



THE TERM "alts and adds" is an easy label for a grab bag of potentially mismatched residences. Take my place, for example: an architecturally undistinguished inner-Melbourne terrace house with default polished floorboards and a hastily upgraded back-end incorporating a new bathroom, a laundry and a "possible third bedroom." And then take Angelo Candalepas's artful reworking of a majestic Glenn Murcutt house on Sydney Harbour (*Houses* 59). Yes, both homes have been built around an existing structure, but the comparisons end there. Of course, Angelo's project isn't your garden-variety family home, and my house isn't exactly prime fodder for a glossy design magazine, but the point is clear: alts and adds come in all shapes and sizes. In between these distant bookends are a plethora of architectural stories worthy of telling. The good stories tell of triumph in the face of adversity, of constrained budgets and confined spaces, of challenging briefs and idiosyncratic sites – stories that will inspire architects and renovators alike.

We have three such stories here. At first glance, these houses might seem architecturally disparate, but they embody similar processes and similar levels of inventiveness. Each architect was confronted with an unremarkable building that failed to make the most of its site and orientation, and each responded by manipulating spaces and openings, showing sharp eyes for detail and deft hands for refinement.

The unremarkable building presented to Conrad Johnston, of Sydney

practice Fox Johnston, was the archetypal renovator's dream: a slightly dilapidated Californian bungalow with a flimsy lean-to extension at the rear. There was no client brief to speak of – just a request for a new kitchen and a contemporary living space connected to the garden. Conrad's solution was to replace the lean-to with an articulated volume, separated from the original house by a small internal courtyard. Despite the southern orientation of the backyard, this new rear volume is spoiled for natural light. Its roof kicks up to the north with a large skylight to draw in sun over the top of the main house's pitched roof, and glazed bifold doors open onto an east-facing courtyard – the perfect spot for breakfast on sunny mornings. As a result, half of the house is, in effect, reoriented to soak up the rays. It's a neat piece of work.

Even neater, however, is the precisely laid English bond brickwork along the southern and eastern walls. "Felix Junker, the project architect, drew every single brick in those walls," laughs Conrad. "The openings for doors and windows were calculated specifically to fit the dimensions of the bricks." Wide brick lintels and deep brick-clad soffits add a sense of muscularity to the rear elevation, but the effect on the interior is softened by an outlook that takes in gardens and landscaping on two sides.

Bricks were also a strong feature of the house presented to another Sydney architect, Eva-Marie Prineas, for renovation. The 1960s project home was characterized by steel windows and doors, wide eaves and



PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT: Fox Johnston's renovation of a Californian bungalow involved a new kitchen, living space and small courtyard. RIGHT: The precisely laid English bond brickwork adds a sense of masculinity to the southern and eastern walls. OPPOSITE PAGE: An elegant steel-framed pivot door matches the existing windows at Eva-Marie Prineas's extension to a 1960s project home. THIS PAGE, TOP: An airy double-height interior space has a roof sloping to the north to admit daylight. BOTTOM: The decision to build downwards on the sloping site created a greater connection between the living area and the rear landscape.

