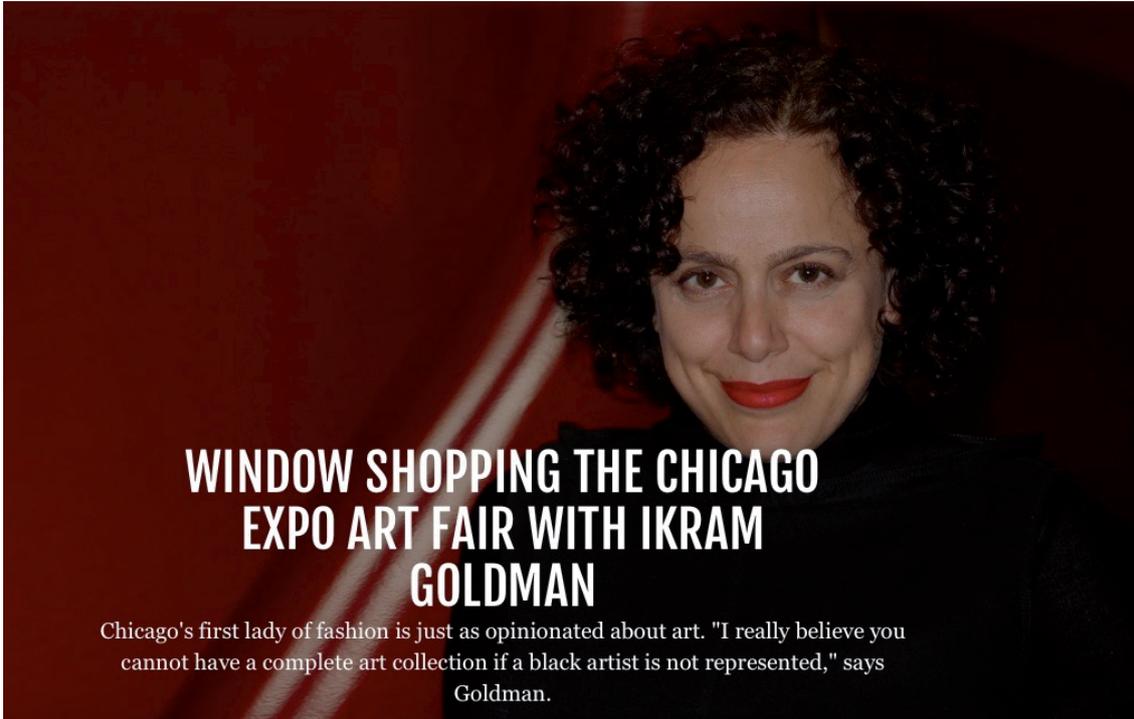


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Window shopping the Chicago Expo Art Fair With Ikram Goldman.

Earlier this week, Ikram Goldman was standing at the check-in of Expo Chicago, the recently revitalized art fair quickly becoming a staple of the art world calendar. The owner of the city's most famous boutique, Ikram, and fashion's ambassador to the Midwest, Goldman had just returned from the whirl of New York Fashion Week. She was due to head to Paris on Sunday, so she didn't have time to make it to the fair's VIP previews — there was the matter of parents' night at her children's school — but the vernissage was in full swing when she arrived and hit the floor running. Of course, she barely walked a foot before being asked to pose for a party picture. Goldman and her husband, Josh Goldman, obliged, but not before they'd spotted a diptych of nearly monochromatic squares, by the artist Sipho Mabona, hanging on the exterior of a gallery's booth. They stood in front of each component of the piece, and offered up deadpan expressions to the photographer. The event's publicist requested a "normal picture."

"That was normal," Goldman responded.

As she continued along the aisles, she engaged the social ebb and flow of the fair's opening while keeping a trained visual eye on the art. "When you get to the show, are there any galleries you make a beeline for?" I asked her.

"There are a few galleries we never miss, especially in Chicago," she said. "But I don't run to them. When I arrive in Paris on a Monday, I can't skip over to the show I'm excited to see on Wednesday. I have to see what comes first. Going by the set schedule — or the way the fair has arranged the galleries — allows the whole of what is being seen unfold before me. By the time I get to galleries I'm excited to see, the art I've already

seen puts the work in those booths into perspective for me."

The art of African American practitioners are on Goldman's mind at the moment. She and Josh focus much of their collecting on abstract photography, but art that takes the shifting and evolving African American experience, as well as those of other peoples, as inspiration have been commanding her attention. "Lately, I've been really into art that investigates culture, and that's because of the work of Nick Cave and the way his sound suits capture the heart of experiences that can be understood best in a visceral way." The last shoot she completed for her store was at Theaster Gates's Rebuild Foundation on the Chicago's long neglected, and primarily black, South Side. "To transform the concept of industrial re-use into a work of art that acknowledges the history of the site is, itself, an extraordinary work of art," she said. She added, "I really believe you cannot have a complete art collection if a black artist is not represented."



Ike Ude's "Sartorial Anarchy #17," 2013. Courtesy Leila Heller Gallery.

Goldman stopped in front of Ike Ude's Sartorial Anarchy #17, picturing a black man in a fez and a carpet wrapped around him like a skirt, at Leila Heller's booth. "This is beautiful," she said. She did not plan on buying any work on this night, but she was open to having her gaze captured. Sometimes, there are things that suddenly one cannot live without.

"Opening night? Aren't you usually at some fashion thing?" teased the photography dealer Catherine Edelman. The Goldmans have known Edelman for years; she has facilitated many of their acquisitions. In her booth, there was a photograph by the husband-and-wife team of Robert and Shana ParkeHarrison, whose work happens to hold pride of place in the Goldmans' living room. "It's a passage way that appears to be in a post-apocalyptic world," Josh explained. "People often ask if it's a Holocaust piece," Ikram said. "But for me, I see people still

walking through a passage, which shows a sense of hope. I see the goodness in it. But I'm a glass half-full sort of optimist."

"The problem with buying art now is that it's a full time job to be a collector," said Josh, whose parents have long been trustees of the Art Institute of Chicago. "There's so much information. The first step is to find something you like, but now a lot of research is required to learn the conceptual meaning behind it."



"Even if conceptually you love every piece created by a particular artist," Ikram added, "certain pieces become the ones on which you are focused, the one that moves you to the core. You have to look at everything whether it's an Alex Katz or a Robert Mapplethorpe." We lingered in front of one of the photographer's famous flower pictures. "Does that particular Mapplethorpe speak to you as the quintessential Robert Mapplethorpe?"

Josh eyed photographs by Edward Burtynsky, one of which the Goldmans owned, in the Weinstein Gallery booth, while Ikram seemed eager to examine the Kehinde Wileys over at Galerie Daniel Templon. "When we come to the fair, it's nice to see artists you know well or are getting to be familiar with in a new way; to see their new work or old work you didn't know or in context with other artists," she said. "But what's happening now with social media is artists are able

to expose their projects on their own. Lincoln Schatz, for example, does a Lake Series: images of Lake Michigan, which he posts almost daily. Those posts brighten my day and make me think about the world in a visceral way. It used to be serendipitous when I would see them, but now I look for them."

We paused at Construct #10, by Lyle Ashton Harris, a 1989 identity-politics image of a black man in white face wearing a tank top and a stretch of gossamer fabric wrapped around his waist like a tutu, exposing his penis. Contemplating such a picture can cause conversation to get deep. "I try to live every day of my life like it's my last," Goldman said softly.



Studio Drift's Fragile Future Diamond Chandelier. Courtesy Carpenters Workshop.
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Her reverie was snapped by the sight of the Fragile Future Diamond Chandelier by Studio Drift at Carpenter's Workshop Gallery. It's a design piece constructed of phosphorus bronze, dandelion seed heads, and LEDs. She first saw a version of it at Paris's Hotel Particulier and convinced a friend to commission a piece for her own home. "I don't only look at a photograph or a painting," Ikram said. "I look at objects

of daily use, objects of design, the composition of those things in space, and I see art. I curate my senses in the way for them to fill and nurture me so I can pour it back out into the world I live in."