 2005 Ryszard Wojtynski



Photo: © 2005 Vincent Castiglia



having it permanently inscribed there. Having been informed in advance of the master's visit, many tattoo artists working the convention made a point of showcasing their command of the Giger repertoire. Standing out in my memory are Adrenaline Tattoo, Alain Kajan Tattoo, Tattoo Exorcist of Prague, and Alien Tattoo of Poland. The contests, of course, abounded with Giger-related entries. This must have proved for hard judging, as the venue was brimming with amazing Giger reproductions and Giger-inspired tattoos. The judges narrowed the entries to the most remarkable

works and the winners were awarded the most unique trophy conceivable: an original "Alien" caricature that Giger dashed off just for the occasion.

The Giger exhibition at the Technical Museum spanned two floors divided into four viewing areas. The first floor displayed a comprehensive array of Giger's 3D works, among them, a full-size original model of the Alien creature and the sleek and sexy cast aluminum Nubian Queen. The adjoining space displayed a rare assembly of some of his most famous

SOCIETY

H.R. GIGER

airbrush paintings, all borrowed for the retrospective from private collections. I was entranced, as seemed the whole of the crowd, by the eminence of what we were beholding. I studied each painting thoroughly, as if searching for a personal precept encrypted in each piece specifically for me. Organic mech-scapes, laced with infinitely dense mesh-patterns, haunt my mind's eye. Ashamed to admit, but by the end of viewing the whole exhibition, I had a terrible headache that endured for most of the trip. I had been deeply affected by the impregnable nature of the man's work, evoking a physical reaction, never provoked in me by any other piece of art. But that is Giger's trademark effect; the ability to induce a response unlike any other artist.

Separate from, but interwoven to these experiences I've been so fortunate to behold and participate in, is the chance occurrence that brought me thousands of miles to the Czech Republic. Three years ago I accompanied my drummer to a competition he was participating in. While sitting in the crowd next to the judges, one of them asked if the Guy Aitchison on the back of my neck/head was a Giger tattoo. "It is and it isn't.." I said, handing him my business card which displays one of my large Giger tattoos on the back of it. The image is among one of my favorite icons, a part of my own personal portfolio of Giger reproductions, one which I spent fifteen hours working on. The judge was Jonathan Mover, percussionist to many superstar acts and the editor in chief of Drumhead magazine. Jonathan is an art collector and a close friend of Les Barany, Giger's agent. He urged that I contact Les regarding a book, now in preparation by Scapegoat Publishing, "H.R. Giger Under Your Skin," comprehensive collection of all Giger artworks, as they have been reproduced on skin. From there on, the situation, could not have unfolded better synchronized. The mechanism of circumstance was already hard at work to bring to you this account of my experiences with H.R. Giger in Prague.



Birthmachine, 1999
Aluminum, 200 x 140 x 25 cm
Photo: © 2000 H.R. Giger



Birthmachine Baby, 1998
Aluminum, 53 x 22 x 22 cm
Photo: © 2005 Ryszard Wojtynski

Photo: © 2006 Leslie Barany



Giger provides the hand-drawn certificates for the competition winners
Photos: © 2005 Vincent Castiglia

TATTOO SOCIETY