

**SHANGRI LA NAMES BEN WEITZ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

*Former chief brand officer for UCLA and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa graduate takes helm of organization*

**HONOLULU** – Doris Duke Foundation announced today that Ben Weitz, experienced brand marketing and operational executive, will join Shangri La, a museum of Islamic art, culture & design, as executive director beginning October 2. Interim executive director Meredith Artley, who has led the organization since January 2023, will remain Shangri La's executive-in-residence through the end of the year to provide a seamless transition.



*Ben Weitz, executive director, Shangri La*

“Shangri La is a place for transformation—a focal point of the beauty, culture and sense of place that makes Hawai'i singular, spectacular and essential. At a time when people around the globe are opening their hearts to Hawai'i in an unprecedented way, I can think of no one better to lead Shangri La in more effectively connecting this marvelous community to audiences around the country and the world,” said **Sam Gill, president and CEO of the Doris Duke Foundation**. “Our entire team has sincere aloha for Meredith Artley, who has opened our eyes to the possibilities of a Shangri La that more deeply understands our kuleana, both to the community where we work and to the world that can benefit from Hawai'i's perspective. No one could have been a better prologue for Shangri La's next chapter.”

Weitz has made a career connecting people to purpose and passion. His expansive background includes serving as senior vice president and general manager for Loot Crate, an e-commerce startup he led to profitability, a decade-long career at Disney spanning global roles across the enterprise marketing Pixar, Marvel, Lucasfilm properties and leading consumer product strategy for Disney Store and Theme Parks worldwide as well as working in hospitality marketing.

He's also no stranger to mission-led organizations. He will be joining Shangri La from UCLA, where he served as the inaugural chief brand officer. Under his leadership, the university was named the #1 public university in the nation for its sixth consecutive year.

Weitz will be returning to Hawai'i in order to take up leadership of Shangri La. While earning his master's degree at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Weitz worked to produce Ka Leo O Nā Keiki, the Hawai'i Student Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use Study statewide report commissioned by the Hawai'i State Department of Health to understand student trends and outline treatment and prevention needs across the islands. As a lifestyle and college marketing representative for Universal Music Group, while in Hawai'i, Weitz established more than 100 marketing relationships with media, retail and university organizations from North Shore Boardriders in Haleiwa to Coffee Talk in Kaimuki.

“Much like Hawai'i, Shangri La is unparalleled in its place in the world, unlike any other when it comes to culture, communication and connection,” said **Weitz**. “I'm humbled to return to the islands in this leadership role, moving Shangri La and Doris Duke Foundation forward for greater impact, while having the privilege to return to the community with my husband to raise our two sons in this magical place that I care for deeply.”

Endowed by Doris Duke, a lifelong philanthropist who built a home and lasting relationships in Hawai'i, Shangri La houses nearly 4,500 artworks, cultural resources and architectural designs purchased, commissioned or gifted to Duke during her extensive travels throughout North Africa and Western, Central, South and Southeast Asia.

Today, the center supports diverse programming that brings together its spectacular location on O'ahu, its unique compound, and its extensive collection in order to create the conditions for personal and community evolution. This includes hosting world-class contemporary artists for residencies that produce original work and serving as a forum for important dialogues about the future of Hawai'i and the world. Over the past 25 years, the Doris Duke Foundation, which supports people and the planet for a more creative, equitable and sustainable future, has invested a combined \$118 million in Shangri La and in grants to local projects and organizations benefiting Hawai'i and its residents.

“It has been an honor to serve Shangri La, creating new avenues for inspiration and growth for both individuals and communities,” said **Artley**. “I look forward to supporting Ben and the team in the months ahead to further expand the positive powers of Shangri La.”

For more information about Shangri La and the Doris Duke Foundation, visit [www.shangrilahawaii.org](http://www.shangrilahawaii.org) and [www.dorisduke.org](http://www.dorisduke.org).

#### Media Kit

- [Headshot](#)

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**About Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design.** The only child of James Buchanan Duke, a founder of the American Tobacco Company and Duke Energy Company, Doris Duke was a lifelong philanthropist. In her will, she left her fortune, extensive collections of art and properties, including Shangri La, to a foundation that would be created in her name. Itself a work of art, Shangri La is now a museum for exploring the global cultures of Islamic art. While Doris Duke's interest in Islamic art was progressive and visionary, how Islamic art has been presented remains a topic of ongoing discussion and debate. Shangri La's approach to art reflects our entire organization's commitment to the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice as ongoing active engagements represented in all that we do. For more information, please visit [www.shangrilahawaii.org](http://www.shangrilahawaii.org).

**About the Doris Duke Foundation.** The Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) supports the well-being of people and the planet for a more creative, equitable and sustainable future. We operate five national programs—in the performing arts, the environment, medical research, child and family well-being, and mutual understanding between communities—as well as Duke Farms and Shangri La, two centers that directly serve the public. Visit [www.dorisduke.org](http://www.dorisduke.org) to learn more.

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