

## Iké Udé, Style and Sympathies @Leila Heller

By [Loring Knoblach](https://collectordaily.com/author/loring-knoblach/) / In [Galleries](https://collectordaily.com/category/galleries/) / October 25, 2013

**JTF (just the facts):** A total of 25 large scale color photographs, framed in white and unmatted, and hung against yellow, red, olive green, and white walls in the divided main gallery space and the smaller front room. All of the works are pigment prints on satin paper from the series *Sartorial Anarchy*, made in 2010 or 2013. Physical dimensions range from 48×44 to 62×44, with edition sizes either 3+3AP or 5+3AP. The exhibit also includes two glass vitrines displaying objects seen in some of the works: a hat from Uzbekistan, a Lord Byron mask, a fencing mask, and 18th century ruffled collar, and a book of Egyptian forms. A selection of 8 of the artist's portrait commissions is shown against dark blue walls in the back room. (Installation shots below.)



<https://collectordaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Ude-1-1024x768.jpg>



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**Comments/Context:** Iké Udé's over-the-top combinations of fashions push our notions of what "goes together" beyond any conception of normalcy. Using himself as a kind of digital mannequin, his works bring together an astonishing mixture of clothing and accessories from all over the globe, creating multiple composite selves brimming with conflicting cultural associations and allusions. While these colorful confections are like eye candy for fashion aficionados, Udé's careful amalgamations of historical style are never allowed to unravel into chaotic dissonance; refinement and harmony are discovered in even the most unlikely of blends.

Udé's confident characters exhibit an inspired sense of fashion synthesis, juxtaposing pieces from different periods and cultures with sartorial flair. Like a chef with a pantry full of exotic ingredients, he cooks up ensembles full of whimsy: a massive triangle afro paired with a Catholic cape and madras pants, an embroidered Japanese jacket with matching baseball knickers, a feathered Indian headdress set off by a US Marine uniform and Renaissance breeches, an octopus hat put together with a striped UK schoolboy blazer and billowing Nigerian trousers. Each image is meticulously documented with wall text that lists every single component of the fashion suite, from 17th century French shoes and Mexican sombreros to Egyptian pharaoh hair and Malian fabric skirts, making each picture into a puzzle to be unraveled, an identification test of fashion obscurities like Soviet armbands, Greek kilts, and swirling Nigerian hairstyles. As a series, while there are obvious ties to other artists who have explored constructed photographic identities (think Cindy Sherman or Samuel Fosso), I think the works are more focused on energized, informed and joyful fashion risk taking than on any underlying conceptual framework.

Udé's constructed mashups could easily have fallen into the trap of being ridiculous jokey costumes, but for the most part, I came away impressed by their ability to find connection and elegance in unexpected medleys. By breaking all the usual rules, the artist has created some vibrantly eclectic and quirkily original looks, equal parts fantastic fairy tale and exacting anthropological study.

**Collector's POV:** The prints in this show are priced between \$18000 and \$35000, based on the place in the edition. Udé's work has little secondary market history, so gallery retail remains the best/only option for those collectors interested in following up.

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