

Michael Eure Show Transcript

Special Guest Obelia Exum

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EURE: Hello this is Michael Eure, and I'd like to invite you to The Michael Eure Show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube Channel.

EURE: Good afternoon and welcome to the Michael your show today. We are very happy to have our special guest Obelia Exum, who's a graphic design supervisor at the North Carolina Museum of History. Tell us a little bit about yourself. I know you're from Wayne County. Tell us about that.

EXUM: Yes, I am from Wayne County. I grew up in Goldsboro, North Carolina. I consider myself still to be just a little country girl from Greensboro. So I grew up there and went to graduate from high school and went to Wayne Community College and I love Wayne community because they were like, the roots of helping me begin my career, right? Yes.

EURE: Do you think that prepared you for your travel? You went to North Carolina A&T after that?

EXUM: I did. I did. It definitely prepared me for that. It prepared me for that. I appreciate and I always say this when I think of weighing community. I appreciate all the tutoring that I received there because it definitely prepared me academically.

EURE: Okay.

EXUM: Yes.

EURE: And Wake Tech students just know this is a great place. All the community colleges in North Carolina have great, great resources and prepare our students. Now tell us about your NC State experience. I know you went there for your graduate studies.

EXUM: Yeah. Had t and i k. Went to, came to NC State from North Carolina A&T that graduated from there. I was an art education major at A&T with emphasis in design in graphic design, and then I left North Carolina A&T and went to NC State. And then there is where I majored in graphic design. Going towards getting my master's.

EURE: Tell us a little bit about your work experiences and how you wound up at the Museum of History. Because a lot of people don't even know museums have graphic designers.

EXUM: And that is so funny because there are a lot of people I'm sure that, I've been at the Museum of History for a pretty good while. So I'm gonna say for at least 25 years. So my experiences my experiences include alone. I kind of want to say my career is mostly based there at the North Carolina Museum of History, but also along that way I have also taught at universities, visual communication courses, graphic design courses, as well. And, and then and then you have your freelance and I'm sharing that with you. Because all of that is just a part of my, what I call my graphic design career. But working at the Museum of History has been the place I came out from NC State and began to work and then also teaching there at the universities.

EURE: Now, you did some magazine work. Did you submit some?

EXUM: And here's the deal I we do and just saying what we cover at the museum effacer is graphic designers there two other graphic designers that are there as well in the very beginning we started as one and so that was just me It's been a long time. So we cover branding, there at the Museum of History. We work on thematic loops when it comes down to branding, thematic looks for exhibitions. So part of our job is to come up with that look for exhibits. We also work on promotional items that go along with the exhibition. So we may come up with a look and then have that look, it may be the title entry, sometimes it is, and then have that look, apply it to all of the promotional materials. We do collateral materials as well, credit materials, I call them credit, but magazines. We do that as well. We have several of them, program calendar, any of the pieces that you see coming out of the Museum of History, North Carolina, chances are the graphic designers worked on that. And they have some specific ones I work on.

EURE: Okay. Now, do you want to?

EXUM: Oh, I'm so sorry.

EURE: Show us any of your pieces? Now tell us about this.

EXUM: Yeah, let me just share with you on Ernie Barnes and if I can get, I'll just show this one first. And this is the title entry that I worked on for Ernie Barnes exhibit. And it took a lot of planning to sort of get to this place where we, we decided, "Okay, here is the image that we're going to select." And coming up with takes in a type face, that sort of thing pulling all of that together, getting the aesthetic of who Ernie Barnes was. And so you asked me to tell you about that one. But I had to start here, because this is where the branding began another game to work on and develop that title panel, with the drum major of the piece and so this of course, is a painting in the exhibit. I, and we, thought this image of drum major, being a single image is where it would really look good visually, would work well visually with the exhibit because Ernie Barnes has a lot of images, as you well know, a lot of figures and a lot of his images. But yeah, very bright colors, that sort of thing as part of his trademark. I had to come up with a title and a look for that. Select text selecting type faces that go

along with that. And I'm pointing this out because I'm getting ready to talk about that a little bit. And then the wood, which is a part of who Ernie Barnes actually was.

EURE: Thank you.

EXUM: When he dealt with his father, part of his look on many of his paintings, he has that wood included. He asked me about this and I was getting to it. So here is a banner and I worked on the title entry and we came up with, we're going to use the drum major. Then we began to apply and this is part of the branding and that's what I brought that because this is a banner that we came up with and this is and as well.

EURE: And Ernie Barnes, the exhibit at the museum, for anyone who has not went, it's awesome, it'll be there until March 3rd. And the museum is open from nine to five, Monday, seven days a week, right? And it's free.

EXUM: Nine to five, Monday through Friday,

EURE: Okay. Don't forget Saturday and Sunday.

EXUM: And Saturday, and then Sunday nine to five, and then Sunday it opens at twelve.

EURE: Okay. It's a 12 o'clock.

EURE: Anyway, for more information, you can always go to the website, ncmuseumofhistory.org. And everything is there. So the Ernie Barnes exhibit. We had some kids from South Africa, it was the first time I went to go see it.

EXUM: Sure.

EURE: You were their special guests?

EXUM: Sure.

EURE: I would say tour guide. Tell us a little bit about what to expect if they come to that particular exhibit. If you want to pop out some highlights of it.

EXUM: In Ernie Barnes?

EURE: Yes.

EXUM: Yes. Ernie Barnes figures and it's just amazing how he, what he paints and why he paints. Part of his history is that he wasn't allowed as just a child living with his mother and father wasn't allowed to go out to the club. He wasn't allowed. He went to church a lot.

EURE: Okay.

EXUM: And so one night he slipped out and went to the Durham armory. That's the story that's being told. And once he went to the armory, there was a dance. And with the dance, of course, it began to excite him because usually young kids living out there, "Oh my god, look at these people. I've never seen it before." And so he began to I would imagine, he began to take those figures. A lot of those figures are in his paintings, and I'm segwaying into sugar shack. But he came back from there. And one of the things I noticed about what he does in his painting sugar Shack I believe it's an example of that armory. Once he came back, and started painting Sugar Shack and in other paintings that of his works, I have noticed that a lot of them are when we talk about growing up in Durham so the images are paintings of him growing up in Durham what he experienced when he went to North Carolina Central University. And people in his paintings are often very, very, very colorful. He has energy, a lot of energy and a lot of movement, a lot of expressions. He's into detail I think that's really interesting. I think about it as a graphic designer. So he has a lot of banners I'm noticing in many of them, typefaces he uses. Sometimes he zooms in you can just look at people's shirts, what they're wearing.

EURE: Alright, so we have a question. Obelia.

EXUM: Okay. We have a question, huh? Okay.

Q&A: Was he political at all his beliefs was he writing to change the world?

EXUM: And when we say change the world now you know that

Q&A: Was there an agenda in his paintings, besides just painting.

EXUM: You know, Ernie Barnes grew up as a child he was bullied. Okay.

EURE: Right. And I think that's a great story of him being bullied and then lifting weights

EXUM: Exactly.

EURE: Making it to high school and the coach asked him to be on the team because people may not know that Ernie Barnes was an NFL athlete, and he won a scholarship in North Carolina Central as well. Yeah. And I know the story from you. People that are in between his plays on the field, they nicknamed him big Rembrandt.

EXUM: They did, they did.

EURE: Yes. See? I remember what you said.

EXUM: So but that question, saying that though I believe him going up and coming out being bullied, I believe when you say, "Is there a message to the world?" I believe, "I want to show images of people around us and those who are not as important. Some of them are important. Some of them are not. I'm going to go to the club, take pictures of that fashion show, take pictures of that on a football field. I'm going to be painting and drawing, I'm going to talk about politics in one of my paintings." So there are a lot of paintings that he has, where he is sharing with you who he is.

EURE: And I think that he also expresses, as you say, everyday people, and I think about that painting, The Homecoming Week. It could be central hillside, but you see the parade and the drum majors, and he does a lot with musicians and athletes.

EXUM: He does he does and every day people thinking about Jake.

EURE: Yes. For the people that don't know, tell him what Jake is?

EXUM: Yeah, but the painting of Jake, Jake's a pool player. So if you go and see that painting is really very interesting. He's shooting pool. And it's one of the more popular, it's one of the more popular paintings there at the museum. Everybody loves it, but I believe we love it because we know that character named Jake, if you've ever hung out, like the guy down at the bar, the guy down at the shooting pool, that sort of thing. He likes to bring emphasis to a pool player. Someone as simple as that. And but also in one of his got there are two pool player paintings that he has in there. A couple of the thoughts was that this guy was a smart student. Look at this precision as he shoots, as he holds his hands and he's getting ready to hit the ball, I believe. And Ernie Barnes I know was about precision. "Now I want you to look at this, it's a smart man."

EURE: And some of the paintings at the museum they range from his beginning until the end. But what I want you to talk about, I call it a fashion show that might not be the name when the ladies are with their eyes closed. Can you tell us a little bit about that? I think you have a little right up in the museum. It's towards the end. And it's just some women on a runway.

EXUM: Yeah, I remember that when that was an unfinished if I'm not mistaken, that one was unfinished, because Ernie Barnes will constantly can have some paintings or I need to go back and complete it. Apparently he was he did come back and sketch that. I want to believe in that picture, I remember seeing just the women on stage. I remember seeing if you will look at audience you can just imagine, "Well, who are these people? This must be somebody from New York. This must be someone who was here to you know, actually get the drill who was this person?" There seemed to be an eclectic mix of people in their audience and as they were watching there on the stage. And the women in that painting were elongated. I guess I don't remember saying any longer but Ernie Barnes paintings, he is known for that elongated style. Definitely.

EURE: Right and then there's a one about boxing. I think this is a boxing match. You talk about the religion they seemed like it was a scriptural version, what was that?

EXUM: It was a scripture.

EURE: But I don't really read the scripture. But it was just whatever.

EXUM: Well it was another one of his because that's what I was saying about him. He would often, I think of him so much just in terms of graphic design, because he will paint these signs and have these scriptures sometimes hidden in his paintings. And so you have to look at it. That particular painting that you're talking about in the rain, apparently that went for eight years. Yeah, that went for he worked on that, for at least that amount of time and apparently it started with one image and it began to grow around the ring.

EURE: We're going to have a question from Dr. Roddenberry.

Q&A: Tom Rankin wants to know, did he live most of his life in Durham after the NFL? And was there an artist or teacher who inspired his style?

EXUM: There was a teacher that inspired his style. And that teacher, it was said that a couple of things one was he was, one of the teachers asked him to come and stretch his muscles. That was it, you know? And he had a moment because like I was saying he was bullied when he was growing up. So I believe that that particular coach was saying to do there and I'm trying to remember, one of the coaches did come to him and ask him to stretch his muscles. And so he is used to. He was used to, he did get inspired by that particular coach to go out and that's the way he started drawing. Because in a lot of his pictures, he has that sort of muscle tone and that strength. When he's reaching, he has a lot of there. In his pain, he was inspired by a coach. He was inspired by one other person as well.

EURE: But back to him, I know he wound up in Los Angeles, and he met long Norman Lear. We didn't talk about good times. But that's another story and we want to talk about that a little bit.

EXUM: Good times. Yeah, he's that's the painting that everybody knows sugar shack and JJ. Dynamite. That's the one that everybody knows and is excited about. I know to come and see, Sugar Shack, but that was often hanging in the back. Apparently there were two Sugar Shack paintings as well. I'm so excited to be able to (UNINTELLIGIBLE) and and to see all of the things that are being offered to us as staff (UNINTELLIGIBLE) as a professional, being able to do graphic design (UNINTELLIGIBLE) it's an exciting place to work and we get to do some exciting things I didn't get to show.

EURE: To close out, I thank everyone for tuning in and next month, September 20th. We'll have Detrick Clark from the DHIC which stands for Downtown Housing Improvement Corporation, get back out money for your housing if you're students or people in the audience that want to get money they give up \$60,000 for down payments, etc. So tune in and you can talk to Detrick to find out all the programs they have.

EXUM: And I'm showing this I got a little spreads. But this was discovered at governor's just want to give you an idea. We work on exhibitions and just another entirely different thing. Another exhibit and then also right now we have 1000 words. All of this, coming up with a brand new exhibition, and just taking their brand to promotional pieces. So I just want to share that with you.

EURE: Thank you very much.

EXUM: Okay, well, graphic design for Circle Magazine- Oh, there it is. Hold that up for just a minute. So and I say to you all don't forget this is Circle Magazine. This is still (UNINTELLIGIBLE) I worked on and pretty interesting, but don't forget this has World War One Exhibits featured. But it has a lot of interesting articles in there. So do take a look at that. And then there's a program calendar also for the Museum of History I want you all to come by and visit us.

EURE: Thank you. And for you, have a great day and look forward to you next time.