

Ernie Merlán

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(818) 620-3617

Proven Creative Director with 20+ years of experience building and creative teams. Trusted partner amongst artists, clients, vendors, city officials and the media.

Exceptional Minds, Sherman Oaks, CA 2011 - 2018

A nonprofit vocational school and working studio that prepares young adults on the autism spectrum for careers in digital animation and visual effects.

Executive Director 2016 - 2018

- Built organization from 9 students to over 250 students year round.
- Directed and led organization in the school, studio, operations, development and finance.
- Established organization wide policy and directives for human resources, finance, curriculum development and working visual effects and animation studios.
- Manage \$3 million dollar budget serving over 250 families.
- Graduated 10 students to full time employment within the entertainment industry with 20 additional students working in-house on a contracts within the studio system. Partial employer/client list includes: Marvel, ILM, HBO and Cartoon Network.
- Proudly created a culture of teamwork and loyalty by fostering a supportive environment with measurable goals.
- Designed and produced all marketing materials, website, videos and physical spaces.

Co-Executive Director/ Program Director 2011 - 2016

- Led founding team to create a training program for young adults on the Autism Spectrum to develop their natural talents in animation, editing, rotoscoping, web design and graphics arts.
- Built and oversaw team of 24 employees including psychologist, behaviorist, teachers, supervisors, visual effects artists, animators, and IT.
- Worked with a dedicated board and staff to raise 750k a year in donations.
- Completed original 10 year strategic plan in 3 years, consistently achieving over 90% of measurable goals year after year.
- Developed and fostered donor stewardship programs, marketing and media campaign strategies.

Merlán Creative, North Hollywood, CA 2010 – 2011

Animation and design firm providing creative services for the Consumer, Film and Theme Park Industries

Principal/Owner

Directed business development, budgets, creative pitch meetings, product delivery, client and city partnership development and management. Partial employer/client list includes: Disney Imagineering, Disney, Universal Studios, Morley Builders, and Live with Regis and Kelly.

Iguana Digital, North Hollywood, CA 2007 –2010

Animation and design firm providing creative services for the Consumer, Film and Theme Park Industries

Co-Owner

Digital graphics, animation and 3D modeling agency. Partial client list includes: Disney Imagineering, Disney Special Events and Universal Creative.

Film and Television Credits include:

"Black Panther" - Marvel - Executive Director of Exceptional Minds (VFX crew)	2018
"Star Wars: The Last Jedi" - Lucas Films - Executive Director of Exceptional Minds (End Credits)	2017
"Doctor Strange" - Marvel - Executive Director of Exceptional Minds (VFX crew)	2016
"Ant-Man" - Marvel - Executive Director of Exceptional Minds (VFX crew)	2015
"Dawn of the Planet of the Apes" - 20th Century - ED of Exceptional Minds (VFX crew)	2014
"Legend of Zorro" - Sony Pictures - Scenic Lead, Mexico	2004
"Mask of Zorro" - Sony Pictures - Scenic Lead, Mexico	1997
"Dance with Me" - Sony Pictures - Field Art Director, Dominican Republic	1998
"Pee Wee' Playhouse" - HBO -(TV Show) Dialect Consultant	1990

Theme Park Experience:

Universal Studios Port Aventura, Spain 1999/2000/2001/2002

Field Art Director

Leading crews, managing vendors, working with park executives and local government entities

Shows and Rides: *Mediterranea, Templo Del Fuego, Sea Odyssey, and Hotels Port Aventura and El Paso*

Winner of THEA's Award for Outstanding Achievement, 2003, Best Amusement Park attraction.

Walt Disney Imagineering - Mural Makers Contractor (Tujungu) 1994-2002

Senior Scenic Artist

Lead painter for sets, backdrops, props and logo design.

Partial Shows and Rides list: Indiana Jones, Toon Town, World of Disney, Innoventions, Tokyo Disney, Seas, Buzz Lightyear, Disney's California Adventure and the renovation of It's a Small World.

Teaching Experience:

West Los Angeles College, Westside Extension Program 2002-2004

Instructor

Classes: Faux Finish, Advanced Finishes and Trompe l'oeil.

Hollywood CPR, Apprenticeship Program for the Entertainment Industry 2002-2003

Director of the Scenic Paint Department

Designed and supervised production and finishes of sets, backdrops and props. Responsible for LOCAL 816 and LOCAL 729 curriculum, teachers and materials.

Education:

BA in Illustration, California State University, Northridge

Storyboard and Design, The Art Academy of Los Angeles

Advanced Maya and After Effects, Friedman/Studio Arts, Los Angeles

Maya Fundamentals, Video Symphony, Institute of Entertainment Media Production, Burbank

Community Service:

Boy Scouts of America, Founder of Muralism.org, Absolut Chalk, LA Works, LA Unified Schools, Ahead with Horses, Archdiocese of Los Angeles