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***The North Carolina Roots of Artist Ernie Barnes at the NC Museum of History
Exhibition Opening June 29, 2018***

“This is my home place. This is where I grew up, and my affection for this state is organic. My roots lie here in this very soil. Elementary, high school and college were all within walking distance. This proximity to some of the most meaningful experiences in my life never leaves my consciousness. I live it. I paint it. It remains the foundation of my outward life and my sense of spiritual community.”

—Ernie Barnes, November 18, 1999 (accepting the University Award from the University of North Carolina Board of Governors in Chapel Hill)

RALEIGH, N.C. – *Good Times* are in store at the North Carolina Museum of History on June 29, 2018.

The NC Museum of History presents [*The North Carolina Roots of Artist Ernie Barnes*](#), a new exhibition showcasing his original artworks and artifacts from his life. **Ernie Barnes**, a native North Carolinian and NFL football player, became one of the nation's foremost African-American artists.

In his prolific body of work, Barnes chronicled his personal experiences with football, music, dance, love, sports, education, church and the South. His art is recognizable for its unique style of elongation, energy, and movement. Affectionately nicknamed “Big Rembrandt” by his teammates, he is the first professional American athlete to become a noted painter.

Barnes is known in pop culture for his art on the television series *Good Times*. Most notable is Barnes’ iconic dance scene that appeared on a Marvin Gaye album cover and in the closing credits of *Good Times*. This painting, *The Sugar Shack*, was inspired by an actual dance at the Durham Armory.

“Although I never got a chance to meet Ernie in person, I was so honored to be able to work on this exhibition- because now I feel like I do know him,” said exhibition curator Katie Edwards. “He was a remarkable human being who defied odds and became a renowned artist. This exhibition is an amazing opportunity for the state of North Carolina. It’s a chance for visitors to see a number of Ernie’s works that he painted throughout his life and see the impact that the state had on him and his career.”

Born July 15, 1938, at Lincoln Hospital in Durham (Durham County), Barnes lived with his parents and younger brother in “The Bottom” section of the city. Shy, sensitive, and bullied throughout childhood, he sought refuge in his sketchbooks and eventually transformed his body and attitude through exercise and discipline. In high school Barnes excelled as an athlete, and in his senior year in 1956 at Durham’s

Hillside High School he was the captain of the football team and state champion in the shot put. Barnes graduated with 26 athletic scholarship offers.

Segregation, however, prevented him from considering nearby Duke University or the University of North Carolina. He attended the all-African American North Carolina College at Durham (formerly North Carolina College for Negroes; now North Carolina Central University), on a full athletic scholarship and majored in art.

Barnes was selected in the 1960 National Football League draft by the Baltimore Colts. After five seasons as an offensive lineman for the New York Titans, San Diego Chargers and Denver Broncos, he officially retired at age 28 to devote himself to art. He moved to California where he enjoyed a remarkable career, including appointment as Sports Artist of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Barnes died of cancer at age 70 on April 27, 2009.

“The family is proud to kick-off Ernie Barnes’ 80th birthday here in his home state, with his first public exhibition in 11 years,” said Luz Rodriguez, Barnes’ longtime assistant and estate trustee. “I hope his fans -- and those now introduced to him -- discover more about his extraordinary career. His journey is inspirational and important to American culture.”

In addition to the exhibition opening, author Sandra Neil Wallace will be signing her newly released children’s book on Ernie Barnes, titled [*Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery*](#), on Saturday, June 30 from 2:30-4p.m. The book was recently named one of 2018’s Top Biographies for Youth by [Booklist Online](#).

In addition to museum happenings, check out these other noteworthy Ernie Barnes celebratory events sponsored by local organizations. For additional information, visit <http://www.erniebarnes.com/>.

Ernie Barnes 80th Birthday Hometown Celebration

Sunday, July 15, 2018, 3-5p.m.

North Carolina Central University, Durham
1851 Fayetteville Street, Durham, NC 27707

Celebration of painting “The Sugar Shack”

Thursday, October 11, 2018, Day and Evening events, time TBD

In conjunction w/NC African American Heritage Commission
Durham Armory, 220 Foster Street, Durham, NC 27701

About the NC Museum of History, a Smithsonian Affiliate

The NC Museum of History is located at 5 E. Edenton Street in downtown Raleigh. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The museum collects and preserves artifacts of North Carolina history and educates the public on the history of the state and the nation through exhibits and educational programs. Each year more than 400,000 people visit the museum to see some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

For information about the NC Museum of History, call 919-807-7900 or access ncmuseumofhistory.org or follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Google+](#) or [YouTube](#).

About the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the NC Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the NC Arts Council, State Preservation Office and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call 919-807-7300 or visit www.ncdcr.gov.

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