

COLUMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Columbia County Historical Society Names Melissa Davis and Eric Blair- Joannou to Board of Trustees

(KINDERHOOK, NY) JUNE 6, 2023 -- The Columbia County Historical Society announced today the appointment of two new members to its Board of Trustees, Melissa Davis and Eric Blair-Joannou. With the addition of Davis and Joannou, the Society's Board of Trustees now stands at 12 members.

"Melissa and Eric bring a dynamic energy and enthusiasm to our Board of Trustees that will be an asset to our growing and evolving organization," said Lisa Weilbacker, Executive Director of the Columbia County Historical Society. "Their extensive professional experience, passion for history and shared emphasis on community are precisely right for the Columbia County Historical Society in this pivotal moment," she added.

Melissa Davis is the owner of Ruby Press, a boutique PR agency she founded in 2001. She began her career in fashion editorial at *Harper's Bazaar*, and worked as a fashion editor in New York City for eight years. Melissa has also been a contributing editor for *Lucky* magazine and a fashion and beauty editor for *7X7*, a San Francisco city magazine. In 2014, she wrote and published the award-winning *This is Oakland: A Guide to the City's Most Interesting Places*. Melissa has been featured in media outlets such as *Lonny*, *Martha Stewart Weddings* and *Marie Claire*, and has been invited to speak at top universities including San Jose State and UC Berkeley. She lives in Chatham, New York.

"Columbia County's fascinating history is a big part of what compelled me to move here with my family. So, being invited to join the board for CCHS is a complete thrill. I truly look forward to sharing my expertise and skills to continue moving the organization further," Davis said.

Eric Blair-Joannou comes to the organization with personal and professional experience in historic built and natural environments, as well as educational programming experience for a number of historic sites and museums. Historic preservation in public and private spheres is at the core of Eric's values and mission, and as a perpetual student of colonial Dutch history in the Hudson Valley he is excited by his new role at CCHS. Eric is a commercial and industrial landlord in Columbia County and elsewhere in the Hudson Valley, and currently volunteers for the Columbia Land Conservancy. He also serves as a trustee of the Bronx Museum of the Arts and Historic Hudson Valley, which stewards van Cortlandt Manor, Philipsburg Manor, Washington Irving's Sunnyside, the Union Church of Pocantico Hills, and Kykuit, the Rockefeller Estate. Eric received his B.A. in History from Cornell University and his M.B.A. in Real Estate Finance and M.S. in Urban Planning & Design from Columbia University's Graduate Schools of Business and Architecture, Planning & Preservation. He lives in New York City.

"We are on the cusp of reimagining the context and national importance of our remarkable four sites, indeed the lasting impact of Nieuw-Nederland and Dutch America across more communities than many previously imagined. I could not be more thrilled and proud to play a small part in sharing our stories with audiences and scholars, young and old, across the region and the nation," Blair-Joannou said.

About Columbia County Historical Society

Columbia County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) cultural education organization founded in 1916 and chartered by the NYS Department of Education Board of Regents to collect, preserve, interpret and present the history, heritage and culture of Columbia County, New York, for its residents and visitors. CCHS serves residents of all eighteen towns and the City of Hudson. In addition to a research library and a permanent collection of more than 15,000 objects, CCHS owns and maintains the CCHS Museum & Library and three additional historic properties: the National Historic Landmark Luykas Van Alen House (1737); James Vanderpoel 'House of History' (c. 1820); and Ichabod Crane Schoolhouse (c. 1850).

For more information, please contact: Communications@cchsny.org



Melissa Davis



Eric Blair-Joannou

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