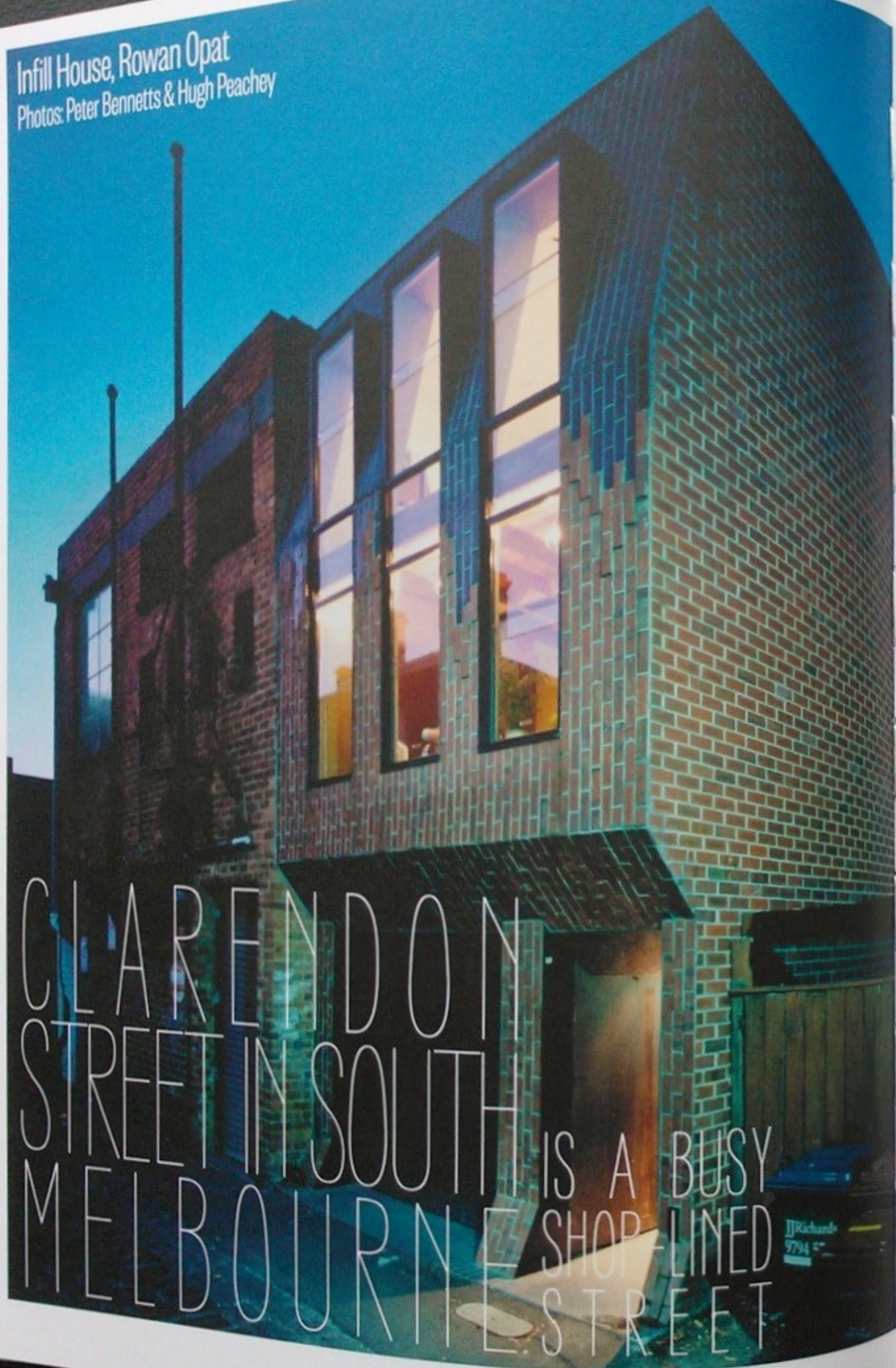


Infill House, Rowan Opat
Photos: Peter Bennetts & Hugh Peachey



CLARENDON
STREET IN SOUTH
MELBOURNE IS A BUSY
SHOP-LINED STREET

...with deep awnings and bustling trams taking people up to the city and down to St Kilda. Behind these shops are former warehouses and underused yards, all made from an abundance of brickwork. Squeezed onto one such site is a new two-level house on top of a carpark and shop rear entry. These are now internalised and the new house effectively sits above, with entry from a thin tunnel-like space that connects also to the shop fronting onto the lane.



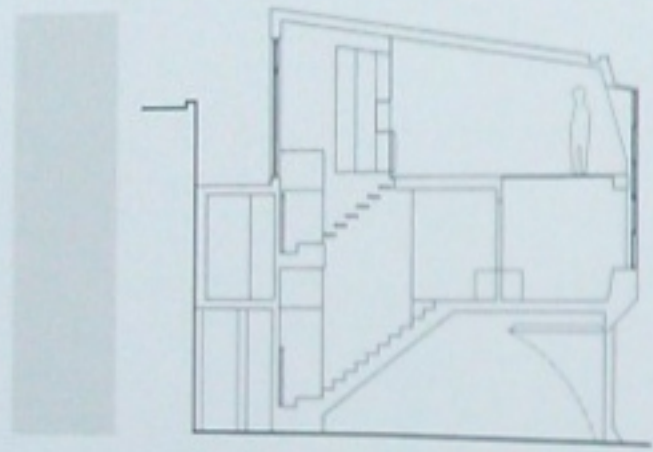
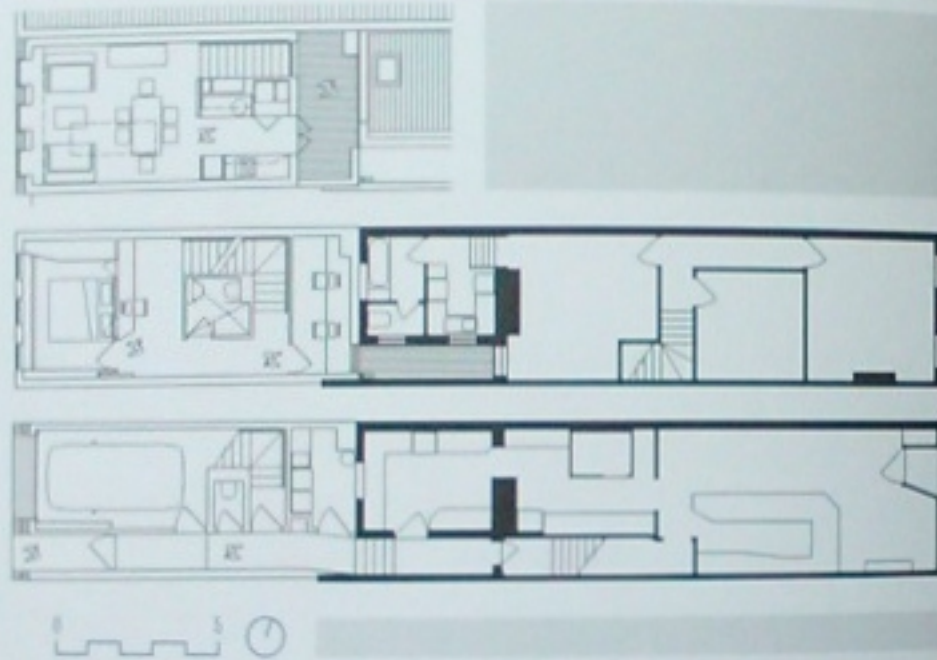
This hard-working project is made from the same material that surrounds it—brick—not only stitching it firmly into the gritty context, but generating an opportunity to use this most traditional of materials in a new way. On the front façade, the bricks are laid vertically rather than horizontally. This surface is like an upturned brick road—it starts at the base and moves in and out, creating depth. The eye is drawn up the building, and the sense of the vertical is exaggerated. The three main windows are also vertical—like rotated modernist ribbon windows. These cut across the floor level, while the brick wall angles back, subtly suggesting a roof. The surface is modulated with a series of bricks that sit proud of the main wall, announcing the change from rough red to smooth black-glazed brick. The red bricks on the side wall are in a conventional horizontal stretcher bond, but seemingly transition to a dark colour as they meet the raking black brick wall on the lane.



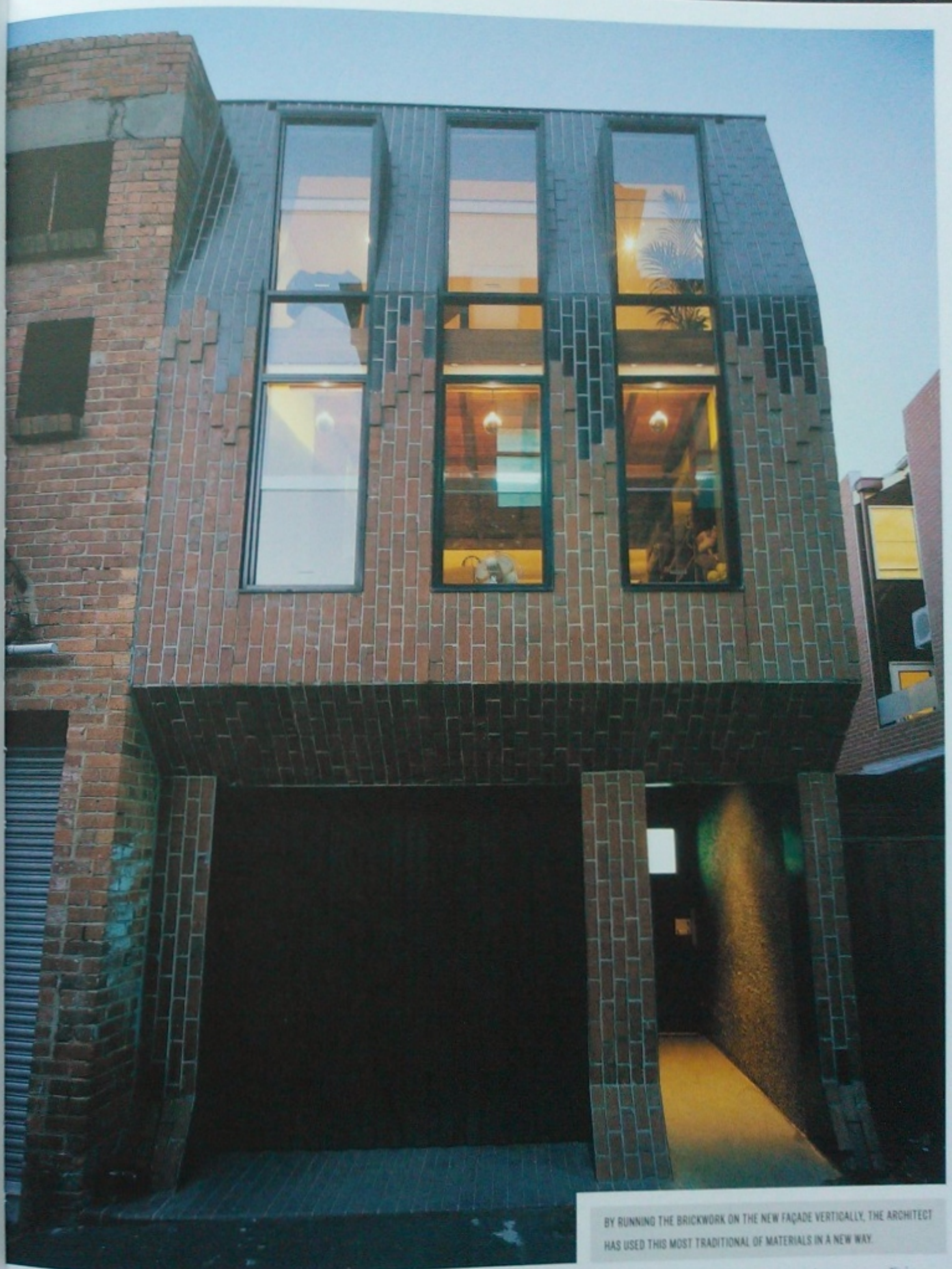
“THE REAR END OF A HERITAGE-LISTED SITE, THIS NEW HOME FILLS AN URBAN GAP WITH BRICK CRAFTED ON ITS SIDE.” —ROWAN OPAT

The main bedroom is on the first floor, facing out into the lane. Behind it is a generous landing area, a bathroom and a decent-size storage room, which could be also used as a small second bedroom. The bedroom, despite its compact size, is loaded with storage—a wall of robes on one side, open shelving on the other. The top level is the living space: an open living room connects to a galley kitchen that in turn opens onto a balcony space between the original building and the new one. The interior materials are dominated by the rich recycled redgum floors and the striping green and brown laminate joinery. On the first floor, the timber structure of the floor above is exposed, adding a sense of the urban warehouse.

Tiling in the bathroom and kitchen splashback repeats the rotated brick stretcher bond pattern of the façade, reduced in scale, like a high-resolution version of it. This technique is repeated with black tiles and contrasting white grout in the kitchen splashback. The garage door is made from timber boards, designed and painted like a paling fence, embracing the memory of the site rather than seeking to replace what was there entirely. This compact infill suggests we can have history and future, rather than one or the other.



RECYCLED TIMBER FLOORS ADD MATERIAL DEPTH TO THE COMPACT SPACES.



BY RUNNING THE BRICKWORK ON THE NEW FAÇADE VERTICALLY, THE ARCHITECT HAS USED THIS MOST TRADITIONAL OF MATERIALS IN A NEW WAY.

