

MEET THE GUY BEHIND THE LENS

British photographer David Hughes has recently worked with Scabal for a second time, on the occasion of the 2009-2010 Autumn-Winter Collection launch. A chance to discover the personality of this internationally acclaimed artist...



David Hughes

INTERVIEW

Bespoken: State your full name, and date and place of birth.

David Hughes: *No! What kind of question is that?! 32" waist, 7.5 shoe size... A naughty Libran, trying to find the balance in my life.*

What is the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?

I can't tell you that! The same thing the rest of the world does, I hope...

Describe your typical day.

I don't have a typical day; that's the beauty and the nightmare of what we do. To be honest, sometimes, I crave typical days.

Why did you choose photography as your profession? And when did it all start?

I used to work on a production line in an oil drum factory: Funny things, production lines, and very humdrum days. I left the UK and made a living repairing yachts in Jersey and Gibraltar. So photography was far away from being a reality for me, yet. Then I went back to the UK at the age of 22. I found myself with no job and was forced to sign up to a back-to-work scheme, a state-generated programme that encouraged unemployed people to find work. That's when a career advisor suggested that I enroll in an arts foundation course, which sounded great because I figured there would be more girls there than in an oil drum factory, so

it all made sense. Photography was part of the course. They gave me a 35mm camera and a bulk of film, a direction, an outline and I went along with it and learned by my mistakes. Then the teachers on the course pushed me to do more, until I did a BA and they funded my portfolio. From there, I went on to being an assistant at the Click Studios in London, where I was earning £25 per day and assisted several photographers. That was 12-13 years ago. I did it for myself. Everything fell into place and felt natural. I enjoyed doing photography and had finally found a way of expressing myself. I was finally able to express all my nonsensical ideas. From the start, I knew I didn't want to be in the oil-drum business, but photography wasn't on the radar. I just had to find it, or it had to find me. Today I have slightly evolved into other disciplines such as sculpture and 3D work/animation. It's more abstract than what I do in photography.

Would you say that you have a specific style? How would you describe your work?

I don't know! People seem to think I have a style. There is definitely a difference in what I do; for example, the use of lights, the long exposures, etc. And the evolution into other disciplines has also changed my style.

Who are your favorite photographers? Who would you say inspires you most? Any other influences?

A huge influence would be Raymond Moore, a British photographer who started his career as a painter. His main interest/focus was landscapes, between reality and fantasy. Although there are no people physically there in his shots, he manages to create a sense of presence, which is an interesting emotion. Years ago, I used to go to the V&A [Victoria and Albert Museum], and at the time, you could request boxes full of Moore's prints. They would give you a pair of gloves, and I would go through the box, looking at each image for hours. Of course, I am open to all influences, whether they are films, books, art, or

everyday life. It can come from anywhere or be anything; I just tend to go with the flow. I tend to surround myself with nice people—people I can work with, a team, the right team. You also need the right tools because you simply cannot do it on your own. Having said that, I do like my solitude. I believe it is essential to disappear and "have a word with myself". It gives you time to breathe and put things into perspective. Collaborations take time, but are worthwhile in the end.

Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

On a golf course! Seriously, no idea. Somewhere nice...

Describe the craziest photo shoot you've ever been on.

*Ah... That would be when I was shooting the cover of Nick Cave's album *The Lyre of Orpheus*. Tom Hingston, a good friend of mine, Nick Cave himself, and I, came up with a concept: that we would use both aesthetically beautiful images and others that would tend towards the slightly macabre. So we went to the UK's south coast and were taking pictures of featherless birds when we saw this buff, sweaty man wearing a burgundy V-neck. He sparked our intrigue so we approached his house, and it was full of parrots enclosed in individual incubators. His partner, a very large woman, was nursing these baby parrots between her rather generous breasts to keep them warm. A very rare and bizarre situation. When we developed the pictures, the birds looked like singing penises. So we opted for pictures of flowers for the album cover.*

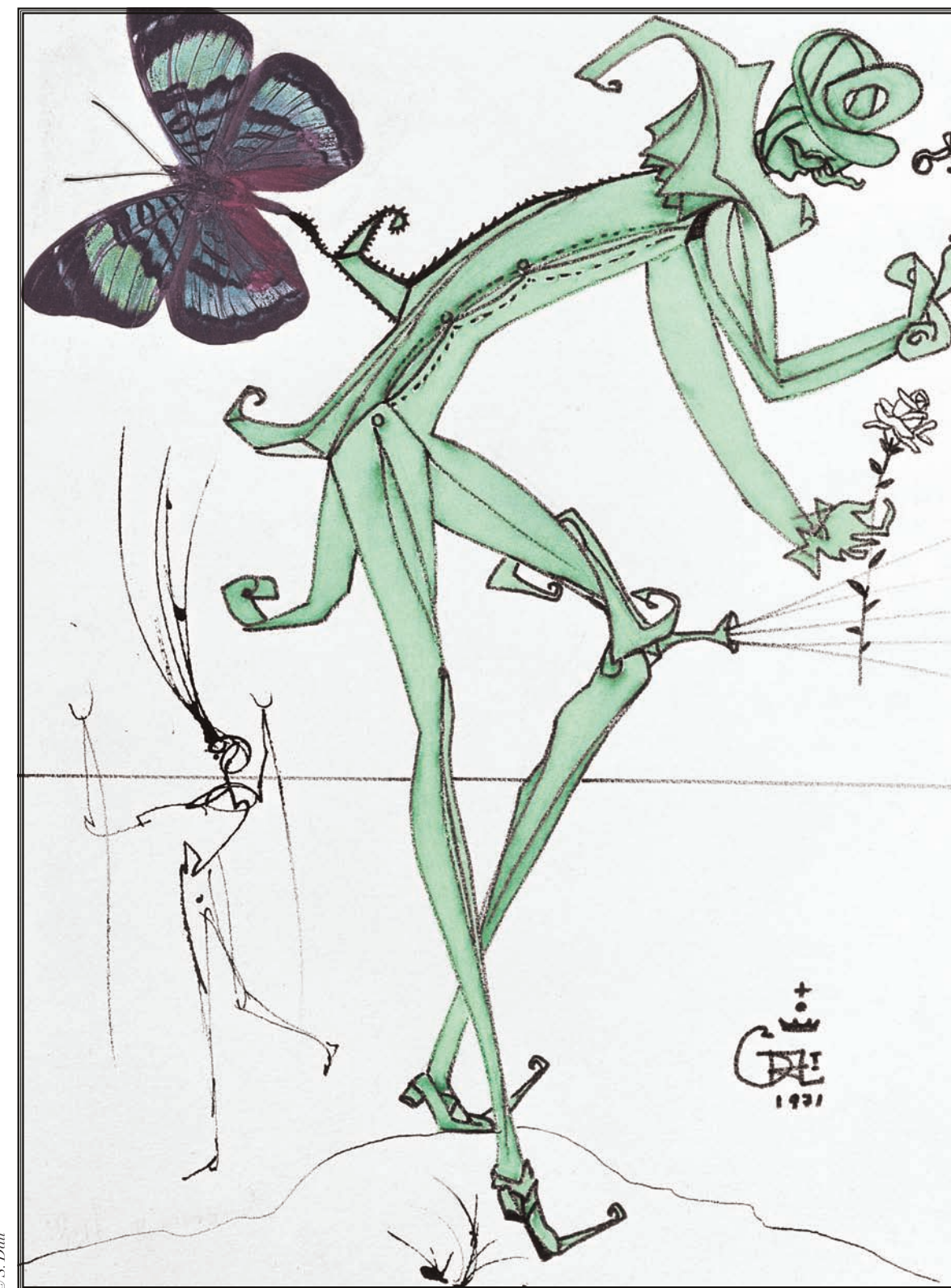
Who do you dream of photographing?

No-one in particular. I love people who have character, no matter how it manifests itself. I love people who make me laugh; they're my favourite.

Interview first published on BaseNow, the blog of BaseDesign – www.basedesign.com

REMEMBER DALI

In collaboration with London College of Fashion bespoke tailoring students, Scabal recently launched an ambitious project to mark the 20-year anniversary of the death of Salvador Dali. *Bespoken* reveals the results.



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One of Dalí's 12 drawings commissioned by Scabal in 1971