

# JOY LOVES FASHION

...STYLISH TRENDS AND HOW TO WEAR THEM

## JLF Special: Artist Iké Udé's "Style & Sympathies"

by [JOY ADAEZE](#) posted on [10/18/2013](#)



If you've never heard of Nigerian-born artist **Iké Udé**, you'll surely never forget him after reading this post. Iké has created works of art for over 2 decades, one of my favorites being his [Cover Girl series](#) from the 90s – where he recreated iconic magazine covers like Harper's Bazaar, Vogue, and GQ with avant-garde flair.

Iké and I first met in September at a book party for my friend Cameron Silver (owner of vintage store, Decades). Soon after, he invited me to the opening of his new exhibition, “Style & Sympathies” at Leila Heller Gallery and I jumped at the chance to see his most recent offering. It is absolutely breathtaking. “**Style & Sympathies**”, a collection of 27 portraits made between 2009 and this year, features Iké in a jaw dropping array of clothing and accessories from a multitude of eras and ethnic backgrounds. One of my favorite aspects of this exhibit is the extremely vivid use of color. It’s quite extraordinary and a must see in person. I had a chance to speak with Iké afterwards to pick his brain. Here’s our conversation:

**Joy Adaeze: Your bold use of color serves as a dramatic constant in every image of this exhibition. What inspires you to create such strong imagery?**

Iké Udé: Many consider me a born colorist. I suppose that I am. Color plays a vital role in my composition and it also allows me an emotional expressiveness that I wouldn’t otherwise achieve to the utmost degree that I seek.





**JA: There is an acute attention to detail present in each image of Sartorial Anarchy (like the pair of tourmaline cabochon cuff links on the antique chair in #8). Is this a deliberate or natural addition to your work?**

IU: There isn't anything natural about my pictorial composition. Each and every detail, gesture, pose, color, clothes and their attendant accessories is carefully and lovingly weighed, considered and deployed accordingly for harmonious effect. That said, I ensure—without fail—that all my compositions are respectively naturalized so as to appear effortless. It is also important to note that to naturalize isn't the same as natural.

**JA: From conception to completion, walk us through your process of creating an image.**

IU: I commence in gathering varied costumes/fashions from all corners/cultures of the entire world and from every historical time period as I can get my hands on. Then I live with this collections for a very long period of time in order to familiarize myself with and gain thorough access to their core essence, distinctive characteristics, sartorial demands and the reconciliation of the evident challenges posed by their respective cultural and chronological subjectivity and/or specificity.

Thereafter, I slowly begin to imagine the chosen protagonist and its attendant counterpoints in various sartorial scenarios. In other words, at times, but not always, I'll identify an item—in a protagonist role—based on its architecture, hue, personality, texture, form; then attend to this protagonist by curating it with sartorial items in a musical equivalent of a counterpoint.

**JA: You use a broad range of vintage attire and accessories in Sartorial Anarchy. Has there been one era that you've felt a particular affinity towards?**

IU: I think that I like the very late Victorian and Edwardian fashion arguments in the way that they sort to edit/delineate preceding sartorial endeavors that they'd inherited from varied historical epochs and cultures.

**JA: How important was the usage of diverse ethnic backgrounds and eras to the production of Sartorial Anarchy?**

IU: I can't overstate it's importance.



Iké Udé's new exhibition will be at **Leila Heller Gallery** in Chelsea, 568 West 25th St until November 9. Don't miss out! You may see me there as I can't wait to witness his amazing artwork for a 2nd time.

An iPhone pic of Iké and I from the opening of the exhibit.





Special thanks to Iké Udé and Leila Heller Gallery.

xo

Joy