

# ERNIE MERLAN

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- **Creative Director** – More than 20 years of experience in building and leading high-performing teams
- **Driver & Visionary** – Executive director of one-of-a-kind creative vocational school
- **Community Leader** – Inspires and connects people and projects with passion
- **Artist & Storyteller** – Hands-on and collaborative creative contributor, partner and manager

## Professional Experience

### **Exceptional Minds, Sherman Oaks, CA**

*Executive Director*

(2011-2018)

Drove the growth and success of nonprofit vocational school and working studio that prepares young adults on the Autism spectrum for careers in digital animation and visual effects. Managing a \$3 million budget, oversaw fiscal management, board and donor relations, community outreach, program and business development, operations, and creative delivery of animation, editing, rotoscoping, web design and graphic arts to clients.

- Graduated 10 students to full-time employment; additional 20 students working in-house on contracts with studios including Marvel, HBO, Cartoon Network and Industrial Light & Magic (ILM)
- Raised \$3 million over seven years in partnership with dedicated board and staff
- Increased enrollment and capacity from nine students to over 250 year-round

### **Merlan Creative, North Hollywood, CA**

*Principal/Owner*

(2010-2011)

Directed business development, pitch meetings, product creation and delivery, and client and city relationship management. Strong reputation and quality of product resulted in contracts with The Walt Disney Company, Disney Imagineering, Universal Studios Hollywood, Morley Builders and “Live with Regis and Kelly.”

### **Iguana Digital, North Hollywood, CA**

*Co-owner*

(2007-2010)

Led creative development and delivery of digital graphics, animation and 3D modeling for creative services agency. Client list includes Disney Imagineering, Disney Special Events and Universal Creative.

### **Universal Studios – Port Aventura Theme Park, Spain**

*Field Art Director*

(1999-2002)

Mobilized crews, managed vendors, and partnered with park executives and local government entities to design and deliver rides and attractions, earning THEA Award for Outstanding Achievement, Best Amusement Park Attraction, 2003.

### **Disney Imagineering, Tujunga, CA**

*Senior Scenic Artist*

(1994-2002)

Developed and created sets, backdrops, props and logos for Disney theme park shows and rides including Indiana Jones, Toon Town, Tokyo Disney and the renovation of “It’s a Small World.”

## Film Credits

“Good Night Scare Crow” – Werner Krow Productions <i>Production Designer &amp; Art Director</i>	(2019)
“Black Panther” – Marvel <i>Executive Director, Exceptional Minds, VFX crew</i>	(2018)
“Star Wars: The Last Jedi” – Lucas Films <i>Executive Director, Exceptional Minds, End Credits</i>	(2017)
“Doctor Strange” – Marvel <i>Executive Director, Exceptional Minds, VFX crew</i>	(2016)
“Ant-Man” – Marvel <i>Executive Director, Exceptional Minds, VFX crew</i>	(2015)
“Dawn of the Planet of the Apes” – 20th Century <i>Executive Director, Exceptional Minds, VFX crew</i>	(2014)
“Legend of Zorro” – Sony Pictures <i>Scenic Lead, Mexico</i>	(2004)
“Dance with Me” – Sony Pictures <i>Field Art Director, Dominican Republic</i>	(1998)
“Mask of Zorro” – Sony Pictures <i>Scenic Lead, Mexico</i>	(1997)

## Technical Skills

3D Computer Simulations  
Photoshop, Premiere, Illustrator, Sketchup, Maya, After Effects  
Dreamweaver, Flash, Keynote, MS Office  
Fluent in Spanish

## Community Involvement

Boy Scouts of America, Absolut Chalk, LA Works, LA Unified Schools, Ahead with Horses, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, muralism.org (founder)

## Education and Certifications

- BA, 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
- IATSE Local 800, IAPPA, TEA, VES