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**Contact:**

Megan Eves

Assistant Director for Programs and Communications

518-273-3400 | [meves@nysmuseums.org](mailto:meves@nysmuseums.org)

## **Museum Association of New York Announces 2023 Awards of Distinction**

**[Troy, NY]** – Museums and museum professionals will be recognized at the 2023 annual conference “Finding Center: Access, Inclusion, Participation, and Engagement” in Syracuse, New York this April for their exceptional achievements. The fourteen awards made in 2023 celebrate unique leadership, dedicated community service, transformational visitor experiences, community engagement, and innovative programs that use collections to tell stories of everyone who calls New York home.

“New York’s museums and museum professionals are reimagining and reinventing their roles within their communities, how they interpret their stories and collections, and the visitor experience,” said **Natalie Stetson, Executive Director of the Erie Canal Museum and MANY Program Committee Co-Chair**. “This year’s award winners are outstanding examples for the museum field.”

“We were incredibly impressed with the quality and quantity of award nominations this year, which made the review process highly competitive,” said **Clifford Laube, Public Programs Specialist at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum and MANY Program Committee Co-Chair**. “Museums and museum staff across the state are demonstrating creative thinking and are inspiring institutional change.”

### **2023 Awards of Distinction Winners**

#### **Excellence in Design**

This award acknowledges extraordinary achievement in design in three categories: Publications/Graphics, Media/Marketing Campaigns, and Exhibition Design.

#### **Publications & Graphics**

##### **Cow Neck Peninsula Historical Society**

“WWI: The Home Front –Our Community Takes Action” Exhibition Catalog

The catalog reflects how people on Long Island experienced the home front during the First World War. It is illustrated with primary source materials, newspapers, pictorial magazines, photographs, images, artifacts, and letters from soldiers. The designers color coded sections to correlate to the exhibition installation.

## **Media & Marketing**

### **NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center**

“Celebrating Harriet Tubman’s 200th Birthday”

To celebrate and commemorate the bicentennial of Harriet Tubman’s birth, the City of Auburn, the Cultural Sites Commission, and the Equal Rights Heritage Center partnered with TGW Studio, Rochester, to create a unique logo and promotional materials including forty street banners placed along South Street in Auburn, eight billboards across the Finger Lakes, as well as digital and print assets.

## **Exhibition**

### **The Wild Center**

“Climate Solutions”

“Climate Solutions” is a 3,000 sq ft exhibition designed to change the dialogue and shift people’s mindsets about climate change. Constructed of upcycled and repurposed materials, the exhibition features hands-on interactives, multimedia storytelling, interactive learning, immersive experiences, and large scale portraits of individuals who are working on climate solutions.

## **Engaging Communities**

These awards celebrate organizations that use exceptional and resourceful methods to engage their communities and build new audiences. Awards are made based on the size of an organization’s operating budget.

### **Volunteer - \$99,999**

#### **Bird Homestead and Meeting House Conservancy**

“William Voris Archaeological Site Excavation”

This project consisted of eight archaeological workshops for the public, organized and conducted by professional archaeologists that focused on excavating and preserving materials from the life of William Voris, one of the first Black entrepreneurs in Westchester County.

### **\$100,000 - 250,000**

#### **Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance**

“Growing Uptown”

“Growing Uptown” is a free, bilingual (Spanish and English) environmental program initiative of the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum that benefits Upper Manhattan and Bronx residents. They have served more than 100 families with virtual and in-person workshops in partnership with New York Common Pantry, Green Thumb, and Root to Rise.

### **\$251,000 - 499,999**

#### **Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art**

## “Benjamin Wigfall and Communications Village”

This first retrospective of Benjamin Wigfall’s art documented his early career in Virginia in the 1950s to his arrival at SUNY New Paltz as the first Black professor in its Fine Arts Department. In the 1970s Wigfall founded the community art space “Communications Village,” in a former mule barn in Kingston. The exhibition, created in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the related program series engaged multiple community organizations and attracted the largest attendance in the Dorsky’s history.

**\$1,000,000 - 4,999,999**

### **Burchfield Penney Art Center**

“LEROI: Living in Color”

“LEROI: Living in Color” was the first museum retrospective of the work of internationally acclaimed artist Le Roi Johnson. The Museum partnered with Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology, Squeaky Wheel Film and Media Art Center, Just Buffalo Literary Center, and the Buffalo Public Schools. Partners developed responsive multimedia artworks including video projections, digital collages, sculptural installations, and poetry that brought voices of the next generation into important conversations around identity, community, culture, social justice, and the environment.

**Over \$5M**

### **Intrepid Museum**

“Making History Accessible: Toolkit for Sensory Interpretation”

The Intrepid Museum partnered with New York University’s Ability Project to create “Making History Accessible: Toolkit for Sensory Interpretation” that offers a range of digital and physical/tactile solutions designed to improve and increase access, enjoyment, engagement, appreciation and understanding of historic sites through their spaces and collections for all audiences, but especially audiences with disabilities. As a joint research initiative with the Occupational Therapy Department and the Interactive Telecommunications Program, NYU’s Ability Project eliminates barriers for people with disabilities at the intersection of disability and technology.

### **Individual Achievement**

The Individual Achievement Award honors a dedicated museum professional or volunteer that played a significant role in advancing their organizations.

### **Mia Certic**

Executive Director, Montauk Historical Society

The Montauk Historical Society hired Mia Certic as its first Executive Director in 2020. She guided the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic by expanding its online presence, creating new school curricula, producing a virtual lighthouse tour, and designing new QR- code activated “History Spots” that allowed anyone with a smartphone to explore Montauk’s past. Certic expanded the museum team by creating two new full-time positions and summer internships for high school and college students. Certic also launched a capital campaign for restoration work to the Montauk Lighthouse Tower that raised \$1.8 million in its first year.

**Bill Merchant**

Deputy Director for Collections, Historian & Curator, D&H Canal Historical Society

Over the last eight years, Bill Merchant has grown the D&H Canal Historical Society from an all-volunteer organization to a museum with two full-time and five part-time staff. Through his research, Merchant recognizes and shares the stories of historically marginalized peoples that were significant to the success of the D&H Canal. He expanded the Historical Society's audience through outreach and virtual programs and played a significant role in the acquisition and restoration work of the building that is the new location for the D&H Canal Museum and the Mid-Hudson Visitor Center.

**Rising Star**

The Rising Star award celebrates museum professionals with five years or less experience who think creatively, inspire change, spark innovation, and exemplify leadership.

**Peter Fedoryk**

Curatorial Fellow, Preservation Long Island

Since of July 2021, Peter Fedoryk has worked at Preservation Long Island (PLI) as a full-time Curatorial Fellow charged with the management of PLI's The Art of Edward Lange Project, a collaborative, multifaceted initiative focused on the life and work of German immigrant and landscape artist, Edward Lange (1846-1912). In this position, Fedoryk created a pop up exhibition and initiated a partnership with the Town of Huntington to develop a "Looking for Lange" community scavenger hunt that encouraged the public to use a website to find the places Lange painted around town, and share their visits on social media.

**Olivia Khristan**

School and Education Partnerships and Programs Supervisor, Corning Museum of Glass

As the first staff member to focus on teachers and students Khristan quickly built relationships with teachers and the Corning community to champion DEI within and outside the museum. She chairs the Museum's DEI Matrix Team and is a leading member of multiple DEI subteams. She is part of Diverse FLX, a group of emerging leaders from the community who work together to build a diverse, equitable, and sustainable future for the region. She is a board member of the Elmira-Corning NAACP, a member of the ED&I Committee of the New York State Art Teachers Association, and volunteers for the African American Read-In of the Southern Tier.

**Anne Ackerson Innovation in Museum Leadership**

The Anne Ackerson Innovation in Museum Leadership Award honors a museum professional who made significant contributions to the museum field or to their organization. Award winners are selected for their commitment to accessibility, equity, and inclusion, and their dedicated work towards community engagement, relevance, and sustainability.

**Neil Watson, Former Executive Director, Long Island Museum**

Under Neil Watson's leadership, the Long Island Museum reopened the History Museum, initiated a new outdoor sculpture program, and partnered with local organizations such as the

Sunday Street singer/songwriter series and North Shore Pro Musica, to bring a chamber music series to the community. During Watson's tenure, the museum's annual operating budget grew to nearly \$3 million. Exhibitions during Watson's career at the LIM include the *Long Road to Freedom: Surviving Slavery on Long Island*, the first major museum project to examine slavery from a Long Island regional historical perspective, *Walt Whitman's Arcadia: Long Island Through the Eyes of a Poet & Painters* to mark the American bard's 200th Birthday, and *Fire & Form: New Directions in Glass*.

Prior to his nine-year stint as Executive Director at the Long Island Museum, Neil built a distinguished career as an artist and curator and held directorships at several other museums, including at the Katonah Museum of Art. Beyond his transformative leadership, Neil has impacted and aided museums and cultural institutions with dedicated service to the field.

### **Board of Directors Special Achievement Award**

The Board of Directors special achievement award is given to individuals or museum projects that deserve exceptional attention.

#### **Suzanne LeBlanc**

President, Long Island Children's Museum

For the past 18 years, Suzanne LeBlanc has been President of the Long Island Children's Museum, where she has led the Museum to achieve national recognition. When hired, Suzanne was charged with raising LICM's national profile, expanding access and community engagement, and pursuing accreditation. As Suzanne prepares to retire from a 49 year career in the field, not only did she achieve those goals, but she did it while navigating three major challenges - the financial crisis of 2008, the aftermath of SuperStorm Sandy in 2012, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. With each of these challenges, she led with an eye on the big picture, and secured essential financial support, including \$3 million in federal relief funds during the pandemic. In 2021, Suzanne led LICM through the American Alliance of Museums' rigorous accreditation process.

Throughout her career, she has been instrumental in the development and oversight of major initiatives which have addressed issues of diversity, equity, access and inclusion. Under Suzanne's leadership, LICM was heavily involved in the development of a Cultural Competence Learning Institute and was in the program's first cohort. This involvement and Suzanne's commitment to DEAI resulted in a new Museum program, LICM4all, which serves visitors with disabilities and makes LICM accessible to all. Suzanne's dedication to providing these community outreach programs led to LICM receiving the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2012. Other recognition awarded to LICM during her tenure includes the Education Partner Award from the Board of Cooperative Educational Services of Nassau County, the Excellence in Exhibition award from the American Alliance of Museums, the Neighborhood Builders Award from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, and the Association of Children's Museums' Promising Practices Award.

Award winners will be honored during the 2023 annual conference "Finding Center: Access, Inclusion, Participation, and Engagement" at the Syracuse Marriott Downtown on Monday, April 17.

Awards of Distinction are supported by Hadley Exhibits, Inc.

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### **About the Museum Association of New York**

The Museum Association of New York is the only statewide museum service organization with more than 730 member museums, historical societies, zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums. MANY helps shape a better future for museums and museum professionals by uplifting best practices and building organizational capacity through advocacy, training, and networking opportunities. Visit [www.nysmuseums.org](http://www.nysmuseums.org) and follow MANY on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn @nysmuseums