Shopfront revival

Architect Chris Clinton's adaptive reuse of a 1960s bootmakers cum take-away shop is much more than an exercise in recycling.

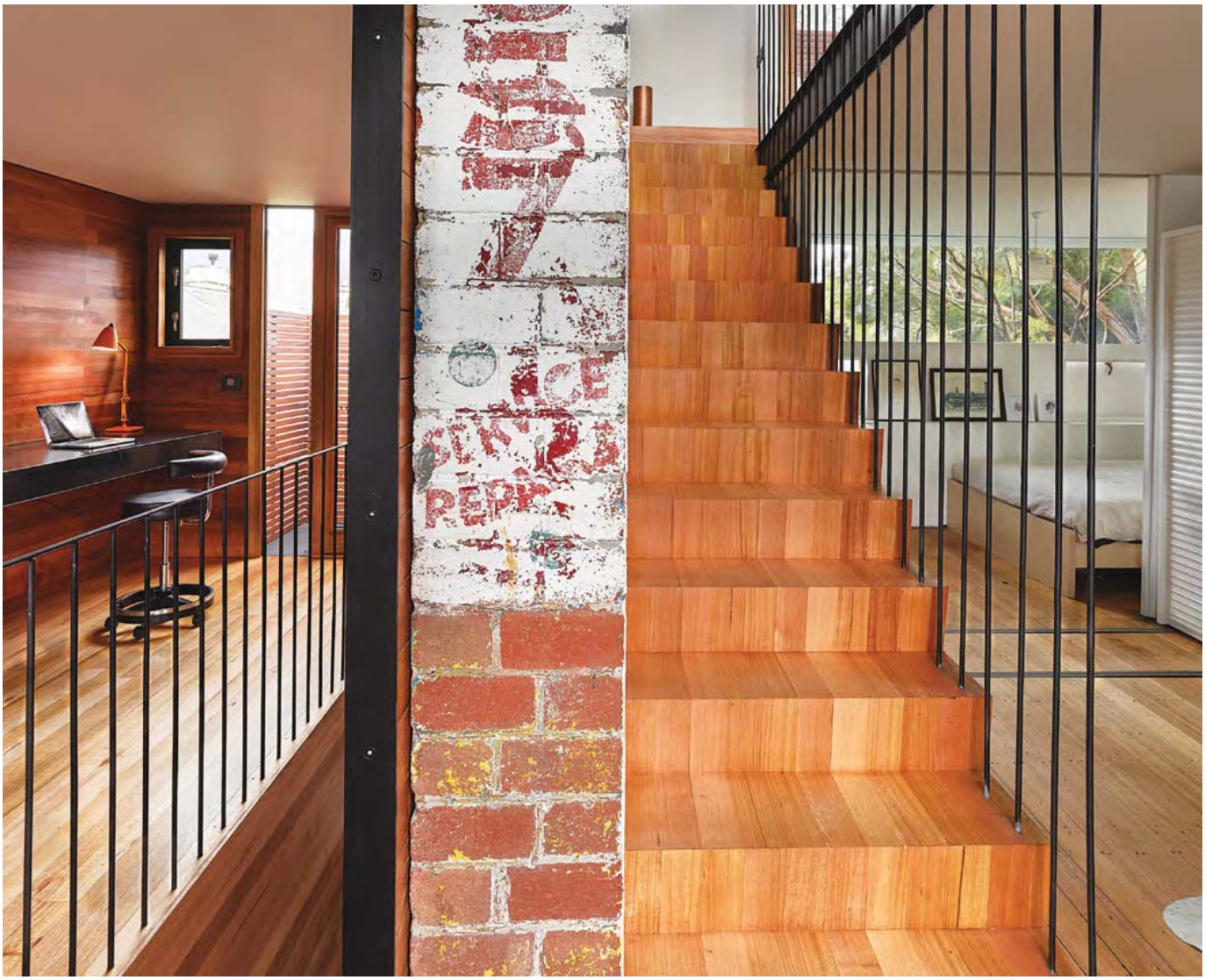
WORDS Gabi Mocatta
PHOTOGRAPHY Peter Whyte

SET ON ONE OF HOBART'S SMALLEST residential blocks (just 76 square metres), the former fish and chip shop had stood disused for some years. But Chris saw the tiny site as an opportunity – and so began six years of architectural experimentation that culminated in a compact, innovative home where salvaging and re-invention reign.

"The whole place is an experiment," says Chris. It was also about economy. "I wanted to retain as much of the original building as I could," and he wanted to undertake much of the work himself.

And so he moved in with his son Alec, now 19, and began a complete re-purposing. Keeping the core of the old shop to live in, he worked nights and weekends, expanding the house out wherever possible. He painstakingly excavated a lower floor – 48 tonnes of earth – mostly by hand to create the soundproof music studio that doubles as Alec's bedroom. He stepped the building out to the pavement at the front and added a level on top. Over time, the original 22-square-metre building grew to 100 square metres over three floors. The tiny take-away became a modest two-bedroom,

The facade consists of vertically stacked Hebel block columns, with remachined VJ timber infill panels salvaged from a local primary school interior. The studio recess (at left) frames a self-made steel and recycled textured glass window and incorporates a seat for passers-by.



As much of the original shop was retained as possible, including some of the bootmaker's brick walls and signage.

two-bathroom home, with two flexible living spaces and an architectural studio.

The rectangular column and reclaimed timber panel facade is perhaps its most striking feature. "It was important for me to make a contribution to the street," Chris says. The stacked Hebel concrete blocks, which he laid himself over time, are left exposed in the interior, providing useful thermal mass.

These add to a mixed palette of reused materials, including the building's original red brick walls, some still bearing the bootmaker's painted signage. Almost all of the ruby-hued myrtle, used in the wall panelling and in the kitchen bench, has been reclaimed for a second use, and the majority of the Tasmanian oak floor is also recycled. The upstairs living area is lined on two sides with striated plywood panelling salvaged from a nearby '50s home, and re-used dado board makes up part of the custom-built kitchen sideboard. A textured patchwork in the studio wall, also visible from the street, is made up of a store of collected glass and steel, salvaged piece by piece over the years.

Chris drew on his earlier experience in steelwork to create the dark, mild steel features of the kitchen benchtop, the studio workbench and the simple steel banisters. The steel is offset by glossy black mosaic

Reclaimed and reused timber was used throughout, including the Tasmanian oak used for floorboards and ruby-hued myrtle for wood panelling, furniture and even chopping boards. Reclaimed white striated panelling was used for the walls in the living areas.

The upstairs living area is lined on two sides with striated plywood panelling salvaged from a nearby '50s home, and re-used dado board makes up part of the custom-built kitchen sideboard.

tiles, “used for their blackness and texture – a bit of bling,” Chris says.

Because the home is a renovation of a commercial property, it did not require an energy rating, but it does perform well thermally. The building does not have a northern orientation (the northern wall forms a boundary with the neighbours) so a strong emphasis was placed on insulation in the walls and ceilings. All moveable windows are double-glazed, and a three-kilowatt photovoltaic system helps power panel heaters on the coldest days. In summer, the house creates a stack effect for natural ventilation: it draws in cool air from the shaded backyard plantings of the lower level as hot air rises to the open windows of the upper floor.

The rooms are used flexibly in a nod to a Japanese sensibility, where living spaces can become bedrooms before being easily switched back. “I’m not particularly comfortable putting names to rooms, because they can be anything,” Chris says. To this end, the ground level bedroom has sliding panels separating the bedroom and sitting area, which also double as wardrobe doors. When the doors are open, hiding the bed, the sitting area is almost as large as a typical living room. Long windows frame Hobart’s Mount Wellington to the west, creating a great sense of space. Guests are also catered for with a ‘sleeping nook’, a tiny space just large enough for a bed, perched above the upper level stairs – with its own perfect view of the mountain.

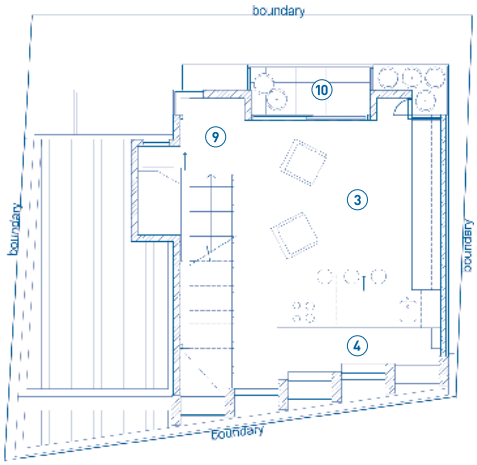
“I’ve always been interested in building small,” says Chris. “And I think as far as sustainability goes, compact living, re-using and recycling are the best ways to reduce materials and energy use.”

And that’s how a nondescript vacant shop becomes an architecturally interesting, environmentally sensitive home and workspace.

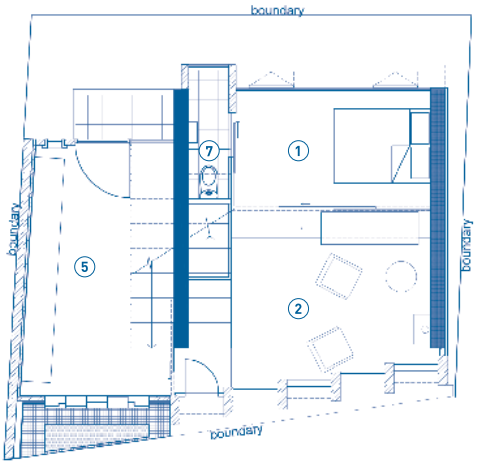
Long windows frame Hobart’s Mount Wellington to the west. The house does not have a northern orientation, so a strong emphasis is placed on insulation in the walls and ceilings.

The spaces of the reformed shop are flexible; the ground level bedroom has sliding panels separating the bedroom and sitting area, which also double as wardrobe doors. When the doors are open, hiding the bed, the sitting area is almost as large as a typical living room.

UPPER FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



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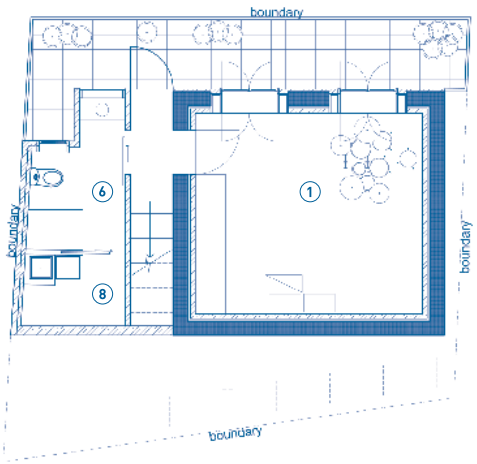
LEGEND

1. Bedroom
2. Sitting/library
3. Living/dining
4. Kitchen
5. Study
6. Bathroom
7. Ensuite
8. Laundry
9. Nook
10. Deck

LOWER FLOOR PLAN



New Town Road

—Specifications

Credits

DESIGN
Chris Clinton, Core Collective

BUILDER
Chris Clinton

PROJECT TYPE
Alterations and additions (adaptive reuse)

PROJECT LOCATION
New Town, Tasmania

SIZE
House 100 sqm
Land 76 sqm

Sustainable Features

HOT WATER
– Rinnai Instantaneous HotFlo 10 gas hot water system.

RENEWABLE ENERGY
– 3kW PV solar grid-connected photovoltaic power system, supplied and installed by Southern Green Energy.

WATER SAVING
– High WELS-rated Caroma and Reece tap and sanitary ware.

PASSIVE DESIGN
– Air drawn in from lower level and vented to upper level for natural convection cooling
– Solid custom insulated air vent shutters in bedroom to aid airflow, handmade with recycled mechanism and salvaged steel windows.

ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING
– Nobo radiant electric panel heaters.

BUILDING MATERIALS
– CSR Hebel concrete blocks used for structural columns, left exposed internally
– Existing cavity brick walls battened and clad with Kingspan Aircell Insulbreak 65 R2 for internal mass passive heating and cooling
– Knauf Earthwool R2.5 HD (High Density) wall batts
– Knauf Earthwool R5 ceiling batts in combination with Kingspan Air-Cell Insulbreak 65 R2 (in lieu of standard roof sarking)
– Kingspan Air-Cell Retroshield insulation
– James Hardie HardiPlank cladding
– Internal cladding and facade infill panels are remachined vertical joint timber salvaged from a local primary school
– Reclaimed striated 1950s plywood to upper living area
– Tasmanian myrtle salvaged from local demolition used for joinery, floorboards and furniture
– Double scotia profiled lining from local demolition used for joinery: rolling wardrobe and upper joinery unit
– Deck built out of original rafters and lintels salvaged from local demolition.

WINDOWS & GLAZING
– Double-glazed, low-e (site fixed/frameless) windows by Glass Supplies, Moonah; 10.38mm laminated glazing to street (higher sound Noise Reduction Coefficient than standard double glazing)
– Double-glazed, low-e, thermally broken Vantage windows to bathroom, studio and lower bedroom
– Double-glazed timber windows and external doors by EuroTrend Windows and Doors, Margate
– Recycled glass for feature window from Hobart Resource Tip Shop (now Resource Work Cooperative) and various building sites over years.

LIGHTING
– Compact fluorescent and LED lights (manufacturer unknown).

PAINTS, FINISHES & FLOOR COVERINGS
– Ability Duropaint external paintwork
– Livos clear finish oils to all timberwork
– Intergrain UltraDeck to all external timber
– Dulux Wash & Wear 101 low-VOC paints internally
– Ecolour paints to steelwork.

OTHER ESD FEATURES
– Adaptive re-use of original shop, retention of majority of existing building
– Recycled material from demolished sections reused wherever possible, all other materials sent to Resource Work Cooperative, Hobart
– Compact living model.

Guests (and curious visitors) are catered for with a 'sleeping nook', a tiny space just large enough for a bed, perched above the upper level stairs – with its own perfect view of the mountain.