Throughout Fuller Craft Museum’s nearly 50-year history, the seamless integration of architecture and nature at 455 Oak Street has been the perfect environment to house the aspirations of a changing institution. Whether presenting integral New England paintings in the early 1970s, or fulfilling its current mission of showcasing contemporary craft-based media, Fuller Craft Museum continues to reap the benefits of its intimate, peaceful retreat tucked away in the woods.

Years of tireless preparation led to the inaugural unveiling of Brockton Art Center-Fuller Memorial in 1969. When the 1940s trust fund of Brockton-native Myron L. Fuller (editor/publisher of the Brockton Enterprise) reached the necessary $1 million baseline, the first Board of Directors had the contractual option to create an institution geared towards children, natural history, or the arts. Fuller’s only stipulation was that “it shall be of the greatest possible benefit to the members of the community.”

In 1964, with consultant Frederick P. Walkey (then Director of the DeCordova Museum), the Board meticulously toured New England in pursuit of inspiration. After seeing the overflow of patrons at the Fitchburg Art Museum, they concluded that an art museum was the path of greatest value. Edouard Du Buron was named the first Director of the Brockton Art Museum-Fuller Memorial in 1965, and he sought young architects to construct a...
museum that would serve as a destination unto itself. Du Buron selected J. Timothy Anderson & Associates of Boston (now Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc.). Anderson’s proposal was inspired by Denmark’s modernist masterpiece, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, which was designed by architects Jørgen Bo (1919–1999) and Vilhelm Wohlert (1920–2007), who applied a “rural-cultural” philosophy and organic perspective. For the Louisiana Museum, the vision was that one could traverse the outdoor grounds like a “covered stroll” while continuing this leisurely experience through the interior of the museum, that is in actually three interconnected structures, Project architect Doris Cole explains. The Louisiana is a beautiful museum, essentially a series of pavilions with links between them. That is how we designed Fuller Craft Museum.

In a land exchange approved by Governor John A. Volpe, a plot of territory off of Oak Street was exchanged by the city of Brockton for an area of submerged land adjacent to Upper Porter Pond. With the outline of the premises now in place, construction began on the two-level, 20,000 sq. ft. building on November 20, 1967, and the blueprints allowed freedom for expansion in the future. The finished building included nods to modernist ideals of design, a set of beliefs that date back to the early 20th century Bauhaus movement—a modernist view that echoes Louis Sullivan’s famed mantra “form follows function,” as well as the self-described “organic architecture” of Sullivan’s protégé Frank Lloyd Wright. This organic modernism
was representative of a general period throughout the world, not just Europe and the United States.

Doris Cole, one of the architects (along with George Notter and Tim Anderson) who designed Fuller Craft Museum adds: "The idea was really to make an art museum that used nature as art. That's why as one goes through the galleries and through the links, one has views out to the site, to the forest, the woods, to the pond." At the first preview opening of the Museum in 1960s, a reviewer noted its resemblance to an old Pilgrim settlement. Furthermore, the building’s abundance of straight lines and 90° angles offer a clean aesthetic. The sloped and shingled roof forms come out of the 19th century New England vernacular, and are similar to the structures of Maine's Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, an architectural wonder designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes—also completed in the 1960s.

At Fuller Craft Museum, a diversity of spaces cater to our changing audiences, while also offering a variety of opportunities for the display of exhibitions. The Museum’s outside grounds and views provide a sense of peace, while the abundance of natural light that finds its way through the galleries further reinforces humanity’s place in the larger environment. As the Museum goes forward in its mission, it is a privilege to have a structure that is an exciting setting for the future.