

remodel: from warehouse to wow

# santa fean

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## The Home Issue

21st century  
Santa Fe style

at home with  
Patricia Carlisle  
and David Pearson

how homebuilding  
is protecting an  
ecological hot spot

*plus: Hispanic dance heats up the season  
Artists speak about the power of home*

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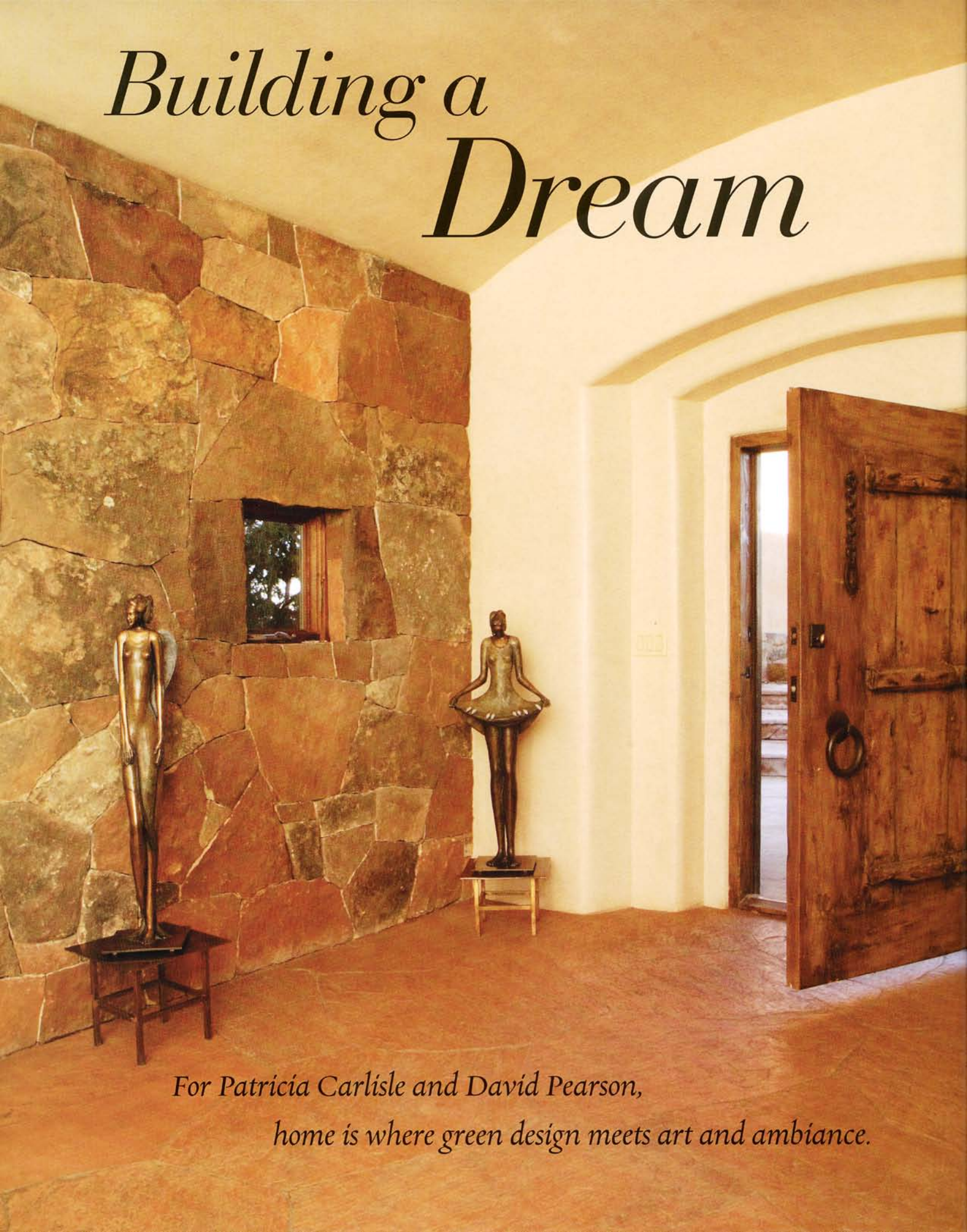
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# *Building a Dream*

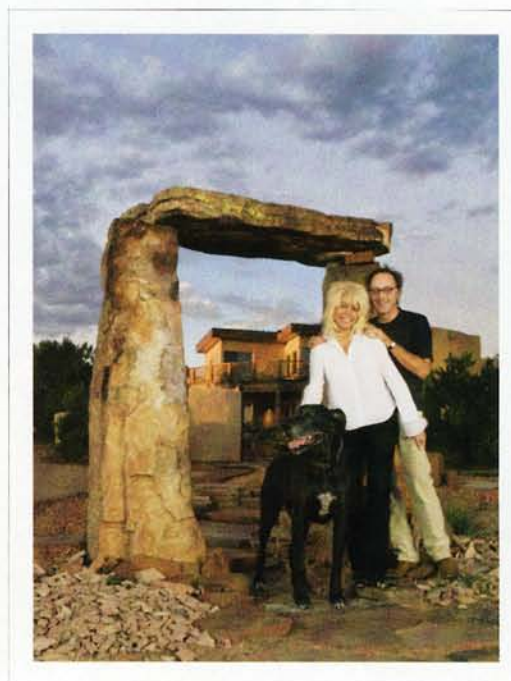


*For Patricia Carlisle and David Pearson,  
home is where green design meets art and ambiance.*





ADJUNSON DUTY PHOTO



PETER OOLIVE PHOTO

*by Gussie Fauntleroy*

One evening in the pale dusk light, David Pearson and Patricia Carlisle watch a dramatic, constantly changing sky halfway fill with billowing, cumulous forms, then quick, hard rain that clears again as the full moon appears and disappears behind clouds. The vantage point: a large xeriscaped garden beside a koi pond, among sculptures lit up at night by solar-powered accent lights. The setting is a home created to be a sanctuary and an inspiration, where life and art intertwine.

Since opening Patricia Carlisle Fine Art on Canyon Road in 1997, Carlisle has insisted on maintaining a gallery atmosphere where all the senses are soothed and stimulated in various ways. Scented candles and fresh flowers replenished daily, music, soft lighting, and the paintings and sculpture she displays—including the bronze figures her husband, Pearson, is known for—all combine to create an enveloping experience for gallery visitors. When she and Pearson decided a few years ago to expand their home, just outside of town off Highway 14, the same goals applied.

In the couple's vision, a two-story, 3,500-square-foot addition that connected to the original 1,500-square-foot adobe house would serve as an extension of the gallery. It would be a place to bring collectors to experience Pearson's sculptures and other gallery artists' works in the setting of a warm and strikingly beautiful home. At the same time, the space needed to be a serene retreat—for Carlisle after working with the public and gallery staff, and for Pearson after a long day in his studios, which are just a short walk from the house along a flagstone path in the landscaped compound. The house also needed to accommodate four large dogs: two Great Danes, a Great Pyrenees, and an Australian shepherd mix—"the girls," as Carlisle calls them.

These goals were realized in the addition designed by Stefan Merdler, of Santa Fe. London-born Merdler, who describes himself as an "ecotect," was among a small cadre of solar pioneers and energy-conscious builders in Northern New Mexico in the early 1970s. In the mid-'80s, he spearheaded the design of the Pecos River





Left: A painting by gallery artist Adam Shaw serves as a backdrop for low-key dining. Below: In her home as in her gallery, Carlisle adds touches like flowers and a finely wrought railing. Opposite and previous pages: Pieces by David Pearson fill nooks and grace shelves throughout the home. (Info: carlislefa.com)



ROBERT RECK PHOTO

PETER OGILVIE PHOTOS

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Ranch, an extensive state-of-the-art, passive-solar, all-adobe conference facility that catered to Fortune 500 firms; over the years, he has been involved in numerous residential and commercial projects in the Santa Fe area. Carlisle and Pearson learned of Merdler through builder and Chimayó native Toby Martinez, who had previously built Pearson's studio and now oversaw the building of the addition, working with teams of artisans specializing in various aspects of fine craftsmanship and construction.

The literal centerpiece of the home's new wing is a large, circular opening in the first-floor ceiling above the living room. The opening is bisected and traversed by a glass-block bridge that leads from the top of the staircase into the upstairs master suite. Directly above the bridge, a circular skylight mimics the opening's shape, providing natural light for both floors and, with the help of ceiling fans, creating a vertical flow of air for warming and cooling. The feature also creates drama and a sense of spaciousness while keeping the ceiling height at a comfortable (and energy-conservative) 10 feet, rather than soaring to cathedral heights.

Just above, in the second-floor master bath, a sleek white Jacuzzi-style tub next to large corner windows serves as a front-row seat to the expansive views, making the most of both design and nature. There, gazing at the tops of juniper and piñon trees, the Ortiz Mountains, and endless sky, Carlisle and Pearson greet the day as they have every morning since the addition was completed. Beginning around 5 AM, they treat themselves to two hours of relaxation time before the rest of the world wakes up. "I call it 'wombian,' as if you're





Below: A Pearson sculpture foregrounds a painting by gallery artist Jim Alford. Bottom: The glass-block bridge leading to the home's master suite. Opposite, clockwise from top: The mantel, where Pearson's bronzes complement antique Native pots; the xeriscaped garden, also serving as a sculpture gallery; an iron door handle, one of many Old-World details.



PETER OGILVIE PHOTO

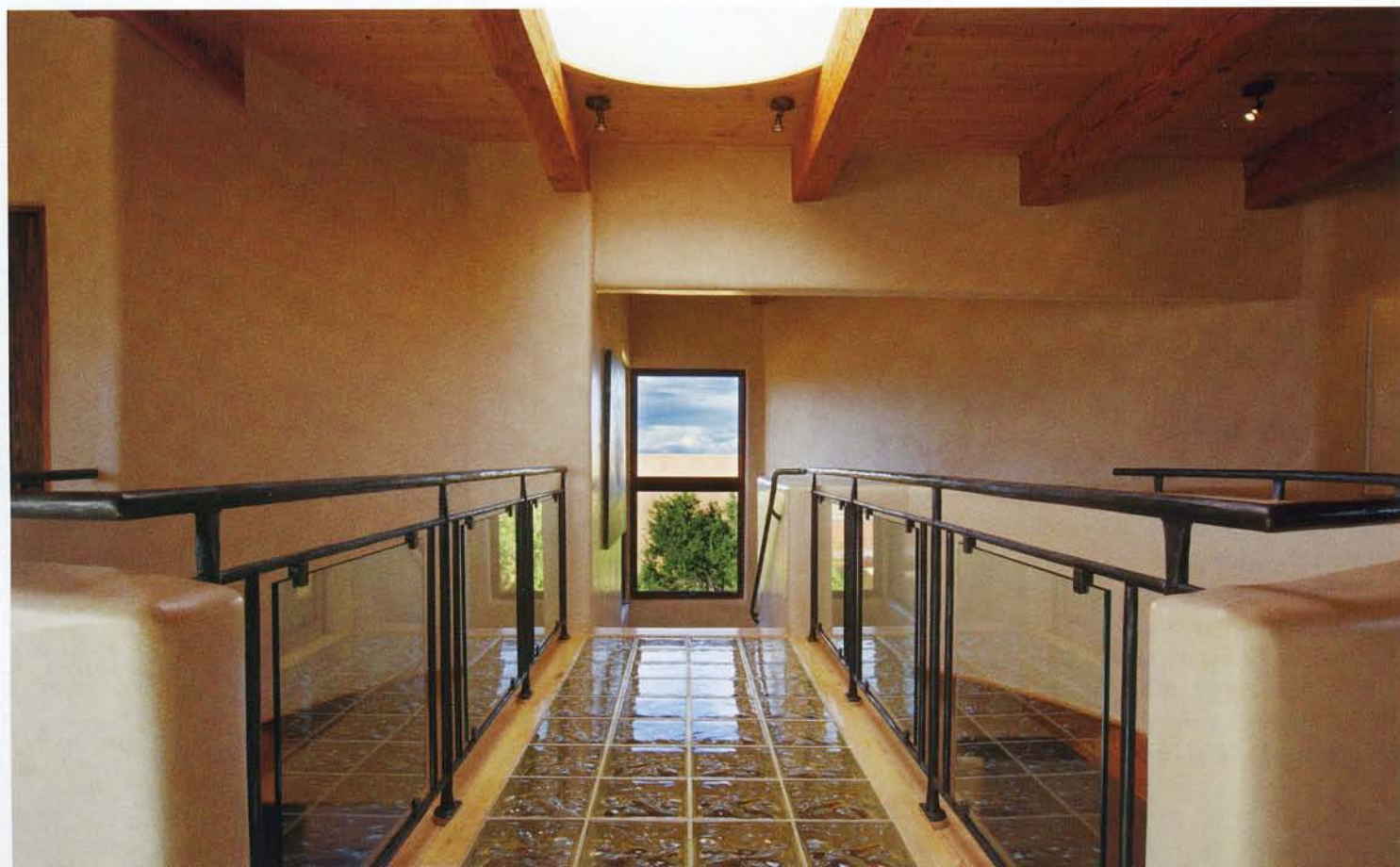
cradled in a womb," says Carlisle of the design. "It's so calm and beautiful."

That's just one of the ways the couple enjoy a home they envisioned as not only a showcase for art, but a work of art in itself. Details such as arches in doorways and niches, smooth, Structolite-finished walls, hand-chiseled flagstone floors, hand-adzed Douglas-fir ceiling beams—"Old-World techniques in a modern idiom," Merdler explains—contribute to the home's sculptural grace, sense of mass, and inviting, sheltering feel. Another architectural highlight greets visitors at the threshold: the front door itself. Massive, four feet wide, and custom built of old, recycled wood, the commanding entrance swings effortlessly on a pivot. The same door on hinges would require a muscular servant to operate, jokes Merdler.

The entry hall was a requisite feature for Pearson, a Santa Fe native who grew up in the Casa Solana subdivision, where front doors generally open directly into living rooms. (Carlisle hails originally from L.A.) This home's entry, with its gently arched ceiling and long, narrow skylight, introduces visitors to the primacy of the home's role as a setting for art. Straight ahead is a life-size niche showcasing one of Pearson's sculptures in his signature style, a gracefully elongated female figure with an almost mythological elegance. Elsewhere around the house and grounds, sculptures and paintings by gallery artists—including large pieces by Jim Alford, Melinda K. Hall, and Adam Shaw—fill open spaces and corner nooks alike, even in the walk-in closets. "It's all about art," Carlisle says. "It's what we do."

Merdler believes a key factor in developing the addition's design was the process of working with clients whose artistic sensibility is an integral part of their daily life. Before beginning, Merdler spent time at the gallery and on site, consulting with Carlisle and Pearson about their lifestyle and vision for the house. Then he hand-drew the plans (he doesn't use a computer program for architectural drawings). "We really didn't know how to read architectural plans," Pearson admits. Carlisle laughs and adds, "So every time something would go in [during construction], we'd go, 'Whoa! That is so cool!'"

Construction, however, would not be quick. Preferring to pay as they went,



ROBERT RECK PHOTO





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Carlisle and Pearson proceeded in stages. The design and plans were completed in the first year. Then came September 11, 2001, and a slowdown in the art market, so nothing happened on the house the following year. Then the slab and septic system went in, and each year after that they saved some more money and had more done. But as the addition went up, the couple realized that for the original section of the house to match the new portion, it would need a major renovation. By the time the project was completed, in the fall of 2007, the original structure—now the east wing, housing the kitchen, dining area, and upstairs guest suite, all connected to the addition by the entry hall—had revamped baths, new balcony railings, a new portal, different lighting and architectural hardware, and interior trim replaced with recycled wood to match the addition.

Outside, by the well-used freestanding fire pit and enclosed by a straw-bale wall, Pearson's bronzes punctuate and complement the flagstones and desert plants. Continuing the compound concept, the couple's next project is a sculpture museum for his work. That will be another three-to-five-year production, Carlisle notes. For now, she and Pearson are still in the "can't believe it's real" stage with their expanded home. "It far exceeds our expectations," she says. And it's big enough for the dogs, Merdler adds in a characteristic, low-key quip: "Great Danes need great places." **SI**



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