

Texas Architect

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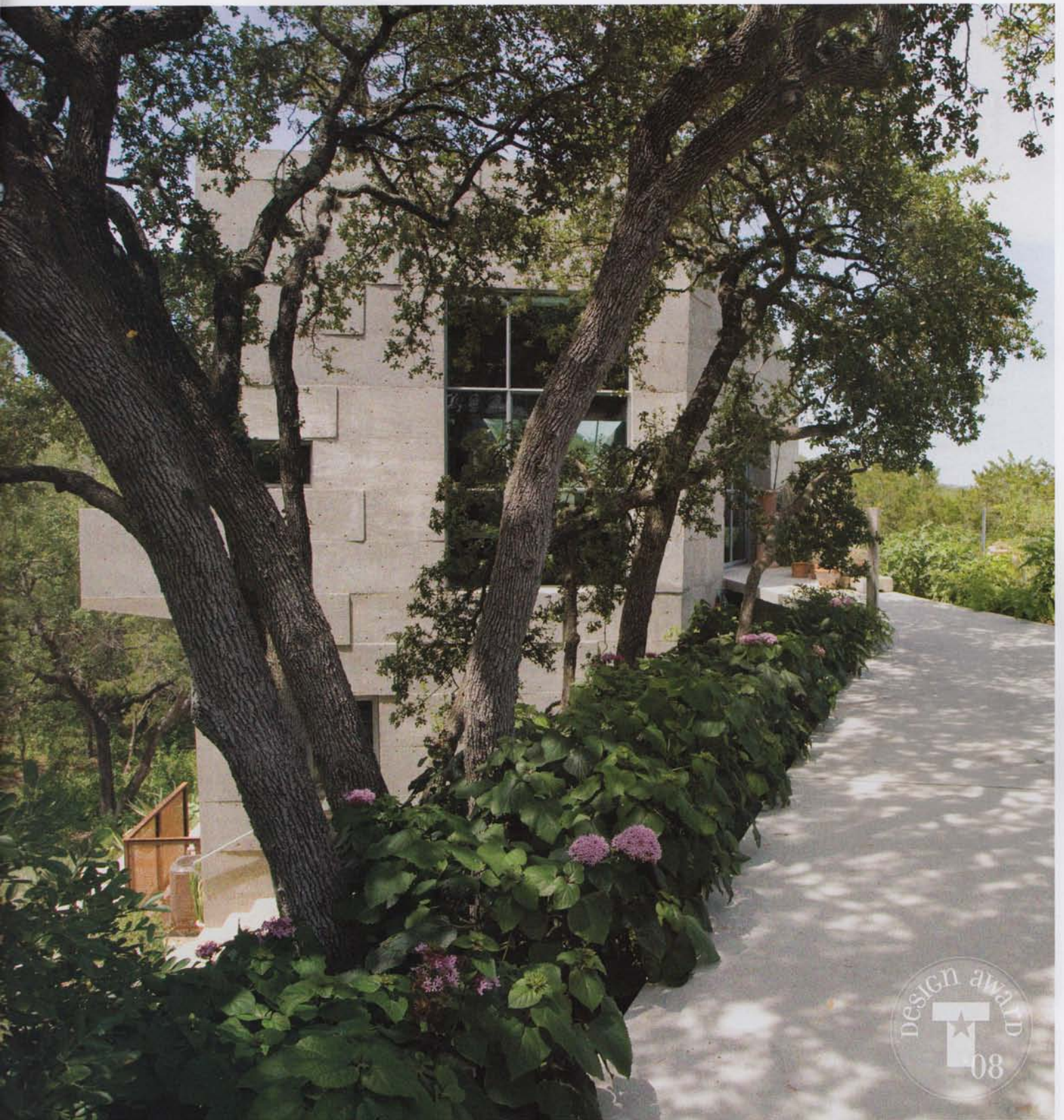


DESIGN AWARDS
★
EDITION



PROJECT Concrete Studio, Austin
CLIENT James David and Gary Peese
ARCHITECT Mell Lawrence Architects
DESIGN TEAM Mell Lawrence FAIA, Krista Whitson, François Levy, and John Castore
CONTRACTOR Crowell+
CONSULTANTS David/Peese Design (landscape and interiors); Boothe Concrete (concrete); Gunter Recht Lighting (lighting design)
PHOTOGRAPHER Mell Lawrence, FAIA





Concrete Studio

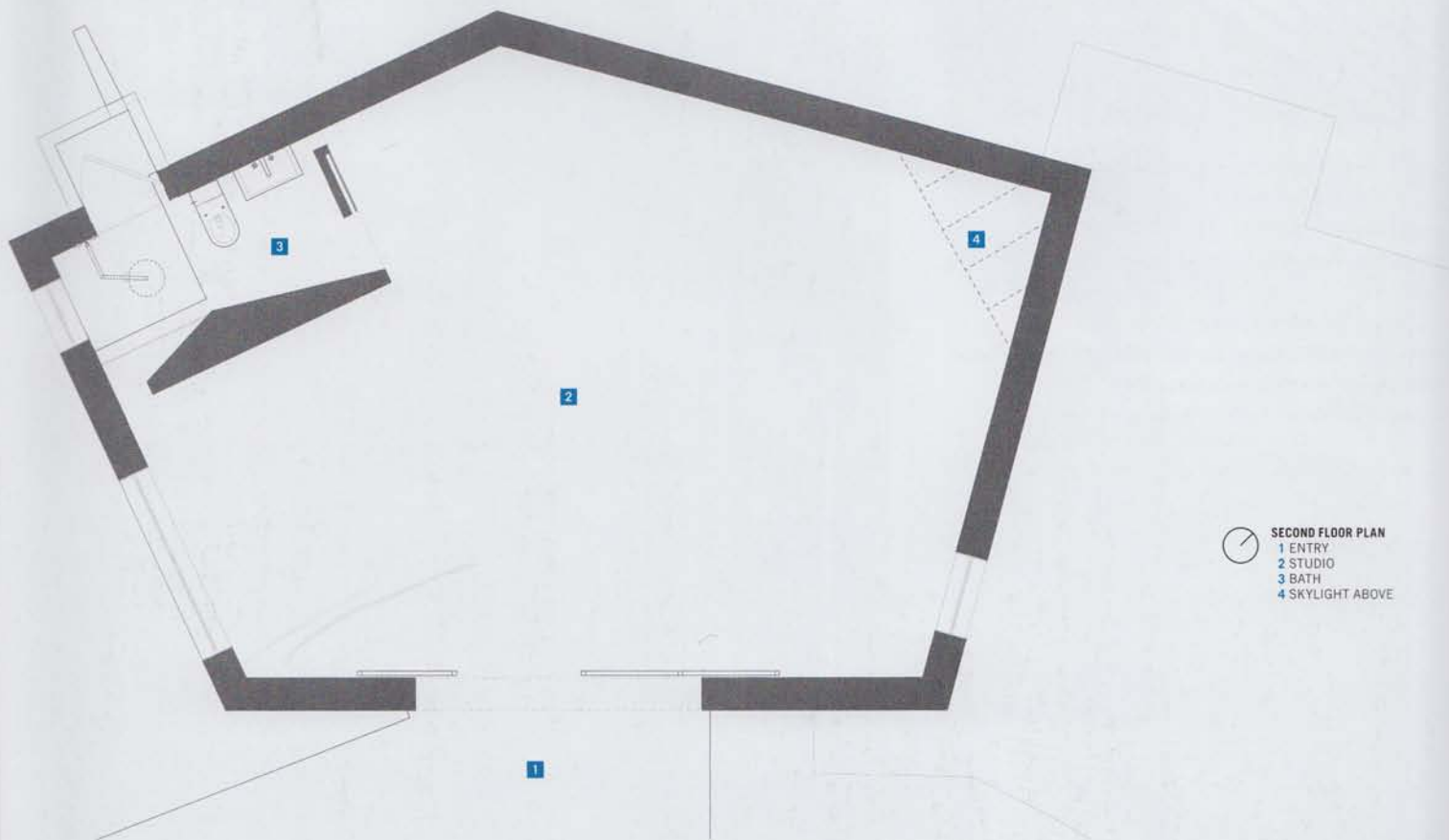
by STEPHEN SHARPE

RISING AMID THE GORGEOUSLY LUSH GARDENS that permeate the two-acre Rollingwood compound of James David and Gary Peese, the Concrete Studio marks a surprising contrast to the Bohemian splendor of the main house. The new building, its hard-edged surface softened by a mosaic of overlapping board-formed concrete strata, is the latest addition designed by Mell Lawrence Architects, the firm whose expansion of the house was recognized with a 2001 TSA Design Award.

David and Peese are the co-owners of David/Peese Design, a landscape design firm in Austin and were the founders of Gardens, a pioneering gardening store. The partners have spent almost three decades fine-tuning their home in the rugged hills of southwest Austin. Jim Coote designed their original house in 1979, which was expanded by Paul Lamb a decade later. The subsequent, award-winning addition to the house included a roofed terrace on the second level that opens to verdant views of the surrounding gardens and hills beyond.

The latest improvement is a two-story, poured-in-place concrete building that houses a garage and storage space tucked into a hillside with a studio above—a tectonic sculpture that celebrates the structural and aesthetic qualities of its hardened shell. The exterior's concrete surface is rendered





in articulated planes that resemble reptilian scales which, says the architect, was the serendipitous result of the necessity to overlap plywood panels when the concrete was poured. The raised edges cast shadows that animate the monolithic volume as sunlight bathes the walls.

Inside the second-story studio, the smooth-finished concrete walls are penetrated by large steel sash windows and a large skylight sliced from the north corner. On the south side, another window filters dappled light through a live oak. The large sliding door to the east captures morning sun and opens the building's face to the formal lawn adjacent to the main residence.

Juror Billie Tsien, AIA, was effusive with praise: "So this is a crazy project...kind of an amazing thing. I imagine it's a project that architects will seek out over time because it's a very sculptural piece and in many ways is, for me, related back to the concrete work of Le Corbusier but at the same time it's much more minimal. I appreciated very much the form work which was very articulate and very beautiful, and the sense that there had been a sort of complete space carved out so that the concrete was on the inside and the outside; it was of a whole and there was really no compromise."

Stephen Sharpe is the editor of *Texas Architect*.

