Sur-reality overtakes fashion reality

That's what Dalí predicted 30 years ago. Matthew Temple asks for today's designers' views

sale ends

surreal art, so it's fitting cloth. Thissen reckoned a that 30 years ago a Belgian famous painter was needed men's wear outfit asked Sal- to prophesy men's fashion, vador Dalí to predict men's and Dalí was first choice. fashions today.

company was called Scabal, and the artist's fashion gene run by a man named Peter was well chronicled. He'd

Fashion prediction is a Thissen, and made suit

The year was 1971. The secretary, "Captain" Moore, collaborated with Chanel and Schiaparelli, and in the book The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí (Alkin Books/-Dover, £16.95/\$10.17), he recalled art student days in Madrid with velvet jackets, pearl necklaces, gilded canes and "hair like a girl's". sometimes set with paint varnish: "The age of the dandy had begun, and for me it was never to end."

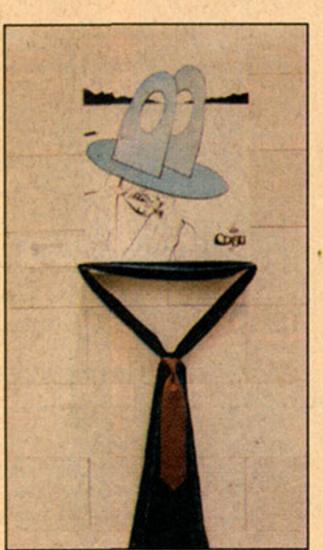
> Though small talk was was more monologue than dialogue," says Thissen -Dalí accepted the commission. Inspired by paintings from the 15th to 18th centuries, the golden ages of men's wear, Dalí created 12 sartorial canvas visions, all surreal, many prophetic. A blue-faced man with butterfly-decorated headpiece is "Man of the year 2000 who will be gastronomically stereoscopic and stereochemical", and a youth in green cravats with butterfly in mouth is "A maximum of 4 cravats worn by anaemic nympholeptic high school kids of the future".

"When I saw them, I wasn't very impressed," says Thissen. But after staring at it for 30 years on his office wall, he now appreciates Dalí's vision. "It's like haute couture. You can't believe someone's wearing it, but it shows a tendency."

Dalí's "plastic and mica hat filled with helium eleva-

beggars", for example is not that far from Galliano's tophatted Olliver Twist look, while his butterfly decorations presage McQueen's Thissen's PR knew Dali's ornate Indian garb on bluefaced models. Dalí's frockcoated "chamberlain in charge of the ex-hippies pilgrimage" looks not dissimilar to an Ozwald Boateng jacket, and his pink dandy with "useless lyrical appendages" bears an eerie resemblance to rose creations from Rykiel, Commes des Garcons, Conran and Cavalli.

And this merging of surreality and fashion reality may not be a fluke. Surrealism is born of the subconscious and so too is fashion prediction, says Scabal's scarce - "He didn't listen. It Michael Day, who helps divine the colours, textures and patterns of the company's current men's wear, and who recently translated Dalí's dreams into a suitcloth collection. What has made the label "hot" six months hence comes to Day



ting the spirits of depressed Tendency: or haute couture?



Made from Dalí cloth: a Pal Zileri outfit with one of the drawings

anywhere, any time: sitting on a train to Paris or plane to Tokyo, or reading a newspaper about something unconnected with fashion. "I'm convinced the subcon- a diagonal hatch amid scious plays a part," he says twilled base. By translating emphatically.

total abstraction, Day's subtion. We can smell a trend, he says. Add that to informal chats with other textile makers and the bottom line. and you get a collection. That non-aesthetic influ-Dalí collection.

"cybernetic gentleman with cassette drawers attached" become a geometric herring- requires distance between nascent trends. For each pro-

bone (the drawers) traversed by fine blue threads creating the illusion of movement, while the spring heel of a "shoe for Mercury" becomes external forces on a design-But whereas Dalí advo- er's psyche into something cated critical paranoia and tangible, cloth becomes a "good chronicler of the conscious is fuelled by sales times", says Day, reflecting statistics. "There's an evolu- Dalí's assertion that through

coming". Still, capturing the zeit- ing; a mix of the scientific, geist only creates successful fashion trends if wearers recognise that spirit, says ences such as politics, phi- Lorenzo Della Croce of Pal that Kjaer argues begets losophy and technological Zileri, which makes suits inventions can be woven from Scabal's Dalí cloth. into cloth may sound warped Della Croce reckons the by intuition we discover'." but then consider Scabal's revival of bold colours, for instance, subconsciously as Dalí's, only she creates The moving drawers of his accesses our desire for hap-social prototypes - speed piness in difficult times. hunters, karma tourists, eco However, astute prediction

creator and wearer. "Clients always say they like what they bought last year," says Croce. "We have to say what will sell in five years. That's intuition."

Anne-Lise Kjaer came across French mathematician Henri Poincaré, she knew she'd found her hero. Poincaré's assertion that intuition can be proved influenced Kjaer's clothes make them feel like fashion, "you always see war own methodology. She calls it multidimensional thinksocial, spiritual and emotional, with the intuitive dimension being the part cogent predictions. "As Poincaré said: 'By logic we prove;

Kjaer's world is as fertile gatherers - based on

totype, she then creates lifestyle scenarios (what they eat, favourite colours, etc) that become "like small films", and out of these imaginative extrapolations come future trends. "The future is not some place you go but one you create,' explains Kjaer.

"Fashion creates these small dreams, these princes and gods," she goes on. But while the fashion designer's dream "reflects a trend as it has affected him in his own personal way", the end result must touch something within us all, even if we don't yet know what.

Which raises the question: if predicting the future creates the future, will men soon wear butterflies to work? Della Croce says men are "100 per cent not ready" for Dalí extremes, but adds, "Dalí's paintings are about man and his personality. Individuality is definitely coming back."

And 30 years from now, he says, he imagines greater When trend forecaster surrealism: suits that retain body temperature or alter colour, more fabrics incorporating precious stones and metals, as men embrace Dali's notion that fine kings, and ignore the artist's less marketable strapline: "The constant tragedy of human life is fashion."

DETAILS

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