COTTAGE MEETS WAREHOUSE

A traditional weatherboard house in Melbourne’s inner city embraces the area’s industrial past.

Fashionable and arty, Abbotsford in inner-city Melbourne offers a low-key alternative lifestyle in a prime location. Here, space is at a premium – streets are lined with Victorian workers’ cottages, townhouses and new developments – and in an area that still bears the hallmarks of its industrial past, there is one white weatherboard cottage that symbolises the neighbourhood’s winning mix of edge and ease.

Part house, part warehouse, this weatherboard cottage has received a new lease on life that is befitting of its industrial surrounds. Occupying a corner block, the cottage is bordered by street frontage, a laneway and a carpark. Rather than drawing away from its surrounds, Melissa Bright, director of MAKE Architecture, has recreated a family home which offers privacy from Abbotsford’s bustling streets whilst engaging with them.

“We wanted to keep the heritage weatherboard cottage but we thought the new extension was an opportunity to build hard on the boundary with zero set back, just like the warehouses in the area,” says Bright. “The extension could be a bit tougher, a defence against the street, offering a contrast to the heritage weatherboard cottage.”

SNAPSHOT

WHERE
Abbotsford, VIC

BRIEF
Build an addition that incorporates another bedroom and kitchen.

LAYOUT
Three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

MATERIALS USED
Recycled brick, Adbri concrete brick, concrete, blackbutt timber (decking) and oak timber (joinery).
For Bright, brick was the obvious choice for the home’s extension. Aside from its barrier-like qualities, brick also has a durability and responsiveness to it that enables it to work in multiple contexts. In this instance, brick gave Bright the ability to create a cohesive form that flows throughout the home, whether in the form of a solid wall, a screen or the home’s defining curves.

The original cottage underwent a restoration of sorts, rearranging the rooms whilst at the same time maintaining the home’s original integrity. And as you move through the home, past the bedrooms and lounge area, the house starts to take on a sweeping form along the western street’s edge. It is here that Bright has made room for multiple functions - a study, a reading/music nook, and a living space which flows seamlessly into the external courtyard.

“We really worked hard to maintain this lower courtyard with a pool, which is squeezed into a pretty tight site. The rooftop garden is really important to this project as well,” says Bright. “Playing on that idea of two extremes, the home is a private retreat-like space, but at the same time you can sit out on the rooftop terrace and wave at the people in the offices across the road.”