



HR GIGER

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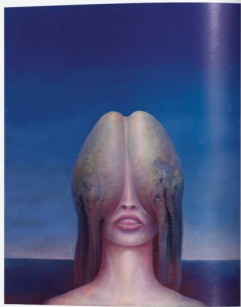
I. Mythologies for the Future

ANDREAS J. HIRSCH

In the spring of 1978, having just turned 38 years old, the Swiss artist H.R. Giger jotted these lines in his diary: "May 18, 1978. Work on the film is in full swing. The construction of the spaceship is almost finished. It looks good. Small models of the landscape and the entrance area of the spacecraft were made. The people who built these have no clue about my architecture. I said that they should get bones and build a model with plasticine. . . ."

At that time, H.R. Giger was already a successful painter whose bleak visions in a style that he termed biomechanics were widely distributed: in the form of popular poster editions that appeared in the late 1960s; in the large-format illustrated book *Necronosis*, which he designed himself; and on album covers such as Emerson, Lake & Palmer's 1973 release *Brain Salad Surgery*. But the project he was now working on would make him both a worldwide cult figure and an Oscar winner. Director Ridley Scott had hired Giger to create the monster in the movie *Alien*.² So the artist went to the Shepperton Film Studios near London to realize his designs for the world of the *Alien* with his own hand.

It was a painting in Giger's *Necronosis* that had immediately convinced Scott to get him involved in shaping the alien creature: *Necronosis IV* (1976; pp. 270/271), one of the key works in the artist's oeuvre. It shows in profile the upper body of a being with only remotely humanoid traits. Its skull is extremely elongated, and its face is almost exclusively reduced to bared teeth and huge insect-like eyes. Bones extend from its neck, and its back is dominated by tubular extensions and reptilian tails. The male sexual organ is significantly extended and curved upwards over the head. It opens out into a transparent bulge in which a skeletonized being is visible like a little saint resting in a glass coffin. The entire body appears to be under a tension that is maintained with ease. Only the powerful arms are still close to the human form, although wires and mechanical tracks are visible under their translucent skin and their material is less reminiscent of tissue than of the grain of medieval woodcarvings. The position of the hands in the top right corner of the image is also noteworthy: they appear to have been taken from the iconography of medieval altarpieces. The elegantly slender fingers contrast sharply with the creature's inorganic men. The hands seem in the process of taking something that is out of sight.



HEIL, 1969, oil on cardboard, 21 1/2 x 18 1/2 in. / 54 x 46 cm
96 | Opposite: HUMANOID 3, 1970, oil on wood, 67 x 39 1/2 in. / 170 x 100 cm





226 | SATHOSALPUS I, 1975, acryls on paper on wood, 28 7/8" x 35 1/2" in. / 200 x 140 cm



A. CHORLEY (THE BEAST 666), 1973, acryls on paper, 28 7/8" x 35 1/2" in. / 200 x 140 cm | 229