

Q&A

Off the Cuff: A Q&A with Gustafson Porter + Bowman's Neil Porter

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Neil Porter is a founding partner of Gustafson Porter + Bowman

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"Off the Cuff" is a Q&A series from Luxury Daily exploring the career paths, current projects and next steps of those shaping the world's best luxury brands.

The interviews feature a Proust-style twist, allowing readers to get to know industry leaders on a personal level. This edition features Neil Porter, founding partner at global landscape architecture firm [Gustafson Porter + Bowman](#).

In this Q&A, Mr. Porter discusses the power of fresh ideas, natural surroundings that inspire creativity and connecting with friends and family in his own garden.

Here is the dialogue:

What was your first job ever? What did it teach you?

My first job came as a complete surprise.

My final-year portfolio at the Architectural Association School was examined by Bernard Tschumi, the renowned architect, writer and educator. On the day he saw my work, he phoned and asked if I would join him at his Paris office to work on the Parc de la Villette, a public park.

It was my introduction to landscape, which has become a lifelong passion. It was also the job where I met Kathryn Gustafson, my future design and business partner.

Which skills have been critical to your success? Did you gain these skills within or outside of the workplace?

Positive communication and collaboration have been critical to my success.

Being able to clearly share ideas, listen actively and build trust with clients, architects and other collaborators has allowed me to help shape landscapes that are not only beautiful, but responsive to their surroundings.

These skills were developed both in the workplace and through my academic background, where I learned the value of working across disciplines and approaching every project as a unique and shared vision.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Never use the same idea twice.

Every place is unique, so be inventive and immerse yourself in understanding context, climate, history, topography and the aspirations of those who will come in contact with designed space.

How has your field changed since you started out in luxury, and what do you think your industry will look like in a decade?

Today, there's a clear shift towards more natural, immersive environments. People enjoy landscapes that feel lush, enveloping and authentic, and using plants and materials that are in harmony with the environments in which they are placed, as found with our work at The Perigon.

This naturalistic influence is less formal and works with contemporary lifestyles, where the relationship between interior and exterior space is fluid, allowing one to see and be surrounded by the diverse colors, forms and textures of plants.

In the next decade, I think luxury landscape architecture will continue to move in this direction, toward landscapes that feel alive and emotionally engaging.

What recent projects have ignited your passion for working in luxury?

The Perigon in Miami Beach has been particularly inspiring, as we've integrated Florida's rich and abundant flora into a luxury residential setting, creating a landscape that feels both exclusive and deeply connected to its natural environment.

We've been able to perfect the indoor-outdoor lifestyle to offer a unique, elevated residential experience like no other.

It's projects like this that reignite my passion for working in luxury, by showing how true sophistication lies in immersing people in nature through thoughtful, environmentally conscious design.

Who, in any industry or sphere would you most like to share a long lunch with and where would you take them?

I would want to meet an inspirational environmentalist or conservationist: David Attenborough, William Morris or Isabella Tree.

I would take them to Spring, a beautiful, airy restaurant housed in the west wing of Somerset House, London. Skye Gyngall, the head chef, selects fresh, in-season ingredients to create clean and naturally delicious food.

How do you get into the right mindset before a big meeting or presentation?

I take a moment to reconnect with the heart of the project I'm presenting, whether it's reviewing visuals or reminding myself of the story we're trying to tell. This helps me ground myself and shift my focus from performance to purpose.

I stay calm and present by trusting my own experience, knowing that clarity and authenticity are what bring my ideas to life.

On your days off, what can you be found doing to relax or have some fun?

Long walks in North Norfolk, an area of outstanding natural beauty with a spectacular coast of sandy beaches, salt marshes, chalk streams, ancient villages and fantastic wildlife.

When at home, you will find me tending a large garden, wildflower meadow and native woodland, growing vegetables and plants from seed and, on warm evenings, having friends and family to share the experience.

What does luxury mean to you?

Luxury is about creating spaces that foster a sense of comfort and connection. It's not about extravagance, but thoughtful design that enhances the human experience.

Luxury is a privilege, and as a designer of landscapes, one must consider how a luxurious experience can help benefit the environment in which it is placed. Minimizing a project's carbon footprint, harvesting water and contributing to habitat creation and biodiversity are all part of the creative process that give luxury its integrity.

Whether a product or service/experience, what is your favorite luxury indulgence?

A great book, an art exhibition, a beautiful garden time to think and be creative.

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