

# Photo*Saint*Germain

Simon Baker

Interview by W.M. Hunt

**What you like most about being creative?**

I am not sure that I am creative myself, but I enjoy working with, and being around creative people. I like artists and publishers, who have a positive attitude to making things, and getting things done. I enjoy the discussions that lead to books and exhibitions, all the time spent listening and thinking, much more than the time spent writing or installing in the end. It is a great privilege and pleasure to spend time with truly creative people, and to help them realise their ideas.

**Your best quality?**

Not for me to say!

**Your main fault?**

Being 'OCD'. I'm typing this from a totally empty giant desk in front of a very neat bookshelf etc etc. I think (in fact I know) that this drives other people mad.

**The natural talent you wish you had?**

The ability to write fiction (if that is a natural ability, I'm not sure...)

**If not yourself, who you would be?**

No idea.

**What you would change about your appearance?**

I always liked having red hair but as I get older and my once red hair becomes thinner and greyer, I'm not sure it's really the best...

**The qualities you most appreciate in a life partner?**

Senses of humour and style... intelligence, curiosity, patience...

**The qualities you most appreciate in a friend?**

Most of my really good friends like to drink and smoke too much, and hang out late at night and have fun. At the same time, they like discussing things, arguing even, while sharing and supporting each other. Above all, they don't take themselves too seriously.

**What makes you happy?**

Being with my partner. But when alone: reading, especially really great fiction, and records played on record players...

**What makes you miserable?**

Legal things, tax returns, impenetrable bureaucracy etc...

**What you would do on a midweek day off?**

If possible (it's not on often...) I would listen to Test Match Special on the radio. It is only broadcast when England are playing a five-day long cricket match. It is important to listen to, not watch cricket, which can be rather unspectacular... But Test Match Special resolves all its shortcomings. It is magic, like concrete poetry...

**The first art or photo book you bought, and where?**

Probably not the very first, but the most important early on was Dada and Surrealism Reviewed, by Dawn Ades, a 1978 exhibition catalogue of a show about surrealist magazines. It inspired me to do my PhD on surrealism, and later I made my first exhibition working with Dawn who became my mentor and taught me everything about making exhibitions... But I have never stopped loving self-published artists books/zines since then. I think I bought it in a little shop in the countryside in Kent in the early 90s.

**Your favorite writers?**

Always Kurt Vonnegut Jr., and recently: Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, Cixin Liu

**Your favorite neighborhood?**

Paris 5<sup>e</sup> – I just moved here in May and love it.

**Your favorite food and drink?**

Chinese Food, made by my partner, and any good red wine from Burgundy, chosen and shared with my partner...

**What you are listening to now?**

French voices from the next room. My French is not great, so it still sounds like soft background music.

**Your greatest regret?**

Marrying young and then having to get divorced.

**Your greatest hope?**

To stay with my partner – she is amazing.

**How you would prefer to die?**

Quietly, somewhere green, preferably quite old...

**Your favorite motto?**

'You, and me, and the moon' (actually more of a toast than a motto, used when drinking with a loved one, and has something to do with a story about a drunk Chinese monk, I think...)