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CONTEMPORARY RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

SHOPPING FOR SHIPPING

The Bent Robe house originated from a desire to create a haven for two travel-mad, soon-to-be retirees with compulsive shopping habits and a rapidly expanding wardrobe



WITH THE ADDITION OF a new master bedroom, ensuite and, most importantly, walk-in-robe, this project defines the latest stage in the evolution of a family home that has a history of embracing change.

Situated in a quiet pocket of suburban Melbourne, the original house, built in the late 1960s, was one of a series of mass-produced, architecturally designed houses. These incorporated natural materials and emphasised functionality, embracing brutalist ideologies and challenging the superfluous in suburbia.

After purchasing the house in the mid-1970s, the owners constructed a high brushwood fence around the perimeter of the corner block and set out to make it a family home. Maggie Edmond, of Melbourne-based architects Edmond and Corrigan, designed a double-storey addition to accommodate their expanding family in the mid-1980s. With their children having now left the nest and retirement imminent, the occupants' lifestyle has continued to evolve and the home was once again forced to respond.

Accommodating a wardrobe strained by regular overseas travel and compulsive shopping habits was the primary catalyst of this new phase. As such, the new robe was initially conceived as a shipping container deposited on the site as a receptacle for their extensive collection of clothes and shoes. This conceptual starting point allowed the occupants to immediately relate to and engage with the project emotionally, reflecting their eccentricity. The scale and form of the shipping container also created a range of architectural opportunities on the site.

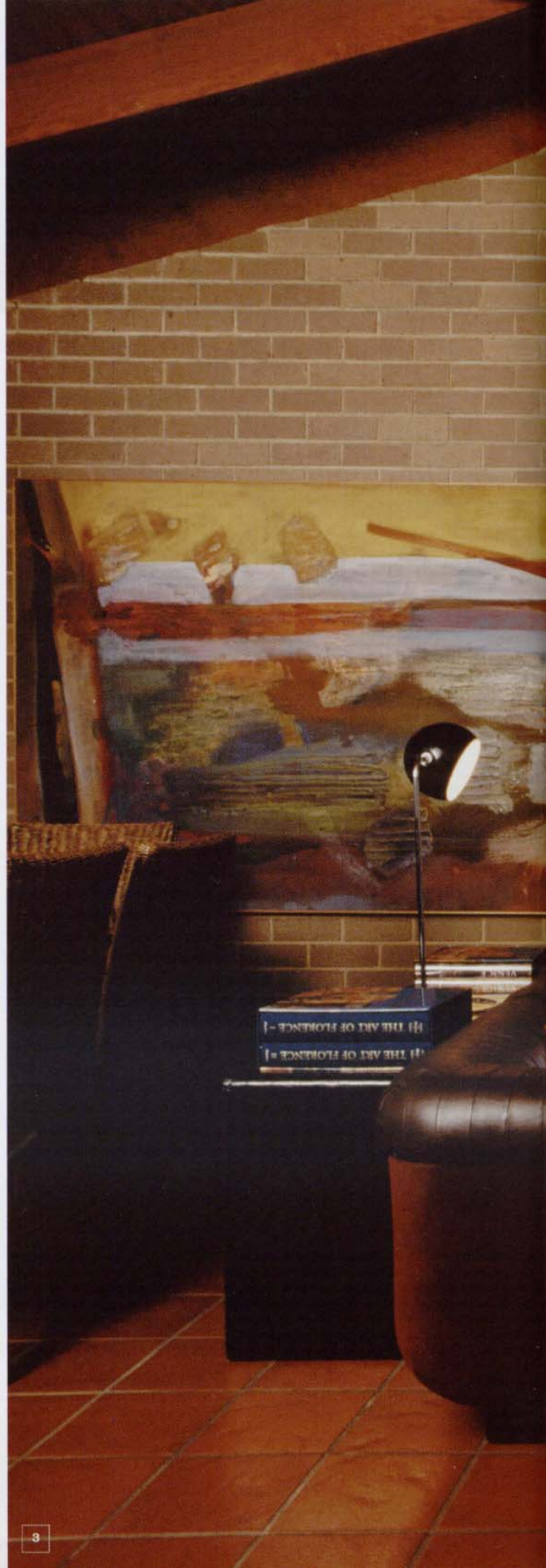
Placed to the west of the original house, the relationship of the container to the existing structure defines the master bedroom. This was conceived as a flow-through, in-between space, outside the confines of the existing house and significantly connected to the landscape of the site.

The container was ultimately split in two, individually housing the robe and ensuite, with the path between providing access to a private garden to the west of the site. The structural framework of the original structure was exposed, extended and stretched to envelop the bedroom space, linking the foreign containers to the body of the home. This gesture reinforces the exteriority of the bedroom space, now inhabiting the framework of an extruded verandah. It also encourages the project to be experienced as a continuation, rather than disruption, of the history of the home, as it evolves in response to the passing time.

The openness of the master bedroom is in complete contrast to the apparent introversion of the containers that shield against the western sun and protect against views of adjoining neighbours. The identity of the robe and ensuite as independent, space-defining objects is reinforced by their cohesive wrapping, with no differentiation of materials between outside and inside. Copper panels reflect the rich, earthy colours and textures indicative of the original house. They express the apparent decay of these "imported" containers, finding their final resting-place in Doncaster.

The apparent introversion of the robe and ensuite is underscored by a series of roof and wall projections that capture and direct sunlight internally while framing views of the sky and landscape beyond. This localises the containers and connects them to the site. —CHD—

1 Copper clad containers house the robe and en-suite, shielding the master bedroom from the western sun and from views of adjoining neighbours 2 Wall projections orientate windows to true north and funnel sunlight into the belly of the containers 3 The structure of the original house is extended to envelope the master bedroom and north facing courtyard 4 The identity of the robe and en-suite as independent, space defining objects is reinforced via their cohesive wrapping, with no differentiation between exterior and interior materials. 5 The bed head rests against an existing brick wall, retained in its original form to emphasise the venture of the bedroom into the outdoors 6 Defined by the relationship between the containers and the original house, the master bedroom is conceived as a flow through, transparent space, significantly connected to the landscape of the site 7 Ensuite and robe wall projections 8 Skylights and projecting windows funnel natural daylight into the interior of the ensuite and frame views of the landscape beyond.









PROJECT DETAILS

BENT ARCHITECTURE

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