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La Gruyère Art and Culture

H. R. Giger – One of a kind



Did you know that *ALIEN* and *SPECIES* were “born” in Switzerland before they “went” to Hollywood?

Hansruedi Giger, the creator of those creatures was born in Chur in 1940, where he grew up in a rather normal, middle class family environment. His father was the local pharmacist. When he was quite young, his father received a human skull as a promotion from a pharmaceutical firm and the young Hansruedi was spellbound.

He fast developed a fascination with all things dark and strange, and later found inspiration in postcards and magazine photos featuring the works of Salvador Dali and Jean Cocteau. Giger's mother Melli was a great encouragement to him, though she did not always understand the strange fascinations of her young son. As a pre-teen, Giger would invite neighbourhood friends over to watch his presentation of “Ghost Train” rides and other portrayals of the dark fantastic.

After high school (gymnasium), Giger went on to study architecture and industrial design at Zurich's School of Applied Arts. In 1966, Giger began work as an interior designer and at the same time completed some early paintings. In 1968, Giger began working exclusively as an artist as well as a filmmaker. Giger

had his first poster published in 1969, followed by some of his first exhibitions outside Zurich.

Giger started using the airbrush in the next decade and his works took a unique otherworldly quality. He gained a reputation as one of the leading airbrush artists in the world and proved that fine art could be produced via the method. Working in large formats, Giger's paintings are meticulously rendered and possess a blend of erotic mystery and alien elegance.

In 1978, Giger began work on the film *ALIEN*, and ended up sculpting most of the creatures and sets. In 1980, the artist was awarded an Oscar for his stunning work on the classic film. Recently, he provided designs for Ridley Scott's *PROMETHEUS*.

Giger began work on the H. R. Giger Museum in Gruyères in the mid nineties.

The Museum houses Giger's personal collection of art from around the world, as well as a substantial collection of his own paintings and sculptural work. Giger continued to work on special outside projects, such as Ridley Scott's *PROMETHEUS*, tending his museum, and creating his own new works, until his death from a fall in May this year aged 74.

For more information about the museum, visit <http://www.hrgiger-museum.com/>. The museum is nestled in the medieval Château St. Germain in Gruyères and is open all year round. Admission price for adults is CHF 12.50 / kids CHF 4.00.

By Alexandra Beskid-Jung

Birth machine by H.R. Giger
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._R._Giger#mediaviewer/File:Birth_Machine.jpg Photo by Matej Stuchlik (CC BY 3.0)

Tibet Museum

Gruyères' main draw for tourism is the town itself, the castle and of course the cheese. One might not necessarily think of visiting a Tibetan museum with amazing Himalayan Art in Gruyères, Switzerland. Opened in April 2009, the Foundation Alain Bordier opened the Tibet Museum in the heart of the medieval city of Gruyères. The exposition contains a remarkable collection of more than 300 high quality sculptures, painting and ritual Buddhist objects. These exceptional collections, which were once possessions of a Swiss collector, can be discovered in the remodelled St Joseph chapel. This

collection has been gathered from Tibet and the Himalayan region. To add to this unique museum, soft music and eastern smells fill the hall; creating a calm and mystic environment for the observers. A brochure is given upon arrival with descriptions of all the displays. The Alain Bordier Foundation was created in order to preserve the collection and to maintain the museum. If you find yourself in Gruyères be sure to check out this unique gem.

By Sabine Wyss

Tibet Museum in Gruyères
www.la-gruyere.ch Photo © Tibet Museum

