

Need a good contractor?
Architect? Kitchen
designer? We went coast
to coast to find the

BEST BUILDING PROS IN AMERICA

and we'll tell you **HOW TO HIRE THEM**—and
others just like them—to work on your house

FEATURING:

- » Our Hall of Fame list
- » A 6-point plan for getting the best to work for you
- » Expert hiring tips from the TOH TV crew

CONTRACTORS & BUILDERS

Duce Construction Corporation
Olde York Homes
Hull Historical Restoration and Millwork
Fort Hill Construction
Allen J. Reyen Inc.
Fraser Construction
Jeremiah Parker Restoration & Construction
Plath & Company
Recreate
Tidewater Preservation Inc.

ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS

Glenn Keyes Architects
Kenneth R. Nadler Architects
Dubbe-Moulder Architects
Satterberg Desonier Dumo Interior Design
Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture
Studio Encanto
Erica Broberg Architect
European Country Kitchens
Drysdale Inc.
Austin Patterson Disston Architects

TRADES & SPECIALTIES

18th Century Fireplaces
Robert Tomlin
Gahme, van Sweden & Associates Inc.
River Wood Studio
Historic Color Consulting
Carolina Joinery Inc.
Copperworks Corporation
Harmonson Stairs
Lucian Avery Blacksmith
E.H. Hutson Plumbing Co. Inc.
Wells Roofing and Sheet Metal Company
Gail Spears Interiors and Landscape Design
Cianni Painting Company
The Kennebec Company
Rader & Crews Landscape Architecture
Painted Illusions Studio
Whitehead Landscape and Design
Crawford & Associates
Les Metalliers Champeinois
Ceramic Harmony

FROM THE RESTORATION CARPENTER WHO WON'T LET HIS CREW USE A LEVEL OR SQUARE (the better to make the new addition appear seamless with the timeworn old) to the painter who throws a drop cloth over a snoozing client (the better to finish the job on time), the Best Building Pros represents the designers, artisans, and tradespeople to whom the editors of *This Old House* can pay the ultimate compliment: We'd be honored to have them work on our house.

■ To our minds, this diverse group of men and women is worthy of recognition not because they have the most famous clients or the biggest commissions but because they meet the highest standards: They have collaborators, not customers; they have a craft, not a job; they make a good living, but never at the expense of a better outcome. ■ To compile the list, we considered thousands of candidates, studied hundreds of portfolios, conducted scores of interviews, and cross-checked references with colleagues, vendors, and customers. ■ It's a good list that falls short in only one respect: It's not long enough. These names represent only a fraction of the talent we uncovered, which is why we decided to make it an annual feature. It's also why we included a special section on hiring the best. Knowing that one of our building pros may not live in your hometown, we offer a six-point plan for locating someone every bit as good, including tips on where to find them, qualifications to look for, and how to work together to get the results you want. Plus, the *TOH TV* crew goes public with the secrets of how they hire subcontractors, not only for their businesses but for their own homes. ■ Follow our advice, and you may find the carpenter you've been looking for—one you can recommend to us for next year's list.



Architects & Designers

Whether it's a simple kitchen expansion or a whole-house gut renovation, these are the pros you need

what they'll do for you

A licensed architect develops plans, generates construction drawings, and, depending on the terms of the job, supervises the contractor on your project. Professional qualifications usually include a degree from an accredited school of architecture, a three-year internship, and passage of a state-administered exam. While membership in the American Institute of Architects is not essential, it's a good sign: Members are required to abide by a strict code of conduct (go to aia.org for links to members in your area). Architects generally charge an hourly rate or a percentage of the cost of home construction, or some combination of the two. Specialty designers, like kitchen and bath pros, can handle smaller projects, but if your renovation involves structural work, an architect is the way to go.



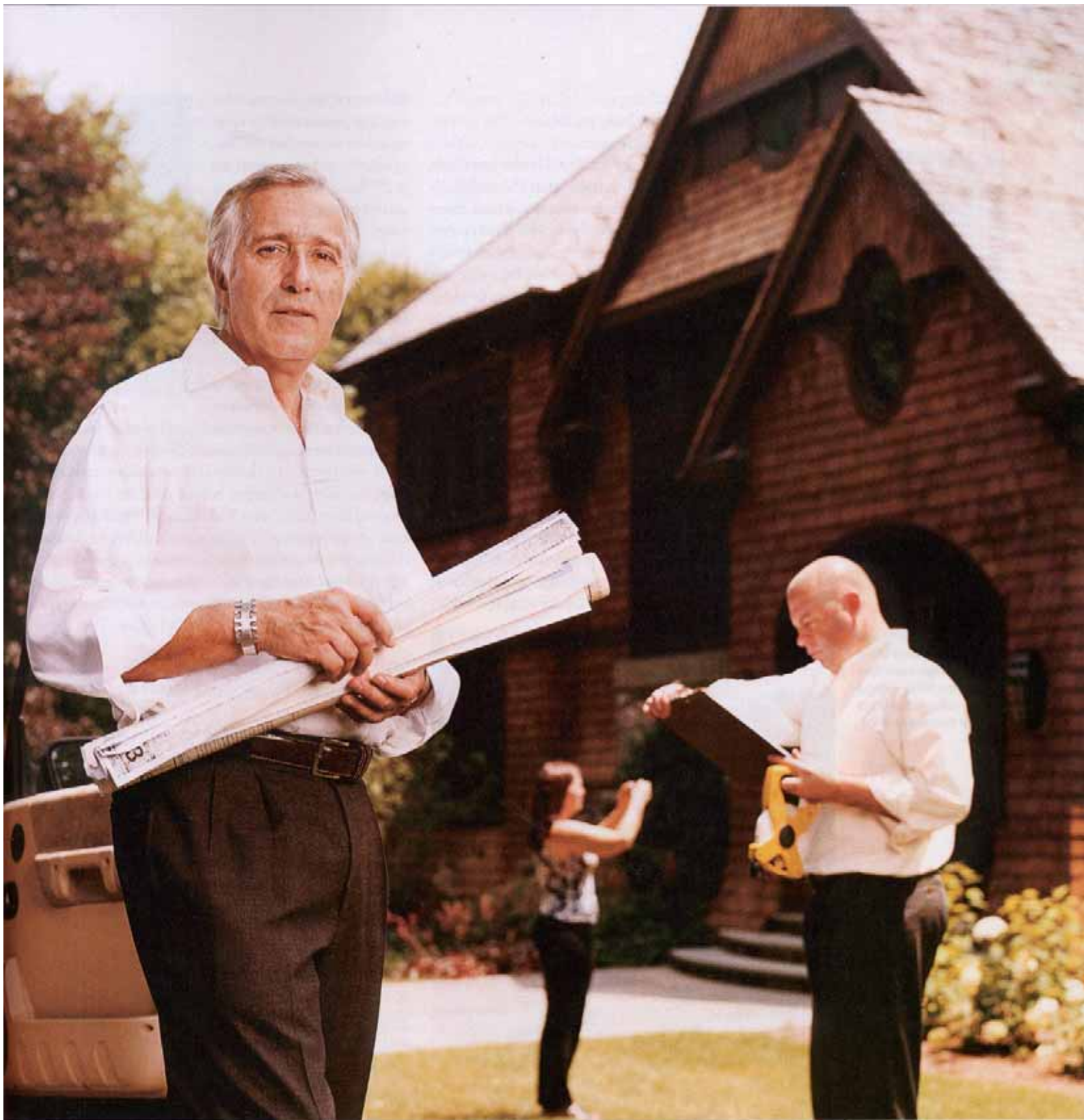
Keyes reproduced a period staircase in this 1790s Charleston residence.

STEWARD OF THE SOUTH

Glenn Keyes Architects, Charleston, S.C.; 843-722-4100

For Glenn Keyes, the commitment to preserving historical accuracy begins with the building and extends to the earth beneath. While working on the circa-1800 Pineapple Gate House, one of the grandest in Charleston, Keyes hired an archaeologist to find the original foundation of a garden wall he'd spotted in old photographs. And he didn't stop there. He went so far as to specify that the landscaping include only the species of oleander and gardenia that would have grown on the Carolina shore in the early 19th century.

Formerly the staff architect for the South Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Keyes has devoted nearly 30 years to saving Charleston's unique architectural heritage. Of the residents occupying the city's mostly Federal-era homes, he says, "They are just stewards. The house was here for 200 years before them, and it will be here for 200 years after."



DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL

Kenneth R. Nadler Architects, Mount Kisco, N.Y.; 914-241-3620; nadlerarchitects.com

Kenneth Nadler cares as much about every interior detail of a renovation as he does about what you can see from the road. On many of his projects, he chooses light fixtures, furniture, even fabrics—something many architects won't touch—and he does the necessary legwork, like the time he prowled the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City to find inspiration for a Federal-style home's entryway chandelier. In that spirit, Nadler recently transformed an ordinary 1960s ranch house in Bedford, N.Y., into a Shingle-style home worthy of the Maine coast. Plus, he made it look like it had been there for decades, from the leaded-glass windows to the fieldstone-and-granite foundation. "You don't want it ever to look like a renovation," he says.

What was once a nondescript ranch is now an elegant Shingle-style house, thanks to architect Kenneth Nadler and three different custom-cut shingle patterns.

WAY-OUT WEST

Dubbe-Moulder Architects, Jackson, Wyo.;
307-733-9551; *dubbe-moulder.com*

There's no challenge too quirky for Kurt Dubbe and Chris Moulder. One homeowner demanded that the architects squeeze an Art Nouveau spiral staircase hauled back from Paris into a hand-hewn 1902 log cabin (they did). Another insisted that they design the pool deck so that the client's pet iguanas could easily slip in for their morning swim (no problem). For perspective, Dubbe saddles up for rides through the old mining towns in the Wind River Mountains, where he gets a refresher course in the vernacular architecture of the West. "It's a real challenge to honor the historic fabric while creating something new and unique," Dubbe says, "but we can learn a lot from our past."

MOTHER-DAUGHTER DUO

Satterberg Desonier Dumo Interior Design,
Mercer Island, Wash.; 206-232-1830

Two heads really are better than one—especially when it comes to kitchen design. Mother-daughter team Nancy Satterberg and Kirsten Dumo bring two sets of expertise to every project. Dumo, an architectural designer, takes the lead on the initial design, while Satterberg, a

Nancy Satterberg and Kirsten Dumo bring their design expertise to the table—along with mountains of fabric samples.



lighting expert, layers ambient, task, and accent lighting to add personality to the space. Since they teamed up in 1995, the pair have worked on interiors in styles ranging from contemporary to rustic to Craftsman.

A PASSION FOR DETAIL

Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture,
Des Moines, Iowa;
515-288-9536; *hlkb.com*

The architects of Herbert

Lewis Kruse Blunck approach each project like archaeologists uncovering old bones. "The best way to discover what was there is to slowly and carefully remove carpet, tiles, and even wallpaper before you can start to see the original floor plan," says Kirk Blunck. "You'd be surprised how many pieces of evidence are still left behind." And once they've found the architectural clues, there's little they won't do to bring the past to life: for example, using the original molds to reproduce some 30,000 terra-cotta roof tiles for the restoration of a 1920s English Tudor manse.



Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck restored Herndon Hall, an 1883 mansion with 28 rooms and nine marble fireplaces.

SOUTHWEST STYLE

Studio Encanto, Tucson, Ariz.; 520-624-1133;
studioencanto.com

It's not uncommon for Christy Martin to conduct extensive research on every room she designs, flying to California, for instance, to tour Mission-style houses so she can create stylistically accurate interiors for a similar one back in Arizona. Her studio, run out of a 1920s produce warehouse, is known for its desert-style bath and kitchen designs, which feature earthy terra-cotta, brick, and hand-troweled plaster. But a look at her work reveals inspiration from sources as diverse as Moroccan palaces and Tuscan villas.

MULTITASKING MAVEN

Erica Broberg Architect, East Hampton and New York,
N.Y.; 631-329-9928; *ericabrobergarchitect.com*

Zigzagging between extremes would make most folks dizzy. For Erica Broberg, it's all in a day's work. She might be adding a master suite to a Revolutionary War-era home

how to find a **KITCHEN DESIGNER**



A certified kitchen or bath designer (CKD, CBD) is just that—someone who specializes in residential kitchen and bath design. To become certified, a professional must have at least seven years of hands-on experience and have passed a

series of tests administered by the National Kitchen & Bath Association. (To find a list of designers in your area, go to nkba.org.) Some charge pure design fees, which include only the plans; if the designer is also ordering fixtures or supervising the installation, he

or she might also charge for those additional services. Most designers can work in a variety of styles, but some prefer to specialize. If you want ultracontemporary, you're likely not to get it from someone whose portfolio is mostly Greek Revival.

while designing new windows and a roof for a not-particularly-historic beach bungalow. She's also sought out for her kitchen and bath redos, such as the one on our cover. "Switching gears all the time keeps you on your toes," she says, "and that helps you become a better designer."

OLD-WORLD AESTHETIC

European Country Kitchens, Bloomsbury, N.J.;
908-735-9929; *eckitchens.com*

When a client was distraught over parting with a majestic walnut tree standing in the way of her kitchen addition, Joan Picone and partner David Peer preserved it by using its lumber for the new kitchen cabinets. That sort of creative compromise is the firm's stock in trade. It has to be for the relationship to succeed, Peer says. "When you go messing with people's homes, you're involving yourself in the third most stressful thing in their lives, just behind family and work."

A SENSE OF PLACE

Drysdale Inc., Washington, D.C.; 202-588-0700

"The kitchen is not just a drywall box with cabinets on the walls," says designer Mary Douglas Drysdale. "The kitchen is the family room, entertaining room, and din-

ing room." Drysdale designs kitchens to be elegant as well as efficient, incorporating artwork, antiques, even a Steinway piano for singer Bette Midler. She applauds the trend toward kitchens that look like they belong in the home. "For a period of time, kitchen design was being led by a revolution in appliance design," she says. "You could walk into a Federal or a Victorian-era house and everything in the kitchen was modern. But now, people want the style of a kitchen to reflect the architectural style of their home."

WEATHER-WORTHY DESIGN

Austin Patterson Disston Architects,
Southport, Conn.; 203-255-4031; *apdarchitects.com*

Up and down the eastern seaboard, the firm of Austin Patterson Disston is acclaimed for thoughtful, highly detailed renovations of waterfront Shingle-style houses. Though worn from years of sun and salt, most of these homes have stood the test of time, so APD's architects focus on reviving rather than reinventing them—replacing windows, redoing interiors, and fixing previous insensitive renovations. "It's about understanding what went into the process of making those old homes," says Stuart Disston, "then trying to translate that to the present."

TOH

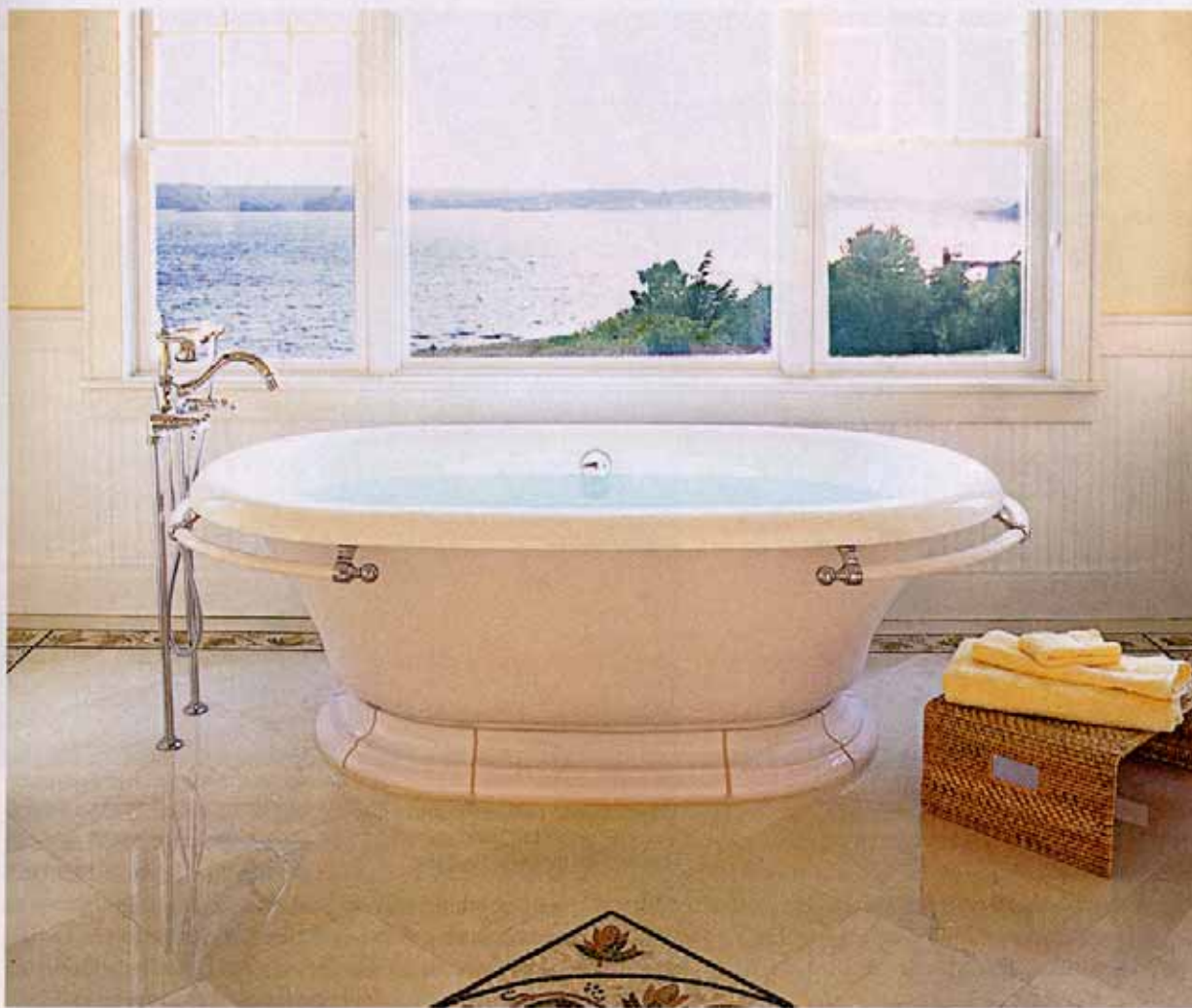


expert advice

HOW I HIRE

"It's a balance between competence and compatibility. I'm building a house now, and the general contractor has that competence, that quality in his core. But we also communicate well. When you spend six months to a year on a job, heaven help you if you're not compatible. It's like a dating process. You just have to have a hunch about somebody."

—RICHARD TRETHEWEY
This Old House plumbing and heating expert



There's water, water everywhere in this Erica Broberg-designed master bath overlooking Montauk Lake, also seen on our cover.