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Style File: The World's Most Elegantly Dressed

by Diane Pernet/photography Francesco Scavullo

Technically speaking, it only took Iké Udé, the editor-in-chief and publisher of *aRUDE* magazine, a few intense months to compile his 224-page volume *Style File*. In truth, it was kick started in 1995 when Udé first established the 'Style File' and 'Elements of Style' departments in *aRUDE* magazine.

Style File: The World's Most Elegantly Dressed profiles more than 55 of the most influential arbiters of style in the world today. Each of the subjects was asked the same questions and Udé was more delighted than surprised by some of the answers. On shoplifting, John Galliano had this to say: 'Never say never; but I love to window shop and to visually plunder the markets and vintage shops and stores for ideas and inspiration, to understand and see new cuts, then go away and try to create homage or run even

further with an idea. I don't want to encourage people to rob me, but I hope that my clothes drive you so crazy with desire you want to steal them! To design objects of desire is the object of the game!'

"As far as I'm concerned, John wove and wrought the most utterly nuanced answer on shoplifting," says Udé. "There are obviously some exceptional interviews in the book, but the poetry resides not in my favorite interviews but pockets of revelations that one unexpectedly finds in each interview, which is why I included them in the first place."

"Those whom I chose for the book, each boast a commendable stylistic quotient and moreover, redoubtable integrity on style," adds Udé. "They are not your typical, insufferable fashionista or trendy types that always clamor for the

latest thing. And these stylish elect, as it were, reinforced my profound aversion for trendy, fashion-infected majority who parade around "designer labels" with little or no embarrassment."

In addition to the profiles, there are annotated photo albums by photographers such as Scavullo, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Seydou Keita and Maripol. *Style File* also features numerous editorial features that deepen the book's exploration of enduring style such as the exposé on the Motown Look, the Belle Epoque, as well as archival portraits of fashion legends including Marchesa Casati and Diana Vreeland. The biggest challenge that Udé faced while writing this book was writing a biographical portrait for every individual interviewed for the book. "I'm a born aphorist, therefore I

especially love the collection of aphorisms—*Style and Sympathy*—that I wrote for the book," he says. Udé called upon his friends to complete the project. Valerie Steele, director of the Museum at F.I.T., wrote the foreword and Harold Koda, curator-in-charge of the Costume Institute at MOMA, wrote the introduction. "I love their intellectual faculties, their linguistic verve, grasp of history and their pleasure in sharing it with me," says Udé.

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