

Interviews

Articles

Columns

Reviews

Culture Vultures

Gallery

Archives

Monstruo

Creature Character Designer Carlos Huante

by [Kat Avila](#)

When I was a kid, we created monsters by folding a piece a paper lengthwise, then someone would start by drawing the head. The next person would draw the adjacent part without having seen what had been previously drawn. The end result, after the paper was fully unfolded, was a silly-looking but entertaining creature.

Carlos Huante, born and raised in Los Angeles, California, got me thinking about monsters again after I ran across his astounding book **Monstruo** and its addendum **Mas Creaturas** at the **Design Studio Press** booth at **Comic-Con** 2006 in San Diego. Huante has worked in the animation and film industry for over two decades.

Sequential Tart: *Carlos, I actually did this backward. I reviewed **Mas Creaturas** before I had a chance to peruse **Monstruo**. Maybe because I did it that way I'm fonder of **Mas Creaturas**. Or it could be your backstory for the thinner volume — which included the provocative question "What if Medusa could somehow create her own kind?" — made the drawings more understandable to me. Have you ever thought of putting together your creature designs and their backstories in the form of a graphic novel?*

Carlos Huante: I've thought of it many times. My first book was supposed to be an illustrated novel, which I had pitched to **Dark Horse** more than ten years ago. It was a go for a short time, until the whole project was cancelled. It was to

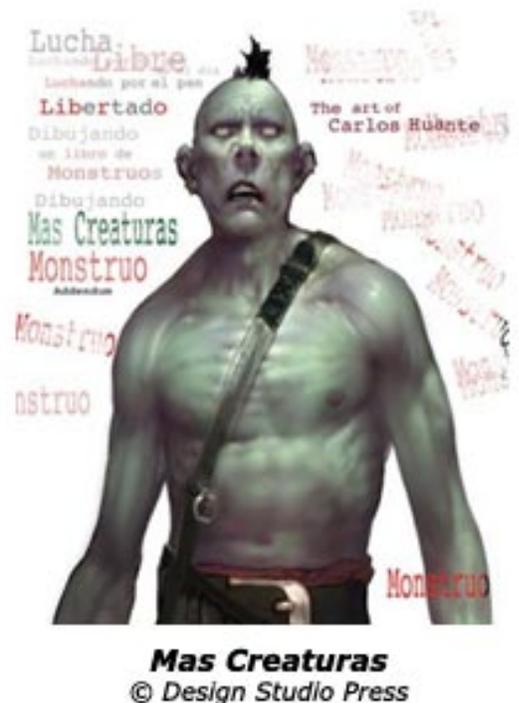
include Moebius as one of the artists participating as one of the contributors. I was the newcomer in the group. That story still exists but it's way on the back burner. I've got others, many others, all on the back burner.

The problem is I have to love the story and I'd rather be drawing than writing. So, that being said, the reason that there are no descriptions or titles is that the books are intended to be art books, not storybooks. Although, if you asked me about any character in the books, I'd be able to give you some backstory or reason for their existence.

As I said in ***Mas Creaturas***, whenever you design characters, you should know who they are as far as their personalities go. The compositional illustrations are worthy of explanation because their whole reason for being is that something is being said.

ST: *You asked in the introduction to **Monstruo**, "Where are the monster movies?" Does it have to be with a camera? Couldn't you feature your creatures in an animation?*

CH: Well, I worked as a character designer for TV animation for almost eight years of my career, and I got into this whole thing in part because I wanted to work on animated features.



Unfortunately at the time, and still now, there are really no action/adventure, sci-fi animated features being made. With the exception of anime, the **Batman** straight-to-video movies, and now **The Incredibles**, that avenue does not exist yet in this country.

The way I look at it all is that the characters I design for films these days are all completed as CG characters, so essentially they are as they would be for a CG animated feature, albeit a little more realized. To answer your question

directly, yes, I would love to work on an animated sci-fi feature.

ST: *When I flip through **Monstruo**, I see an ability to re-visualize humans — fiercer, uglier, nastier, and stronger. But what keeps your monsters appealing is they maintain souls. Do these personalities come from the backstories, or do actual people sometimes serve as the inspiration for your creatures?*

CH: For the compositional works, it's more like the emotions or the feelings, the vibe of the things you see every day, rather than the people themselves being the inspiration. Mix that with what I find interesting.

For the character designs, it does come down to interesting people, but it's not quite that simple. I'll design something, and only after I have the first concepts do I start to think of whom the character best resembles, physically and personality-wise.

ST: *On page 14 of **Monstruo**, what had that sick-looking guy been eating? A cheeseburger with tentacles? Or is something eating him?*

CH: I guess *Poltergeist II [The Other Side]* made a huge impression on me. It probably stems from my interest in H.R. Giger's work in my early years, due to his work in the movie *Alien* and then in *Poltergeist II*. He is a phenomenal artist, a historical mark in art.

ST: *On page 20 of **Monstruo**, there is a blue pencil sketch. The reader is able to see the fully realized, colored version on page 17 of **Mas Creaturas**. I like viewing them side-by-side to witness the process.*

CH: Yeah, I like looking at artists' rough drawings, and so, being a draftsman and enjoying the drawing part of the design process, I wanted to show it off in the books.

The piece that you are referring to in particular is called "Punk Pirate Zombies and Alien Ghosts." It was one idea I had in my idea frenzy while making **Monstruo**. One of the many story ideas that I have that I mentioned earlier.

I thought, what if some pirates (my N.C. Wyeth influence), who are stuck on an island where their ship has run aground, encountered an ancient wreckage of a space ship which carried an alien virus? The dead aliens' ghosts haunt the island. The pirates become infected by the virus and, instead of dying, become zombies. Thus, the title of the piece.

This particular piece was used for both covers of **Monstruo** and **Mas Creaturas**, and so it deserved to be fully realized, but it wasn't ready for **Monstruo**.

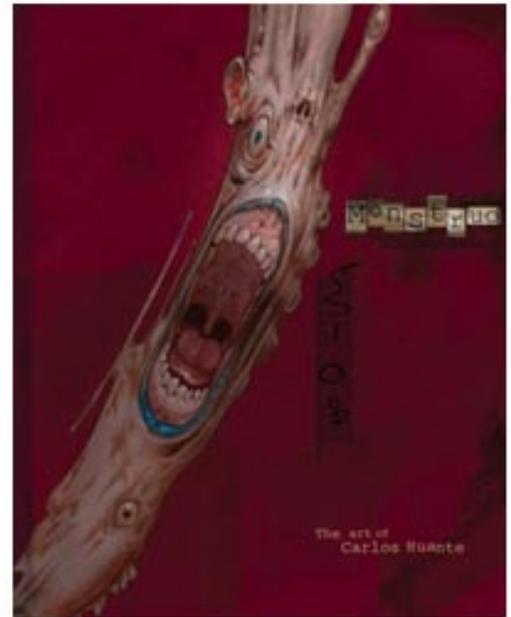
ST: *The screaming Hulk-like monster on page 22 didn't look scary at all to me. He seemed to be suffering so much emotional or physical pain that I wanted to mother him. I bet your backstory was pretty different.*

CH: Uhhh, yes Now he's a character from one of my stories, an alien gone bad. A dog that I had seen years ago inspired the expression. The dog was an apparent problem animal. It was very aggressive and I remember seeing him for the first time. The rage on this Alaskan Malamute was not in a grin or action. He had sad eyes, but it's like he was so angry he was sad about it.

I've seen gangsters in East L.A. with the same look. It's the "they're just looking for a fight and you just said something bad about their mother" kind of a look.

ST: *My idea of a female monster is a jealous woman with daggers shooting out of her eyes. The girls on pages 36-42 are pin-ups, with the exception of the half-dinosaur woman on page 40, shown again in a close-up on page 41.*

CH: Well, these aren't female monsters with the exception of the one you mentioned. They are exactly what they look like: they are girls. I had the drawings already done.



Monstruo
© Design Studio Press

It's something I felt needed to be represented, the girl part of "Girls, Hot Rods, and Monsters" — a very 1950s thing. Before my time, but it deserves to be revisited, tastefully of course.

ST: *In your more personal work, as represented by the pieces "Born Again" and "The Stand," your religious beliefs as a Christian are strongly manifested. Though being a non-Christian, I was able to appreciate them from my own perspective. Would it be correct to say that art and religion are your two driving passions in this life?*

CH: My faith is the lens that I see everything through. I love what I love because God has given me peace. My art is a platform through which I may speak of the things I know and/or see. Whether that is of injustices or of truth, human horrors, or God's glory.

Artwork, as with all art forms, must be universal, but pure to hopefully reach everyone. That's why it makes me happy to hear both Christians and non-Christians alike understand my work. That's the whole point.

ST: *After being part of the animation and film industry as a layout artist and character designer for so long, aren't you all monstered-out yet?*

CH: You know, after 21 years and not being sick of it at all, I think I chose the right career. I don't know if the movie business is quite the same as it used to be, but what are you gonna do.

At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, to say it just right, allow me to mix some words with other lyrics. I'll say, I'm far too gone to work on "Maggie's Farm", and you know in this world, expression is whatever you want it to be, instead of saying or doing what's right. "There just ain't no place for a street fightin' man," so I can't help it. I feel I was made to be what I am. I am far too eccentric of a personality to work in an office.

Artists are Ronin, and art is my gun. I am aiming for the heart or right between the eyes.

[Carlos Huante](#) — Artist's web site
[Design Studio Press](#) — Publisher's web site



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



<http://www.amnesty.org/>

[Join the discussion at the Tartsville Message Boards](#)

[Send us your thoughts!](#)

[Home](#) | [Features](#) | [Columns](#) | [Culture Vultures](#) | [Report Card](#)
[Tart Store](#) | [Indicia](#) | [Contact](#) | [Archives](#)

© [Sequential Tart](#), 1998 - 2005