

HOME & AWAY
Design trends
JENNY BROWN

Modesty is best policy

These unpretentious additions prove that the simple things in life are often the best.

in MELBOURNE

As the second phase of an Abbotsford house renovation in which Make Architecture purposely reduced the footprint of the original residence, the practice has designed a back-corner studio-garage as a small, tall building with a sharply sloping roof and a manifestly uncomplicated shape.

"Squeezing it into the north-west corner, we wanted it to take up as little of the backyard as possible," architect Melissa Bright says.

If modesty determined the form and footprint, reference to the existing neighbourhood character of fancy Victorian factories "with beautiful bricky textures", and the hodgepodge of back-lane garages and sheds, determined the featured use of brick.

"The colour of clay", the white bricks were laid by a bricklayer "who did an amazing job" to create a checkerboard surface that has the bricks sticking further out the closer they are to the corner facing onto the

house. "They slowly protrude and slowly subside," Bright says.

Called The Little Brick Studio, the building that has roller-door entry to the back lane for cars is upstairs roughly divided between a small studio that can also be used as a guest bedroom, or more likely as a retreat for teenage sons, and an open-to-the-sky deck. Charcoal-painted vertical "fins" preclude overlooking into neighbouring backyards while allowing both the studio and the deck to peer into their own garden and pool.

And while Bright outlines the project as being so practical – "the whole thing is designed as flexible space" – those enlivening corner-set fin features, the constant shadow play of the brickwork and the stated simplicity of the structure do what else she was hoping they would: "activate and contribute something to the street and, in that way, be more than just a garage".

"This was a real little love job for us," she says. "There is a lot of joy in this little building."

See makearchitecture.com.au.

and SYDNEY

How primal, pleasing and familiar is the shape of this three-bedroom Rozelle house?

In extending what had been a one-bedroom sandstone cottage, architect Christopher Polly admits he deliberately went "for a form that presents a direct adaptation of the original idea of a house ... a simple, quintessential image of a house that we all drew as kids [in this case, without the chimney]".



Small wonder: The back-corner studio-garage has room for living and parking. Photo: Peter Bennetts



Photo: Brett Boardman

Nudged up against a neighbouring three-storey wall on a 193-square-metre site, the neat, sweet house has an east-west orientation that gives long exposure to northern light along the side wall.

On the upper floor of the white weatherboard, Polly has made the windows the main feature. And at the upper-back corner, wooden cedar windows framed in black plate steel create a wonderful concertina effect when open, which Polly rightly reckons "reinforces a rhythm of

form". But to add even more light and "a sense of unobstructed expansiveness", he's put even more glazing into the western end gables.

While all the transparency, airiness, and the clear white-on-white appointment of the step-down kitchen-living area imply a casual invitation to a relaxed indoor-outdoor lifestyle, Polly says the whole project was actually "much considered and rigorously controlled".

"The exploration of texture from

rough to smooth contrasts the sandstone base with the weatherboard cladding," Polly says.

He says "an attempt to remain modest in size" and to be guided by the form of the original house is what led to that clearly proportioned and resonantly basic shape. It was all an exercise in "making deliberate moves that retained some memory of the former house and its environment".

See christopherpolly.com