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Tastemakers 2018: Wayfair Professional with Stephen Sousa

Award-winning architectural designer and Tastemakers judge, Stephen Sousa, talks about the latest design trends, his personal style, and being your own boss.



TRADE TASTEMAKERS



[Stephen Sousa](#) is the principal and founder of the award-winning Sousa Design Architects design firm. We connected with him to learn how he gets into the spirit of his diverse clients, the benefits he saw from sticking with his Boston roots, and what he'll be looking for when judging this year's Tastemakers contest!

What was it about design that excited you when you were starting out?

I fell in love with the idea of creating an atmosphere that would intimately engage and impact all of the senses. With all design, it's about setting a mood through a combination of lighting, interior finishes, and programming that evolves a normal space into an unforgettable experience.



You've done amazing designs for residential, hospitality, and retail clients. What make each segment unique? Do you have a favorite to work in?

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Each segment really requires a different type of mindset and sensitivity because each environment is so different.

With residential work, I'm creating a very personal and intimate space for someone and it's crucial to understand what makes a place feel like "home" for each client. With retail, I focus on a comfortable circulation flow with a unique display experience. With hospitality, which is my personal favorite, it is a combination of those two. On those projects, I'm creating these zones that range from private to public spaces while still focusing on how the main circulation will flow. To me, it's about creating a beautiful guest experience, from the moment of entrance to every step in between when you sit down to dine.



How would you describe your personal style?

My local roots in Boston have greatly influenced my design style, but I like to introduce a contemporary and modern twist to it.

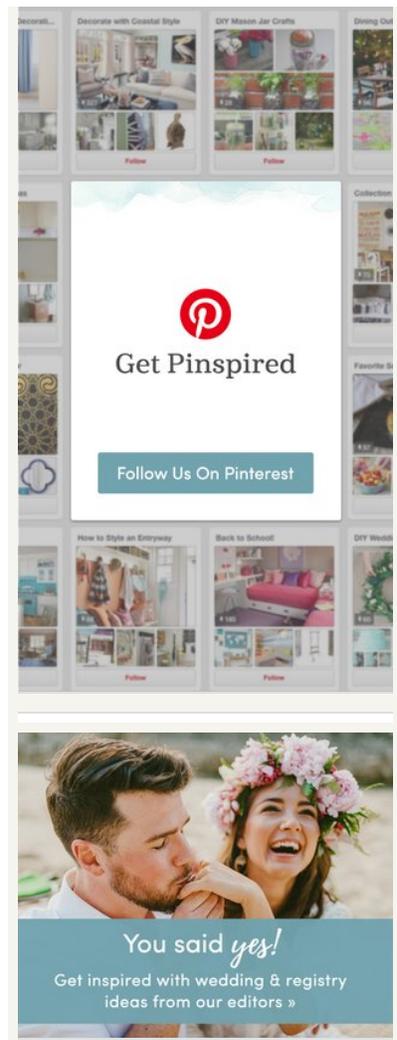
Was starting Sousa Design Architects always a goal of yours?

Yes, I've always had my own design style and ideas and I wanted to use those ideas to better the environment in my hometown. I was given an opportunity to move to San Francisco to start, but as I began to develop connections in Boston, it became more and more obvious that I should stay local.



What benefits has your business seen since you made that decision?

Being a local Bostonian gave me a great understanding of the architectural



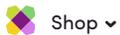
vernacular as a tool to create honest architecture throughout Massachusetts. This gave me the opportunity to develop my local networking and has actively contributed to Sousa Design's growth to this day.

Your company is nearing its 20th anniversary and your portfolio includes countless designs. Can you tell us about one or two of your most memorable design projects and what made them so special?

Each project that I've worked on had its own memorable moments but I'd say I have a particular fondness for the Gallows project. It was not only a great opportunity to collaborate with the owner Rebecca Roth Gullo, but also to deliver the client's vision of a Vermont barn-inspired space on a limited budget.



What advice would you offer designers and architects just getting their start?



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attention to what is around you because it is the little things in life that can teach you the most.

What design trends are you seeing today in the hospitality industry?

Maximalism has been a trend that is quickly slipping back into the hospitality industry. I'm seeing lots of combinations of bold prints and colors that share the idea that "more is more".



f What's the best piece of career advice you've ever received?

t Your goal in life should be to work for yourself.

What will you be looking for when you're judging this year's Tastemaker entries?

I am looking not only at the overall integrity of the design, but also the synergy of every unique design element that makes up the overall experience. I want to see the series of individual layers that will not only make the project stand out, but will also create the big picture.

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