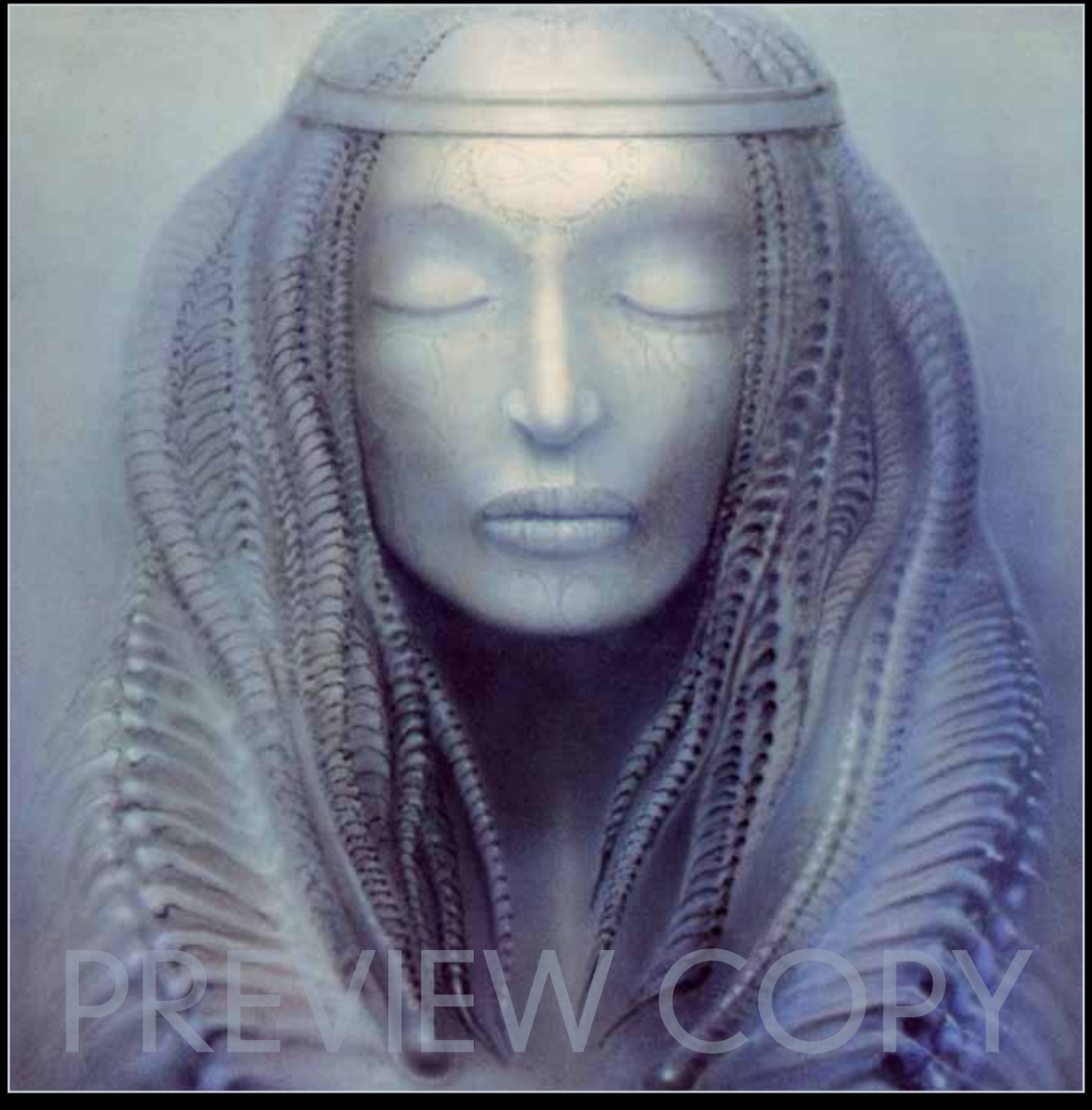
STANISLAV GROF, M.D.

Modern Consciousness Research AND THE Understanding of Art



INCLUDING

The Visionary World of H.R. Giger

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STANISLAV GROF, M.D.

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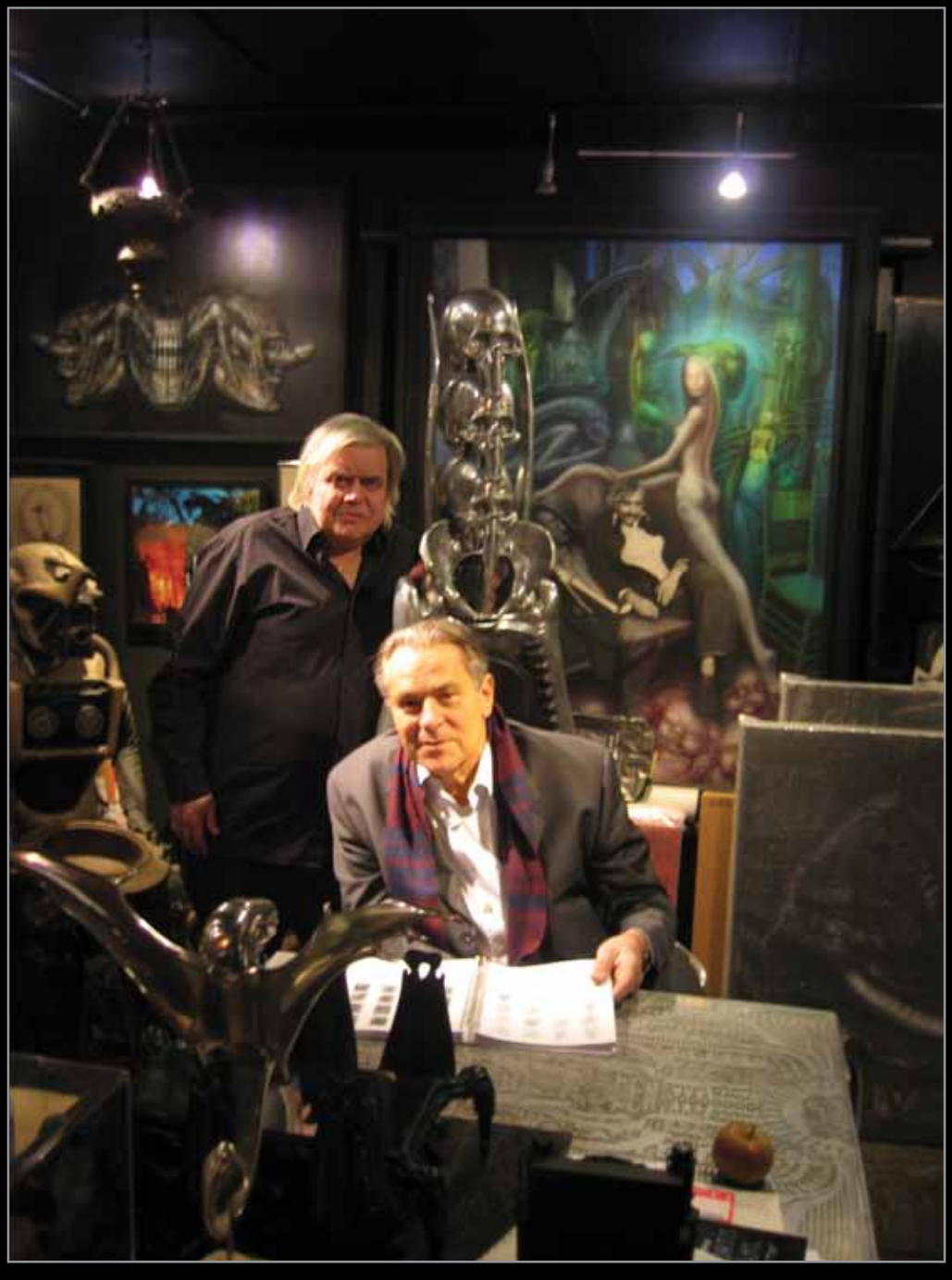

Stanislav Grof and Hansruedi Giger together at Giger's house in Oerlikon.

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Foreword

Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof has made outstanding contributions in both psychology and philosophy by researching and articulating strange higher dimensions of consciousness through LSD psychotherapy, while pointing ways beyond self-destructive mental sinkholes and discovering pathways to humanity's infinite potential. As the Earth's environment degrades and civilizations clash, Dr. Grof's positive message of universal spirituality hardwired in the brain and unlocked during the mystical psychedelic state should be front page news. With this new book, he shows how visionary artists are transcribing the present World Soul's birth trauma and by sharing the discoveries of consciousness research he creates a new context for viewing, appreciating, and awakening through visionary art.

Art has always been one of Stan's preferred ways to share his important insights. Many of the drawings and artworks illustrating his books are from his own hand, from his own transformative experiences. This practice of sharing his psychedelic visions through art unites Stan with all visionary artists, because that is what most of us are attempting to do. Since following Stan's research in the mid 1970s, I have always felt his perspective on consciousness is as important as Freud's and Jung's and needs to be integrated by mainstream science and culture.

Stan has included in almost every one of his books the art of his friend, the Swiss genius, H. R. Giger. Anyone with eyes could see that Hansruedi Giger was a sorcerer whose draughtsmanship surreally summoned forth the darker side of the human collective unconscious, revealing pathologies of the world soul. The only way to transcend a negative psychic condition is to dispassionately contemplate it, letting the wound be seen multi-perspectively, and learning the lessons embedded in this condition. Giger's unparalleled body of work viewed alongside Stan's words will help humanity face, assimilate, and ultimately transcend its own madness.

To say H. R. Giger wrestled with demons was an understatement. They posed for him. He resurrected and honored them. Giger gave fear a new face, a futuristic alien mother with fangs. HRG's work was powerful because it tapped symbolic visionary archetypal mythic dimensions of the psyche that not even Freud or Jung could have imagined. The *Alien's* head vaguely recalls the shape of the Egyptian God of the desert and chaos, Set. Giger's work was deeply informed by the Egyptian pantheon, iconography, and occult intelligences.

Giger's airbrushed shadow worlds articulated the psychosexual trauma of postwar Europe in hallucinatory high resolution. Gigerworld is a dangerous place full of predators and malevolent face huggers where human-machine hybrids, his *Bio-Mechanoids*, reflect a psychic pain of dehumanization as they anticipate a frightening world to come.

As an artist, his accomplishments are unique and extraordinary, including an academy award and position in the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame. Giger was introduced to Dalí by Roberto Venosa, another giant of visionary painting. Giger became the most culturally ubiquitous, most imitated surrealist visionary painter after Dalí. Admired throughout the world, Giger's work has been celebrated in major museums in Europe and is on permanent display at the Giger Museum Castle in Gruyères, Switzerland.

Hansruedi Giger, Stanislav Grof, and Alex Grey.

Well worth the trip, this contemporary museum in an ancient setting was an effort not funded by any sponsor but by the artist and his friends. A gift to all of us from the hands of a master.

The international tattoo community translated Giger's extensive oeuvre into miles of inked human skin. In contrast to the worlds he painted, HR was kind, generous and receptive to meeting and exhibiting dozens of Visionary and Surrealist artists at the Giger Museum Castle. His excellence was an inspiration to all artists. A visit to the Giger Museum and the Giger Bar is unforgettable. Painter, sculptor, magician, architect, Giger changed the world, giving us new icons for addiction and apocalypse, death and rebirth, helping us imagine and integrate painful truths about the human condition. By showing us the beauty and pain of sexuality and temporal embodiment, Giger joins the Buddha in revealing that the greatest teacher of all is death.

Now Giger's work along with the many visionary artists displayed in this book become a skrying mirror for Dr. Grof's deepest world dream interpretations. The evolutionary intelligence of Grof and Giger unmask the fear-filled unconscious of humanity at its turning point. Thanks to the Great Creator for bringing these two wounded healers together, both born from war-torn Europe, in such a creative effort to serve collective awakening. May our hearts be opened to all souls caught in the gloom, violence and pain of life, and by our understanding and loving healing efforts may they be relieved of suffering and the world transformed to a more beautiful place.

Alex Grey
February 2015

H. R. Giger and the Zeitgeist of the Twentieth Century

Several years ago, I had the great privilege and pleasure to spend some time with Oliver Stone, American Academy Award-winning movie director and screen-writer, who has portrayed in his films with extraordinary artistic power the shadow side of modern humanity. At one point, we talked about Ridley Scott's movie *Alien* and the discussion focused on H. R. Giger, whose creature and set designs were the key elements in the film's success[98–101]. In the 1979 Academy Awards ceremony held at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles in April 1980, Giger received for his work on *Alien* an Oscar for best achievement in visual effects.

I have known Giger's work since the publication of his *Necronomicon* and have always felt a deep admiration for him, not only as an artistic genius, but also a visionary with an uncanny ability to depict the deep dark recesses of the human psyche revealed by modern consciousness research. In our discussion, I shared my feelings with Oliver Stone, who turned out to be himself a great admirer of Giger. His opinion about Giger and his place in the world of art and in human culture was very original and interesting. "I do not know anybody else," he said, "who has so accurately portrayed the soul of modern humanity. A few decades from now when they will talk about the twentieth century, they will think of Giger."

Although Oliver Stone's statement momentarily surprised me by its extreme nature, I immediately realized that it reflected a profound truth. Since then, I often recalled this conversation when I was confronted with various disturbing aspects of the western industrial civilization and with the alarming developments in the countries affected by technological progress. There is no other artist who has captured with equal power the ills plaguing modern society—the rampaging technology taking over human life, suicidal destruction of the eco system of the earth, violence reaching apocalyptic proportions, sexual excesses, insanity of life driving people to mass consumption of tranquilizers and narcotic drugs, and the alienation individuals experience in relation to their bodies, to each other, and to nature.

Giger's art has often been called "biomechanoid" and Giger himself called one of his books *Biomechanics* (Giger 1988). It would be difficult to find a word that better describes the Zeitgeist of the twentieth century, characterized by staggering technological progress that entangled modern humanity into a symbiosis with the world of machines. In the course of the twentieth century, modern technological inventions became extensions and replacements of our arms and legs, hearts, kidneys, and lungs, our brain and nervous system, our eyes and ears, and even our reproductive organs, to such an extent that the boundaries between biology and mechanical contraptions have all but disappeared. The archetypal stories of Faust, the Sorcerer's Apprentice, Golem, and Frankenstein have become the leading mythologies of our times. Materialistic science, in its effort to gain knowledge about the world of matter and to control it, has engendered a monster that threatens the very survival of life on our planet. The human role has changed from that of demiurge to that of victim.

When we look for another characteristic feature of the twentieth century, what immediately comes to mind is unbridled violence and destruction on an unprecedented scale. It was a century, in which internecine wars,

bloody revolutions, totalitarian regimes, genocide, brutality of secret police, and international terrorism ruled supreme. The loss of life in World War I was estimated at ten million soldiers and twenty million civilians. Additional millions died from war-spread epidemics and famine. In World War II, approximately twice as many lives were lost. This century saw the bestiality of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, the diabolical hecatombs of Stalin's purges and his Gulag Archipelago, the development of chemical and biological warfare, the weapons of mass destruction, and the apocalyptic horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We can add to it the civil terror in China and other Communist countries, the victims of South American dictatorships, the atrocities and genocide committed by the Chinese in Tibet, and the cruelties of the South African Apartheid. The wars in Korea, Vietnam, and in the Middle East, and the slaughters in Yugoslavia and Rwanda are additional examples of the senseless bloodshed we have witnessed during the last hundred years. In a mitigated form, death pervaded the media of the twentieth century as a favorite subject for entertainment. According to some estimates, an average American child has witnessed on television 8,000 murders by the time he or she finishes elementary school. The number of violent acts seen on television by the age of eighteen rose to 200,000.

The nature and scale of violence committed in the course of the twentieth century and the destructive abuses of modern science—chemical, nuclear, and biological warfare and use of concentration camp inmates as human guinea pigs—gave this period of history distinctly demonic features. Some of the atrocities were motivated by distorted understanding of God and by perverted religious impulses resulting in mass murder and suicide. This century saw the mass suicides of the members of Jim Jones' People's Temple, Marshall Herff Applewhite's and Bonnie Lu Nettles' Heaven's Gate, the Swiss Sun Temple cult, and other deviant religious groups. Violent terrorist organizations, such as Shoko Asahara's cult Aum Shinrikyo that carried out sarin gas attacks on Japanese subways, Charles Manson's gang, the Symbionese Liberation Army, and the Islamic extremists acted out deviant mystical impulses. This was further augmented by a renaissance of witchcraft and satanic cults and escalating interest in books and movies focusing on demon worship and exorcism.

Yet another important characteristic of the twentieth century is the extraordinary change of attitude toward sexuality, of sexual values, and of sexual behavior. The second half of this century witnessed an unprecedented lifting of sexual repression and polymorphous manifestation of erotic impulses worldwide. On the one hand, it was removal of cultural constraints leading to general loosening of sexual repression—sexual freedom of adults, early sexual experimentation of the young generation, premarital sex, popularity of common law and open marriage, gay liberation, and overtly sexual theater plays, television programs, and movies.

On the other hand, the shadow sides of sexuality surfaced to an unprecedented degree and became part of modern culture—excessive promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, escalating divorce rate, adult and child pornography, sexual scandals of prominent political figures, red light districts offering

all imaginable forms of prostitution, sadomasochistic parlors, sexual "slave markets," bizarre burlesque shows, and clubs catering to clients with a wide range of erotic aberrations and perversions. And the darkest shadow of them all—the rapidly escalating specter of a worldwide AIDS epidemic—forged an inseparable link between sexuality and death, Eros and Thanatos.

The stress and excessive demands of modern life, alienation, and loss of deeper meaning of life and of spiritual values engendered in many people a consuming need to escape and seek pleasure and oblivion. The use of hard drugs—heroin, cocaine, crack, and amphetamines—reached astronomic proportions and escalated into a global epidemic. The empires of the drug lords and the vicious battle for the lucrative black market with narcotics on all its levels contributed significantly to the already escalating crime rate and brought violence into the underground and streets of many modern cities.

All these essential elements of the twentieth century's Zeitgeist are present in an inextricable amalgam in Giger's biomechanoid art. The entanglement of humans and machines has been over the years the leitmotif in his paintings, drawings, and sculptures. In his inimitable style, he masterfully merged elements of dangerous mechanical contraptions of the technological world with various parts of human anatomy—arms, legs, faces, breasts, bellies, and genitals[102]. Equally extraordinary is the way in which Giger blended deviant sexuality with violence and with emblems of death. Skulls and bones morph into sexual organs or parts of machines and vice versa to such degree and so smoothly that the resulting images portray with equal symbolic power sexual rapture, violence, agony, and death[103–105]. The satanic dimension of these scenes is depicted with such artistic skill that it gives them archetypal depth[106].

Giger portrayed in his unique way the horrors of modern war, the specter that plagued humanity throughout the twentieth century as part of everyday reality or as a haunting vision of possible or plausible future. We can think here about his *Necronom II*[107], the three-headed skeletal figure wearing a military helmet, which combines in a terrifying amalgam symbols of war, death, violence, and sexual aggression. Many of Giger's paintings depict the ugly world of the future, destroyed by excesses of technology and ravaged by nuclear winter—a world of utter alienation, without humans and animals, dominated by soulless skyscrapers, plastic materials, cold steel structures, beton, and asphalt[108]. And in his *Atomic Children*, Giger envisioned the grotesque population of mutants, who have survived nuclear war or the accumulated fall-out of the nuclear energy plants[109,110]. Allusions to drug addiction appear throughout Giger's work in the form of syringes inserted into the veins and bodies of his various characters[111,112].

There is one recurrent motif in Giger's art that at first glance has very little to do with the soul of the twentieth century—the abundance of images depicting tortured and sick fetuses[113–115]. And yet, this is where Giger's visionary genius offers the most profound insights into the hidden recesses of the human psyche. Adding the prenatal and perinatal elements to the symbolism of sex, death, and pain reveals depth and clarity of psychological understanding that by far surpasses that of mainstream psychiatrists and psychologists and is missing in the work of Giger's predecessors and peers—Surrealists and Fantastic Realists.

Mainstream psychology and psychiatry is dominated by the theories of Sigmund Freud, whose ground-breaking pioneering work laid the foundations for modern "depth-psychology." Freud's model of the psyche, however avant-garde and revolutionary for his time, is very superficial and narrow, as it is limited to postnatal biography and the individual unconscious. The members of his Viennese circle who tried to expand it, such as Otto Rank, with his theory of the birth trauma (Rank 1929), and C. G. Jung, with his concept of the collective unconscious and the archetypes (Jung 1956,

1960), became renegades. Rank was ousted from the psychoanalytic movement and Jung left it after a heated confrontation with Freud. In official handbooks of psychiatry, the work of these renegades is usually discussed as historical curiosity and considered irrelevant for clinical practice.

As we have seen, Freud's theories had a profound effect on art. Freud's discovery of sexual symbolism and his interpretation of dream imagery was one of the main sources of inspiration for the Surrealist movement. In the 1920s, Freud was even referred to as "patron saint" of Surrealism. It became fashionable for the artistic avant-garde to imitate the dream work by juxtaposing in a most surprising fashion various objects in a manner that defied elementary logic. The selection of these objects often showed a preference for those which, according to Freud, had hidden sexual meaning.

However, while the connections between the seemingly incongruent dream images have their own deep logic and meaning, which can be revealed by analysis of dreams, this was not always true for Surrealistic paintings. Here shocking juxtaposition of images often reflected empty mannerism missing the truth and logic of the unconscious dynamic. This can best be illustrated by considering the famous Surrealist dictum, which poet-philosopher André Breton borrowed from Count de Lautréamont's (Isidore Ducasse's) *Chants de Maldoror (Songs of Maldoror)*. This succinct statement describing the aesthetic of jarring juxtapositions represents a manifesto of the Surrealist movement: "As beautiful as the unexpected chance meeting, on a dissecting table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella."

Another important inspiration for Surrealism was medieval alchemy. André Breton came across a medieval image from one of the alchemical texts, representing the synopsis of the first and second opus of the "royal art"[116]. The picture was extremely complex and featured all the most important symbols used to portray various stages of the two works of the alchemical process. Breton was fascinated by the fantastic array of seemingly incongruous images that this picture brought together and the shocking surprise it induced in the viewer. As C. G. Jung discovered in twenty years of his intense study of alchemy, the alchemical symbolism—like the symbolism of dreams—reflects deep dynamics of the unconscious and reveals important hidden truth about the human psyche. The same certainly cannot be said about most of surrealist art.

While the combination of a sewing machine, a dissecting table, and an umbrella might provide an element of surprise for the viewer, it would be very difficult to find a meaningful psychodynamic connection between these three images. Similarly, the assemblies of objects in most surrealist paintings would not make much sense to an alchemist familiar with the symbolism of the "royal art." Giger's art is diametrically different in this regard. The combinations of images in his paintings might seem illogical and incongruous only to those who are not familiar with the discoveries of pioneering consciousness research in the last several decades. The observations from the study of holotropic states of consciousness have revealed that Giger's understanding of the human psyche was far ahead of mainstream professionals, who have not yet accepted the new observations and integrated them into the official body of scientific knowledge.

Giger spent many months analyzing his dreams, using the technique invented by Sigmund Freud and described in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. This focused self-exploration provided the inspiration for Giger's collection of drawings entitled *Feast for the Psychiatrist (Fressen für den Psychiater)* (Giger 2000). However, Giger's self-analysis reached much deeper than Freud's. By seeking the source of his own nightmares, terrifying visions in psychedelic self-experiments, and disturbing fantasies, Giger discovered, independently from the pioneers of modern consciousness research and experiential psychotherapy, the paramount psychological importance of the trauma of biological birth.

98. *Work #373, Alien III, Front View III,* 1978.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper.

Unlike the psychoanalytic renegade Otto Rank, author of the book *The Trauma of Birth*, whose primary emphasis was on the "paradise lost" aspect of birth—the unfavorable comparison of the prenatal and postnatal state and craving to return to the maternal womb, Giger's emphasis was on the various forms of distress associated with the torturous passage of the fetus through the birth canal. It is interesting to notice in this context that Sigmund Freud, during the very short period when he considered that biological birth might be psychologically important as a possible source of all future anxieties, came closer to Giger's understanding of birth than Rank. Freud put emphasis on the difficult emotions, physical sensations, and innervations generated by the passage through the birth canal, rather than the loss of the intrauterine paradise.

However, Giger went far beyond Freud's relatively tame description of the passage through the birth canal; he captured the torturous ordeal the fetus has to endure in the grip of the "death-delivering machine" of the uterus. Steel rings and vises crushing the heads, mechanical contraptions with cogwheels, compressing pistons, and spikes that can hurt feature abundantly in his paintings. Equally frequent are elements associated with the emotions and physical feelings accompanying the difficult passage, such as grotesque, repulsive, terrifying, and demonic creatures, sadistic archetypal figures, vomit, and other scatological motifs. As we will see, Giger's's understanding of the psychological impact of birth has been confirmed by modern consciousness research.

The very term used for Giger's art—biomechanoid—reflects the nature of human birth. Birth takes place within a biological system—female reproductive organs—and is governed by anatomical, physiological, and biochemical laws. Yet, at the same time, it has a distinctly mechanical features, which it shares with the world of machines—the power of the uterine contractions oscillating between fifty and a hundred pounds, pushing the fetus against the narrow opening of the pelvic opening and its hard surfaces, forceful torques, and the hydraulic quality of the process. It is thus not farfetched when Giger used for his paintings the name "birth machine" and portrayed the birth mechanism as a system of cylinders and pistons[117].

The existence of a fascinating and important domain in the human unconscious, which contains the shattering memory of our passage through the birth canal, intuited by Giger and reflected in his art, has not yet been recognized and accepted by official academic circles. Intimate knowledge of this deep realm of the psyche is also absent in the work of Giger's predecessors and peers—Surrealists and Fantastic Realists. Giger's artistic skills and his talent to portray the Fantastic match those of his models—Hieronymus Bosch, Salvador Dalí, and Ernst Fuchs, but the depth of his psychological insight is unparalleled in the world of art.

Some critics described Giger's work as being simultaneously a telescope and a microscope revealing dark secrets of the human psyche. Looking into the deep abyss of the unconscious that modern humanity prefers to deny and ignore, Giger discovered how profoundly human life is shaped by events and forces that precede our emergence into the world. He intuited the importance of the birth trauma not only for postnatal life of the individual, but also as source of dangerous emotions that are responsible for many ills of human society. He said about the tapestry of babies he painted:

"Babies are beautiful, innocent and, yet, they represent an uncanny threat and beginning of all evil. As carriers of all kinds of plagues, they are predestined to represent the psychological and organic harms of our civilization."

One could hardly imagine a more powerful representation of the terrifying ordeal of human birth than Giger's *Birth Machine*[117], *Death Delivery Machine*[118], or *Stillbirth Machines I* and *II*[119,120]. Equally powerful birth motifs can be found in *Biomechanoid I*[113], featuring three fetuses as heavily armed grotesque Indian warriors with steel bands constricting their foreheads, in Giger's self-portrait *Biomechanoid II* on the poster for the Sydow-Zirkwitz Gallery showing him as a helpless warrior encased in a heavy metallic cage[114], and in *Landscape XIV*[115] that portrays an entire tapestry of tortured babies. The symbolism of *Landscape* X[121] is more subtle and less obvious; here Giger combined the uterine interior, symbolizing sex and birth, with black crosses in the shape of Swiss army's targets for shooting practice that signify death, as well as violence. Echoes of birth symbolism can also be easily detected in his *Suitcase Baby*[122], *Homage to Beckett*[123], and throughout his work.

Two motifs that appear in Giger's art do not involve explicitly fetal images, but represent important perinatal symbols—the spider and the volcano. As we saw earlier, spider is an image that often appears in the context of psychedelic or holotropic sessions dominated by the second perinatal matrix (BPM II), usually in the form of giant terrifying tarantulas[73,74]. As C. G. Jung correctly described in his book *Symbols of Transformation* (Jung 1956), spiders often symbolize the Devouring Feminine. This reflects the fact that they rob insects of spatial freedom, something that the fetus experiences in a good womb. The explosive liberation during the final stages of birth often takes the form of experiential identification with a volcano[82]. Both spiders and volcanoes belong to Hansruedi Giger's favorite themes[124–126].

Once we have recognized the prenatal and perinatal roots of Giger's art, it is easy to understand why he incorporated into his drawings, paintings, and sculptures the motif of syringes, toxic substances, and drug addiction[111,112,127,128]. Most of the disturbances of prenatal life are due to toxemia of the mother and for many of us the anesthesia administered at our birth represented our first escape from pain and anxiety into a drug state. It does not seem to be an accident that the generation afflicted by the current drug epidemic was born after obstetricians started using anesthesia routinely and indiscriminately in delivering mothers.

Hansruedi Giger was in touch with the perinatal domain of his unconscious since his childhood. He had always been fascinated by underground tunnels, dark corridors, cellars, and ghost rides. Many of his nightmares and experiences during his psychedelic self-experiments spawned by his memory of the birth trauma gave him a deep understanding of the symbolism of the perinatal process. He knew intimately the agony of the embryo in a hostile or toxic womb, as well as the suffering of the fetus during the arduous passage through the birth canal. And he was fully aware of the fact that the source of this knowledge was his own memory of birth. The following is his description of one of his nightmarish experiences, involving the sense of terrifying engulfment characteristic for the onset of the birth process (BPM II):

> *"Again horror took control of me. Harmless passersby who my mind turned into insane murderers had to be avoided by making wide detours around them. Everything seemed evil to me. The houses, the trees, the cars. Only water could placate my spirit. I felt as if I was about to be swallowed by a hole. The sidewalk became so steep that I was always about to fall off it and into the adjoining gorge. With tears streaming from my eyes, I clutched onto Li (his girlfriend at the time) without whom I would have been lost."*

Experiences of this kind were not limited to Giger's dream life: they occasionally occurred in the middle of his everyday life. Horst Albert Glaser made the following comment about this aspect of Giger's life: "The artist has always been interested in what might be called the cracks in a seemingly smooth daily life. Places where the dreamer steps into a bottomless abyss and the sleeper contorts his body—this is what captures the artist's frightened inner child. What seems to be the road to freedom is a plunge into black nothingness."

The motif of the engulfing vortex that transports the subject into a terrifying alternate reality appears in several of Giger's paintings[129]. I mentioned earlier in this book that another experiential variety of the beginning of birth is the theme of descending into the depths of the underworld, the realm of death, or hell, known from the initiatory visions of the shamans and from the mythology of the hero's journey, as described by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1968).

This immediately brings to mind Giger's childhood fantasies of monstrous labyrinths, spiral staircases, and subterranean enclosures that served as inspiration for his *Shafts*[130] and *Under the Earth*[131]. The claustrophobic nightmarish atmosphere of a fully developed BPM II dominates many of Giger's paintings. He portrayed with extraordinary artistic power the torment, anguish, and hopeless predicament of the fetus caught in the clutches of the uterine contractions and the ordeal of the delivering mother[119]. Clinically, this is the domain of the unconscious that underlies deep depression. But Giger's masterful depictions of the no exit situation reach beyond the ordeal of the fetus to other situations involving similar desperate ordeals.

Giger's art features torture chambers, in which various eerie creatures are tied, stabbed, mutilated, crushed, and crucified. His incisive probing vision traces this suffering to its sources in the archetypal depth of the psyche, where it assumes hellish dimensions. Giger's gallery of bizarre mutants represents a category of its own. These strange creatures are not like Frankenstein's monster, who was composed entirely of heterogeneous human parts, nor are they android robots, lifeless automatons only remotely resembling people and imitating human activities. Giger's biomechanoids are strange hybrids between machines and humans, like the Cyborgs from the *Star Trek* space odyssey, and they are surrounded by a world that itself is biological and mechanical at the same time. As we have seen, this is the same combination that characterizes childbirth.

Individuals, whose psychedelic or holotropic sessions are strongly influenced by BPM II, see the world as it is portrayed in existential art and philosophy or in the Theater of the Absurd—as meaningless, absurd, threat-

ening, and even monstrous. They made frequent references to authors, who captured the atmosphere of this domain with particular artistic power—J. P. Sartre, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, and Ingmar Bergman, all of whom belong to Giger's favorite authors, or even provided direct inspiration for his paintings[123,132].

Unique and unparalleled were Giger's insights into the dynamics of BPM III. The rich array of symbols characteristic for this matrix plays a particularly important role in his art. Images of birth and death, horror and violence, sexual organs and activities, mechanical contraptions that can constrain and crush, sharp objects that can hurt, body excretions and secretions, satanic figures and symbols, and religious scenes and objects appear side by side or merge into each other. This otherwise incomprehensible aggregate of elements appears very logical when we understand its connection with the final stages of biological birth.

Here the fetus experiences a violent assault coming from the uterine contractions, which is painful and anxiety provoking, and responds to it with amorphous biological fury. A long or complicated delivery can take the mother and the fetus to the threshold of death. The extreme suffering and, particularly, suffocation generates a strong sexual arousal and various forms of biological material are natural constituents of birth. The connection between the mechanical nature of the birth process, suffocation, and enforced sexual arousal is very graphically portrayed in Giger's *Biomechanoid 75*, featuring a woman connected to an oxygen tank used for resuscitation and artificial respiration[161]. The tube inserted in her mouth has a very clear sexual connotation. The fact that reliving of birth is a process that is not only biological, but also psychospiritual, accounts for the numinosity of the experiences and for the religious symbolism involved. The collective unconscious contributes to this experience visions of archetypal figures representing death and rebirth. Nothing except the perinatal domain of the unconscious reflecting this stage of birth (BPM III) can bring these seemingly incongruous elements into a meaningful and logically consistent gestalt.

The work with holotropic states of consciousness has shown that BPM III plays a very important role in individual, as well collective psychopathology. On the individual scale, it is responsible for a variety of clinical conditions from extreme violence through various psychosomatic disorders and a wide array of sexual dysfunctions and aberrations to messianic delusions. Here again, Giger's horrifying experiences are sources of invaluable insight, as exemplified by the following account. In this blood-curdling visionary journey the toilet bowl turns into a combination of Freud's *vagina dentata* that can castrate and the life-threatening female genitals of delivery that can engulf and kill.

> *"The first sign of anxiety came when I suddenly had to piss and went to the lavatory. The edge of the bowl grew slowly toward my penis like a wide-open vagina as if to castrate me. At first, the idea amused me. But suddenly the whole room began to grow narrower and narrower, the walls and pipes took on the aspect of loose skin with festering wounds, and small, repellent creatures glared out at me from the dark corners and cracks."*

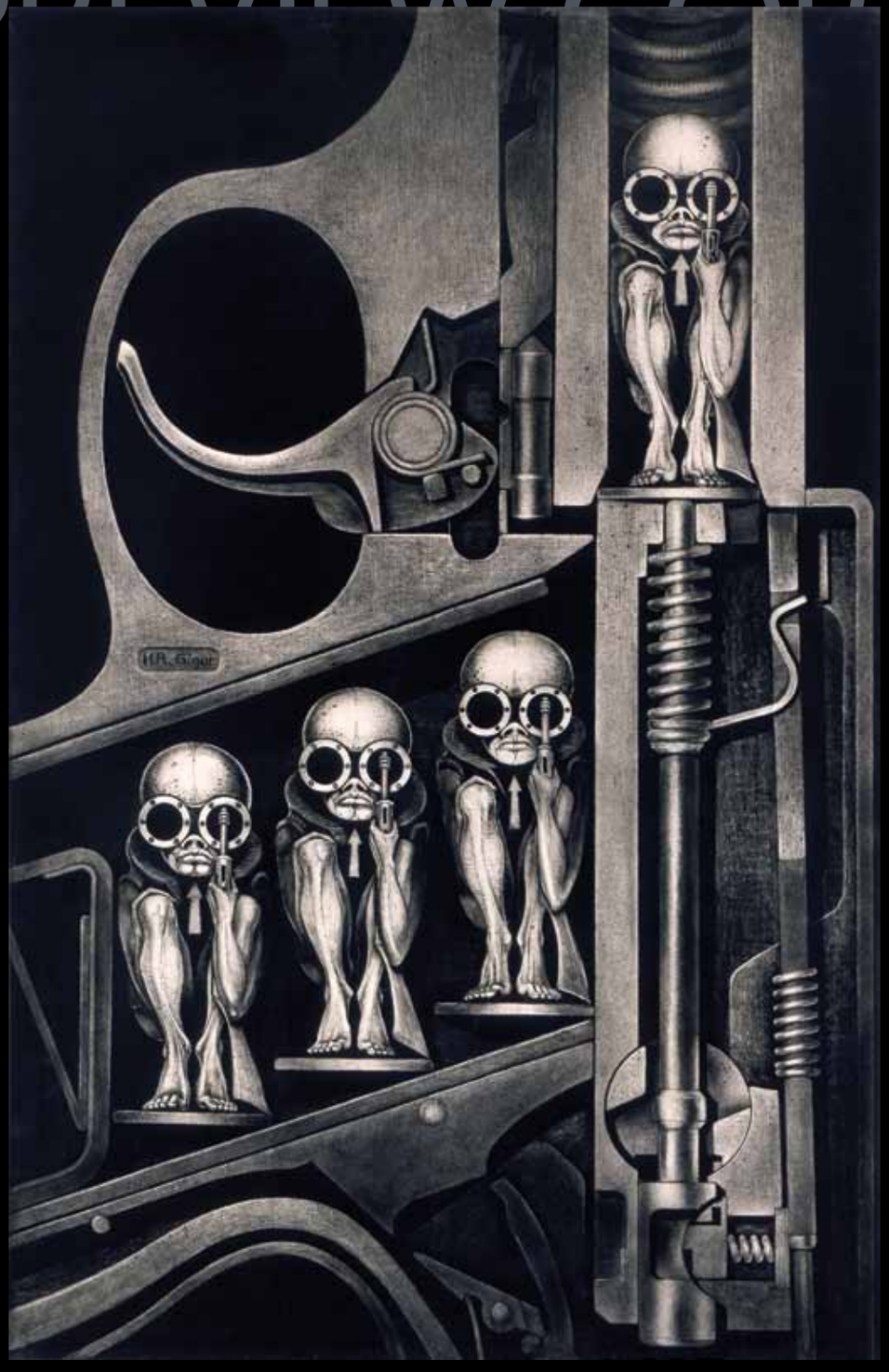
The toilet bowl, the most ordinary and humble object of everyday life, had for Giger deeper levels of meaning and appears in several of his paintings[133]. We can speculate here that the toilet bowl points to the scatological aspect of birth and that the deeper source of Giger's fear of castration was the memory of cutting the umbilical cord. He thus seemed to be aware not only of the obvious relation of the castration complex to the loss of the penis, a motif that clearly fascinated him[134,135], but intuits also the perinatal roots of the castration fears. Many individuals involved in experiential self-explorations have confirmed independently Giger's insight concerning deep psychodynamic link between Freud's concept of *vagina dentata* and the perils of birth and between his famous castration complex and cutting of the umbilical cord and separation from the mother[94].

On the collective scale, the dynamics of BPM III seems to be the deep source of some extreme forms of social psychopathology, such as wars, bloody revolutions, genocide, and concentration camps (see p. 81 of this book). It engenders and feeds such societal plagues as Nazism, Communism, and religious fundamentalism. In a more mitigated form, BPM III accounts for insatiable greed and acquisitiveness characteristic of the human species. In everyday life, it seems to account for the excessive attention that the media and audiences worldwide give to forms of entertainment that draw inspiration from this level of the psyche. For many years, the triad sex, violence, and death has been the favorite formula of the Hollywood film industry, responsible for box office success of many blockbuster movies. Incisive psychological insights of Giger's work thus have extraordinary social relevance.

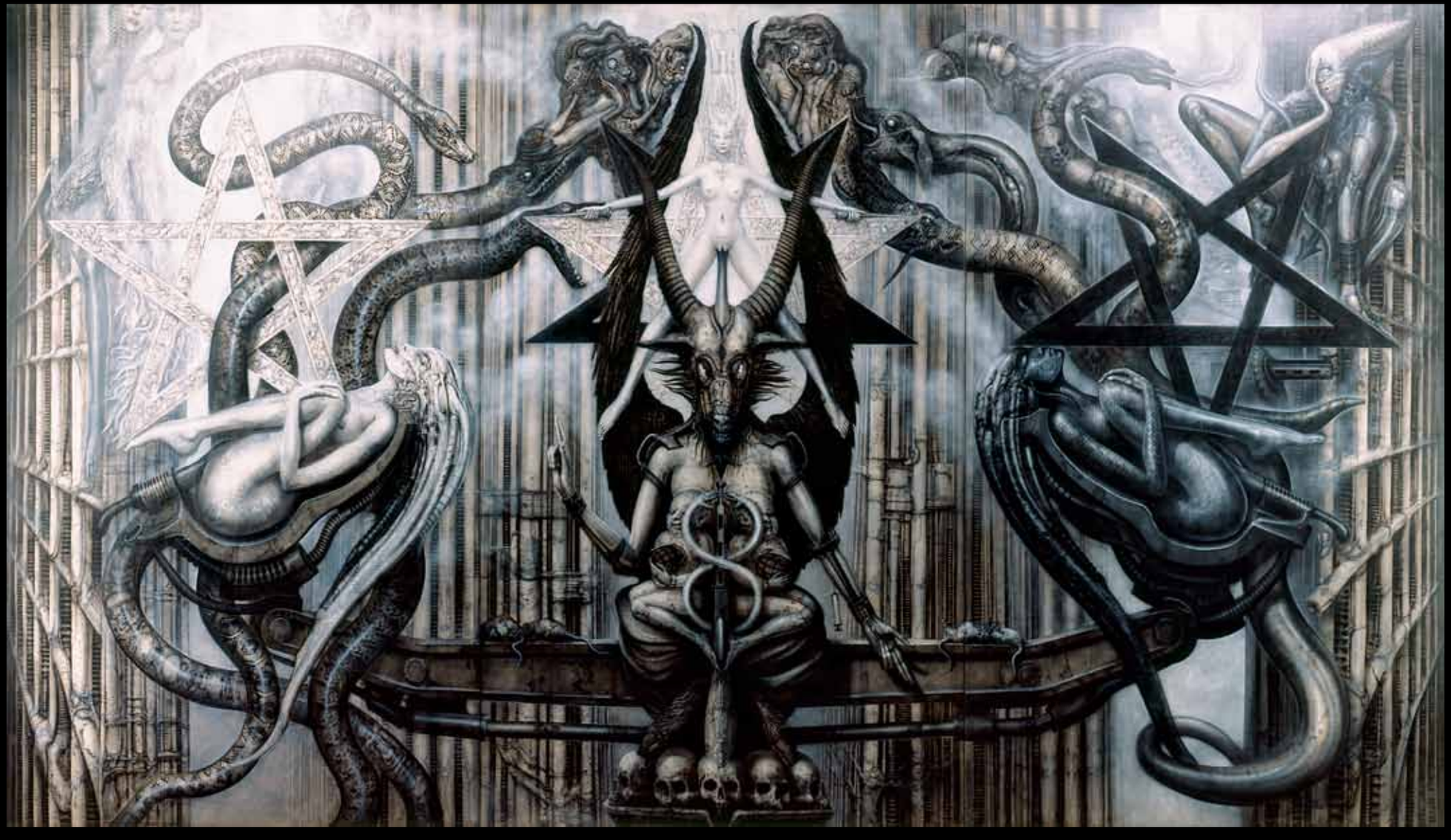
The scatological dimension of BPM III finds its expression in Giger's art in his fascination with toilet bowls, garbage trucks, and refuse collection and his sharp awareness of the erotic overtones these objects and activities had for him[133,136]. It also seems to account for the inclusion of the motif of offal, decomposition of corpses, repulsive worms and insects, excrement, and vomit in his paintings[137,138]. The scatological motifs found their fullest expression in Giger's suggestions for the imagery in the movie *Poltergeist*.

Satanic motifs, intimately interwoven with fetal and sexual elements and images of violence, suffering, and death, form an integral part of many of Giger's most powerful paintings. Giger had a profound understanding of this aspect of the perinatal domain of the unconscious. He was fascinated by Eliphas Levi's picture of *Baphomet*, a mysterious, obscurely symbolic figure combining human, animal, and divine features[139]. This creature, appearing in medieval manuscripts of the Templars, served for him repeatedly as a source of artistic inspiration. Giger intuitively grasped the full range of meaning of this archetypal figure and its connection with the perinatal domain; one of his renditions of *Baphomet* includes not only elements of violence, death, and scatology, but also sexual and fetal symbolism[140].

In some of his works, the satanic represents the main thematic focus. This is particularly true for *Satan I* and *II*[141,142] and the paintings of the *Spell* series—the Kaliesque female deity flanked by phallic condom fetuses[143] or *Baphomet* with a female figure resting with her *mons pubis* on his trident horn[139]. *Departure for Sabbath*[144], *Witches' Dance*[145], *Witch*[146], *Satan's Bride II*[147], *Vlad Tepes*[148], and *Lilith*[149] are additional salient examples.



117. *Work #85, Birth Machine,* 1967.
165 cm x 109 cm. Indian ink on transparent paper on paper on wood.



140. *Work #331, The Spell IV,* 1977.
240 cm x 420 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.

142. *Work #325, Satan II,* 1977.
100 cm x 70 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.

Giger's extraordinary art has been difficult for an average person to understand and for many years, it has been the subject of heated controversy. Giger was the target of many angry reactions from lay persons and vicious attacks of art critics, including those that used moral judgments and psychiatric labels, questioning his character, integrity and sanity. However, he also received highest admiration and praise from many prominent figures of cultural life, including Ernst Fuchs, Salvador Dalí, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Ridley Scott, Oliver Stone, Albert Hofmann, Timothy Leary, and many others. And, of course, he received for his art an Oscar, the highest award from the Los Angeles Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for excellence in cinema achievements.

Freud, trying to understand the role of the artist in human society wrote that the artist has withdrawn from reality into his Oedipal fantasies, about which he feels guilty and finds his way back to the objective world by presenting them in his work. For Freud, the forbidden fantasies revealed in art are related exclusively to the Oedipus complex and the pregenital libidinal drives. The intensity of the controversy surrounding Giger seems to be related to the fact that his art reaches much deeper, to deep, dark recesses of the human psyche, which in our culture have remained subjected to deep repression even after Freud's work succeeded in lifting to a great extent the taboo of sexuality.

The perinatal domain of the unconscious is perceived as particularly dangerous, because it represents an emotional and instinctual inferno associated with the memory of an actually or potentially life-threatening situation—biological birth. It also harbors the deepest roots of the incest taboo—memory of the frightening intimate contact with the mother's genitals. And the fact that Giger portrayed the perinatal domain in the form in which we would experience it in deep self-exploration—using powerful symbolic images rather than verbal means—is a particularly effective way of lifting the repression that normally keeps the perinatal material from emerging into consciousness.

Those who recognize the deep truth in Giger's art and his courage in facing and revealing this problematic aspect of the human psyche, which is responsible for many ills in the world, admire his art. Much of the hostility against him comes from determined denial of the existence and the universal nature of the perinatal domain of the unconscious. It is easier for many people to see Giger's images as an expression of his personal depravation, perversion, or psychopathology, rather than recognize in his art elements that we all carry in the depth of our psyche. The world would not see phenomena like Nazism, Communism, murderous religious extremism and suicidal fanatism, if all we had to deal with would be adverse consequences of unsatisfactory nursing, dysfunctional family dynamics, and strict toilet training.

To avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to mention that not all admirers of Giger are individuals who appreciate his art for its mastery and the depth of psychological understanding. His museum in Gruyères also attracts many visitors from the Goth subculture, recognizable by their black clothing, white make-up, body piercing, tattoos, chains, and other bondage items, members of the punk subculture with their outrageous hair styles, provocative t-shirts, unusual jewelry, and body modifications, and other individuals, who are attracted to Giger's art because of its dark themes and the provocative and shocking effects it has on conservative circles. Some tend to see him as a black magician indulging in the elements he portrays in his paintings—occultism, deviant sexual practices, and satanic worship. They would have been very surprised if they had a chance to get to know Hansruedi personally and found out that he was a shy, gentle, amiable, and

loving person, who used his art to struggle with his anxieties, insecurities, and inner demons.

The discovery of the paramount importance of the perinatal and transpersonal realms of the unconscious—the domains of the human psyche as yet unrecognized by mainstream psychiatrists—does not make the postnatal experiences in infancy and childhood irrelevant. Freud's insights concerning infantile sexuality, the Oedipus complex, and various psychosexual traumas still have their place in psychology, but instead of being the primary sources of emotional, psychosomatic, and interpersonal problems, they are conditions facilitating the emergence of deeper emotions and physical sensations from the perinatal and transpersonal levels of the psyche into consciousness.

We have already seen the interplay between biographical levels of COEX systems and deeper levels of the psyche in Riedlinger's study of J. P. Sartre (Riedlinger 1982). Similar dynamics can be clearly demonstrated in Hansruedi Giger's life, since many of his traumatic experiences in childhood and later in life were deeply connected with his memory of birth. Using them as a bridge, perinatal material then found its way into Hansruedi's nightmares and psychedelic experiences and through them into his art. For example, the inspiration for his series of paintings entitled *Shafts*[130] came from terrifying dreams, the sources of which were in the memory of birth and related memories from his childhood. One of these memories involved a secret window in the stairwell in the house of his parents in Chur, which led to the interior of the neighboring Three Kings Hotel. In reality, this window was always covered with a dingy brown curtain and Hansruedi never saw what was behind it. But in his dreams, it was open and revealed gigantic bottomless shafts with treacherous wooden stairways without banisters leading down into the yawning abyss.

Another childhood memory was related to a cellar in Hansruedi's parents' house. Hansruedi heard from the hotel proprietor that there were two subterranean passages in Chur, which led from the bishop's palace to another part of the town. This hotelier also told him that their cellar was allegedly part of one of these passages. The idea of these underground corridors had enormous impact on Hansruedi's imagination. Again, the exit leading from their cellar to the hotel had always been closed, but in his dreams it opened into a monstrous, dangerous labyrinth with a musty spiral stone staircase. He felt great ambivalence toward this image—both attraction and fear.

The motif of a journey into a dangerous labyrinth is one of the standard themes in the sessions of people reliving their birth in a therapeutic context or during a spontaneous psychospiritual journey. It is also an important part of the initiatory visions of novice shamans, of the hero's journey as described by Joseph Campbell, and of mythological stories of gods and demigods involving death and rebirth, as exemplified by the underworld adventures of the Assyrian king Gilgamesh, the Sumerian goddess Inanna, the Thracian bard Orpheus, the Aztec Plumed Serpent Quetzalcoatl, and the Mayan Hero Twins Xbalanque and Hunahpu. The association between the above places from Hanruedi's childhood and his memory of birth would explain how he responded to them in his childhood and why they figured so strongly in his nightmares and subsequently in his art.

Another example is Giger's extreme reaction to anything related to torture, mutilation, dismemberment, and impalement. These again are themes that appear regularly in psychedelic and holotropic sessions of people reliving the trauma of birth. In these sessions, the physical and emotional suffering associated with the reliving of biological birth *per se* is further augmented by the fact that perinatal experiences often come interspersed

with images of extreme suffering and torture from the historical domain of the collective unconscious. When Giger attended the Zürich School of Applied Art, a fellow student showed him a 1904 photograph, depicting the tortures inflicted on the murderer of the Emperor of China. The assassin was impaled on a stake and his limbs were cut off one after the other. Having seen this photograph, Hansruedi was not able to sleep for a number of weeks. The images from the Nazi concentration camps had a similar impact on his imagination and sleep.

The most powerful aspect of the photograph depicting the Chinese torture was for Hansruedi the image of severed limbs. He encountered amputated limbs also during his visits to the Civic Museum in Chur, where the Egyptian exhibition featured parts of dismembered mummies. At the age of six and seven, Hansruedi spent there many Sunday mornings, all alone. It was a subterranean, musty hall with huge vaults, poorly illuminated only by light that came through shafts from above. Apart from the fascination, it was for him a "test of courage," since the place terrified him so much. He felt compelled to go there again and again. The motif of severed limbs also played an important role in Hansruedi's strong emotional reaction to the scene from Jean Cocteau's 1946 film *The Beauty and the Beast (La belle et la bête)* with Jean Marais and Josette Day, where candelabras of a large hall are held by arms protruding from the walls.

The motif of arms and legs separated from the body imprinted itself deeply into Hansruedi's mind and figured prominently in his paintings and sculptures. Saliant examples are the painting *Preserving Life* featuring arms crucified on a peace sign[150], the sculpture *Beggar*[151], and the astrological signs on one of his masterpieces, the *Zodiac Fountain*[127,128]. Beings created by connecting arms with contralateral legs represent the central theme in *The Mystery of San Gottardo*, Giger's concept for a movie that currently exists only in the form of a book and accompanying sketches (Giger 1998). It is interesting to mention in this context that the theme of dismemberment is an archetypal motif, which plays an important role in the psychospiritual death and rebirth experiences of novice shamans.

Giger also responded strongly to another prominent aspect of the Chinese photograph, the motif of impalement. He encountered it in the story of the Transylvanian prince Vlad Tepes (literally Vlad the Impaler), whose preferred way of executing his enemies was to impale them on stakes[148]. He was known to have his breakfast amidst the heads of his enemies displayed on poles. Vlad was initiated by Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor, into the prestigious Order of the Dragon and took on the nickname Dracula (son of the Dragon). Under this name, he became the model of Bram Stoker's famous horror story of the same name and for countless vampire books and movies.

Giger even responded strongly to a local fairy-tale about a scarecrow impaled on a stick and asked his mother to read it to him again and again. When he later thought about this episode in his life, the scarecrow became for him a powerful symbol of the meaninglessness of life. Echoing the advice Silenus gave to King Midas in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1961), Giger wrote: *"I think this stake-bound life, for whom redemption meant death as soon as possible, showed me the senselessness of existence, an existence better never begun."* As I mentioned earlier, preoccupation with meaninglessness of life, existentialist philosophy and literature, and the Theater of the Absurd is very characteristic for individuals who are under the influence of the second perinatal matrix (BPM II). Giger's interest in Samuel Beckett and particularly his *Waiting for Godot* belongs to this category[123,132].

The motif of torture also played an important role in Giger's interest in

the story of Madame Tussaud and her wax museum, particularly the *Chamber of Horrors* and the *Chamber of Torture*. He was intrigued by the fact that she used as models the heads of criminals executed by guillotine on Place des Grèves during the French Revolution. Giger even attempted to build a guillotine himself and employ it to behead plastic figures. In his mind, the image of the guillotine was connected to his memory of the "Try Your Strength Machine," which he experienced as a child at the confederate riflemen festival held shortly after the end of World War II in Chur. One year, many people attending this event experienced food poisoning by sausages made by butcher Lukas. At next year's celebration of the same group, the machine was adapted in such a way that it featured a fork piercing the effigy of a sausage made by Lukas. In Giger's drawing, entitled *Hau den Lukas (Strike Lukas)*, the strength-testing machine became a castrating guillotine, a perfect representation of Freud's *vagina dentata*[134]. Giger's nightmares and psychedelic sessions with the motif of castration and his interest in guillotines also inspired castrating devices and condoms in Giger's sketches for the movie *The Condom of Horror (Kondom des Grauens)*[135].

Giger repeatedly wrote about his childhood obsessions, to which his parents referred as "*Fimmel*"; it is a term for which the closest translation would probably be "craze." One of these was obsession with trains and ghost rides. Hansruedi encountered his first ghost ride when he was six years old as one of the attractions at Chilbi, the annual fair held on the main square in Chur. He mentions that one of the reasons for his interest in this attraction was that he liked to observe the naughty behavior of the operators, who often feigned a blown fuse and used the ensuing darkness to grope and kiss terrified women. He liked the ghost ride so much that he got depressed when the show left after three weeks.

Later, at the age of twelve, Hansruedi created his own ghost ride, for which he charged the neighborhood kids five Rappen. It was a dark corridor full of skeletons, monsters, and corpses made of cardboard and plaster. The ghosts, villains, hanged men, and the dead rising from their coffins were manipulated by Hansruedi's friends. He liked to watch his masked assistants take advantage of the girls and experienced vicarious pleasure, but he was too shy to participate in these naughty activities himself.

The work with holotropic states of consciousness has shown a deep psychodynamic connection between trains and the memory of birth. Individuals suffering from phobia of trains typically discover in their self-exploration that in their unconscious the experience of being carried by a powerful mechanical force on a trajectory that includes passing through tunnels, without having any control over this movement, is closely linked to a memory of biological birth, which involved similar elements. The importance of loss of control as a factor in this fear can be illustrated by a related phobia involving cars. The same people who have problems being driven by a car feel quite comfortable when they sit behind the wheel and are in charge of the car. Fascination with trains thus might be a counterphobic reaction to the trauma of birth. This is even more plausible in the case of a ghost ride, where the shocking emotional impact is deliberately amplified by terrifying props.

Hansruedi's fascination with rides was lifelong. He constructed in his house in Oerlikon a small railroad that winds its course through the garden and the corner of one of the ground-floor rooms and allows the passengers on a little train to admire a rich array of his sculptures, many of which feature perinatal themes[152–154], and the remarkable *Zodiac Fountain*[127,128]. He even seriously considered building a similar ride in his museum in Château St. Germain in Gruyères, but had to abandon his plan because of technical difficulties and the costs involved.

Another of Hansruedi's childhood obsessions was his passion for collect-

ing suspenders. He preferred those which had severely damaged silk-bound rubber loops and traded them for new ones with his schoolmates. According to Hansruedi, one of his fantasies underlying this obsession was the image of the rubber breaking and the pants falling down. He also felt that his fascination by the damaged rubber loops was connected to his loathing for worms and snakes. These creatures are among the elements that repeatedly appear in Giger's paintings[139,141,143,155,156]. According to his own admission, to find a worm in excrement is the most terrifying thing he could imagine and even mechanical objects resembling worms or snakes, such as hoses and tubes, made him feel uncomfortable.

This aversion seems to be the central theme of an important COEX system comprising memories from different periods of Hansruedi's life. One of its layers is a traumatic memory from his visit to the island Mauritius. In the morning after an evening swim in the Indian Ocean, he discovered that what in the darkness he had considered to be kelp were actually giant ugly sea worms about five feet long. An older layer of the same COEX system is a childhood memory of a visit he and his mother made to his grandmother's tomb. As they were turning over the earth, a thick worm crawled out and Hansruedi thought: *"My God, that's part of my grandmother!"* He dropped the spade and ran out of the graveyard in horror.

It is conceivable that the perinatal root of this COEX system is the memory of cutting of the umbilical cord or an even older one from prenatal life. Both worms and snakes also represent important perinatal symbols. Images of worms appear often in the scatological phase of BPM III in connection with images of decomposition and putrefaction of corpses. Boa constrictor snakes, because of their ability to twist their body around their victims and crush them, symbolize the crushing uterine contractions during birth[72]. Constrictor snakes are also symbols of pregnancy, because of the bulging of their bodies after they swallow their prey whole. Vipers are symbols of imminent death[70,71], but also initiation and psychospiritual death and rebirth. Both vipers and constrictor snakes feature prominently in Giger's art.

The connection between worms, scatological material (slime, vomit, offal), and birth is evident in the full version of the frightening experience to the beginning of which I alluded earlier (p. 122):

> *I was lying on my bed watching Li dancing in a yellow dress, which sprayed sparks of yellow light across the room. The space was interwoven with red geometric shapes and the pictures on the wall were coming away in layers. The walls pulsated in step with my heartbeat. The first sign of anxiety came when I suddenly had to piss and went to the lavatory. The edge of the bowl grew slowly toward my penis like a wide-open vagina as if to castrate me. At first, the idea amused me. But suddenly the whole room began to grow narrower and narrower, the walls and pipes took on the aspect of loose skin with festering wounds, and small, repellent creatures glared out at me from the dark corners and cracks.*
>
> *I turned and hurried toward the exit, but the door was infinitely far away and very narrow and tall. The walls hemmed me like two paunchy lumps of flesh. I leapt for the door, drew the bolt, and rushed into the corridor, gasping for breath. Rid of the specter, I went to Li's room and lay down. Little Boris (son of Li's friend Evelyne) was also in the room and wanted to play with me. He began to trample on the bed beside me, kicking me. I was as helpless as a small child and could not defend myself. Li finally rescued me from my diminutive tor-*

mentor, who had by now turned into a little violet-green devil with an offensively mean and aggressive expression. Li took Boris to his mother, who was hanging around in the kitchen.

But the couple of kicks in the stomach had been enough. I felt sick. The air in the room was stifling. My only thought was to throw open the window and escape to the garden, for the room was at ground level. But at the last minute, I noticed a woman looking at me strangely. The vomit already in my mouth, I turned round, rushed into the corridor and suddenly stopped dead—I was afraid to go into the narrow lavatory again. In the kitchen, I noticed Evelyne with her son, both staring at me. The only sanctuary was the small bathroom and the rusty blue bathtub with its flaking enamel. So I grabbed Li by the hand and dragged her into the bathroom, where I vomited into the bathtub. The vomit spewed endlessly from my mouth in the form of a thick, gray, leathery worm turning into a kind of primeval slime, and once into the living intestines of a slaughtered pig.

During this whole performance, I had held Li firmly by the left wrist. She had been struggling to free the clogged waste pipe by poking at it with a ballpoint pen. Finally, she could no longer stand the repulsive garlic-impregnated smell and we both vomited together into the bathtub, hand in hand, while the gas water heater glared at us malevolently…" (Toward the end of the dream) "…the fear of losing control of my senses made me more and more confused in my actions. Suddenly I felt I could not stand the torment any more! I had to kill myself. Now the loaded revolver became highly dangerous. I asked Li to empty it and throw the ammunition away. But as she did not know how, I had to take hold of the revolver to do it myself and, in doing so, suddenly became aware of the ridiculousness of my fear. My horror vanished and—thanks God—I awoke.

Another of Hansruedi's obsessions was his strong passion for weapons. His uncle Otto taught him the art of lead casting and working in wood and metal, necessary for making home-made weapons. Hansruedi returned from his holidays laden with bows and arrows, lead axes, handcuffs, flintlocks, knuckledusters, knives, and daggers. Uncle Otto also taught him how to fish and hunt fowl and animals. One day in Chur, Hansruedi got to know Goli Schmidt, an extravagant antique dealer, and began to spend most of his free time with him. Goli lived in a hut cluttered with objects almost to the ceiling. He believed in ghosts, could touch a wire carrying 220 volts without blinking his eye, and sprinkled petrol in his coffee as tonic. He taught Hansruedi how to handle weapons and provided many weapons for Hansruedi's collection.

The first lecture Hansruedi gave at the gymnasium was on the history of the revolver. Some of his experiences with weapons went beyond just a hobby. On afternoons when there was no school, he took his collection of weapons and his friends to a piece of terrain reserved for military maneuvers. There they shot with barrel and breechloaders at the targets set up for the military and blew up abandoned cars with trotyl (trinitrotoluene). During these plays, he was twice nearly shot dead. According to Hansruedi, so far four people in his life shot at him and he shot at one person; in two cases, the cartridges were duds, and three bullets missed him "by a hair's breadth." He was also nearly killed by a stranger in his bedroom. Hansruedi's practical

interest in firearms disappeared completely when he was drafted and experienced firsthand the hardships of military life and abuse from the officers. His interest in weapons as esthetic objects survived this ordeal.

An interesting example of how deeply Hansruedi's perception of everyday life was influenced by his easy access to the perinatal level of his unconscious was his reaction to a scene of garbage collection. In 1971, on the way to London, he saw in Cologne a German refuse truck in front of the Floh de Cologne house. He was fascinated by it and it became the subject of a series of his paintings, in which it appears in numerous variations. For Hansruedi, the refuse truck has multiple meanings, all of which have important perinatal connotations. Besides the obvious connection to impermanence, decay, scatology, and death, it represents for him also a Freud's *vagina dentata*, a female organ that can castrate, as well as the dangerous engulfing and devouring reproductive system of the delivering woman. Giger made this connection quite explicit in some of his paintings, in which the transformed the opening into the rear of the truck into a vulva[136]. By its resemblance to the ovens of the crematoria of the Nazi concentration camps, the back of the refuse truck also became for Hansruedi the symbol of sacrificial murder.

Many of Giger's paintings depict tight headbands, steel-rings held together by screws, heads in vices, and bodies fettered with cords and straps[103,113,114]. On a deeper level, these are clearly echoes of the memory of birth, which involves hours of life-threatening confinement. This connection is particularly obvious in pictures featuring constrained fetuses. However, Giger also remembered childhood situations that seemed to have helped to keep the perinatal memory alive. When he was three years old, he and his mother participated in a carnival procession. His mother dressed him for this occasion as an elevator boy; he had to wear long trousers and a dark red satin jacket with silver stripes. The costume included a velvet-covered pillbox held by a tight elastic band, which cut into his chin. He felt ashamed to appear before the other children in this outfit, rather than wearing a costume of one of his childhood heroes, but he had to put on a pleasant face.

When Hansruedi was about four years old, emotionally more important layers were added to the COEX system, the core element of which was confinement. His mother made him an overall, which was fastened by a row of little buttons running from his neck down his back and between his legs. Whenever he tried to have a bowel movement, he also needed to pee. Since the buttons made it impossible to do both at the same time, he would inevitably pee in his pants. He was unable to convince his mother to change the arrangement of the buttons and solved this problem by waiting until bedtime when he could get out of this straitjacket and relieve himself.

A psychiatrist or psychologist trying to analyze Hansruedi's art using the traditional Freudian approach limited to postnatal biography and the individual unconscious would assume that he came from a highly dysfunctional family and would expect to find major psychotraumatic influences in his infancy and childhood. However, unless Hansruedi's traumatic memories were subjected to complete repression or his account was not accurate for some other reasons, the family in which he grew up was relatively normal. We do not find anything that would come close to the childhood of one of Hansruedi's heroes, Edgar Allan Poe, whose erratic, intractable, and alcoholic father left the family when Edgar was eighteen months old, and the death of his frail mother suffering from tuberculosis left the little boy in the care of an unloving foster father before he reached the age of three years. There is nothing in Hansruedi's childhood history comparable to that of Toulouse Lautrec, whose legs, fractured in a riding accident, did not heal and grow because of a genetic defect and left him crippled for the rest of his life, or to Frida Kahlo, who suffered serious injuries during a bus crash

and used her art as an escape from intolerable pain and confinement to bed.

Hansruedi described his childhood as "beautiful;" he appreciated that his parents let him play, but he disliked the domestic helpers who tried to discipline him. He referred to his mother Melly as being a wonderful, kind, and supportive mother and an object of envy of his friends; he felt that he was her "beloved." It would be difficult to see her as a model for Giger's women, most of whom radiate dangerous sexuality or seem to be demonic and sadistic dominatrices. It seems that this motif came from levels of the psyche, which lie beyond postnatal biography—from the perinatal and the transpersonal domains of the unconscious. The same seems to be true for the problems Hansruedi has had since childhood in relating to women.

According to his account, his father Hans-Richard Giger was very introverted and upright. He helped everybody who got into trouble and commanded respect as a doctor, pharmacist, and President of the Pharmacists' Association and of the Alpine Rescue Service. Hansruedi described him as strict and authoritarian. Their relationship clearly was not very close and intimate; Hansruedi complained that his father was difficult to read and that he hardly knew him. But again, we do not get the image of a towering brutal and tempestuous emotionally abusive bully as Franz Kafka portrayed his father in his famous letter he addressed to him. The overwhelming physical and psychological presence of such a man in Kafka's childhood might be seen as the reason why the characters in his novels are so often impotent and insecure victims coming up against overbearing power.

Hansruedi's father never hit him, except once during a major confrontation, when his anger appeared to be justified. At that time, Hansruedi stole from a street construction power cables made of copper and lead and covered with bitumen. When he was burning the cables in the cellar of his parents' house in order to get lead for making bullets, the smoke polluted and almost destroyed his father's pharmacy, covering everything with black, sticky, oily film. The cleaning was very tedious, took long, and was very expensive.

Hansruedi's father did not seem to have great ambitions for his son. Following the common practice of his time, he expected him to take over his pharmacy. He certainly did not have much interest in Hansruedi's artistic talent and did not show great understanding and support for it. He shared the opinion held by the citizens of Chur, where "*the word artist was a term of abuse, combining drunkard, whore-monger, and simpleton in one.*" He tried very hard to steer Hansruedi to a respectable profession—if not a pharmacist, then at least an architect or a draftsman. Responding to his father's opinion that art was "unprofitable," Hansruedi went to Zürich, to study architecture and design at the College of Arts and Crafts, and graduated three years later. Before his interest in painting surfaced fully and took over his life, he also worked with designer Andreas Christen at Knoll International.

From the very beginning, Hansruedi showed very little interest in formal school education. Reading about his educational environment, it is hard to tell whether he was disinterested, unteachable by conventional educational methods, or victim of incompetent teachers and poor school system. His Marienheim Catholic kindergarten at Chur was run by an elderly nun, who kept in her desk as an educational tool a series of pictures of Jesus, which showed him in various degrees of suffering, ranging from a few drops on the thorn-crowned head to his face fully covered with blood. Depending on how disobedient the children were, she showed them the appropriate picture, suggesting that the amount of his suffering reflected how bad they were. This experience seems to have contributed to the fact that Jesus and the motif of crucifixion often appear in Giger's paintings and sculpture, the salient examples being *Untitled*[157], *Jesus candelabrum*[158], *Jesus table*[159], *Satan*

I and *II*[141,142], *The Crucified Serpent*[156], and *The Spell I*[160]. On a deeper level, Jesus is a powerful perinatal symbol associated with the process of psychospiritual death and rebirth.

In elementary school, pupils of different ages shared the same classroom and Hansruedi was the only boy in a class of seven. The girls wanted to play kissing games, but he found them embarrassing. He preferred to play horses and enjoyed putting harnesses on girls and whipping them. He remembered often masturbating at school during the classes. School toilettes signified for him places of forbidden sex. Among his favorite fantasies was the theme of "damsel in distress," in which he played the role of the heroic rescuer. Many of these fantasies about liberation from the claws of a vicious enemy revolved around a girl who lived in Villa Saflisch. This villa reminded Hansruedi of his favorite film, Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*.

From the data we have available about Giger's childhood, it seems that the problems he was struggling with reflected more his inner life than objectively difficult external circumstances. We have to think here of the Jungian psychologist James Hillman, who in his interesting book *The Soul's Code: On Character and Calling* argues that character and calling are the result of "the particularity you feel to be you" and criticizes the tendency prevailing in contemporary psychology and psychiatry to blame childhood difficulties for all the problems in life. Hillman gives numerous examples of prominent individuals, who seemed to intuit from early childhood the role they were destined to play and pursue it with unswerving determination (Hillman 1996). Although Hillman does not speculate any further about the forces that might be involved in this scenario, modern consciousness research revealed deeper influences shaping our life, which include perinatal, prenatal, karmic, archetypal, and even astrological determinants.

It becomes clear that Giger's art comes from the depth of the collective unconscious, if we consider his enormous creativity and the way in which he creates. He shared with me during our personal discussions that he frequently does not have an *a priori* concept of what will be the final outcome. For example, when he was creating some of his giant paintings, he did not have any idea what they would look like and worked without any preliminary sketches. He started in the upper left corner and aimed the airbrush toward the canvas. The creative force was pouring through him and he became its instrument. And yet, the end result was a perfect composition, often showing remarkable bilateral symmetry.

Listening to Hansruedi describing his work, I had to think about Jung's discussion of the work of genius and particularly the example of Nietzsche that Jung gave in that context. Nietzsche said about his state of consciousness when he created:

> *"Has any one at the end of the nineteenth century any distinct notion of what poets of a stronger age understood by the word "inspiration"? If not, I will describe it. If one had the smallest vestige of superstition left in one, it would hardly be possible to set aside the idea that one is mere incarnation, mouthpiece, or medium of an almighty power. The idea of revelation, in the sense that something which profoundly convulses and shatters one becomes suddenly visible and audible with indescribable certainty and accuracy, describes the simple fact. One hears—one does not seek; one takes—one does not ask who gives; a thought suddenly flashes up like lightning, it comes with necessity, without faltering—I never had any choice in the matter (Nietzsche 1992)."*

As the ultimate master of the nightmarish aspect of the perinatal uncon-

scious, which is the source of individual and social psychopathology and of much of the suffering in the modern world, Giger has no match in the history of art. However, the perinatal dynamics also has its light side and harbors great potential for healing and transcendence, for psychospiritual death and rebirth. In the history of religion, a profound encounter with the Shadow in the form of the Dark Night of the Soul or Temptation has often been a prerequisite for spiritual opening.

The arduous ordeals of Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, and Saint Anthony, as well as similar elements in the story of The Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, and Padmasambhava, testify to that effect. Thus religious scholar Christopher Bache was able to find many difficult perinatal experiences in the mystical states of Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross (Bache 1985, 1991). They also feature prominently in the spiritual autobiography of the late head of the Siddha Yoga lineage Swami Muktananda Paramahamsa entitled *The Play of Consciousness* (Swami Muktananda 2004).

It has been repeatedly noted that for many great artists finding creative expression for the stormy dynamics of their unconscious represented a safeguard for their sanity or even an effective method of self-healing. The great Spanish painter Francisco Goya, who was haunted by terrifying visions, felt that painting them gave him a sense of control and mastery over them. I have already mentioned earlier that Marie Bonaparte, Greek princess and an ardent student of Sigmund Freud, wrote in her three-volume work, entitled *The Life and Work of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psychoanalytical Study*, that the unconscious of this tortured genius was extremely active and full of horrors and torments. She suggested that had he not had his extraordinary literary talent, he would probably have spent his life in a mental institution or in a prison (Bonaparte 1934). As we saw earlier, Jean Paul Sartre used for a period of about fourteen years his writing to overcome adverse after effects of a poorly managed self-experiment with mescaline that had left him connected with a difficult domain of his perinatal unconscious (Riedlinger 1982).

Giger's determined quest for creative self-expression was inseparable from his relentless self-exploration and self-healing. In analytic psychology of C. G. Jung, integration of the Shadow and the Anima, two quintessential motifs in Giger's art, are seen as critical steps in therapy and in what Jung calls the individuation process. And Giger himself experienced his art as healing and as an important means of maintaining his sanity. It has been suggested that his art can have a healing impact also on those who are open to it. Like a Greek tragedy, it can provide powerful emotional catharsis for the viewers by exposing and revealing dark secrets of the human psyche.

Giger said about the function that art played in his life: "Since I have taken the path of art, it is like a kind of LSD trip with no return. I feel like a tight-rope walker; I see no difference between work and free time. Suddenly, I became aware that art is a vital activity that keeps me from falling into madness." Like Goya, who struggled to harness his terrifying visions by portraying them, Giger tried to overcome in his paintings his scary claustrophobic nightmares and experiences in psychedelic sessions. He described this process while talking about a series of dreams that had provided the inspiration for a collection of his paintings called *Passages* (Giger 1974):

> *"Most of the time in those dreams I was in a large white room with no windows or doors. The only exit was a dark metal opening which, to make things worse, was partially obstructed by a giant safety pin. I usually got stuck when passing through this opening. The exit at the end of a long chimney,*

which could be seen only as a small point of light, was to my misfortune blocked by an invisible power. Then I found myself stuck as I tried to pass through this pipe, my arms pressed against my body, unable to move forward or backward. At that point, I started to lose my breath and the only way out was to wake up. I have since painted some of these dream images in the Passages *series and, as a result, have been freed from recurring memories of this particular birth trauma. But the* Passages, *which for me became the symbol of becoming and ceasing to exist, with all the degrees of pleasure and suffering, have not let me go until this very day."*

However, Giger's personal quest did not end here. It seems that he intuited not only the healing, but also the spiritual potential of a deep experiential immersion in the world of dark perinatal images. As I have already mentioned earlier, he was intrigued by the motif of crucifixion and used it often in his paintings. The prime example is his painting *Untitled*, clearly portraying an experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth[157]. Jesus also appears in Giger's sculptures, such as in the candelabrum and the table support, each made of identical figures of crucified Jesus[158,159]. The painting entitled *Spell I* features the motif of crucifixion[160]. As we saw earlier, visions of Jesus appear often in psychedelic and Holotropic Breathwork sessions of people experiencing BPM III[80,81]. Giger's image of the staircase to Harkonnen Castle for Alejandro Jodorowsky's film *Dune*, lined with dangerous phallic death symbols, appears to lead to heaven[162], and Giger's *Magus*[163] and *Death*[164] have definite spiritual overtones.

It is also important to mention in this context the extraordinary series of paintings created in the early 1980s that Giger called *Victory*[165]. They depict demonic female figures painted in fluorescent red color. The combination of biomechanoid elements with fierce sexuality and death symbolism gives them awesome archetypal power. The radiant fiery quality of these paintings is suggestive of the pyrocathartic aspect of the psychospiritual death/rebirth process (transition from BPM III to BPM IV). The comment that Giger made about these paintings reveals that he was himself aware of the perinatal origin of these visions. He said of his *Red Women* paintings: "This must be the kind of perspective a newborn has when looking back after being forced out of his mother's body." We can also speculate that the title *Victory* alludes to the experience of the neonate, who is still very much in touch with the memory of the demonic power of the delivering mother, yet feels the triumph of having escaped from the clutches of the birth canal and the exhilarating sense of liberation.

The paintings mentioned above suggest that, at times, Giger's exploration of the deep unconscious approaches the realm of psychospiritual death and rebirth (BPM IV). However, the most dramatic illustration of Giger's awareness of the transformational potential of the perinatal process is the *Passage Temple*, one of his masterpieces created between October 1974 and May 1975. The paintings decorating the temple show all the essential aspects of perinatal dynamics. In Giger's original conception, the entrance into the temple consisted of a sarcophagus-like opening padded with two down-filled leather bags. Every visitor thus had to painfully force his or her way into the interior with outstretched hands, thus reenacting the sensations of birth.

The temple's interior consisted of four paintings, fading into a diminishing perspective at the edge. The entrance, which was also the exit, showed a cast iron wagon, also in the form of a sarcophagus, moving on rails through primeval slime, containing a strange amalgam of organic and technological

material, one of the signatures of Giger's art. According to Giger, it represented impermanence, the passage of all becoming and dissolution[166]. Giger's preoccupation with the unrelenting nature of time resulting in aging and decay seemed to be also the deep underlying motive for his fascination with Swatches, which found its expression in his collection entitled *Watch Abart (Deviant Art of Watches)* (Giger 1993b).

The painting on the right side of the temple, entitled *Death*, featured prominently the symbolism of the second perinatal matrix (BPM ll). It depicted a mechanism on the back of a refuse truck, "the perfect gate of hell, through which passes everything that has outlived its usefulness[167]." It had for Giger a very powerful symbolic meaning and was clearly overdetermined. As we can infer from his other paintings, the opening in the garbage truck also represented female genitalia, the dangerous *vagina dentata*[136]. In addition, Giger mentioned himself a powerful association he had between the opening of the garbage truck and the ovens in the crematoria of the Nazi concentration camps. This archetypal garbage truck was flanked with bizarre figures of corpse-robbers rising from a sea of bones.

The painting on the left side, entitled *Life*, had all the essential characteristics of the third perinatal matrix (BPM III), bringing together elements of birth, death, sex, and aggression[168]. Giger depicted these fundamental aspects of nature in a symbolically stylized way revealing the brutality of the life process. The central focus of the painting was a giant phallic object penetrating a massive metal pelvis and appearing in a mandorla lined by an oversized zip fastener. This phallus was composed of pairs of sickly children with raised fists, placed above each other, who were shown in various stages of birth and death.

The last painting, facing the entrance, could be seen as portraying the transition between BPM III and BPM IV—emergence from the world of mechanical tensions and pressures, suffering, death, and deviant sexuality into the transcendental realm[169]. Giger depicted here a throne bathed in diffuse light, standing at the top of seven steps decorated by symbols of death. The throne was flanked by biomechanoid virgins, two of whom were supported by hydraulic mechanical contraptions. Giger confirmed the spiritual connotation of this painting by describing it as "the way of the magician that has to be taken to attain man's most desirable goal and become on a level with god."

Ernst Fuchs, Giger's friend and kindred visionary genius, seems to have intuited the spiritual potential in Giger's art when he wrote: "(When we experience Giger's art) …despair and craving for manifestation of new heaven and new earth have begun to fight for our soul. Yes, even the hope that we will once again see the celestial blue of the sky becomes a complementary wishful image, as if in this negative had to be hidden a positive. I have long suspected the existence of this element and believe that I have discovered traces of it in Giger's art."

Timothy Leary, Harvard psychology professor turned psychedelic guru, whose knowledge of the deep recesses of the human psyche attained in many hundreds of his LSD experiences gave him a unique perspective on Giger's art, seemed to share Ernst Fuchs's opinion. He wrote in his preface to Giger's book *New York City*: "In Giger's paintings, we see ourselves as crawling embryos, as fetal, larval creatures protected by the membranes of our egos, waiting for the moment of our metamorphosis and new birth…. Here is the evolutionary genius of Giger: Although he takes us far back, into our swampy vegetative, insectoid past, he always propels us forward into space" (Giger 1981).

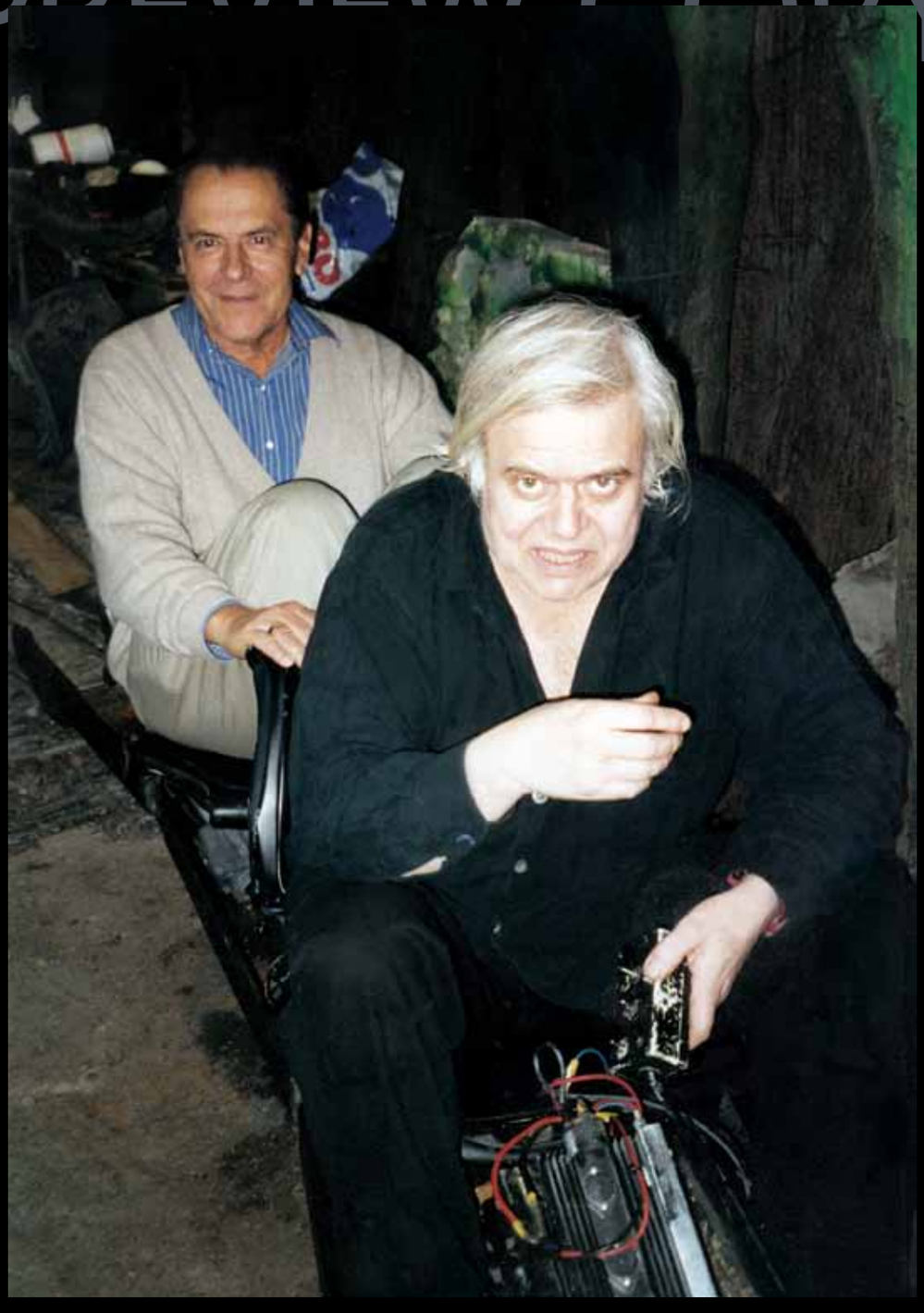
And Horst Albert Glaser wrote about this aspect of Giger's work: "What can be said about the fact that, as a boy, the artist had already decorated his

bedroom like an Egyptian crypt? Perhaps it expressed the longing for a state of Nirvana by a pubescent boy who had, haplessly, turned within. Consequently, he often assumed a Buddhist meditative pose and even had himself photographed in that position in the *Black Room* as a young artist."

How close Giger's art came to the resolution of the perinatal process can best be illustrated on a series of his paintings entitled *Pump Excursion*[170]. At first sight, these paintings seem to feature a musician absorbed in deep meditation. However, closer inspection reveals that we are witnessing an act of self-destruction. What appears to be a musical instrument is actually a deadly weapon inserted in the protagonist's mouth. A beautifully configured lower part of a nude female body then suggests sex and birth. This scene is illumined from above by light that has clearly a numinous quality. These paintings thus bring together the motifs of aggression, self-destruction, sex, birth, and divine light—essential elements of a psychospiritual death-rebirth experience.

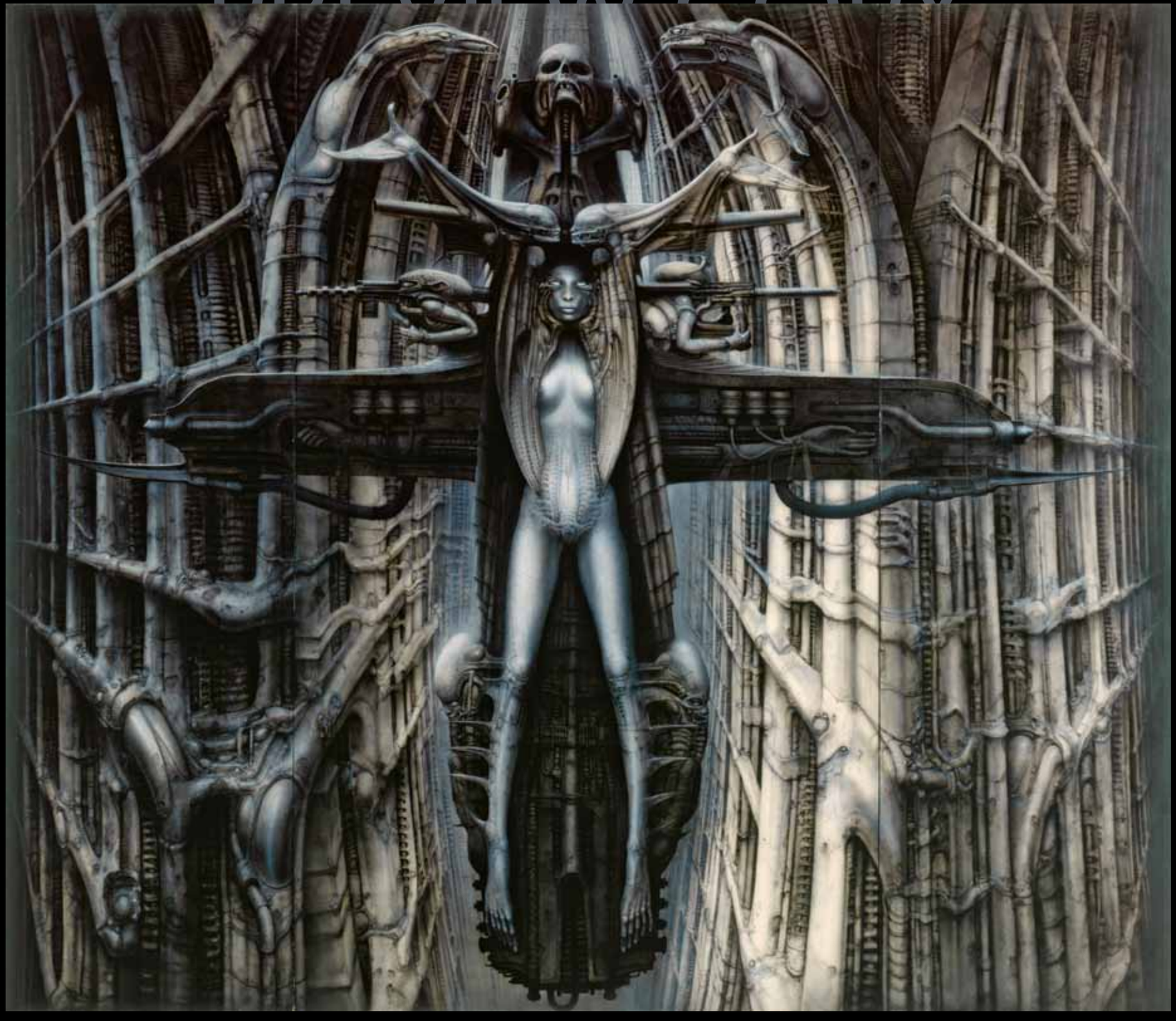
In general, however, the transcendental potential of the perinatal process received little of Giger's attention. It would be interesting to speculate about the possible reasons for it. The great American mythologist Joseph Campbell once commented that the images of hell in world mythology are by far more intriguing and interesting than those of heaven because, unlike happiness and bliss, suffering can take so many different forms. Maybe Giger felt that the transcendental dimension had been more than adequately represented in western art, while the deep abyss of the dark side had been avoided. It is also possible that Giger's own healing process had not yet proceeded far enough to embrace the transcendental dimension with the same compelling force with which it engaged the Shadow.

I personally hope that the last alternative is closest to truth. I would have loved to see Giger's genius use his incredible imagination and masterful free-hand airbrush technique to portray the transcendental beauty of the imaginal world with the same mastery with which he captured its "terrible beauty." I have heard this comment from many others from the circle of his admirers. But Giger always pursued his own inner truth and disliked taking orders from his customers. It is unlikely that the wishes of his fans, however sincere and passionate, would have been more successful in this regard. He followed the inner logic of his Promethean quest, wherever it took him, as he always did, and those of us who admire his art will continue enjoying the extraordinary products of this process as they keep emerging into the world. ◈

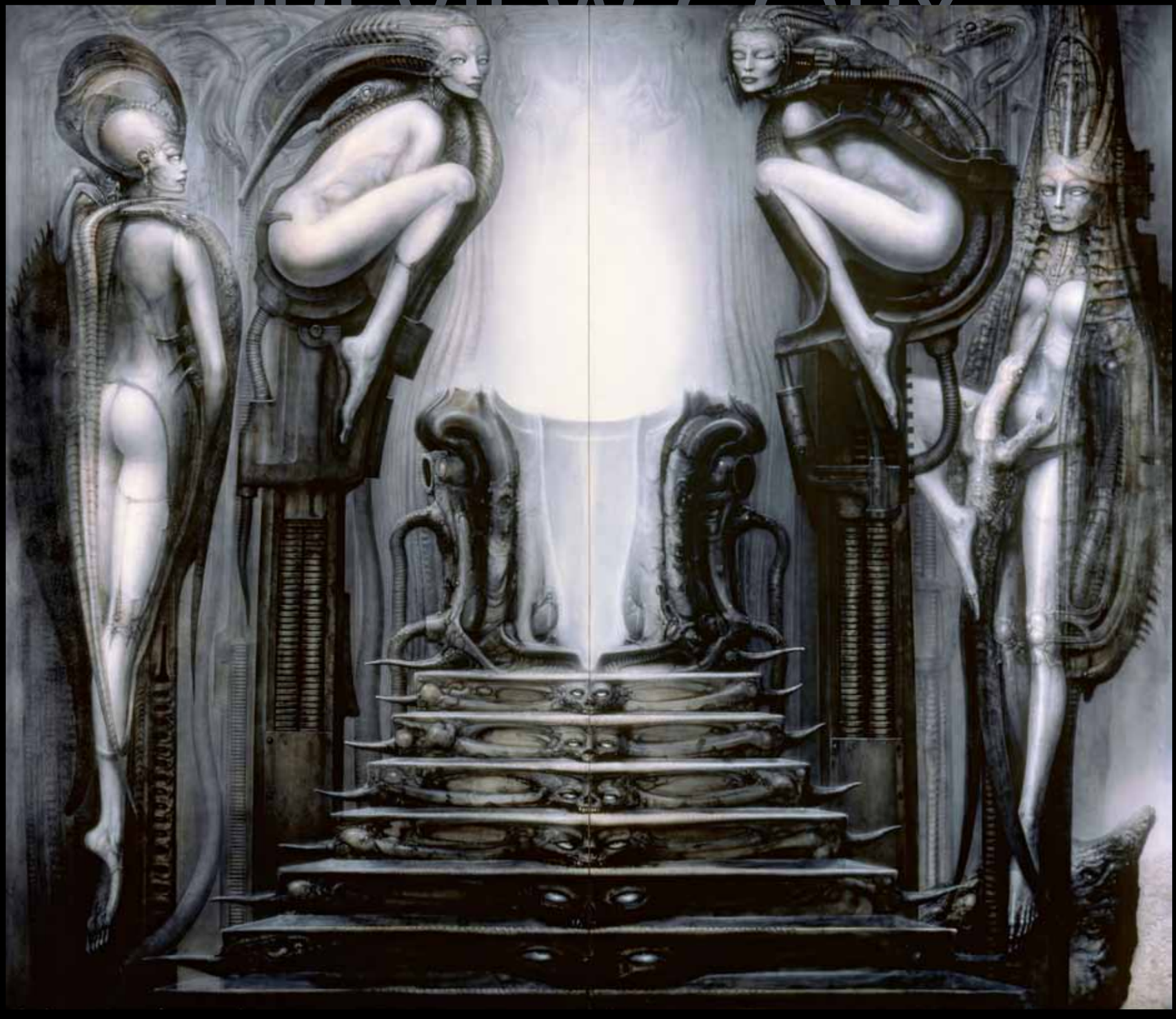


152. Hansruedi Giger taking Stanislav Grof for a ghost ride that he built in the garden of his house in Oerlikon. The little railroad takes the visitors through a perinatal world, featuring tapestries of suffering fetuses, tunnels, demonic women, and a life-size crocodile.

159. Table support constructed from six figures of crucified Jesus, 1992.



160. *The Spell I,* 1973–4.
240 cm x 280 cm. Acrylic and Indian ink on paper on wood.



169. *Work #264, Passage Temple: Way of the Magician,* 1975.
240 cm x 280 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.

170. *Work #621, Pump Excursion IV,* 1989.
100 cm x 70 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.

Epilogue

When I wrote the first draft for Stan's book, the circumstances were very different. My beloved husband, Hansruedi, was still alive, and so was Stan's wonderful wife Christina. Last year, they both died a sudden death only a few weeks from each other, leaving us sad and desperate. Less than two weeks before Christina died, the first copies of her last book, *The Eggshell Landing*, a moving history of her emotional and sexual abuse and spiritual reconciliation with the perpetrator at the time of his death, had just arrived at the doorsteps of their home. And only shortly before Hansruedi died, the German/English version of Stan's essay on his life and work included in this book arrived at our house.

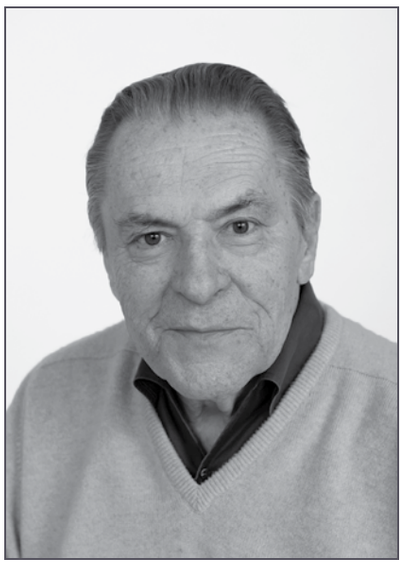
The publishing of *H. R. Giger and the Zeitgeist of the Twentieth Century* had taken several years, and we were so happy that Hansruedi could see the book before leaving us. I might add that Hansruedi liked it so much that he was eager to learn more about himself. He was so fascinated by Stan's research in psychedelics and by his being a psychiatrist—which impressed him very much—that he asked him to expand on the existing manuscript, especially concerning his very person. I know that Hansruedi also saw a kindred soul in Stan, which is fully understandable if we look at their work and passions. Though appearing in different fields, the quality of their expression is very similar. Both dedicated their lives to the mysteries of existence, the soul, and the unconscious.

The triad of birth, sex, and death is one of the most crucial themes for both of them. Their dedication to these three aspects of life let them explore completely new dimensions. Stan's research at the frontiers of human consciousness matches Hansruedi's fascination for the deepest unconscious—to go as far as possible, and to paint the almost impossible. I do not know how many of us know that Stan, before he embarked on his current path, was himself a good painter and that he wanted to start a professional career as an animator of children's movies. I am grateful that a close friend of his showed him one day Freud's *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*. Stan found it so amazing that he started his studies in psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Hansruedi, on the other hand, drew a whole series of pictures which he called *A Feast for the Psychiatrist*. It was inspired by the book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, written also by Freud.

There are so many other parallels between Hansruedi and Stan that could be mentioned here, such as adoration of the feminine, a deep interest in the dark side of life, great love of sensuality, appreciation of culinary pleasures, good sense of humor, and a great heart that is capable to feel joy and compassion.

The book we are holding in our hands is a testimony to their friendship. Hansruedi said that nobody had ever understood him as well as Stan did, and he was very proud of it.

Carmen Scheifele-Giger
February 2015



Stanislav Grof, M.D., is a psychiatrist with more than fifty years of experience in the research of non-ordinary states of consciousness. In the past, he was Principal Investigator in a psychedelic research program at the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, Czechoslovakia; Chief of Psychiatric Research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center; Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD; and Scholar-in-Residence at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA.

Currently, Stan is Professor of Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA, conducts professional training programs in Holotropic Breathwork and transpersonal psychology, and gives lectures and seminars worldwide. He is one of the founders and chief theoreticians of transpersonal psychology and the founding president of the International Transpersonal Association (ITA). In 2007, he was granted the prestigious *Vision 97 Award* from the Václav and Dagmar Havel Foundation in Prague and in 2010 the *Thomas R. Verny Award* from the Association for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH) for his pivotal contributions to this field.

Among his publications are over 150 articles in professional journals and the books *LSD: Gateway to the Numinous; Beyond the Brain; LSD Psychotherapy; The Cosmic Game; Psychology of the Future; The Ultimate Journey; When the Impossible Happens; Healing Our Deepest Wounds; The Stormy Search for the Self; Spiritual Emergency;* and *Holotropic Breathwork* (the last three with Christina Grof).

Image: Annie Bertram

H.R. Giger was born in Chur, Switzerland, on February 5, 1940 and died on May 12, 2014. As a child he developed a strong passion for all things surreal and macabre. His need to express himself and share the unique aspects of his powerful imagination drew him to the visual arts. Giger's own dreams and the brilliant imagery of such fantastic geniuses as Gustav Meyrink, Jean Cocteau, Alfred Kubin and H. P. Lovecraft combined to form a rich soil from which the amazing imagery of Giger's own art sprouted. It bloomed into the vast wealth of exotic women, wondrously bizarre landscapes, and frightening creatures that continues to capture the fascination of millions of fans worldwide.

Meticulously detailed, Giger's paintings were usually done in large formats, and worked and reworked by this maestro of the airbrush. It was Giger's popular art book, *Necronomicon*, that caught the eye of director Ridley Scott as he was searching for the right look for a creature in his upcoming film. That creature, of course, turned out to be the *Alien*, and Giger's masterful designs for the film of the same name garnered him a much-deserved Academy Award.

Giger's fascinating biomechanical style, that brilliant synthesis of flesh and machine, was realized not only through his remarkable paintings but also via sculpture pieces, elegantly fashioned furniture, and architectural and interior design projects. His paintings are displayed in galleries and museums throughout the world.

Giger's alien aesthetic, his *biomechanics*, goes beyond talent, and even art. It enters the rarified realm of the near magical, and certainly the land of genius. The art herein is a mere taste of the phenomenal oeuvre created by this unique Swiss maestro.