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A Lifestyle...Expanding Opportunities

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The Style Edition

LAW ROACH,
MILLEN MAGESE:

**On fashion,
style and the
modelling world**

Editor's note



Happy New Year and welcome to a year that is already proving to be an exciting one.

As you may have noticed, for the very first time, our very first edition of the year features two cover personalities who are huge fashion and style individuals making great strides in two continents. While Law Roach is a celebrity stylist whose Midas touch has been known to transform many A-list celebrities in America from plain looking Mary Janes to style stars, the other, Millen Magese is no push over in the modelling world. Besides having strutted the runways of New York, Milan, Paris and Johannesburg, she is known to give of her time, resources and talents to charitable organizations, not also forgetting her self-named foundation through which she inspires and educates young girls in Tanzania, her home country, on endometriosis.

For these reasons, both Law Roach and Millen Magese were drafted to be facilitators at the Master Classes of the 2019 GTBank Fashion Weekend, a platform for ideas to be shared and nurtured while also providing fashion entrepreneurs the unique opportunity to learn from global industry leaders and experienced brands.

Settle down to the interesting read and you can be sure to learn a few things from both interviews.

Once again, Happy New Year!

Nkarenji Ukonu



There is a huge deposit of talents in Nigeria

— Celebrity stylist, Law Roach

Law Roach who likes to be referred to as an 'Image Architect', is one of America's most celebrated stylists whose works have appeared in some of America's leading lifestyle publications such as Vogue, GQ amongst others. Roach who started his career in the fashion industry, selling vintage clothes from the trunk of his car, has been credited with the style transformation of legendary superstar, Celine Dion and a

clientele that boasts of other celebrities such as Zendaya, Anne Hathaway, Ariana Grande, Tiffany Haddish etc. The image architect who was one of the facilitators at the 2019 GTBank Fashion Weekend spoke on how he successfully transitioned from selling fashion items from the booth of his car to becoming a celebrity stylist as well as his thoughts on the Nigerian fashion industry.

How did you get introduced to the world of fashion?

I think my first introduction to fashion was actually my grandmother. Attending church with my grandmother was such a delight for me especially on Sunday mornings. It was such a process. Watching her make-up, dress up, wear her shoes, hat and jewelry were so interesting. So I think me watching that entire process really made me obsessed with the art form of being a woman which encompasses fashion.

Why fashion?

I think fashion chose me because fashion was the only thing I was ever really interested in. It was the only thing I was ever good at and it just made me happy. So, I just started to like go out to try if I can be successful and make it and by the grace of God I have.

You started out by selling vintage items from your car before transitioning into a celebrity stylist. How would you describe that transition?

It is so amazing, I mean my transition to becoming who I am today. I met Zendaya and then one day Kanye West came into the store just randomly, where I stocked some of my vintage items and picked some stuff and the news travelled all over the world. So a lot of stylists started to come around. So when I sighted that they were making a living out of it; it seemed like they were happy. I felt like I could do it too so that was how we started the transition.

What is it like working with some of the biggest stars like Celine Dion and others?

It was funny that I hadn't dreamt of a dream that big so when Celine Dion





called and asked to meet me and work with me, it was incredible. I approach everybody the same way and that is why I am really happy and grateful and honoured that she choose me. It was incredible because she is such a huge star and she is such an icon. So to be able to work with her and know her on a personal level was probably incredible.

How come you have not transitioned from being a stylist to a designer?

I think it's all about timing but when I am ready and the opportunity presents itself I will do it. I have done things with Zendaya; we have designed things together. When it's my time to happen you know things happen exactly when it's supposed to.

When you see a star because every star is unique, what comes to mind on what you are going to do as regards the person's styling?

You know for me, someone that we know might have a really distinct style. So you know you just try to follow that and to build on that. You know some people want to style from the bottom and some people want to start from ground zero. They want something new and fresh, so you need to figure out who they are, so whichever one that is I just have to work from that.

You literally transformed Celine Dion's style from just having the-girl-next-door-



look to a super style look. How did you achieve that feat?

I think everybody had an idea of who Celine is, who she was and I had to be close to her to really figure out her style. She is a fashion girl, she loves it, appreciates it, she knows it and wanted to take the risk. She just wanted her inside to be her outside and I glad I achieved that. She has been around for 30 years and I don't think anyone has given her the opportunity to really evolve her style.

On your personal note, how would you define your own style?

It switches, it changes because it all depends on my mood. I love vintage, I love a lot of vintage outfits and sometimes I wear a lot of well-tailored suits. I think clothes are our biggest expressions and who you should. I feel your clothes are your costumes. Every superhero has a costume.

What are your favourite fashion pieces?

I love clothes, bags, and shoes. I also think every woman needs a beautiful handbag and classic dress coat and a great black dress.

How much of the Nigerian fashion industry are you in tune with?

I have been trying to visit Nigeria for a very long time. I have followed all the designers who showcased at the Lagos Fashion Week and 'Orange Culture' is one of my favorite Nigerian designers. So I have not honestly been able to make contact with so many Nigerian fashion designers. That is why I was so excited about coming to Nigeria to use this opportunity to get to know them and of course buy some of their clothes. I just need their connection so I can get their clothes for my clients.

So what is your assessment of our fashion industry far?

There is a huge deposit of talent here and I think what is going on in the Nigerian fashion industry is incredible. There are a

lot of black Americans that are very interested in visiting Nigeria. I have a lot of friends who visit Nigeria especially during Christmas which I heard is insane (in a good way). I think for black people in America, what is happening in Lagos and Ghana is really important and we want to be a part of it. Nigerian fabrics are rich and there is so much we can do with it. I know some Nigerian designs, fabrics have been worn by American celebrities but I know it can get better. You guys can do more with the right support and network.

Why are you called the image architect?

It is because I am better than other people. It's just a way to showcase what I do and differentiate myself.

Do you love our indigenous fabrics like the Ankara?

I am taking this trip as an opportunity to familiarise myself with your fashion industries and everything in between.

What inspired your Tommy Hilfiger and Zendaya collection?

It was inspired by just black women and the idea of black women who are fashion icons. It was our own way to create these fantasies of what if the black women were praised and celebrated like white American. It is basically to show love and respect to our women that came and opened doors for Zendaya.

Was it your first shot at designing?

No it isn't. We did some shoots in the past but that collaboration was the biggest of them and Tommy Hilfiger was really gracious to give us everything we needed. I have done designs for tours. I design the outfits and entire ensemble for Ariana Grande's last two world tours. I always have a hand in designing but that was the first time I actually had a hand in a full design collection.

Are you a fan of our food or music perhaps?

I worked with Star Boy (Wizkid). I love Wizkid and I dressed him for the BET awards a couple of years ago. I just met Davido at Idris Elba's wedding where he performed.



Aspiring models should brand themselves and have a good platform

– Fashion model, Millen Magese

Millen Magese is a renowned fashion model and humanitarian who when she is not strutting runways in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, she can often be found giving her time, talents, and energy to making a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate through her significant contributions to charities such as the Tanzania Education Trust, African Rainforest Conservancy and the MacDella Cooper Foundation and her self-named foundation through which she inspires and educates young girls in Tanzania, her home country, on endometriosis. A former Miss Tanzania, Magese who is currently signed with Ford Models in New York and Ice Model Management in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a facilitator at the 2019 GTBank Fashion Weekend. She opens up in this interview about her humble beginnings, her struggles with endometriosis as well as how aspiring models can position themselves for opportunities in the fashion world.

It looks like you are back to modelling. But you did quit at a point

I did but started again. I stopped modelling because I needed some time

off to have my child. I needed to be sure that I could have a child without having my womb removed because as you know I suffer from endometriosis. After years of battling severe endometriosis pain and undergoing 13 surgeries, my persistence paid off and I had my son, Prince Kairo which means 'Victorious One' in Arabic. I allowed him to grow a little before returning to modelling as quickly as I could. Obviously, my priorities have changed. I do not look at modelling the way I used to before. Now, I am looking way beyond just cat walking and thinking about investing in it. I am just looking at expanding my horizons in the modelling industry.

What inspired you to begin modelling when you started in year 2000?

My family. I never wanted to be a model. I wanted to be a lawyer. My dad's finances at a point went from a 100 to 0 and I had to do something to help my family. The first job I took was as a waiter but then I also did the job of washing the dishes and mopping the floor each day after close of work at the restaurant. That continued until I passed my exams to go to the university. But my father couldn't afford to pay for my fees and so I continued to figure out what to do as I needed to go to the university and also had to figure out a way to help my family. My mum was working two jobs then and my dad was down with stroke. We were really down and when I say down, I mean down.

So modelling wasn't quite my passion, if it was, I would have started when I was much younger. Besides, I was too shy to be the centre of attention. Way back then, I used to dress like a Somalian Arabic girl. It was after I won Miss Tanzania that I became more inclined to dressing up more.

How did you nab your first modelling job?

Through an agency. And when I got it, I didn't quite know what to expect but the moment I began modelling, it was as if the flood gates of modelling jobs opened. There was never a fashion week I missed, especially in Africa, it was back to back, bookings.

What would you consider to be the challenges facing the modelling industry?

Now things have changed. Then, you had to go for casting calls to get a job but now, you can be scouted through the social media. I am not complaining but people should understand that modelling isn't about one but about selling a product. In those days, you would answer certain questions and then go through a series of photoshoots to determine if you have any unique selling point. But these days, it is the number of followers you have on social media that counts. So I advise today's generation of aspiring models





to brand themselves as the opportunity is there, to market themselves very well, so when the client sees them, they already have a good platform.

Did you suffer from any form of sexual harassment as it is known to happen in the modelling industry?

No I didn't. But I believe it is all about how you position and present yourself. You need to know your worth, know what to do and do it correctly. I mean if an agency isn't interested in me as a model, how can I give sex? So, if a model does her job as he/she should, no one will come to you to ask for sexual favours.

You are hooked on giving back. What prompted this and what work does your foundation do?

My foundation, Millen Magese Foundation is about reproductive health education. In 2013, I met with an endometriosis excision specialist and EndoFound Co-Founder, Dr. Tamer Seckin and immediately felt impressed with his passion for helping women with endometriosis. That encounter birthed the Millen Magese Foundation and through it, I use my courageous plight to inspire and educate others on endometriosis. I empower African women and girls about endometriosis and reproductive health because endometriosis is something that you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy.