

## Stefan Beese brings some surprises to 2009 Voodoo Fest art and music design

By Doug MacCash, *The Times-Picayune*  
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Recent New Orleans transplant Stefan Beese wants to change the look of music festivals. He'd like to invent more interesting replacements for the standard white tents and stepped grandstands. His glinting silver "Loa Structure" positioned near the main stage at the 11th Voodoo Art and Music Experience is a step in that direction.

Made from six steel cargo containers perforated by the Voodoo logo, Beese's industrial-chic creation will serve as the festival's VIP concession stand, topped with two viewing platforms accessible by ladders.

"Everybody can put up a tent," Beese said. "I want to add some surprise."

Beese, an architect and entertainment production designer, already surprised New Orleans once, when he orchestrated Brad Pitt's "Pink Project" in December 2007. In just a matter of days Beese managed to erect a head-spinning village of 150 pink fabric houses in the Lower 9th Ward, meant to call international attention to "Make It Right," the affordable housing development that is now rising on the site.

Born in Flensburg, Germany, Beese, 40, began his career in what he calls "temporary architecture" by building exhibit displays for conventions in Hannover. He eventually moved to Los Angeles to try to break into Hollywood set designs. For a decade he worked on for independent films, the Sci-Fi Network and commercials. He also designed elaborate convention structures for clients such as Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen.

"You can build things in very short time frames," said Beese, comparing temporary architecture to permanent. "What would take three years, you do in three months. Sure it gets trashed, but it exists on movies and DVDs."

In February 2007, the GRAFT architecture firm of Los Angeles and Berlin selected Beese to create the publicity-grabbing pink houses that popped up on empty lots in the flood-ravaged neighborhood. The project changed his life. In the early stages of the endeavor, Beese met Voodoo Experience founder Stephen Rehage, who partnered in the making of the temporary pink neighborhood. As Beese put it, he and Rehage "clicked" and were soon working on other projects together, including the Voodoo festival and the Essence Music Festival that Rehage also produces.

Beese said he and his wife were attending a barbecue at Rehage's house in 2007 when an impromptu jam session broke out among some New Orleans musicians. That was the spark that caused the couple to move to New Orleans with their 2-year-old son in March.

"New Orleans has the flair," he said. "The attitude is different here."

At future festivals, Beese said he would like to see a new sort of stage, where the entire background was a video projection that enveloped the musicians with "art and effects."



DOUG MACCASH / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Architect and festival designer Stefan Beese at the "Loa Structure," which is not your typical grandstand. It is made from six steel cargo containers.