

# New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Presenting the  
2022 New England  
Design Hall of Fame  
Inductees

*Beauty*  
Everywhere

*Tactile textures for restful retreats*





## The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual New England Design Hall of Fame

**H**appy fifteenth anniversary to the New England Design Hall of Fame! Since 2007 (and including this year's seven inductees), we've been proud to celebrate eighty-three talented architects, interior designers, landscape designers, specialty builders, and other professionals and firms whose talents have made New England's residential design scene so vibrant.





**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:**  
Bob Ernst, Colin Flavin,  
Wayne Towle, Susanne Csongor,  
Michael Coutu, Robert Dean,  
and Andrew Flake. This year's  
inductees were photographed  
at Casa Design Group's  
Georgetti showroom in Boston.

This year's inductees represent a broad spectrum of talents, but all have in common a passion for design and an uncompromising drive for the very highest quality. We're pleased to introduce the class of 2022: architects Robert Dean and Colin Flavin; landscape designer Michael Coutu; interior designer Susanne Csongor; custom builders Andrew A. Flake, represented by Andrew Flake, and FBN Construction, represented by

Bob Ernst; and woodworkers Wayne Towle Master Refinishing & Restoration, represented by Wayne Towle.

Join us as we gather to celebrate this impressive group of design pros. This year's gala will be held on November 10 at the InterContinental Boston. See page 132 for all the details!

*Text by* PAULA M. BODAH | *Portraits by* BRUCE ROGOVIN



# Andrew A. Flake

ANDREW FLAKE



A career in the sky was actually Andrew Flake's first plan. The Boston native earned a degree in aviation science from Northeastern University, intending to be a commercial pilot, then ran headlong into a slowdown in the airline industry as the economy collapsed in the 1970s.

The sea was his next plan, as he

signed on as second mate on an eighty-foot schooner out of Nova Scotia. Fifteen months later, after sailing much of Central and South America, he was back on land at the family's Martha's Vineyard home and looking for work in the yachting industry. Fate once again intervened, this time in the form of a fire that destroyed the island home.

With a lifelong friend, Flake designed and built a new house—the house he eventually raised his own family in—and in the process, found a new career.

Since starting his firm in 1979, Flake has built a reputation for crafting homes of exceptional quality, a fact he attributes to both his own hard work and passion as well as to the relationships he has built with other design professionals. “Builders ought to know what architects do and how they do it, and architects should do the same for builders,” he says. His own close relationship with Vineyard architect Mark Hutker has been an important factor in both their careers, he adds.







# New England Design Hall of Fame | ANDREW A. FLAKE



In a place as small as Martha's Vineyard, relationships are paramount, and it's not always all about business, says Flake, who has a long history of community involvement and volunteer work. "When you invest in the community you live in, that's what makes it all work."



"Builders ought to know what architects do and how they do it, and architects should do the same for builders."—*Andrew Flake*



New England Design  
Hall of Fame | 2022 INDUCTEE

# Colin Flavin

FLAVIN ARCHITECTS



Colin Flavin has been passionate about midcentury modern architecture since—well—pretty much the midcentury. He was a college student at the end of the 1970s when he first got a look at the style. A friend's father happened to be architect Mark Mills, protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright and renowned in his

own right for his work in the Monterey, California, area where Flavin grew up. "He'd built a small colony of buildings, and I was taken with it," Flavin recalls. "The organic architecture, the intimate scale, the beautifully crafted natural materials—I was mesmerized by the work."

At the time Flavin was focused on

art and environmental studies, but the seeds of his career in architecture had been planted. Eventually, he headed east to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he earned a master's in architecture.

For the first half of the thirty-plus years he has helmed Boston-based Flavin Architects, Flavin covered the gamut of styles—from traditional to modern—and worked on both residential and commercial projects. About fifteen years ago, however, Flavin realized he had strayed too far from his true love. He shut down the commercial side of his business and refocused his residential work on a style he calls "natural modernism." These days, his firm of twelve focuses on building







# New England Design Hall of Fame | COLIN FLAVIN



“The organic architecture,  
the intimate scale, the  
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—Colin Flavin

clean, contemporary homes throughout New England as well as reimagining vintage homes with all the amenities and sustainable practices of the twenty-first century.

Like many architects, Flavin still loves to draw. Perhaps unlike some, he also loves to write. When he's not designing modern houses, he's often writing about them as a contributor to Houzz. And, as a member of the board of the New England chapter of Docomomo, he lives out his commitment to the documentation and conservation of buildings and neighborhoods of the modern movement.





# FBN Construction

BOB ERNST



**T**he only thing Bob Ernst knew when he graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy was that college wasn't for him. Instead, he spent time traveling in the U.S. and in Europe, a decision he has never regretted. "I learned a lot in my travels, about people and about communicating," he says, as he tells tales about jobs washing windows,

running a rental car company, and doing just about every task there is in the restaurant industry.

It was a challenge from the owner of the last restaurant he worked for that started him on his career path in construction. Could Bob remodel the restaurant in less than two weeks? "I didn't know the first thing about it,

but I started calling electricians and plumbers on Monday and did a million bucks worth of work in nine days,"

Ernst recalls. "A funny little opportunity presented itself and turned out to be what I was destined to do."

Through the 1980s he honed his skills in carpentry and construction as well as in business, developing a reputation both for the quality of his work and the depth of his commitment to customers. Since Ernst joined FBN Construction—first as vice president in 1995 and then transitioning to president ten years later—the company has grown from \$750,000 in annual revenue to \$30 million. The outstanding work the Boston-based firm of forty does is, of course, a large part of its success, but Ernst, who







“Our mantra is honesty, dignity, fairness, and respect.”

—Bob Ernst

purchased the company in 2013, is equally proud of the relationships his company builds with its clients as well as with architects, designers, craftspeople, and other professionals in the residential design community.

“Our mantra is honesty, dignity, fairness, and respect,” he says. “At the end of the day, what drives me is problem-solving, figuring out solutions, and helping people achieve their dreams and goals.”





# Michael Coutu

SUDBURY DESIGN GROUP



**T**he day after he graduated from high school, Michael Coutu took a job at a landscape design company. He never left. “It was a local company with a good reputation,” he says about the firm whose name he eventually changed to Sudbury Design Group. “I worked from the ground up,” he adds, working on weekends, days off, and summers

while he attended college, earning an associate’s degree in landscape operations from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture and a B.S. in Environmental Design from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

In the early days, the company had just a handful of employees, but in the mid-1990s, Coutu bought it and began

expanding. With offices in Sudbury and Osterville, Massachusetts, and more than sixty employees, Sudbury Design Group is now a complete design-build landscape architecture firm creating beautiful yards and gardens all along the eastern seaboard.

The world of landscape architecture has changed, and Coutu and his crew have changed right along with it, adopting sustainable practices with a focus on conservation and the promotion of native species. “Our clients have become more educated, and that in turn drives us,” he says.

Community service is an important part of his work, and he’s proud of the







“Our clients have  
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—*Michael Coutu*

involvement his company has had in such efforts as building the September 11 Memorial Garden for the town of Sudbury. Coutu is also on the board of directors of Household Goods, an Acton, Massachusetts-based nonprofit organization that provides furnishings annually to some 3,000 needy households.

Coutu says people often ask him when he’s going to retire after more than fifty years in the business. “I say, ‘Why would I retire?’” he responds. “I’m in my office at 5:30 every morning. I enjoy coming to work every day. My work is my passion.”





# Robert Dean

ROBERT DEAN ARCHITECTS



**H**ad Robert Dean been less artistically inclined, he might have had a career as an urban planner. Growing up in the old manufacturing city of Brockton, Massachusetts, with a father in the construction business, he was attuned early to the importance of the relationship between the built world and the community.

“When I was in high school, I already had a very established interest in buildings and cities and how they reflected each other,” he says.

As it happens, the artistic side won out, and Dean studied architecture, earning a B.A. at the University of Pennsylvania and an M.A. at Columbia University. “The program at Penn

was very fine arts focused,” he says.

“I came out understanding architecture as a fine art, and I continue to view it that way very consciously.”

In that sense, he’s old school—not to be confused with old-fashioned. True, many of the projects in his portfolio are sensitive, respectful renovations of older homes, but Dean is equally comfortable in the modernist realm. “Old school means being interested in a long tradition of how architects have worked, how materials and forms go together, how people use a building,” he explains. “It doesn’t mean looking back to a specific







“Old school means being interested in a long tradition of how architects have worked, how materials and forms go together, how people use a building.”

—Robert Dean

time and trying to pretend you're there.”

Dean, who founded his New Canaan, Connecticut, firm in 1986, has purposely kept his staff small. “I like to have my hand directly in every project,” he says. “Working with us is like working with a two-person firm.”

Over the years, the architect has indulged his broader interest in how communities operate by being active in his own region, often as an elected official (he's currently on the Board of Finance in Redding, Connecticut, where he lives) and as an adviser to groups related to community planning and historic preservation.





# Susanne Csongor

SLC INTERIORS



**S**usanne Lichten Csongor grew up with a mother, also named Susanne, who loved beautiful things and filled their home with custom-crafted furnishings. Inspired by her mom, and with her own penchant for exquisite objects, Csongor studied fine arts and business, then went on to earn a master's in interior design. Along the

way, she spent time as a teaching assistant to Arnold Friedmann, former director of Pratt Institute's interior design program, and studied decorative art and architecture in Paris with Parsons School of Design.

Those experiences, along with the business acumen she acquired as an undergraduate, have been the founda-

tion for her successful design firm, SLC Interiors, going strong for thirty-three years now.

Csongor and her staff of ten at her South Hamilton, Massachusetts-based company (there is an office in Boston, too), have a strong portfolio of residential projects, ranging in size from a family compound off the coast of Massachusetts to luxury high-rise condominiums in Manhattan, and in style from a historically important home in Charleston, South Carolina, to a frankly modern home in Miami, Florida. "From guiding clients through the building process to creative development and collaboration, each step is met with







Community involvement is a priority, too, and Csongor holds frequent events to raise funds for local equestrian organizations.



inventive solutions and innovative ideas that have the client's best interest and bottom line in mind," Csongor says.

While her career passion is interior design, Csongor is equally passionate about her family and their horses. When she's not in the office, you'll find her and her twin daughters fox-hunting with the Myopia Hunt Club.

Community involvement is a priority, too, and Csongor holds frequent events to raise funds for local equestrian organizations. She supports causes that range from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy to the Pan-Mass Challenge. Csongor is an active member of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art.



# Wayne Towle Master Refinishing & Restoration

WAYNE TOWLE



Wayne Towle is quick to credit his wife, Debbie, for his career. It was she, after all, who first taught him how to refinish furniture when the pair were living in Missouri while she pursued a master's degree.

Towle had studied resource economics with an eye toward a career in academia, and he began job hunting when the couple relocated to Boston in 1980. Until the perfect job came along, he took on work painting, plastering,

and refinishing woodwork and furniture for people moving into the brownstones in the Towles's South End neighborhood. Word of mouth led to more work, and before he knew it, Towle had a thriving business. In those early days, he spent lots of time at the Brookline library. "I'm basically self-taught," Towle says, "and I'm still learning."

Now based in Needham, Massachusetts, Wayne Towle Master Refinishing & Restoration has twenty-seven employees and is recognized as the go-to company for important restoration work, both residential and institutional. Among his







New England Design

Hall of Fame | WAYNE TOWLE MASTER REFINISHING & RESTORATION

“I’m basically self-taught,  
and I’m still learning.”—*Wayne Towle*



schools will help keep the field alive.  
“When you do this, you’re going to  
get dirty, but there’s really immediate  
gratification,” he says. “At the end  
of the day you can stand back and say,  
‘I did that.’ ”

noteworthy projects are a series of  
historic rooms at Yale University and  
the offices of the chief justice  
at the Massachusetts Supreme  
Judicial Court. Since 2016, Towle has  
been the resident expert refinisher  
on PBS’s *This Old House*.

The work may be steeped in tradi-  
tion, but, says Towle, “it changes with  
the times. We’re constantly educating  
ourselves, and we’re always pushing  
the envelope.”

Restoration and refinishing aren’t  
for everyone, he admits, especially  
those who don’t like a mess. But he’s  
hopeful that outreach to area trade







# New England Design Hall of Fame | ANNOUNCEMENT PARTY

## Hall of Fame Announcement Party

EDITED BY CAMILLA TAZZI

We raised a toast to the 2022 New England Design Hall of Fame inductees at an intimate announcement party in October. Their close friends and family members gathered with top industry professionals at the SoWa Power Station to recognize these seven individuals. Congratulations to architects Colin Flavin and Robert Dean; interior designer Susanne Csongor; landscape designer Michael Coutu; custom builders FBN Construction, represented by Bob Ernst, and Andrew A. Flake, represented by Andrew Flake; and woodworkers Wayne Towle Master Refinishing & Restoration, represented by Wayne Towle.



Kevin Cradock of Kevin Cradock Builders and Jason Harris of Gregory Lombardi Design



Debbie Towle of Wayne Towle Master Refinishing & Restoration and New England Home's Kim Sansoucy



2022 Hall of Fame judges Jean Verbridge of SV Design and Allison Iantosca of F.H. Perry Builder



2022 inductees Michael Coutu, Susanne Csongor, Wayne Towle, Robert Dean, Andrew Flake, Colin Flavin, and Bob Ernst



June Flake and inductee Andrew A. Flake with Carla and Mark Hutker of Hutker Architects



John Trifone of Hancock Appliance



Peter Ferland, inductee Michael Coutu, Kathy Johnson, and Matt Sullivan of Sudbury Design Group

Inductee Robert Dean of Robert Dean Architects and New England Home's Roberta Mancuso



Howard Raley and inductee Colin Flavin of Flavin Architects, David Brookes of Brookes + Hill Custom Builders, and Jason Harris of Gregory Lombardi Design



New England Home's Jenna Talbott and inductee Susanne Csongor of SLC Interiors



Zhanna Drogobetsky of Casa Design Group, New England Home's Kathy Bush-Dutton, and inductee Bob Ernst of FBN Construction



Larissa Cook and Chris Magliozzi of FBN Construction with Lorelle Carlson of The REvision Group





# New England Design Hall of Fame | 2022 JUDGES



## 2022 Panel of Judges

Four of the five judges for this year's New England Design Hall of Fame are previous Hall of Fame inductees themselves, and Ted Landsmark has been a judge for all fifteen years of the program. We are grateful for their time, expertise, and dedication to the vetting process. Each year, the judges set a high standard that continues to raise the bar for design in the region.

### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

**Charles Hilton**, Charles Hilton Architects, Greenwich, Conn.

**Allison Iantosca**, F.H. Perry Builder, Hopkinton, Mass.

**Ted Landsmark**, Dukakis Center for Urban Research & Policy, Boston

**Robert Marzilli**, R.P. Marzilli Landscape Professionals, Medway, Mass.

**Jean Verbridge**, SV Design, Beverly and Chatham, Mass.

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