



A new exhibition reveals the ambitious science-fiction artwork and production design behind the unrealised film version of Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Dune*. *Claudia White* reports

Above: Sci-fi artist Chris Foss's vision for the Emperor's artificial planet in Dune

David Lynch's film adaptation of Frank Herbert's classic science fiction novel, *Dune*, has its 25th anniversary this year. Yet Lynch's film, from which the director removed his own name, and that opened to a critical mauling

and low box-office receipts, was only the final effort in a decade-long series of attempts to make a screen version of Herbert's book.

The most notable of these earlier attempts was by cult Chilean

film-maker Alejandro Jodorowsky in 1979. Thirty years later, an exhibition at London's Drawing Room, gives us a taste of the initial production work involved in what could have been a hugely provocative and genre-changing film adaptation.

Jodorowsky's vision was elaborate in its scope and would have required a monumental production effort: its proposed cast included Orson Welles, Salvador Dali and – in a strange prefiguring of Sting's appearance in Lynch's version – Mick Jagger. The exhibition's curator Tom Morton believes that 'it pointed to a direction for sci-fi that ran counter to the prevailing Hollywood winds at the time, which favoured a more George Lucas or Steven Spielberg approach to the genre'. To create his sci-fi vision of the future, Jodorowsky brought together an astonishing collection of artistic talent in order to visualise the film's aesthetic and production design.

Morton's exhibition showcases work by notable French comic book artist Giraud, most commonly known as Moebius, the Swiss artist H R Giger, known later for his design work on the 1979 film *Alien*, and the British sci-fi artist Chris Foss. The work of each reveals what a powerful piece of work Jodorowsky's *Dune* would have been. Moebius' output, consisting

of etchings, black-and-white illustrations, and coloured storyboards, are vivid visualisations of the film's central themes that have a particularly contemporary resonance, including resource-war and environmental degradation. Five examples of Foss's work are shown, creating grand visualisations of spaceships and an artificial planet (pictured). The exhibition includes three designs by H R Giger showing his vision of the 'Harkonnen homeworld': a partially submerged egg-shaped castle in an apocalyptic industrial wasteland.

There is also a collection of vintage copies of the extraordinary French sci-fi magazine *Métal Hurlant* on show, for which Jodorowsky and Moebius were regular contributors. According to Morton, this magazine was the one place where the un-made *Dune* project saw any kind of public life. The curator has also commissioned a series of new responses to Jodorowsky's plans, by artists Steven Claydon, Matthew Day Jackson and Vidya Galstaldon. It marks a fitting tribute to a remarkable film that never was.

Alejandro Jodorowsky's Dune is at the Drawing Room, E2, 17 September-25 October