

{PROJECT}

TREETOPS HOUSE, WOOLLAHRA

{ARCHITECT}

TOBIAS PARTNERS



BELLEVARDE

Welcome to Building with Belvedere: Insights.

We have a wonderful project to cover in this edition.

A quiet block in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs offered the chance to do something unique—an upside down house based on the idea of 'living in the trees'.

Architects John Richards and Natalie Condon of Tobias Partners worked closely with the owners to produce a place they love with the space to accommodate their treasured furniture, artworks, and artefacts.

We hear from John about his experience working with Site Manager Daniele Feltracco and the Belvedere team on this stunning build.

We hope you enjoy the read.

As always, we welcome any questions, feedback, or opportunities to discuss your next project.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Fielding', written in a cursive style.

JOHN FIELDING
AND THE BELLEVARDE TEAM







The clients, a retired couple of empty-nesters, approached us about creating a home that would accommodate and showcase a collection of their most treasured belongings—furniture, artworks and artefacts—and give them a new sense of place.

They had a quiet block in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs with some well-established trees and beautiful vistas down through the valley towards Double Bay.

The topography of the site drops away sharply from the street and, early in our discussions with them, the idea formed about 'living in the trees' and the concept for an 'upside down' house emerged, in which the living spaces would be located at street level, elevated in amongst the canopies and the sleeping areas would be below, nestled into the garden. Whilst initially a little unorthodox, as the project evolved, this idea proved to be a logical choice for their lifestyle.

Functionally, this idea developed into a simple arrangement of two two-storey pavilions in which the front pavilion, addressing the street, contains the garage and entry on the upper level and an artist's studio and accommodation for guests and grandchildren below. And the rear pavilion, addressing the garden, treetops and district views, contains the living and entertaining areas on the upper level, and the main bedroom suite and a library below.

Delicately linking the two, oriented north and setback from the northern boundary within a courtyard garden, a double height glazed volume contains a sculptural concrete stair, and captures the arc of the sun flooding the home with daylight and winter warmth.

The living and dining areas are open plan, with the kitchen screened by a free-standing joinery wall, all arranged within a single volume. A battened, undulating, ceiling floats above the space connecting the three 'zones' whilst providing a distinct feeling to each—dropping to create a more intimate feel above the central dining table, and lifting at either end to create a more dramatic experience over the kitchen and living area. High level clerestory windows and an oversized skylight draw in an abundance of light from above and large openings frame verdant outlooks into treetops, over adjacent heritage gardens, and down over the valley beyond. A system of sliding panels and a heavy timber handrail enable the space to be opened up into the canopies.

The concrete structure exudes a serene atmosphere, whilst blackbutt joinery provides a rich and textural complement—a shift in direction introduced at an early stage by Project Architect, Natalie Condon in response to the clients' love of Australiana—a decision we feel contributes significantly to the success of the project.

Natalie was involved in the development of the design from an early stage and took charge of the day to day running of the project, from developing details to issuing of drawings ensuring the team on site had all the information they needed to execute works with precision.

I've worked closely with Belvedere's Daniele Feltracco on three significant projects in recent years. Over that time, you come to know what to expect of each other and what each other needs in order to achieve the desired results. He seems to have an innate understanding of how architects think, and works hard to instil the same intuition in his team. Daniele's attention to detail is second to none and there are few I've worked with who work as hard as he does to ensure things are done right.

A case in point—the sculptural staircase—concrete treads cantilevered from a central 'fin' wall delicately supported at a single point—the construction of which was an intricate process to say the least. A lot of the research and development came through Daniele, and his experience in developing the best way in which to achieve our vision was invaluable to the quality of the outcome.

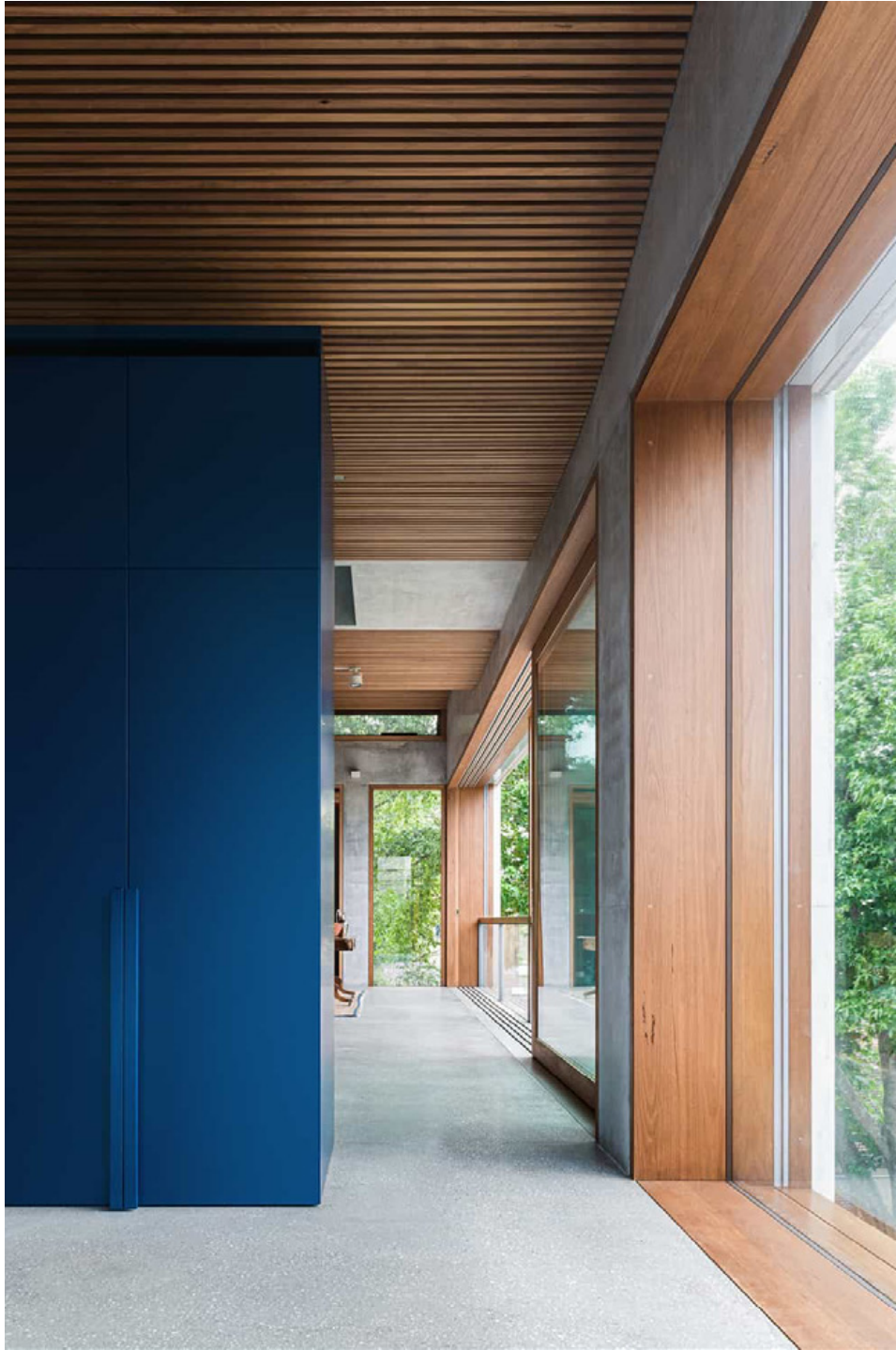
This was the pattern throughout the construction process, especially the concrete pours. Daniele would go through everything, looking at it from our perspective—the control joints, the formboard set-outs, the rebates—to ensure the concrete would be expressed aesthetically, exactly how we wanted.

Most importantly, the clients are very happy. On each occasion that we've been back, they are incredibly positive about their new home and complimentary of Tobias Partners and Belvedere. Things were well organised and ran smoothly. It's so nice to get that feedback and to see the way the owners have settled into their new home and made it their own. It makes all the hard work so worthwhile.

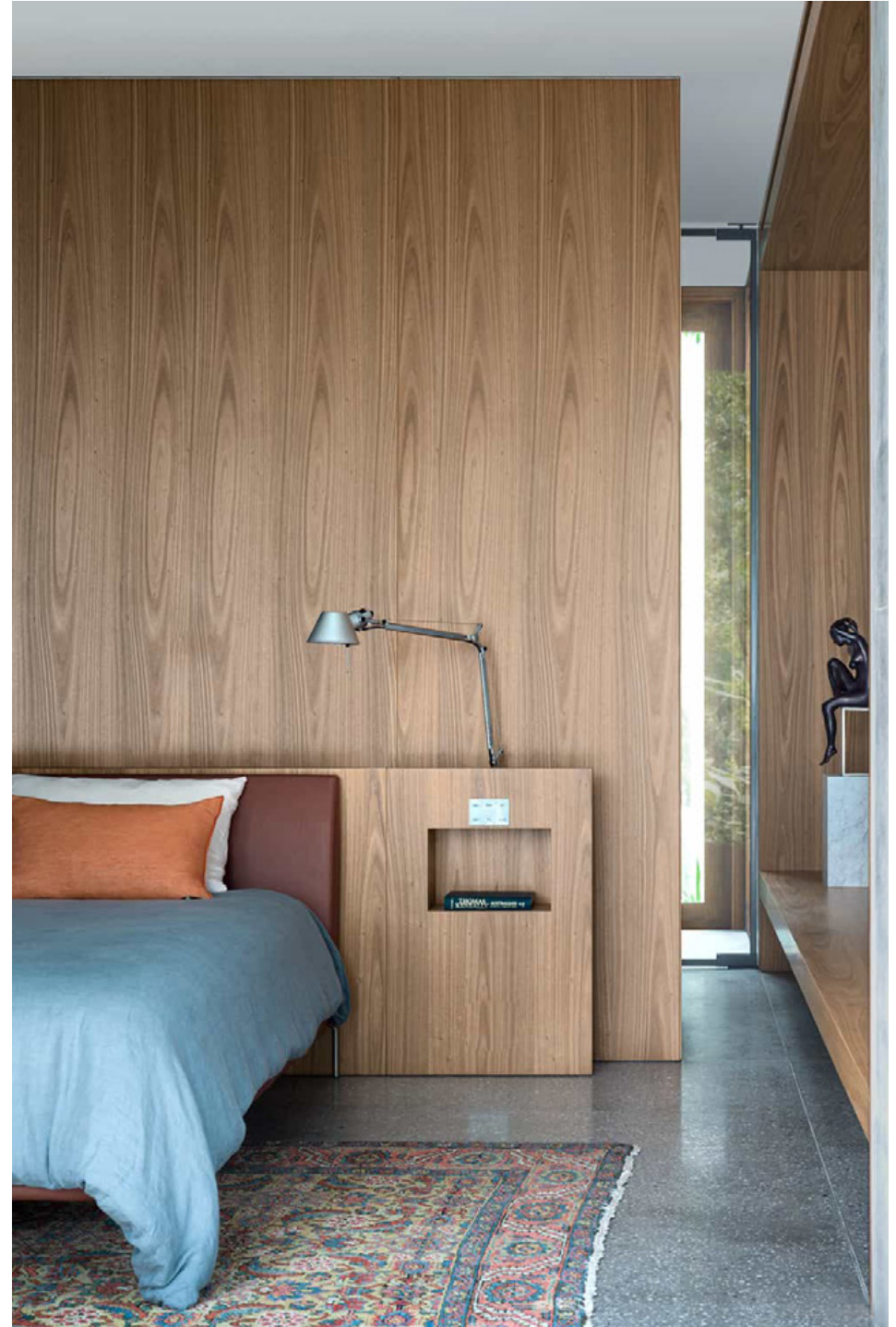
When you're 'in the trenches', things can get somewhat overwhelming, but a few months after it's finished it's great to come back and get to really appreciate all of the hard work. Myself, Natalie, and the rest of the Tobias Partners team are really happy with the outcome. Another enjoyable collaboration, resulting in another remarkable home.

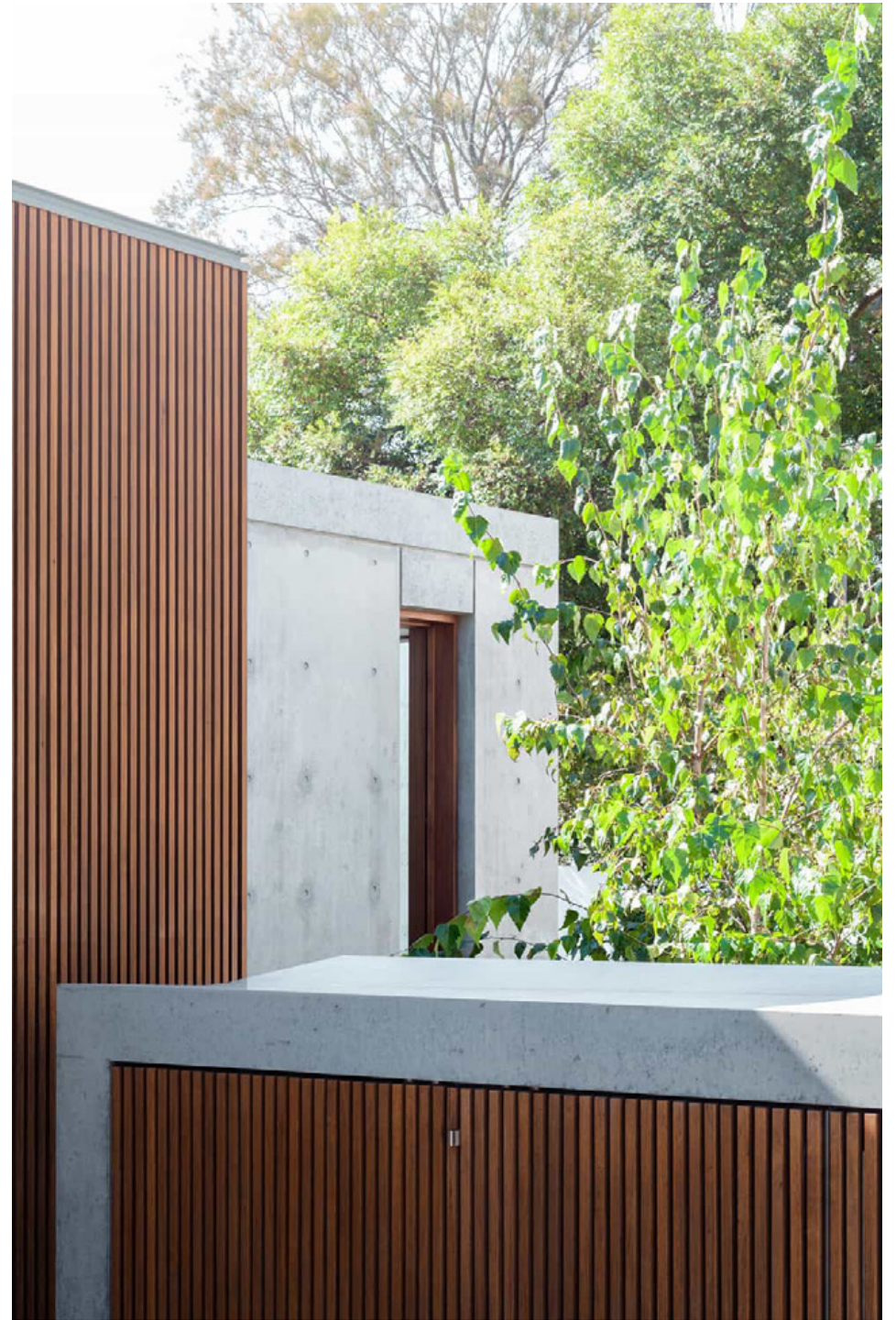


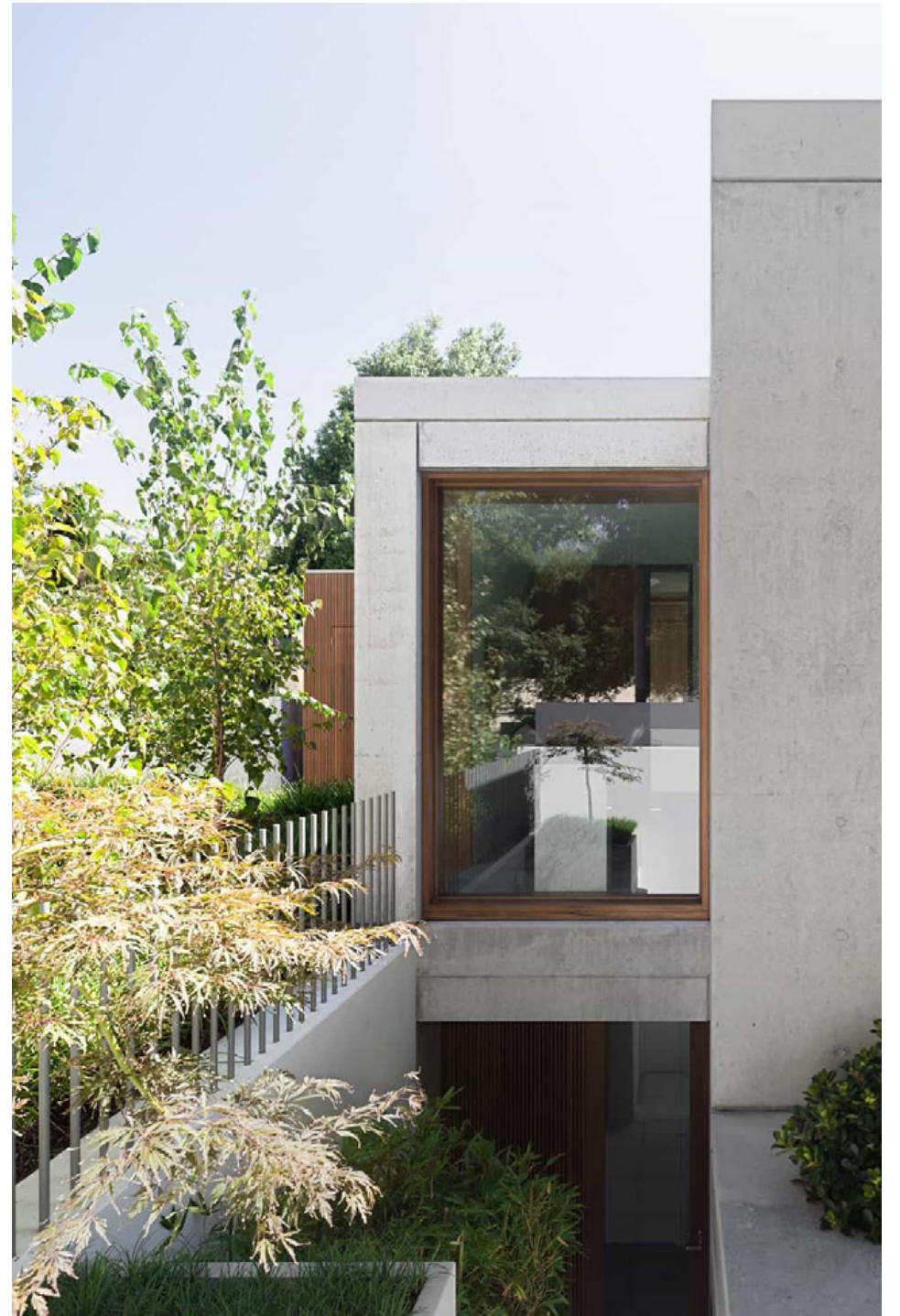




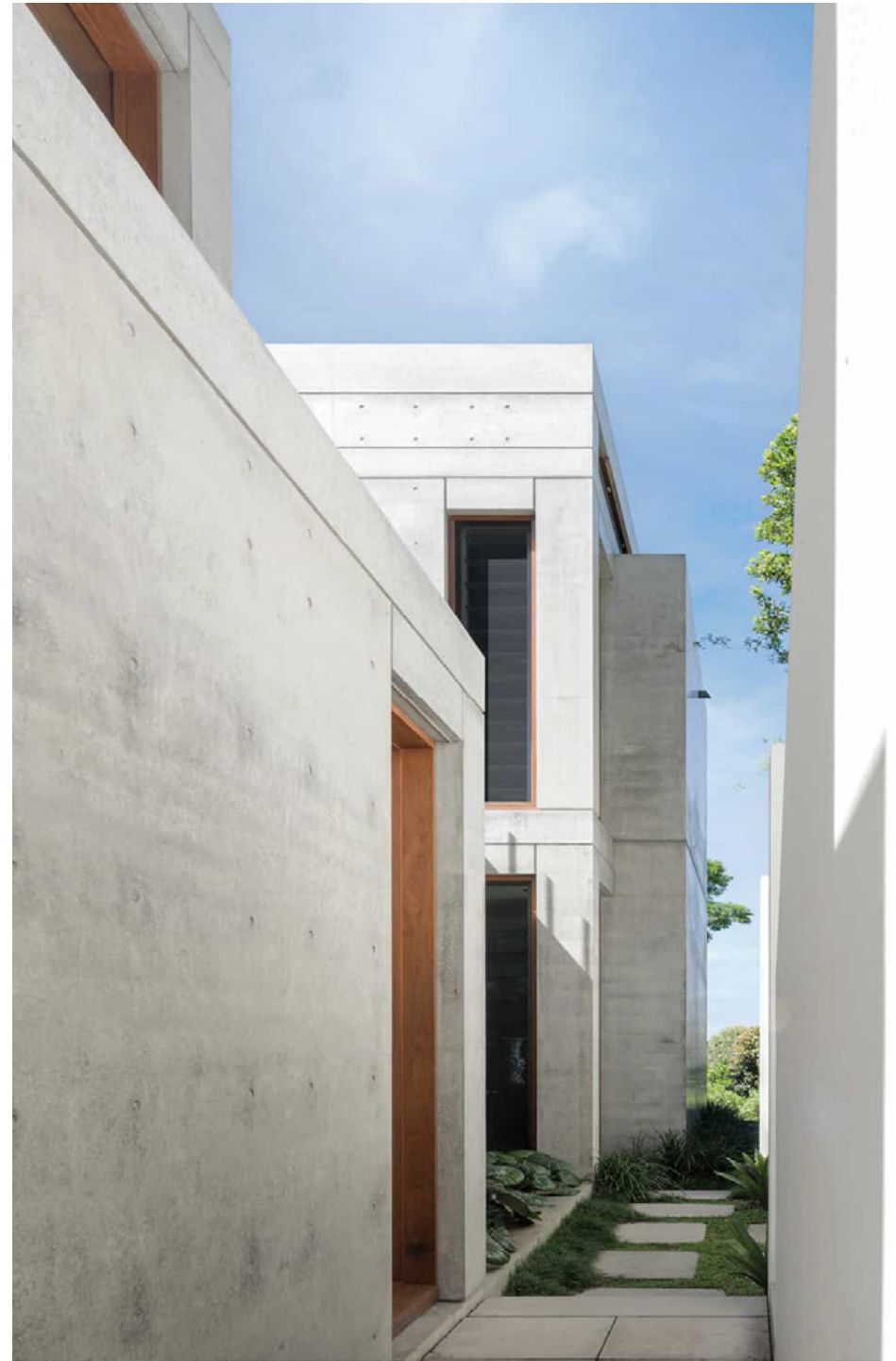


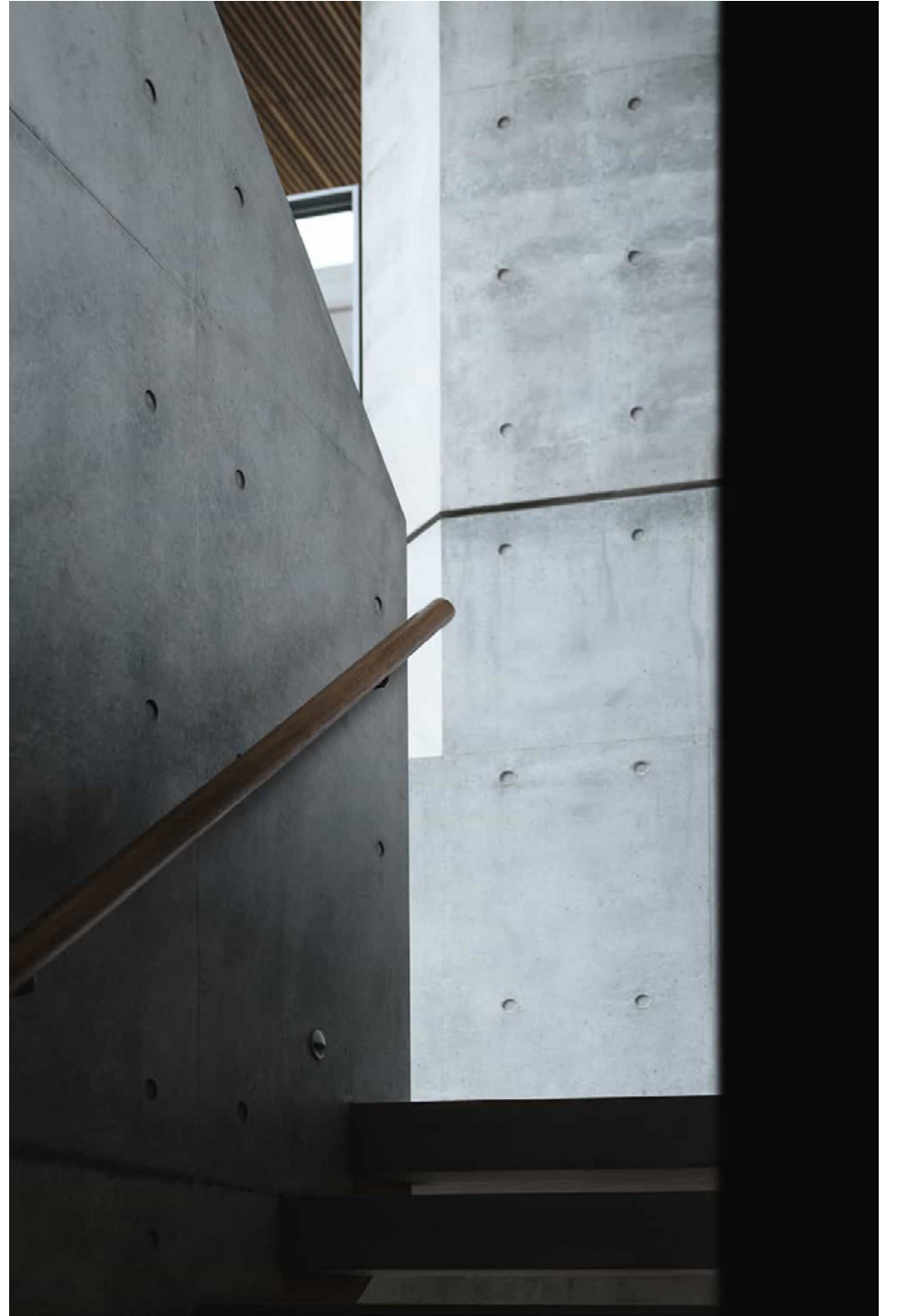
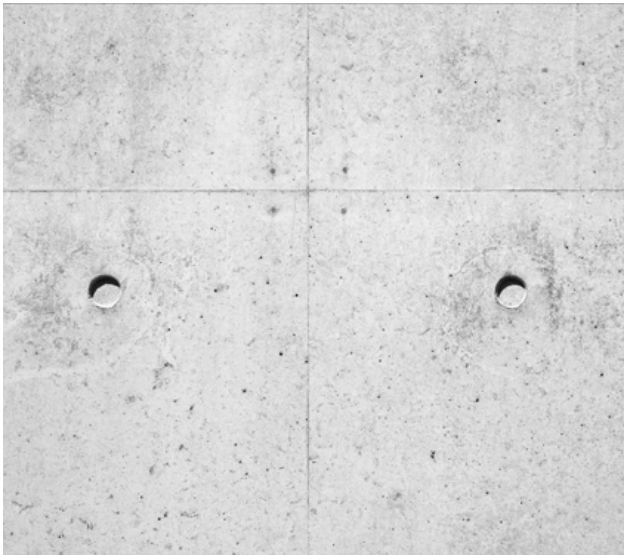












At Bellearde, we have four principles that have served us well in ensuring we maintain standards across every job.

{First Principle}

FIND THE BEST PEOPLE

It is about searching until we find the people who share our love for building houses as well as they can be built.

That's what Bellearde is—a team of us who just want to build extraordinary houses. It is an attitude that can't be driven or constrained by external factors. It's innate.

{Second Principle}

KEEP ON LEARNING

Everything we have learned in building some of this country's most complex and challenging houses is formalised in our 200 page Bellearde Construction Manual.

It details step-by-step instructions on how best to perform every critical task.

It is on every site and is constantly reviewed and updated as our knowledge grows and as building techniques, materials, equipment, and technologies evolve.

We welcome any questions, feedback or opportunities to discuss your prospective projects.



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{Third Principle}

FORM A BUILDING TEAM

It takes three key players to make a great house: Owner, Architect and Builder. That is why on each site we form them into a Building Team headed by our site manager.

The trio meets regularly to review, discuss and guide every aspect of the project. This ensures everyone knows just where we are, where we are going next—and ensures that, together, the Team can make the best decisions.

It is the best way to deliver an extraordinary house, of good value, that brings great joy to all of us.

{Fourth Principle}

MAINTAIN THE HOUSE

This came from our owners. They asked us to take care of their houses as well as we built them. So we formed our own specialised Bellearde Maintenance division. It benefits from access to all information on the construction of the house. Plus we can often call on the very tradespeople who built it.

Each new house has its own Maintenance Manager.

According to our owners and architects, we deliver the most efficient and skilled maintenance operation they have ever worked with—indeed several have asked us to take care of other properties we didn't build.

{Construction}

2019—2021

{Interviews}

Hamish Spencer

{Design}

Pidgeon Ward

{Photography}

Justin Alexander

{Paper}

Colorplan
Knight Smooth

{Printing}

Adams Print

