

2013 Ars Electronica Festival

Featured Artist: HR Giger

HR Giger - The Art of Biomechanics

September 5 / 10 AM to 9 PM

September 6-9 / 10 AM to 7 PM

LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz (Underground Level)

Giger's World

September 5th and 8th / 10:30 AM, 1:30 & 8:00 PM

September 7th / 10:30 AM, 8 PM

September 9th / 10:30 AM

Ars Electronica Center (Deep Space)

Featured Artist Talk with HR Giger and Andreas J. Hirsch

September 6th / 10:00 PM

Ars Electronica Center (Deep Space)

Guided tour for media outlet representatives on September 5, 2013 with

HR Giger, Andreas J. Hirsch (*curator of "HR Giger - The Art of Biomechanics"*), Stella Rollig (*artistic director of LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz*) and Gerfried Stocker (*co-director of the Ars Electronica Festival*).

Press releases, photographs, videos, interviews and in-depth articles about HR Giger and the 2013 Ars Electronica Festival are available online at

<http://www.aec.at/totalrecall/en/presse/>.

2013 Ars Electronica Festival

FEATURED ARTIST: HR Giger

(Linz, September 5, 2013) HR Giger is the featured artist at Ars Electronica 2013. This year's honor goes to the legendary creator of the biomechanical style and the Oscar-winning title character in the film "Alien," a man who, even to this day, draws inspiration from his childhood anxieties and obsessions, as well as subsequent fears of global nuclear war and accelerating technological progress. Festivalgoers are invited to immerse themselves in this *noir* world of imagery in *HR Giger - The Art of Biomechanics*, an exhibition at the LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz, or in the form of breathtaking ultra high-definition, jumbo-format projections screened in Deep Space at the Ars Electronica Center.

From *Necronom* to *Prometheus* – The Art of Biomechanics at the LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz

This show curated by Andreas J. Hirsch features paintings, graphics, films and sculptures—some making their public debut—that illustrate the development of HR Giger's biomechanical style. This exhibition takes a dystopian view of the human-machine interrelationship, and presents HR Giger as the visionary father of early cyborgs and as an architect of interior spaces and entire landscapes of collective horror. Complemented by original props and sketches, it traces Giger's career from the *Necronom* cycle of the 1970s, and highlights the creation of the *Alien* in Ridley Scott's 1979 film of the same name. Among the rarities on display are the *Alien Diaries* from 1978-79.

Alien Diaries – A Detailed Account by the Alien's Creator

The *Alien Diaries* are a legendary, blow-by-blow description of the highs and lows HR Giger went through in 1978 and 1979 while at work on *Alien* at Shepperton Studios. The entire account is now available for the first time in book form and will be launched at the LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz. HR Giger himself will be the star of a book signing at the LENTOS on Thursday, September 5th at 3 PM.

Giger's World in Deep Space at the Ars Electronica Center

Deep Space at the Ars Electronica Center will screen jumbo-format, gigapixel images that offer entrée extraordinaire into the abysmal cosmos that HR Giger conjures up. At this event, curator Andreas J. Hirsch will chat with the artist.

HR Giger – Biography

Hansruedi Giger was born on February 5, 1940 in Chur, Switzerland, the son of Hans Richard Giger, a pharmacist, and Melly Giger-Meier.

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1962-65: Giger studies interior design and industrial design at the Kunstgewerbeschule (school of arts and crafts) in Zürich. His first pen-and-ink drawings, the *Atomkinder* (Atomic Children) series, as well as expressive, tachistic images and early works in polyester–masks in particular–were created during this period.

1966: Following graduation from the Kunstgewerbeschule, Giger works as a designer on a line of office furniture produced by Knoll International. He meets actress Li Tobler and falls in love with her.

1967: Li Tobler and Giger move in together to an attic flat on Rindermarkt. The works he creates here include *Gebärmachine* (Birth Machine) and *Unter der Erde* (Under the Earth). Filmmaker Fredi M. Murer shoots a short film entitled *High*, the first documentary about Giger's work

1968: Giger quits his job as a designer to devote himself to art. He designs props for Murer's film *Swissmade*.

1970: An inheritance enables Giger to buy a small townhouse in Zürich-Oerlikon, in which he and Li Tobler live.

1972: Giger's friend and fellow painter Hugo Schuhmacher introduces him to airbrush, which becomes his favorite technique.

1975: Li Tobler uses a revolver to take her own life on May 19th.

1977: Giger takes his first trip to America. Dan O'Bannon (1946 - 2009) commissions him to create the monster for the science-fiction horror film *Alien*. Giger becomes acquainted with Mia Bonzanigo.

1978: *Alien* director Ridley Scott visits Giger in Zürich. Giger works on the film at Shepperton Studios in London.

1980: Giger wins the Oscar for Best Achievement in Visual Effects.

1998: The HR Giger Museum opens in Schloss St. Germain in Gruyères, Freiburg, Switzerland, which, in 2003, is expanded to include a Giger Bar.

2006: Giger marries Carmen Maria Scheifele, the director of the Giger Museum since 2001. His works are featured in retrospectives in Paris, Prague and Vienna.

2007: The Bündner Kunstmuseum in his hometown of Chur hosts the *exhibition HR Giger: The Works before Alien, 1961-1976*.

2009: *H.R. Giger ART-DESIGN-FILM* runs at the German Film Museum in Frankfurt. Matthias Belz and Marco Witzig near completion of their *HR Giger Werkkatalog*, a catalog raisonné with more than 3,000 works.

2011: KUNST HAUS WIEN is the venue of *HR Giger – Dreams and Visions*, an investigation of his oeuvre's essential themes and motifs. Ridley Scott invites Giger to work on *Prometheus*, his latest science-fiction film project; the film's design makes extensive use of the graphic worlds imagined by HR Giger.

2013: *Alien Diaries* is published by Edition Patrick Frey, Zürich.

HR Giger lives and works in Zürich.

HR Giger's Oeuvre

HR Giger garnered a place among the artistic avant-garde of the 1960s. His works are attributed to surrealism, whereby the influence of fantastic surrealism can be traced back to his friendships with protagonists of the so-called Viennese School. A central, recurring theme in his work is best described by a portmanteau he coined himself—biomechanoid—to refer to his disturbing, even morbid amalgamations of electronics, mechanics and life forms. In addition to his images, HR Giger creates graphics, sculptures and furniture.

HR Giger - Featured Artist at Ars Electronica 2013: <http://www.aec.at/totalrecall/en/featured-artist-h-r-giger/>
Ars Electronica Festival 2013: <http://www.aec.at/totalrecall/en/>
Festival Blog: <http://www.aec.at/aeblog/en/category/festival/total-recall/>
LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz: <http://www.lentos.at/html/en/2676.aspx>

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Andreas J. Hirsch

HR Giger – The Art of Biomechanics

In William Gibson's 1993 novel "Virtual Light," a tattoo parlor in the year 2005 served as the setting for this dialog:

"Lowell ... he's got a Giger.

'Giger'?

This painter. Like nineteenth-century or something. Real classical. Bio-mech."

This exchange gets across the essentials about HR Giger. He's actually a 20th-century artist, born in 1940 in Chur, Switzerland, but his roots do extend back into the art history of the 19th century. He is indeed a painter, but has made the airbrush his primary tool. He's part of the 1960s avant-garde and one of the leading innovators in the fantastic art genre. His works have already attained the status of true classics, and not only among aficionados of 1990s cyberculture. He created a "biomechanical" style all his own, an astounding vision even in light of the reality of cyborgs and biotechnology.

This scene also says a lot about the reception accorded to HR Giger, whose persona is that of an art world outsider and whose work, in the wake of his blockbuster success with *Alien*, became a pop cultural phenomenon in its own right. His rediscovery in the graphic art scene has been a more recent development, one that's also associated with museums' processes of coming to terms with popular culture within the context of, on one hand, shifting concepts of what art actually is, and, on the other hand, the emergence of a broad-based cyberculture.

The truth be told: the history of biomechanics begins in highly "analog" fashion; in fact, it's nothing short of artisanal. HR Giger's artistic career path was preceded by training as a designer, and engendering spaces, even entire worlds, would remain one of his passions. His art draws upon his childhood fears and obsessions, something characteristic of fantastic art as a whole. These coalesced in the early 1960s with humankind's collective fears of global atomic warfare and of being victimized by technological progress. In series such as "Atomkinder" (1967-68) and "Schachtbilder" (Shafts, 1966), HR Giger configured an aesthetic of horror. The "Schachtbilder" also contain the first of many allusions he made over the years to iconic images from art history—in this case, to the prison prints (*Carceri*) created by Giovanni Battista Piranesi in the mid-18th century.

The mother of all traumas is that of birth itself, the event that triggers the cycle of birth, eros and death on which HR Giger has incessantly focused. In his "Gebärmachine" (1967), a womb

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depicted as the chamber of a pistol, the babies awaiting their birth are arrayed like cartridges and, as befitting HR Giger's apocalyptic visions of a perverted world, are equipped with weaponry and protective goggles. The assorted figures that inhabit HR Giger's biomechanics anticipate cyborgs, human-machine hybrids that have gone on to widespread popularity. In HR Giger's takes, these creatures exhibit predominantly female traits. Despite dystopian scenarios, it's not fear they display but rather the apathy of a collective haze—similar to the structures of the Borg civilization in the "Star Trek" cosmos.

Just as the haunting image of "Birth Machine babies" became part of a collective stock of symbols of the 1960s and '70s, the creature in "Alien" created by HR Giger was a milestone in the science fiction genre and horror filmmaking, the absolute epitome of the fears of intruders from beyond, the ultimate dread. The work entitled "Necronom IV" (1976) convinced director Ridley Scott to commission HR Giger to design the alien creature, which earned HR Giger an Oscar in 1980 and garnered worldwide fame for his aesthetic. Whereas the models and mockups for "Alien" were real analog objects handcrafted of wood and polyester, "Prometheus" (2012), the film Ridley Scott made more than 30 years later, took HR Giger's alien world to a whole new level. Not only had the special effects long since gone digital, the creation theme of the Prometheus myth and the flashy burst of the double helix also endowed HR Giger's visual vocabulary with new levels of meaning—a belated, monumental homage to HR Giger's artistry enunciated in the stylistic language of the cinema.

HR Giger and Ars Electronica are not only connected by a cultural "kinship"; they also share a key point on the timeline. Just as HR Giger's oeuvre is divided into periods before and after "Alien," the history of media art and cyberculture is also marked by a watershed: the time prior to the founding of Ars Electronica, and what came next. These key events occurred in the same year: 1979.

So, the 2013 Ars Electronica Festival provides in numerous respects just the right situation for HR Giger, fantastic painter, visionary father of ur-cyborgs, architect of spaces populated by embodiments of our collective terror, and creator of worlds that bespeak our internal abysses in *Total Recall*—the Ars Electronica Center's Deep Space and the dark underground level at the Lentos Museum of Art.

Andreas J. Hirsch was born in 1961 in Vienna. He is a curator, author and photographer. 2004-07, he served as a Prix Ars Electronica juror. Since 2008, he has curated exhibitions at KUNST HAUS WIEN including René Burri, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Linda McCartney retrospectives. During this period, he has also published books on Pablo Picasso, Tina Modotti and Friedensreich Hundertwasser. In 2010, Andreas Hirsch developed the concept of Ars Electronica's Open Source Life symposium. In 2011, he curated the "HR Giger - Dreams and Visions" exhibition at KUNST HAUS WIEN. Andreas Hirsch is the producer of "HR Giger - The Art of Biomechanics" at this year's Ars Electronica Festival.