

## Longue Vue House and Gardens

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*For Immediate Release*

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### ***Longue Vue House and Gardens Lands High-Profile Leader: Joe Baker to Serve as New Executive Director***

*After a five-month national search, Longue Vue House and Gardens has hired Joe Baker—curator, educator, and accomplished museum professional—to serve as the institution’s Executive Director starting January 4, 2010. Baker brings to Longue Vue a long track record of results in enhanced exhibits and programming, revitalized collections, increased funding, new audiences, and greater community support at universities, museums, and cultural organizations across the nation.*

Baker is charged by Longue Vue’s Board of Directors with stewardship of Longue Vue’s many facets: the house and collections, the gardens, programming, and community outreach. Board President René Fransen, speaking on behalf on the entire Search Committee, notes that Baker excels at operating at the intersection of the creative process and best business practices. He adds, “Joe is a visionary individual who has national contacts with the potential to help Longue Vue to continue its important philanthropic work in a post-Katrina environment, where local funding sources are strained.”

Baker comes to Longue Vue from the Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. As the first Director for Community Engagement, he strengthened the public and civic purposes of the arts through innovative campus-community partnerships. Some of his key successes include creating an experimental exhibition space, *Night Gallery*, a partnership with Vestar Development Corporation and the ASU School of Art; researching health disparities in urban populations through a partnership with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, resulting in the establishment of a community garden; and hosting an all elements hip-hop event that explored grassroots arts activism.

Prior to his tenure at the Herberger Institute, Baker was the Lloyd Kiva New Curator of Fine Art at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. There, he pioneered new opportunities for emerging and underrepresented artists through innovative exhibits and programming, such as *Holy Land: Diaspora and the Desert*, which won international acclaim for its examination of seven displaced artists and their cultural ties to desert concepts.

Baker has also held senior leadership positions at the Institute of American Indian Arts and the Phoenix Office of Art and Culture and teaching positions at Colorado College (Colorado Springs, Colorado), the University of Incarnate Word (San Antonio, Texas), and East Carolina University (Greenville, North Carolina). He currently serves on several boards, including the Editorial Advisory Board for the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian and the American Indian Advisory Board for Idyllwild Arts. He is also an award-winning artist himself.

Known for his willingness and proven ability to work within museums and structures undergoing periods of significant transition, Baker is the perfect match for Longue Vue, which is poised between recovering from Hurricane Katrina and moving forward as a leader in the region’s cultural economy.

The former estate of philanthropists and civic activists Edith and Edgar Stern, Longue Vue is comprised of a Classical Revival mansion, housing an extensive collection of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century

decorative arts, surrounded by numerous formal and informal gardens, many of which were designed by premiere landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman.

Longue Vue, now a cultural and educational nonprofit, upholds its mission “to preserve and use the historical and artistic legacy of Longue Vue and its creators to educate and inspire people to pursue beauty and civic responsibility in their lives” by offering extensive programming to the public, often at no cost. Longue Vue is also an active partner in the community, working, for example, to re-green Pontchartrain Park, the historic African-American neighborhood that Edgar Stern helped to develop.

Baker recalls that upon seeing Longue Vue for the first time, he was stilled by the experience. He explains, “While all of us are forever imprinted with the potent memory of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures, Longue Vue compels me to dwell in a different place. What I see when I am here is a beautiful and powerful setting, wrought from the efforts of dedicated and curious staff and from the contributions of countless supporters. Longue Vue, now, resonates with humanity. Its recovery is a living reminder of the human spirit, of the call to action that was answered by supporters from around the country.”

Bill Noble, Preservation Director for the Garden Conservancy, explains why that organization responded to the call to action, starting in 2006, “We were impressed with the resilience of the place and of the people, those who stayed as well as newcomers. They joined together to rebuild Longue Vue as a place that engages the people of New Orleans and provides the community a sense of renewal and hope, true to the institution’s original vision. They are now being joined by a new leader, a man of vision who will further enhance Longue Vue’s mission.” Of the Garden Conservancy, Baker notes, “Their commitment to and investment in Longue Vue is visible every day. I welcome the continuation of our partnership and the exploration of future possibilities.”

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### **About Longue Vue House and Gardens**

Longue Vue House and Gardens is a magnificent 8-acre Country Place Era estate comprised of a Classical Revival-style mansion surrounded by beautifully landscaped formal and informal gardens, including the interactive Lucy C. Roussel Discovery Garden for children. The former home of philanthropists Edith and Edgar Stern, Longue Vue was designed by renowned architects William and Geoffrey Platt and by Ellen Biddle Shipman, one of America’s premier landscape architects.

Longue Vue, which now serves as an educational and cultural resource, offers tours daily and hosts numerous events centered around design, preservation, gardening, architecture, and civic engagement. Longue Vue is a designated National Historic Landmark, is accredited by the American Association of Museums, and is included on the National Register of Historic Places. Located in New Orleans at 7 Bamboo Road, Longue Vue is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Saturday and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday. General admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children and students. For more information, call 504.488.5488, or visit [www.longuevue.com](http://www.longuevue.com).

### **About the Garden Conservancy**

The Garden Conservancy designated Longue Vue as a Preservation Project in 2006 after sending a team of volunteer gardeners to help clean up after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. It partnered with the New York Botanical Garden to raise \$100,000, divided between Longue Vue and the New Orleans Botanical Garden, and hired Heritage Landscapes to develop a renewal plan for the gardens in a way that was much more in keeping with their original beauty and distinction. In 2008, the Conservancy sent a talented young intern to Longue Vue to help return horticultural distinction to plantings throughout the gardens.

The Garden Conservancy is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1989 to preserve exceptional gardens for public enjoyment and education. Working in partnership with individual garden owners and public and private organizations, the Conservancy uses its legal, horticultural, and financial resources to develop innovative methods of securing a garden’s future. For more information, visit [www.gardenconservancy.org](http://www.gardenconservancy.org).

## **Joe Baker Bio**

Joe Baker, the Executive Director of Longue Vue House and Gardens, has a 25-year career as a museum professional, curator, educator, and artist. Known for his willingness and proven ability to work within structures undergoing periods of significant transition, Baker has enhanced exhibits and programming, revitalized collections, increased funding, added new audiences, and garnered greater community support at universities, museums, and cultural organizations across the nation.

Professional highlights include tenure as the Director for Community Engagement for the Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona; the Lloyd Kiva New Curator of Fine Art for the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona; the Dean of the Center for Arts and Culture Studies for the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and the Director of the Arts in Education Program for the Phoenix Office of Art and Culture.

Baker has also held teaching positions at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the University of Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas, and East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

A strong believer in community service, Baker—an enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma—is on the Editorial Advisory Board for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and the American Indian Advisory Board for Idyllwild Arts. He recently served as the National Program Chair for Imagining America, a consortium of universities engaged in public scholarship.

Baker, a recognized entrepreneurial leader, is the recipient of a Piper Fellowship from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust and a Contemporary Catalyst Award from the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art. Baker, who is also an accomplished artist, has received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award in Painting.

Baker graduated from the University of Tulsa with a BFA degree in Design and an MFA in Painting and Drawing. He has also undertaken postgraduate study at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, where he completed the Management Development Program.

Baker and his wife, Joey, live in Uptown New Orleans. His interests include art in public spaces, textile design, beadwork, and community gardens.

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