A RECENT SUBDIVISION LIBERATED THESE century-old stables from their original title. The freestanding double-storey structure presented the purchasers – a young couple – with the chance to insert their ideal of "big open living spaces" into the framework of history.

Architect Jeremy Wolveridge immediately appreciated the character of the building despite its patchy condition and awkward layout. In developing the site, the heritage status of the stables was necessarily respected. Retention of the existing openings and the red brick envelope was paramount. According to Jeremy, the response honours the original structure by "incorporating it as the shell for a contemporary installation".

Situated in a tight inner-Melbourne side street, near a busy main road, the L-shaped structural envelope shields the living spaces and courtyard from its urban environs. The facade abuts the footpath and has no fenestration at ground level. A heavy corten pivot door adds to the sense of fortress-like impenetrability.

The din of constant traffic recedes to a hum once the door is closed. Inside, the architect has made a feature of the new hallway wall that conceals a coat nook, wine store and powder room. Here a softly-lit sculptural incision at knee height signals entry into a sophisticated realm. Beyond the entrance, a double-height void incorporates the stairwell. Dark-stained armourply risers are mounted onto a central steel frame so that they need not touch the aged brickwork. The stair seems to float as a result.

Placement of the stair against the front wall is significant in allowing light and air from the north-facing upper-level windows to stream into the living area below. Jeremy has chosen to hang a metal grid as a balustrade. This element has a decorative quality and also refracts light through the upper and lower volumes. A breathing space has been left between new plasterwork and the old brickwork, conveying a lightness of touch. This is an effective solution to the problem of walls that are no longer plumb.

Downstairs, the space is organised by virtue of plywood joinery units that dissect the expanse into functional zones without compromising openness. The kitchen and dining area is raised on a plinth of armourply panels that encase new plumbing. A generous pantry and fridge are contained in the dark ply component with laundry services concealed in its reverse. Uplights in the top of this unit splay across a small section of exposed beams. With their "layers of a hundred years of paint" Jeremy suggested this slot in the ceiling remain unlined as an added reminder of the building's past.

White plasterboard walls, and white laminate cupboards and benchtops contrast with the blackbutt veneer that gives the timber its rich patina. This refined tonal and textural palette is a counterpoint to the rusticated surface of exposed brick. Steel-framed windows and doors, and brushed stainless steel fixtures add suitably elegant accents throughout.

Pushing the kitchen and the stair to opposing ends of this space puts the

history lesson

Sensitively linking the past with the present, architect Jeremy Wolveridge has transformed nineteenth-century

ables into a contemporary pad for a young couple.

living zone in direct relation to the courtyard. The full height window wall slides aside allowing the indoors and outdoors to merge for easy entertaining. A self-leveling floor mix was applied over existing terracotta tiles and continued into the courtyard. Finished with a concrete stain, this compound achieves the appearance of polished concrete without the expense of removing the tiles or laying a new slab.

As the heritage overlay pertained only to the brick shell and openings, a weatherboard wall to the courtyard could be demolished. Jeremy has asserted a robust architectural statement in its place. Cantilevering the second-storey floor by one metre deepens the narrow arm of the L-plan. Doing so enabled the insertion of the powder room and storage at ground level and augments the proportions of the studio above. Clad in a metal skin that continues to parapet height, the extrusion reads as a sculptural volume of industrial-strength vigour.

The shell itself contributes energy efficiency. Existing brickwork ensures a thermally and acoustically responsive building. Simply opening the stairwell windows and tuning the glazed sliding door is enough to control cross-ventilation. West-facing windows to the living area and master bedroom are sheltered from harsh sun by the configuration of the building and the neighbouring terrace house.

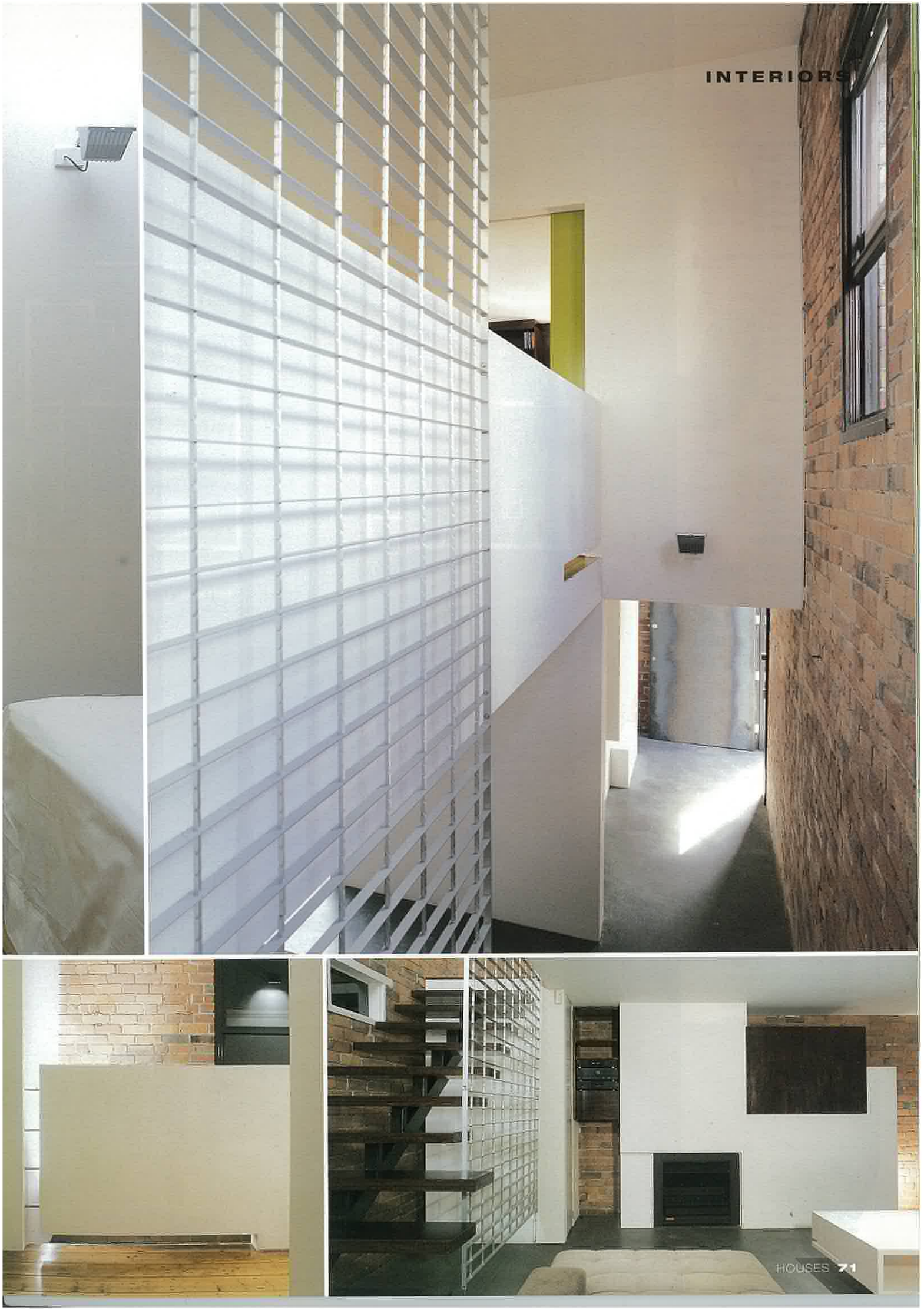
Upstairs, additional ceiling height results in loft-style spaces. A gallery passage leads to the studio at the end of the L-plan's narrow arm. The floor-space gained by the extruded wall makes the previously tight area comfortable as both a work environment and guest room. A vibrant note of colour is introduced via the green sliding door. The slot window in the cladding at hip height concentrates the view down into the courtyard rather than across the roofscape – emphasising the private nature of this domain.

Jeremy has inserted a bathroom behind the corridor wall between the east-facing windows. The armourply plinth is repeated here, neatly concealing plumbing and demarcating the wet area. The simplest of elements – a mirror panel, column cabinet and a linen cube on castors, all expressed in dark-stained ply – leaves this deep space visually uncluttered. Despite the absence of windows, the bathroom is washed with light from the large skylight above the double shower.

Beyond the bathroom, the lip of the plinth extends some 20 cm into the main bedroom. With a square sliding door above it, in the same green hue, this becomes an expressive feature. Given the depth of the room, the architect has utilised another joinery insertion that doubles as an oversize bed-head and spatial divider screening the dressing area from view.

Appreciation of the stables' heritage context is central to this confident architectural revision. By orchestrating this project in terms of an assertive extrusion and the insertion of light-framed elements, Jeremy Wolveridge has established a dialogue between past and present. In the process he has enriched and preserved a slice of local history. **FL**

PREVIOUS PAGES: The main living area features a coffee table, designed by Jeremy Wolveridge, teamed with Jardan's 'Cape' couch. THESE PAGES, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Recycled baltic pine floors lend warmth to the upstairs bedrooms. This view from the stairs, down to the front entrance, shows the metal grid serving as a balustrade. In the living area, white walls contrast with the exposed bricks and dark joinery. View from the bathroom across to the upstairs passage, where a half wall lets in light. In the main bedroom, a joinery wall screens the walk-in robe behind.



INTERIORS

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PRACTICE PROFILE
Small practice engaged in coastal and urban architectural commissions, in single and multiple residential and recreational projects.

PROJECT TEAM
Jeremy Wolveridge

BUILDER
Justin Moylan Building Practitioner Pty Ltd

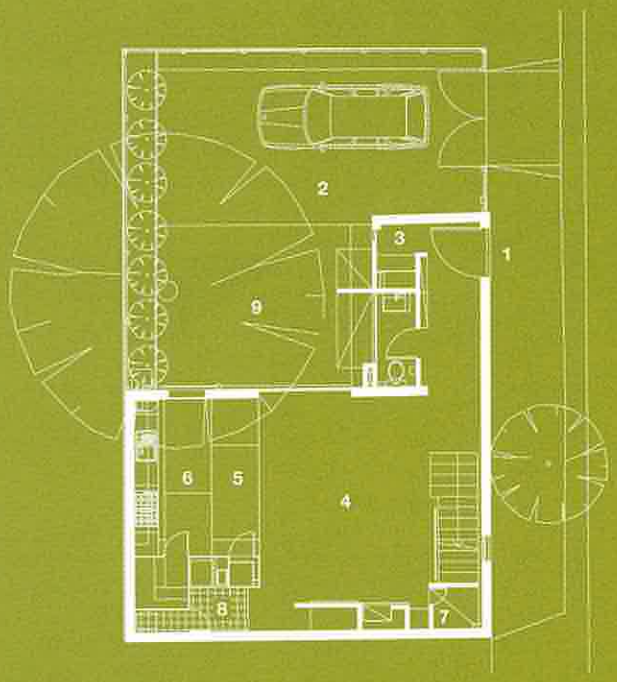
CONSULTANTS
Engineer Don Moore and Associates
Landscaping By owner
Interiors, lighting Jeremy Wolveridge
Joinery Simon Walsh, Thyme for Kitchens and Cabinets

PRODUCTS
Roofing Existing **External walls** Colorbond wall cladding **Internal walls** 10 mm Gyprock plasterboard, painted **Windows** Steel frames **Doors** Entry – solid core exterior grade, with corten steel outer skin; Internal sliding – full height semi-solid mdf, painted, hung from concealed Henderson tracks, 300 mm Designer Doorware blade pull handles; Internal hinged – semi-solid mdf, painted, Designer Doorware brushed chrome lever handle **Flooring** Alternative Floors matt finish stained concrete, w-bond compound over existing ceramic tiles; Big River Timbers dark stained armourply to match joinery; recycled baltic flooring to first floor; acrylic penetrating concrete colour stain **Lighting** Optique Lighting square brushed chrome lv; QI floodlights from Famco **Kitchen** Smeg ss oven; AEG rangehood, dishwasher **Heating** Electric panel wall heaters **Furniture** Coffee table designed by architect; Jardan 'Cape' couch; Loza dining table and chairs

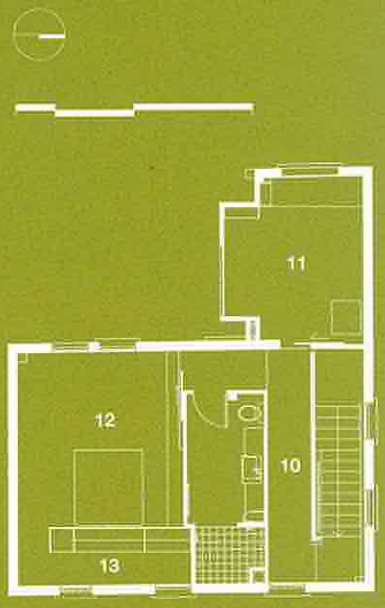
TIME SCHEDULE
Design, documentation 5 months
Construction 5 months

PHOTOGRAPHY
Shannon McGrath

OPPOSITE PAGE: Exterior view from the street.



Ground level



First level

1 **Entry**
2 **Garage**
3 **Coats/wine store**
4 **Living**
5 **Dining**
6 **Kitchen**
7 **Store**
8 **Laundry**
9 **Courtyard**
10 **Gallery**
11 **Study/Bedroom**
12 **Main bedroom**
13 **Walk-in-robe**