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PROFILE | JOSH SEVIGNY

BY SUSAN AXELROD | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTINA WNEK

Balanced Building

FOR BUILDER JOSH SEVIGNY, THE RIGHT MIX OF PROJECTS
MEANS TIME FOR BOTH WORK AND PLAY



Sylvain and Seigny does both renovations and new builds, such as this custom home on Cumberland Foreside.

Josh Seigny (opposite) of Sylvain and Seigny in what will be a second-floor bedroom of a new home that he is building on Cumberland Foreside.



Josh Seigny doesn't like to be pigeonholed. "I enjoy building classic, traditional coastal Maine homes, and I also like doing modern, ultra-efficient houses," says the principal of builders Sylvain and Seigny. "You're going to learn from working with different people in the field." Notable recent projects vary from a large custom home in Cumberland Foreside to a barre studio in Portland to a "museum" for a private collection of rare cars in Arundel. Energetic and driven, Seigny generally has two to three new homes going at a time, and three to four remodels. Most often, he works in tandem with architect Kevin Browne, whose office is right across the hall from Seigny's at Foreside Place on Route 1 in Falmouth. "Even when we work separately, it allows us to say, 'Hey, this guy has a great idea,' or learn things on another project that can be helpful on the project that we're doing together," Seigny says.

Building is in Seigny's blood. He grew up in Saco with contractors on both sides of his family, and he got started in the business working for his good friend Marc Sylvain's father. Following the elder Sylvain's retirement in 2008, his son went out on his own, and Seigny joined him. "I lived in Portland with Marc in the summertime, and then we'd go build houses where there was snow in the wintertime so we could ski," he recalls. Both did stints in Colorado. "If you're a French Canadian from Maine, you can basically go anywhere as a carpenter and get a job, just based on the reputation of our work ethic," Seigny says. Back home, the two formed Sylvain and Seigny in 2010. "Marc is our foreman," says Seigny. "He just loves to build houses. The business side of things isn't for him." Under Seigny's leadership, the company has grown well beyond its beginnings as a way for a couple of guys to support their skiing habit. "It was never the intention for it to get to the point where



Sevigny and his crew are giving the front of this Cumberland house a complete makeover, including the garage.

“ ALL OF THE THINGS THAT YOU WOULD WANT IN A DREAM CONTRACTOR, THAT’S WHAT JOSH IS. HE TAKES *REAL* PRIDE IN WHAT HE BUILDS, AND IT’S NOT DONE UNTIL IT’S RIGHT.

we were doing seven projects at a time, but it just kind of fell into place,” he admits.

The company now employs 20 people and maintains a millwork shop on Preble Street in Portland, something that’s important to Sevigny. “Before, we were outsourcing it, and that puts you at the mercy of somebody else—I don’t like that,” he says. Custom millwork is an important element in what he calls “fit ups”—interior renovation and outfitting of smaller-scale commercial spaces. “They’re interesting because they’re all different, and we can build things in house, which is a service that a lot of other people don’t provide,” he says.

That level of craftsmanship serves Sevigny well in his longstanding relationship with Sal Scaglione and Dana Heacock of Abacus Gallery. The popular retailer of artwork, decor, and jewelry has stores in Boothbay Harbor, Freeport, Kennebunkport, Portland, and Ogunquit. “All of the things that you would want in a dream contractor, that’s what Josh is,” says Scaglione. “He takes *real* pride in what he builds, and it’s not done until it’s right.

At the Ogunquit location, Sevigny recently worked with architect Caleb Johnson of Caleb Johnson Architects and Builders on a ground-up, two-story addition, building a bright, open gallery space with a mezzanine level. “It was quite involved because it was not a cookie-cutter addition,” says Scaglione. “We wanted it to look like a remodeled space, and to mimic—but not match—the building on the other side.” The spacious shop now comprises three structures: a classic, old New England home flanked by smaller contemporary buildings with their gable ends facing the street. Scaglione couldn’t be more pleased with the outcome. “The way the shop fits into the center of town is perfect, because it looks like another old building that has been repurposed for a different use,” he says. “We accomplished exactly what we wanted.”

Sevigny has also been involved in residential projects for Scaglione and Heacock, having worked on their home in Cape Elizabeth as well as houses for their parents. “He’s our guy, and he treats us very well,” says Scaglione. “We gravitate

toward people who are movers and shakers and who enjoy what they do, and that’s Josh. He’s like us—he’s on 24-7.”

Another Cape Elizabeth client, Bill Kourakos, retained Sevigny to renovate the interior of his home, the former keeper’s house at Cape Elizabeth Light. “I love working with him. It’s a rare thing when you find a contractor that you completely trust,” says Kourakos. When the 75-foot-tall, cast-iron lighthouse adjacent to the house needed painting, Sevigny ran the project, with Kourakos picking up the cost on behalf of the nonprofit American Lighthouse Foundation, which is charged with maintaining lighthouses around the country. “It was an interesting undertaking, because the tower is on the National Register of Historic Places and presents some unique challenges because of erosion,” Kourakos says. “But when I put things in Josh’s hands I never question that it’s going to work out.”

While Sevigny will work on projects from Boothbay to Kennebunk, “95 percent” of his work is in Cape Elizabeth, where he and his wife, Jamie, live in a Sylvain and Sevigny-built home—one of three in the neighborhood—with their two children: Danica, ten, and JJ, four. The active family spends weekends in the winter at Sugarloaf Mountain Resort and in the summer on their boat in Casco Bay, all of which are possible because Sevigny has turned over most of the hands-on construction work to his staff. “My tool bag is in my truck, and I will definitely step in, but then my phone rings while a guy is waiting for me to cut something for him, so I’m slowing the project down,” Sevigny says with a smile and a shake of his head. “Plus, I want to still be skiing when I’m older, and I know that lumping lumber all day is not the key to that.”

Praise from his clients offers reason to believe that continued success will allow Sevigny to be on the mountain at Sugarloaf for winters to come. “The evidence of Josh’s qualities as a builder and as a person is in the growth of his company,” says Kourakos. “It’s such a word-of-mouth business, and Josh’s reputation is great. He’s the real deal.”

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