



THE EXHIBIT, EPISODE 3 GETS EMOTIONAL

Show host Dometi Pongo gives Pigment the real deal on how art and culture connect

By Vee L. Harrison

The show is getting heated, and hosts [Dometi Pongo](#) and [Mellissa Chiu's](#) outfits were even hotter, in the latest MTV and The Smithsonian Channel series, #TheExhibit.

Episode three challenged the competing artists to create a piece of artwork that inspired how they survived or thrived during the pandemic. This week's winner, [Jamaal Barber](#), Atlanta-based printmaker and painter, gave us a printed piece that social media (especially Black Twitter) agrees made episode three "Jamaal's episode". During his big win, he shared tears of joy, embracing Pongo with an emotional hug, causing viewers to emotionally connect with his art, and the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pongo caught up with Pigment International this past week to give his perspective on the emotions of episode three, the visceral impact of the art, and how art connects with culture.

He first breaks down how the merger between The Smithsonian Channel and MTV came about...during the pandemic. From that, The Exhibit became something like a televised "art class", Pongo says.

"Art is what tells us how we should respond and react," said Pongo. "If you go to any protests we hear music, like Kendrick Lamar's "We gone be alright" which is the cry in this era, whereas "We gone overcome" was the cry in era's past."

Pongo reminds us, on the set of The Exhibit and in history, that art is indeed the driving force of all cultures; especially Black culture.

"The signs that you see in protests are from different artists, we use their gifts to create the voice of the protests. Art has always been a part of that."

Pongo and his co-host Melissa Chiu, director of the **Hirshorn Museum**, desire to bring art to the forefront of people's minds with The Exhibit, showing us all that art is the intersection of culture.

Catch episode four of The Exhibit on Friday, March 24 at 9:00 pm CT/10:00 pm EST.