



Vidya Gestaldon  
 Try looking into that place... 2009  
 watercolour, acrylic, gouache and coloured pencil on paper  
 31 x 17.5 cm  
 Courtesy the artist and Art:Concept, Paris

There is a Hebraic legend which says: 'the Messiah will not be a man but a day: the day when all human beings will be illuminated'. Kabbalists speak about a cosmic collective consciousness, a species of meta-Universe. And this for me was what the **Dune** project was.

To show the process of illumination of a hero, then a people, then a whole planet (which in its turn is the Messiah of the Universe since by giving up its orbit, the holy planet leaves to spread its light throughout all the galaxies) ...

I did not want to respect the novel, I wanted to recreate it. For me **Dune** did not belong to [Frank] Herbert, as **Don Quixote** did not belong to Cervantes [...]

There is an artist, only one in the sea of a million other artists, who only once in his life, by a species of divine grace, receives an immortal topic, a MYTH ... I say 'receives' and not 'creates' because this work of art is received in a medium-like state, directly from the collective unconscious. This work exceeds the artist and to some extent, it kills it because humanity, by receiving the impact of the Myth, has a major need to erase the individual who received it and transmitted it: his individual personality obstructs, stains the purity of the message which, at base, requires to be anonymous ... We do not know who created the cathedral of Notre-Dame, nor the Aztec solar calendar, nor the tarot of Marseilles, nor the myth of Don Juan, etc.

One feels that Cervantes gave HIS version of Quixote – of course incomplete – and that we carry in the heart the total character ... Christ belongs not to Mark, neither to Luke, neither to Matthew, nor to John ... There are many other Gospels known as apocryphal books and there are as many lives of Christ as there are believers. Each one of us has their own version of **Dune**, their Jessica, their Paul [...] I had received a version of **Dune** and I wanted to transmit it: the Myth was to give up the literary form and to become image ...

Alejandro Jodorowsky  
 'Dune Le Film Que Vous Ne Verez Jamais'  
 Metal Hurlant – #107 (1985)

Frank Herbert's novel **Dune** (1965) is set some 20,000 years in the future, at a time when the most precious commodity in the universe is 'spice' – a substance that endows those who ingest it with a range of psychic powers, including the ability to navigate interstellar space – which is found only on the desert planet of Arrakis, or 'Dune', where it is produced as a by-product of the life cycle of a species of huge, mile-long sandworm. The head of the dynastic House Atreides, Duke Leto, is granted exclusive rights to mine the spice by the Emperor of the Universe Shadram IV, but soon after he and his cohorts settle on Arrakis they find that they have walked into a trap, and are all but eliminated by the rival House Harkonnen, which has conspired with the Emperor to bring House Atreides to an end. Following the death of Duke Leto in the fighting, his son Paul escapes into the sands where he joins a band of Arrakis' indigenous people, the blue-eyed, environmentally aware Fremen, who greet him as a Messiah. Paul leads the Fremen in a holy guerilla war against the Harkonnen, who now control the mining franchise, and brings spice production to a halt, causing the Emperor to land a vast invasion force. In the final showdown, Paul threatens to flood the deserts, destroying the spice worms forever and putting an end to space travel, the source of the Emperor's power. Outmaneuvered, Shadram abdicates, and Paul ascends to the Imperial throne, and a universal jihad begins to flicker on the event horizon.

'Alejandro Jodorowsky's Dune: An exhibition of a film of a book that never was' takes as its departure point the cult Chilean filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky's attempted 1976 adaptation of Herbert's novel. Following the release of his mystical Western **El Topo** (1970) and his psychedelic quest movie **Holy Mountain**, Jodorowsky embarked on his **Dune** project, gathering around him a group of collaborators – or as he termed them, 'Samurai' – that included the Swiss artist H.R. Giger, who would later design the 1979 film **Alien**, the French comics artist Moebius, the British sci-fi artist Chris Foss, and the British band Pink Floyd, who would provide the soundtrack. Among Jodorowsky's proposed cast were Orson Welles, Mick Jagger, David Carradine, and Salvador Dali. (Dali, who demanded a fee of \$100,000 per hour in order that he might 'earn more than Greta Garbo' was to play the Emperor of the Universe, who ruled from a golden toilet-cum-throne in the shape of two intertwined dolphins, the mouths of which were designed to receive, respectively, urine and excrement – as Jodorowsky has remarked 'Dali thinks that it is terribly bad taste to mix piss and shit'). Unable to secure the money to create the **Dune** of his imagination, Jodorowsky abandoned the film before a single frame was shot. All that survives of this project is the director's extensive notes, and the production drawings of Giger, Moebius and Foss. These reveal a potential future for sci-fi movie-making that eschewed the conservative, technology-based approach of American filmmakers in favour of something



H. R. Giger  
 Dune II, 1975  
 Acrylic on paper  
 70 x 100cm  
 Courtesy www.hr-gigermuseum.com  
 © 1975 H. R. Giger

closer to a metaphysical fever-dream. This was, though, a future that would never take place. Jodorowsky has written that 'Almost all the battles were won, but the war was lost. The project was sabotaged in Hollywood. It was French and not American. Its message was not Hollywood enough'. In 1977, George Lucas' **Star Wars** was released, and the history of sci-fi filmmaking, and even mainstream cinema, would never be the same again. Following an attempted adaptation in 1979 by Ridley Scott (to which Giger was also attached), **Dune** was finally filmed in 1984 by David Lynch.

In approaching **Dune**, Jodorowsky was not interested in fussy fidelity to Herbert's text, but rather in channeling its core. In a 1985 issue of the French science fiction magazine **Métal Hurlant**, he writes that 'At that time, I had already almost lost my

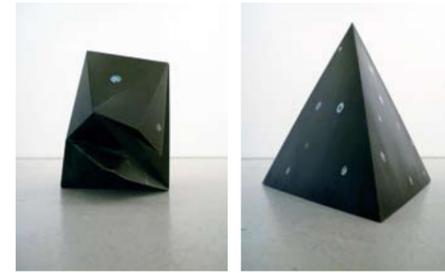


Steven Claydon  
**A COMPREHENSIVE ILLUSTRATION OF DEGRADATION** 2009  
 Screen print on Somerset velvet neusprint  
 75.5 x 56cm  
 Edition 3/4  
 Courtesy the artist and Hotel, London



individual consciousness. I was the instrument of a miraculous work, where all could be done. **Dune** was not in my service. I was, as were the Samurai that I had found, in the service of the work'. In this spirit, in addition to historical material by Giger, Moebius and Foss, the exhibition brings together three more 'Samurai' – the contemporary artists Vidya Gastaldon (FR), Matthew Day Jackson (US) and Steven Claydon (UK) – who have been invited to respond to Jodorowsky's vision of **Dune** as a transmigratory, endlessly mutable myth. In Gastaldon's suite of drawings, the artist has used Herbert's novel as an I-Ching-like instrument of divination, flicking through the pages at random and then making an image based on the first line her eyes alight on (it is perhaps significant that Jodorowsky is a long time practitioner of another divining system, the tarot). Jackson presents a gilded skeleton, the skull of which transforms, over a series of sculptural iterations, into a tetrahedron, the most basic of the Platonic solids. A model of evolution, or perhaps its opposite, the work recalls 'the work echoes both the changes spice works upon the human subject, and the process of psychically 'folding' space that allows the novel's characters to traverse the stars. Recalling museum display furniture, Claydon's sculpture might be read as a display of production models from another, unknown, attempted adaptation of **Dune**, processed through an alien taxonomy.

'Alejandro Jodorowsky's **Dune**: An exhibition of a film of a book that never was' is not an account of the (non)-making of a movie, but rather an exploration of the notion of adaptation (even Herbert's novel, Jodorowsky would argue, is itself only a telling of a



Matthew Day Jackson  
**to infinity ...** 2009 (detail)  
 dyed plastic and abalone shell  
 183 x 343 x 30.5 cm  
 Courtesy the artist and  
 Grimm Fine Art, Amsterdam

pre-existing tale), and a glimpse of a parallel cinematic world. While **Dune**'s themes of jihad, resource war and environmental degradation are pertinent to both the mid-1970s and our own particular political moment, Jodorowsky's ambition was bigger than the simple holding up of a sci-fi mirror to the times, as the ending of his planned film (which differs markedly from that of the book) reveals:

*'Reality changes quickly. Three columns of light spout out of the planet. They mix, and plunge back into the sand. "I am the Earth which awaits the seed!" The spice is desiccated. The ground trembles. Water drops form a pillar surrounded by fire. Silver filaments emerge from the spice, creating a rainbow. They form in a water cloud, producing red lava. Then vapour. Clouds. Rain. Rivers. Grass. Forests. Dune becomes green. A blue ring surrounds the planet. It is divided. It produces more and more rings. Dune is now a world illuminated, which crosses the galaxy, then leaves it, giving its light – which is Consciousness – to all the Universe.'*

So the planet, so the myth.

Tom Morton

This exhibition is guest-curated by Tom Morton, Curator at The Hayward, London, Co-curator of The British Art Show 7 (2010–11), and Contributing Editor, Frieze magazine

The Drawing Room forthcoming exhibition: Cornelius Cardew, 5 November – 13 December 2009 in collaboration with MuHRA, Antwerp

The Drawing Room Patrons: Marie Elena Angulo and Henry Zarb, Stephen Barber, Elizabeth Bauza, Mino Park, Patrick and Sigrid Wilkinson. Corporate Patrons: John Jones

# THE DRAWING ROOM

THE DRAWING ROOM  
 TANNERY ARTS  
 BRUNSWICK WHARF  
 55 LABURNUM STREET  
 LONDON E2 8AD  
 WWW.DRAWINGROOM.ORG.UK

Directions: Old Street then buses 55 or 243 or Liverpool Street Station then buses 149, 26 or 242

Tannery Arts Ltd., Industrial 6  
 Provident Society, Reg. No. 29034R



**ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY'S**  
**Dune**  
**AN EXHIBITION OF A FILM OF A BOOK THAT NEVER WAS**

STEVEN CLAYDON, MATTHEW DAY JACKSON AND VIDYA GASTALDON WITH MATERIAL BY CHAIS FOSS, H.R. GIGER AND MOEBIUS. GUEST CURATED BY TOM MORTON

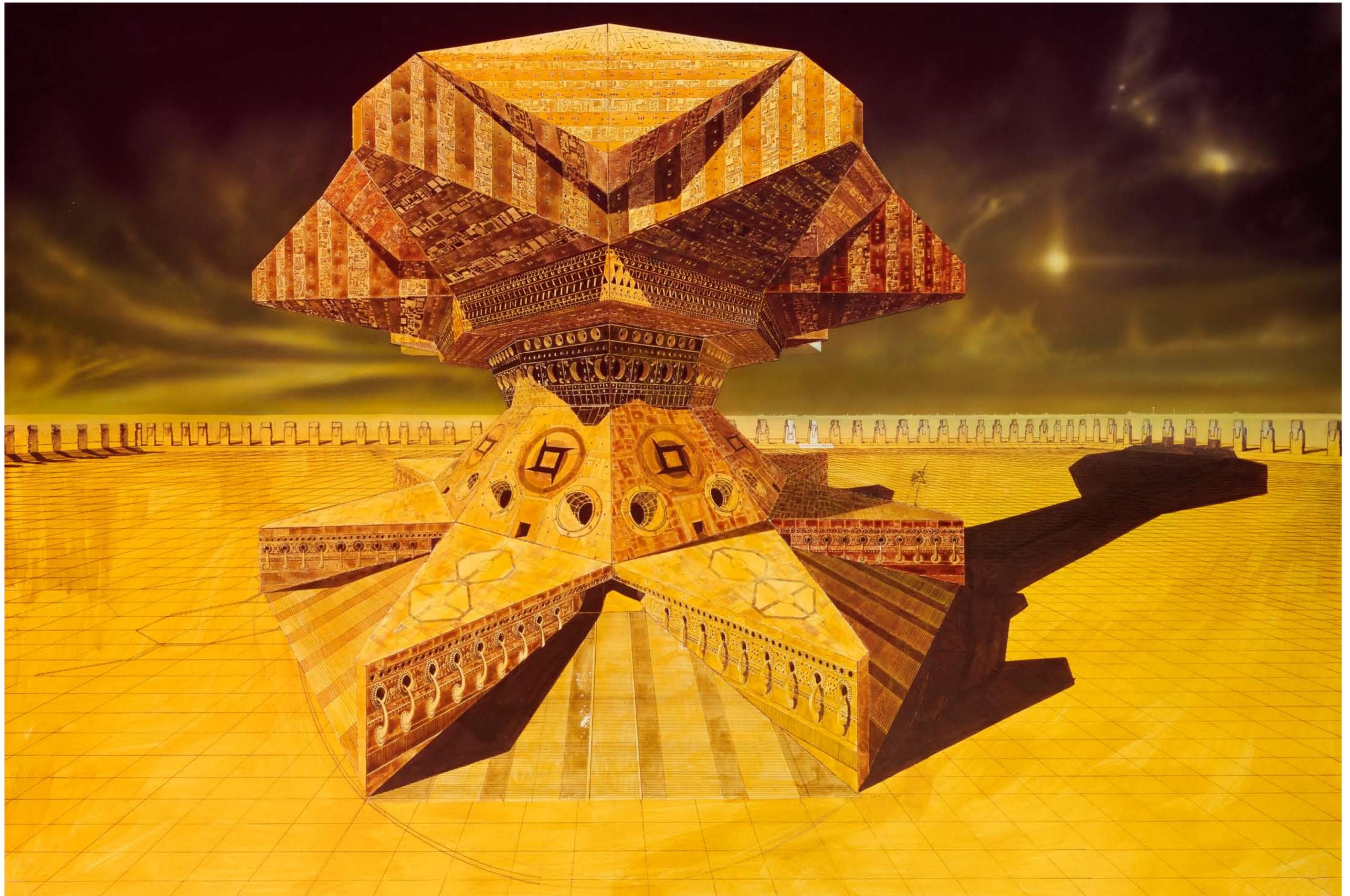
**17 SEPTEMBER – 25 OCTOBER 2009**  
**WED–SUN 12.00–18.00**  
**PRIVATE VIEW WED 16 SEPTEMBER 18.30 – 20.30**

WED 21 OCT 19.00 'IN CONVERSATION'  
 TOM MORTON WITH BRIAN DILLON.  
 ADMISSION FREE. BOOKING ESSENTIAL.

THE EXHIBITION TOURS TO PLYMOUTH ARTS CENTRE  
 3 APRIL – 16 MAY 2010.

Elephant Trust  
 John Jones





Chris Foss  
The Emperor's Palace, in the centre of his artificial planet 1975  
Montage of line drawing with ink and acrylic paint on art board  
34 x 46 cm  
Courtesy [www.ChrisFossArt.com](http://www.ChrisFossArt.com)  
© Chris Foss, 1975