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THE

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SPOTLIGHT

From

DIASPORA
INVESTMENT
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RITA MAWUENA
BENISSAN *of*

SIHENE



GHANA
INVESTMENT
PROMOTION
CENTRE

Kindly introduce yourself and your business.

DID

My name is Rita Mawuena Benissan. I am an interdisciplinary artist and the founder of Si Hene. Through my artistic practice of the royal umbrellas and their foundation, I am creating the importance of preserving, accessibility and awareness of our archives focusing on Ghana's chieftaincy and traditional culture.



When did you start your business?

DID

Si Hene was founded on January 3rd, 2020 and is now almost three years old. Si Hene was able to establish a digital presence on social media through our digital archives on Instagram the first year. In our second year, we curated exhibitions such as helping to relaunch the National Museum of Ghana.

RB

What was your motivation for starting Si Hene?

DID

According to Marcus Garvey, "a people without knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture are like a tree without roots." It is more common now to see various facets of our history being acknowledged by the western world in university and museum exhibitions, collections, and databases, but it appears that only small bit of the documentation is located and owned in our country. To keep our history from being rewritten from a Western point of view. My long-term ambition is to establish Si Hene Museums and Research Institutions in each region of Ghana, with the spaces dedicated to the preservation and study of our chieftaincy. I want to offer a means by which many of our communities and age groups can better understand the significance of who we are as a people and a nation.

RB

What sector of Ghana's economy is your company focused on?

DID

I believe Si Hene controls two important economic sectors in Ghana: the development of the chieftaincy and tourism, as well as the creative arts sector.

RB

What services or products do you offer?

DID

The services that Si Hene provides is being first an accessible platform that provides ways for individuals access to our Chieftaincy and traditional culture archives from 1800s to modern day. We also provide services with working with institutions and Chieftaincy councils on curating and educating on ways in archiving and preservation of their information. With curating we put together and host virtually and in person talks and exhibitions and Installations.

RB

I am thrilled to introduce a new component to Si Hene called Kyiniye Design Studio, which empowers ordinary people in our community through the common use of the umbrella [weather and market]. We hope that each "Kyiniye" that a person or company acquires gives them power in their day-to-day life, similar to the symbol the Royal umbrellas are to the royal individual!



What informed your decision to work in & highlight Ghana?

DID

My research and passion to reclaim the power that the royal umbrella had brought me back home! I knew if I want to really achieve my goals for Si Hene to be a source for our chieftaincy history, I had to come back home.

RB

Art and design are such important parts of Ghana's heritage and culture that they are deeply ingrained in all the country's traditions. I want us to recognize and appreciate the importance of design and visual language in shaping our identity and culture. Consider how we can protect it so that future generations can benefit from the historical significance and stories associated with these elements. I hope that when people look at my work and their interaction through the archives, they feel the power presence as if they were that King or Queen in their own life



What are the positive outcomes so far, in investing in Ghana?

DID

I cannot speak for all sectors, but when it comes to holding the importance of preserving our history and culture, investing in this sector provides opportunity to expand how we view and share the stories of our people. Once we own ownership of our identity and cultural traditions, we can empower ourselves and the next generation through the stories of our past.

RB

What challenges have you encountered while navigating Ghana's business ecosystem and how have you overcome them?

DID

One phrase that comes to mind is "Culture is a Basic Need." On the African continent, especially in Ghana, where our traditions and cultures are so rich and deeply ingrained in our way of life. It's very common for us to fail to take the next steps in order to keep the stories alive. That is evident given the low number of museum institutions and the fact that our children are not learning about Ghanaian history in school. When we take ownership of our history, the rest of the world will take notice

RB



Kindly send a word of encouragement to other diasporas looking to return home or invest in the limitless opportunities the country presents.

DID

"If you can Dream it, you can Do it!" Si Hene has truly changed my life, opening doors and broadening my mind to where passion and self-determination can take you!

RB



What notable successes have you chalked since you started your career?

DID

My experience with Si Hene was highlighted in Artnew, one notable art publications globally. It brings joy being aware that Si Hene is a valuable resource for academics, students and everyday people nationally and internationally. Being a part of the team that reopened the National Museum and ensuring that my umbrellas and Si Hene archive works were included in the exhibition are just a few of the successes I've had.



RB

SI HENE on SOCIAL MEDIA:

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