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Rickerby: Welcome to The Creator State where we share stories of social innovation and entrepreneurship for movers, shakers, creators, and change makers. Each episode will celebrate success and failure, ingenuity and the endless pursuit of knowledge.

Rickerby: Whether meeting friends for a drink or celebrating some of life's grandest occasions, places play an important role in shaping the meaningful moments in our lives. And today's guest, Shelby Worthington-Loomis has a talent for creating spaces people enjoy being in. We're with Shelby inside an event venue she owns in Downtown Riverside. The building has a storied past. It opened in the 1920s as a hotel and furniture store. During World War II it served as an anti-aircraft intelligence headquarters. And in the '70s transformed into the Riverside Ballet Arts Dance School. In 2014, Shelby partnered with a friend to renovate the space into the unique event venue now known as Loft 84. I'm your host, Rickerby Hinds. Welcome to The Creator State.

Rickerby: Can you talk a little bit about how this space came to be, maybe say a little bit about the name, and then what you do in this space creatively?

Shelby: So actually, the space is Loft 84. And it is the 84th historical designation in Riverside. And it's Loft because it's above. And we do weddings and events. We do anything from banquets to charity events to school functions, proms. So not just weddings, we cover a broad range of events.

Rickerby: And how long has this space been in effect? And what prompted you to establish Loft 84?

Shelby: I was at my nephews wedding in Long Beach and I was looking at this historical building that they turned into a venue. And I was like, "There has to be something like that in Riverside," because it was an amazing event and it was because of the surrounding and the building and just the architecture. And so I thought, "I'm going to find something like that in Riverside." And a friend of mine said, "I have this building opening up. The ballet had moved and I'm not sure what to do with it. And I was wondering if I could get your opinion on the best and highest use?"

Shelby: And I walked in and I just started rattling off everything that this other venue was. And it was an inspiration. And so she said, "Great. When can you start?" And I was like, "No, no, no. I'm just telling you the best and highest use." And she said, "I think we both know that this was meant for you to do." And at that time I wasn't planning on taking on any other projects, but also realized it was something I couldn't pass up. So I started putting it out there into the universe and a very dear person in my life now ended up being my business partner. And we pretty much knocked out the walls and repainted and did all the background on G. Stanley Wilson that we could to try to bring it back to its original character.

Rickerby: So when do you know that an idea, or in your case maybe a space is worth pursuing?

Shelby: Honestly, sometimes I walk into spaces without the actual plan on walking into a space. It just happens to be I'm walking through that space to get to the next space to see about something else and I end up getting that feeling. Spaces kind of talk to you. So when you walk into a space, it's going to guide you what that space was meant for, which is the best and highest use. And spaces know what they're meant for. So you're going to cultivate that and you're going to read it, and you're going to grow with it. And that's what makes it successful.

Rickerby: Wow.

Shelby: Yeah.

Rickerby: That has got to be a very cool thing, a great way to exist.

Shelby: Yeah.

Rickerby: Because you are always going somewhere in the space, out of a space. You're always getting these moments of creativity.

Shelby: Yes.

Rickerby: Can you talk a little bit about what you mean when you say the best and highest use?

Shelby: Yes. So if somebody were to come in here and say, "I'm going to put cubicles and we'll have a beautiful architectural office," that's not going to be the best use for it, and it won't be the highest use for it. So walking into a building and reading what that building wants, and usually its original intent and bringing it back to that, because a lot of buildings Downtown have been made into offices or made into something that it wasn't originally. And finding out what would be the best fit and what would make the most sense and create the most business, because like you said yourself, you've been in Riverside a long time and never been in this building.

Shelby: And when Cindy and I took this building on from after the ballet had had it, people were knocking on the door like, "Can I come in?" Because there were always classes going on, so you can't disrupt the classes, you know? And a lot of people were curious driving by and seeing these beautiful windows and eaves up here and not knowing what was up here or what it looked like. So having the opportunity to take a tour, which now Downtown has a night where its doors open and you can go and tour. I think this time we had 27 different buildings on the tour. But people really want to go into buildings and see what has become of them. And finding what the best and highest use, what you're going to get the most use and the best feeling and thing that people will be so desperate to get in because it literally is like bursting at the seams to get in some of the buildings Downtown. And so having that use and being able to accommodate people by that use is really important and so I think.

Rickerby: So this leads to a question, has architecture been a part of your existence? Or is this something that has evolved through-

Shelby: Riverside educated me on architecture, I would say, because growing up I never really thought about the architecture of ceilings and beams and walls and different alcoves. But going into a lot of the buildings in Riverside, you just become a fan and appreciating it and want to get to know more about it and wanting to dress a building around it, you know? I mean, it really does influence everything that you do when you walk in.

Rickerby: Wow.

Shelby: Yeah.

Rickerby: So you said you didn't want to take on any more projects at the time. So can you talk a little bit about what it is that you do? What the other projects are that you do?

Shelby: So I'm pretty much a business owner and community volunteer. I've had a nightclub in Riverside for almost 17 years. And that was my first business that I opened in Riverside.

Rickerby: Okay, and what's the name of the-

Shelby: Worthington's Tavern.

Rickerby: Okay, great.

Shelby: So it's actually given me a platform to grow in the community and get involved in other things and other charity events and other boards that I've been involved with and has helped me grow and being able to help the community grow. And so I was really enjoying that. And then I tried going outside of Riverside and opened a restaurant, and unfortunately I had a family loss. And so I ended up selling the business and then decided to take a year off and just do what I was doing. And literally three months later, this came into my life.

Rickerby: Wow.

Shelby: Yeah, it's not that I didn't want to own another business, it's just I was thinking when most people have any kind of loss in their life that you take some time and I don't think that was meant to be the plan for me. So yeah.

Rickerby: Yes. Wow that's very cool. So tell me about your presence in the city, you know? Just in our brief conversation, you've mentioned the city of Riverside. You've mentioned looking or being in other places and kind of seeing things that are happening there. Tell me about your involvement with the city and your commitment too?

Shelby: Well I'm 110% committed to this city, and I'm actually the chair of the Riverside Downtown Partnership, this is my second year as chair. And I'm on the Board of Directors for California Citrus State Historic Park. I'm on the Athletic Board of Directors

for UCR. And I am recently getting involved in United Way. I'm on a side committee for Golden Badge for the Riverside Police Department. And I pretty much do a lot of community service helping other business owners that are struggling or need help with certain things in their businesses or trying to start up a business in Riverside. So I try to bring businesses into Riverside that didn't originally plan to open in Riverside and help them with any of their paperwork or licensing, just to make it an easier process for them so that we can get them open quicker and have more business development in the city.

Rickerby: Wow. So those were a lot of things. I'm going to ask about the Downtown Partnership, the Riverside Downtown Partnership. And what are some of the things that you are doing with that entity as the city is growing and evolving?

Shelby: Well, the biggest thing is in the name alone, partnership. It's a platform to be able to partner with every aspect of things that happen in this city. So any of the art festivals or any ... I mean, anything, even from Riverside transit with the grid system and just having input and knowledge. I mean, you really get to learn a lot about this city when you're involved with the Partnership because you partner with many different avenues. So I get to know a lot that happens in this city before it happens and a lot of upcoming things. And it just honestly gives hope for the growth of our city and the strength that we have within.

Rickerby: Very cool. So tell us something that's going to happen that we don't know is going to happen because we don't know it's going to happen yet, and we won't tell anybody, except for everybody.

Shelby: Well, the city does like to be kind of transparent. They like to let people know because they want to get people excited. So there are hotels opening up, which is going to help grow the city. We have a lot of conventions. Once the Convention Center was remodeled, the conventions have really gotten a lot stronger and so we do need a lot more hotels, you know? Hotels and parking are the biggest shortages in this city, and it is really aggressively being handled. And so the Hilton is opening up the R Hotel where the fire station was. And so that's actually going to implement the fire station into the design. So they're not taking away what the city has, they're actually adding to the bones of it.

Rickerby: Wow, and there's the food.

Shelby: Food? Yes. The Food Lab is opening up, and that should be within another month or so. So that's 14 different unique eateries. And I kind of called it a Disney gastronomy because it's all craft and gastronomic eateries. And so that's going to be an exciting place, and that's one of the reasons why I'm really excited about trying to bridge the gap of UCR and Downtown. We want to get the college-

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:11:04]

Shelby: Trying to bridge the gap of UCR and downtown. We want to get the college students down here and get them enjoying what we have to offer and the new things that are

coming up. Even living downtown, like with Imperial Hardware Lofts. I'm huge fan of Imperial Hardware Lofts. It's 91 units. It's going to open very soon. It's a great atmosphere for young adults and people that want to get into more of a metropolitan area. Then the Stalder building is opening up soon. I mean, they're groundbreaking already and Imperial Hardware Lofts Ratkovich is actually starting another project and then we're going to have Chow Alley open up, which is actually the same developer as the food lab and it's a Container City. Have you heard of those with the shipping containers?

Rickerby: No, tell me about that. No.

Shelby: I think it's approximately nine shipping containers, but there'll be individual restaurants and things that are going to be opening up in containers over by the old courthouse on Main.

Rickerby: Something tells me that creative partnerships are an important part of what it is that you do. Can you talk a little bit about those partnerships?

Shelby: Absolutely. I would say with the boards that I'm on, just all the different personalities that creates my creative partnerships. Not enjoy anyone's personality on my boards. It's so great to see all the different thoughts and ideas that are out there for the community that I'm involved in and seeing what we do as a community together and as a board together. But in business, I've always been on my own with Worthington's and never realized what it would be like to have a partner until I got into the wedding industry. My business partner in the wedding industry is ... We always say I'm social butterfly and she's social marketing. She does a lot of the contracts, paperworks, different things like that.

Shelby: She's very creative with the things that she does, and then I go out and I'm in the community and I'm very creative with the things that I do. We come together at the end of the day and it really does explode on all of the things that we've been able to do together and it's what makes us successful. We both have different things that we're strong at and different strong points and I love her for hers and she loves me for mine and it's really made the strength in our business by knowing what we each do and by supporting each other on it and that's a partnership.

Rickerby: What is your creative activity when it comes to balancing the different entities that you're involved with? So you mentioned Riverside Downtown Partnership, you mentioned UCR athletics, and you clearly have this space and you also mentioned the Citrus Park space. That may not be the correct name.

Shelby: Citrus State Historical Park.

Rickerby: Citrus Historical Park.

Shelby: The venues that are there, there's a picnic and amphitheater and then the Craftsman Bungalow, which is about 2,000 square feet. Then we also have the old chapel on 14th

Street. Those are the ones that are open currently. I think honestly strength in numbers, being the chair of the Downtown Partnership, I wouldn't be successful with what I do if I didn't have a great board. The same with UCR athletics, if I didn't have the support of the board in the things that I want to do because I am a creative person and sometimes that seems a little bit crazy with the ideas that I come up with. Just the fact that people have faith in me and kind of help with my ideas, I think having a business partner in the wedding industry, I never really have to feel like I'm on my own with anything. Honestly, a lot of people have a hard time depending on other people, but if you're not dependent and you work as a team, everything's a lot stronger.

Rickerby: So good. What is your favorite state of creativity? So, yes.

Shelby: Destruction.

Rickerby: Okay.

Shelby: When I walk into a place and it looks like an absolute mess, I think that's when I'm the happiest because I know that it's a blank canvas and anything can happen with it. We're actually getting ready, me and my business partners, Cindy Alden are getting ready to take on a morgue. You go in there and I mean Jesus The Shepherd painting is there and all the beams are there and all the Spanish Moorish painting. That building, this building and the old chapel on 14th Street are all G. Stanley Wilson buildings. His architectural design kind of runs throughout all of his buildings. We walk in there and everyone's like, "Oh, this is a huge undertaking." Not to make a play on words but we really don't really see that standing in our way. I mean this building was very dilapidated and needed a lot of work and the chapel as well. With the team efforts, I mean these places have become an amazing institute in Riverside to start growing all over again. We want to bring that as much as we can to as many-

Rickerby: So you walked into the morgue and said, this is going to be a-

Shelby: Amazing. This is going to be a steakhouse and bar and reception hall.

Rickerby: Wow, and there's so many directions we can go with that, but we won't. I know that building. I actually looked at the building and the exterior is phenomenal.

Shelby: That's amazing.

Rickerby: The architecture. How did you land at a steakhouse?

Shelby: My business partner has always wanted to own a restaurant and bar and we support each other in all of our ventures. I already have my nightclub that I've had for almost 17 years and she's always wanted to do that. When we came across this location and it fit both of the things that we love to do in our lives, it was a no brainer.

Rickerby: Wow. This new steakhouse you mentioned is one of several Stanley Wilson.

Shelby: G. Stanley Wilson.

Rickerby: G. Stanley Wilson architectural designs in the city. Can you tell us a little bit about ... I saw there's a photo or there's a painting of him in the entrance to the space.

Shelby: Yeah, Loft 84 was an old hotel and ballroom, so this is where everybody ate and danced and then all the offices that have been rehabbed used to be the hotels. After that it became the ballet and it was the ballet for many, many years. Darci Kistler, she was a ballerina in Riverside and ended up going to New York and becoming very successful. The mezzanine downstairs was named after Darci Kistler, ballet mezzanine. While G. Stanley Wilson who is one of the biggest architects in Riverside, after he did the Rotunda, took a lot of the pieces that were left over and came and implemented them in this building so you'll see a lot of things here that you'll see at the Mission Inn. We put a painting of him in the Rotunda the day that it opened across from the G. Stanley Wilson room and then put his picture outside the room, which we kind of mimic to be what his apartment may look like if he were still in this time.

Rickerby: Wow, that's very cool. That's really great. What right now are you excited about creatively? What's the next thing that you are probably going to walk into or have already walked into and are looking to destroy?

Shelby: The destruction has already started and the reconstruction is already in the process. One of the things that excites me in life is not only to be successful in what I do and in my endeavors, but to bring other people on board. Right now I have my son and my brother, are both opening a business and I'm helping them with that and it's opening up on Main street. It's called Retro Taco and it's going to be an international taco shops. There'll be like Vietnamese tacos and Irish Tacos, lots of different kinds of Tacos, but it'll be a fun place that students will want to come and hang out and also families can come and feel like they're having a good time and being in a light environment. It'll be really great that people can go in and not be in a stressed and rushed environment and they can just enjoy themselves. There's like 24 foot ceilings and you know it's going to be a really good environment and it's on Main street. I'm watching that come into fruition right now as the other two things that me and my business partner are kind of in the works on.

Rickerby: Retro Taco.

Shelby: Retro Taco.

Rickerby: You've mentioned a couple of times the desire to create a stronger connection between the university, between UCR and downtown, can you talk a little bit about that desire and what are some of the things that you're working on perhaps that the university and the downtown partnership are working on together and where do you see that relationship going?

Shelby: Honestly, I have conjoined kids from a later marriage in life and with the five kids, they've all gone to college and going and visiting them in college and going into their

college towns and seeing a presence has always been really exciting and I kind of felt like they were in a more enjoyable atmosphere and also something that was supportive of what they were doing in school. It's not either all work or all play. You have to have both at the end of the day. My thought was get them involved in the downtown partnership, invite them to the lunches, have them come into town, get athletics in here. I think making it more accessible for people, having a student store, having something that represents downtown, having artwork that reminds people of the students and getting the students more involved in downtown is going to grow the city even more. Once downtown grows, it just keeps going out. Pretty soon you could be five miles away and you're still a part of everything going on in downtown.

Rickerby: I was a student at UCR a while ago, late 80s. When I was a student at UCR, I didn't come downtown a lot. I didn't spend a lot of time downtown and so I am very interested in this, the endeavor to get students more engaged with downtown and hopefully getting the city itself more engaged with the university. How do you see that job or that endeavor going and why is it important to you?

Shelby: For one, it's probably an easier job than it would have originally been because downtown has grown so much since then. I mean, back then there was maybe two or three places to come to enjoy yourself and now you can walk from place to place. It's becoming more of an entertainment district now and the city has done such a great job with all of our staff and our council and our city managers and our mayor of helping bring these things and actually making them work. It's not just an idea anymore, there's actually things being done about it and I think that it's becoming so big you would have to ignore it not to be a part of it.

Rickerby: Oh cool. Yes, and I've noticed that Thursday, Friday, Saturday nights downtown Riverside are very different than they were when I was a student here. Every time I drive through and I get stuck in a little bit of traffic because there are dozens of people crossing in front of me, that's exciting to me. Speaking of education, how has education and learning played a role in the things that you're doing now? Clearly, you placed a value on knowledge and information and education. How has it played a role in what you're doing.

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:22:04]

Rickerby: And education, how has it played a role in what you're doing now?

Shelby: It kind of like paved the way for me to be able to learn how to start the things that I do, and going to school and learning how to study and put guidelines for myself ... because when you're a creative source, you don't really think in a structured manner. So it probably helped me structure wise. So school helped me with my structure, and what I did in life helped me further the education of what I do.

Rickerby: So here's a question, when you meet someone at a party or on the elevator and they ask you what you do, what do you say?

Shelby: Pretty much I just give them, I'm a business owner and a community volunteer and if they want to hear more, then I have a business card that has my name, and phone number, and my email address and on the back it has the logo of each one of my businesses, other than that I don't like to start spitting out ten different businesses and have people be like, oh you know, I'm involved in a lot of business and I'm just proud of everything that I have my hands in.

Shelby: I'm more proud of everything in the community that helps me because that's what I was able to get those businesses from, is my community connection.

Rickerby: Very nice, very nice. I want to shift a little bit and I want to talk about how setbacks have played a role in your journey as a creative, as an entrepreneur, as someone who sees what isn't there and envisions what can be there. So how has setbacks played any role in this?

Shelby: I don't know, I don't really see many setbacks. I think everything is education, things are gonna work or they're not gonna work, and I don't really see not working as a setback or a failure or anything like that. I kind of see it as a growth to the education of what needs to be done or what will work. I always feel that looking at things in a positive manner, makes people feel more positive and more successful in every endeavor they do. When people start worrying about their setbacks or mistakes or failures, I think that's when they stop trying, and stop taking chances and life is all about chance.

Shelby: When people look at the things that may not have worked, instead of looking at it as a setback or as a failure, if they just look at it as an education to the next step that they're gonna need to take to make it work, then they're gonna be more positive in their business and a lot more successful because confidence is what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur.

Rickerby: Now let's get into the creative state of mind. In each episode we ask our guest to share what's been on their minds, something they can't stop thinking about, a new challenge they're facing or what's inspired them into action recently. We call it, the creator state of mind.

Shelby: Something that's inspired me?

Rickerby: Yes.

Shelby: Honestly, I think the community. Like the way that they reach out, I think everybody's hungry now to make this a bigger place, and it is inspiring and even outside of business it makes me want to do more, and it makes me want to do more with the community and just community involvement is an inspiration to me every day.

Rickerby: Wow, very cool. You are in multi-layered state of creativity and I would love to have you tell us what it is that you enjoy the most about where you are in this creative state right now.

Shelby: Honestly, I think I'm always in a multi-layer state of being because opportunity seems to come my way a lot, and being out in the community is why. Every time I turn around ... Like even with UCR, you know looking for a place and a location for the student store is where I ran across Retro Talk Host space, and so now it's like okay, and then UCR goes here, and then you know, and then I found another space after that and then me and my business partner looked into that one and the next thing you know, we're planning out what that one's gonna be, which that one still, you know, hush-hush but ... and then we still have the Whisky Ridge and the ranch at Whiskey Ridge when the [moregue 00:26:28] is ready to be started for construction phase but literally, I'm always in a state of multi-layer, and I think I like that because when things calm down, that's usually when I get restless.

Shelby: I think I love the fact that I always get to be creative. I get to be creative every day, that's what I do for a living. That's what I do for living.

Rickerby: It is always a valuable learning opportunity to take time to reflect, at the end each of interview we like to ask our guests this, in hindsight what is something you wish you would have known when you were starting out.

Shelby: I always thought as a younger person that you had to have all this money to start a business or that you had to have all this knowledge of how to do the paperwork or file permits or licenses, and I never really realized that you could just go out and ask the city for help, and that they would because everybody wants you in their town. They want the growth for the city, and so I kind of waited a little bit longer in life and I did own a business when I was younger.

Shelby: I started off with a hotdog cart outside of Home Depot, and before I knew it I was making \$110000 a month selling hotdogs.

Rickerby: I think I contributed to your sales.

Shelby: Yeah and then before I knew it, I had three, and then I had five and then after that Home Depot started regulating how things were being done and I just decided that, you know I wanted to do something different and I wanted more of a brick and mortar and I wanted to establish myself and kind of plant my feet in an area that had a community that I could grow in, instead of being spread all over town and that's when I chose down town Riverside.

Rickerby: Wow, this is ... You said something that is so important that I just want to emphasize or revisit and that is, the idea that the city and the communities are open to helping, helping you out. Can you just talk a little bit, maybe about that discovery and how that helped you moved forward?

Shelby: Well when I started in Riverside I really didn't know anything and it's almost intimidating walking into a building and you have the Fire Department, and then you have to go to this floor and go to the Public Works on this floor, and go to Planning and, you know kind of feel lost in the process, and Riverside started a one stop shop, so you go to the

third floor and everybody's there, and you check in and they pretty much guide you through the process, and I know that I've already gotten through the process but they're always there willing to help if I need anything and because I'm a creative person, me and my business partner, we get ourselves into some situations where people are like ... So they help us figure it out together and they have meetings with you and they'll get everybody involved but I think it's gonna be a benefit for all the new businesses that come down, because it's gonna be a lot easier for them to be able to process what needs to be done in order their open their brick and mortar.

Rickerby: Wow that is, that is ... Shelby it has been a pleasure. It was really great talking to you and I've gleaned quite a bit of information that I need to make notes on for myself, as a creative person but someone who is also invested and engaged in this community and want to help it grow, and it sounds like you've figured it out, you figured out some things and so I truly appreciate your time.

Shelby: Thank you, it was nice to talk to you.

Rickerby: Yes. Thanks for listening. Find behind the scenes video and more information about our guest at creativestate.com, write us at creativestate@ucr.edu or find us on Twitter and Facebook at the creator state, there's a team creating this podcast. Help us out by subscribing on iTunes, SoundCloud or wherever you listen and while you're there, leave us a review.

Rickerby: Our producer for this show is Jennifer Merritt with video, audio and editing by Christy Zwicke, Christina Rodriguez, David Silos, Chan Moon and Rosemarie Quan, digital strategy by Kelly McGrail and design by Chrissy Danford, Denise Wolf, Brad Ro and creative director Louise [Sax 00:30:58]. The show is brought to you by the University of California Riverside. I'm your host Rickerby Hinds. Thank you for joining us in the creator state.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:31:10]