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Home is heaven for beginners."
CHARLES H. PANKHURST

August/September 2005

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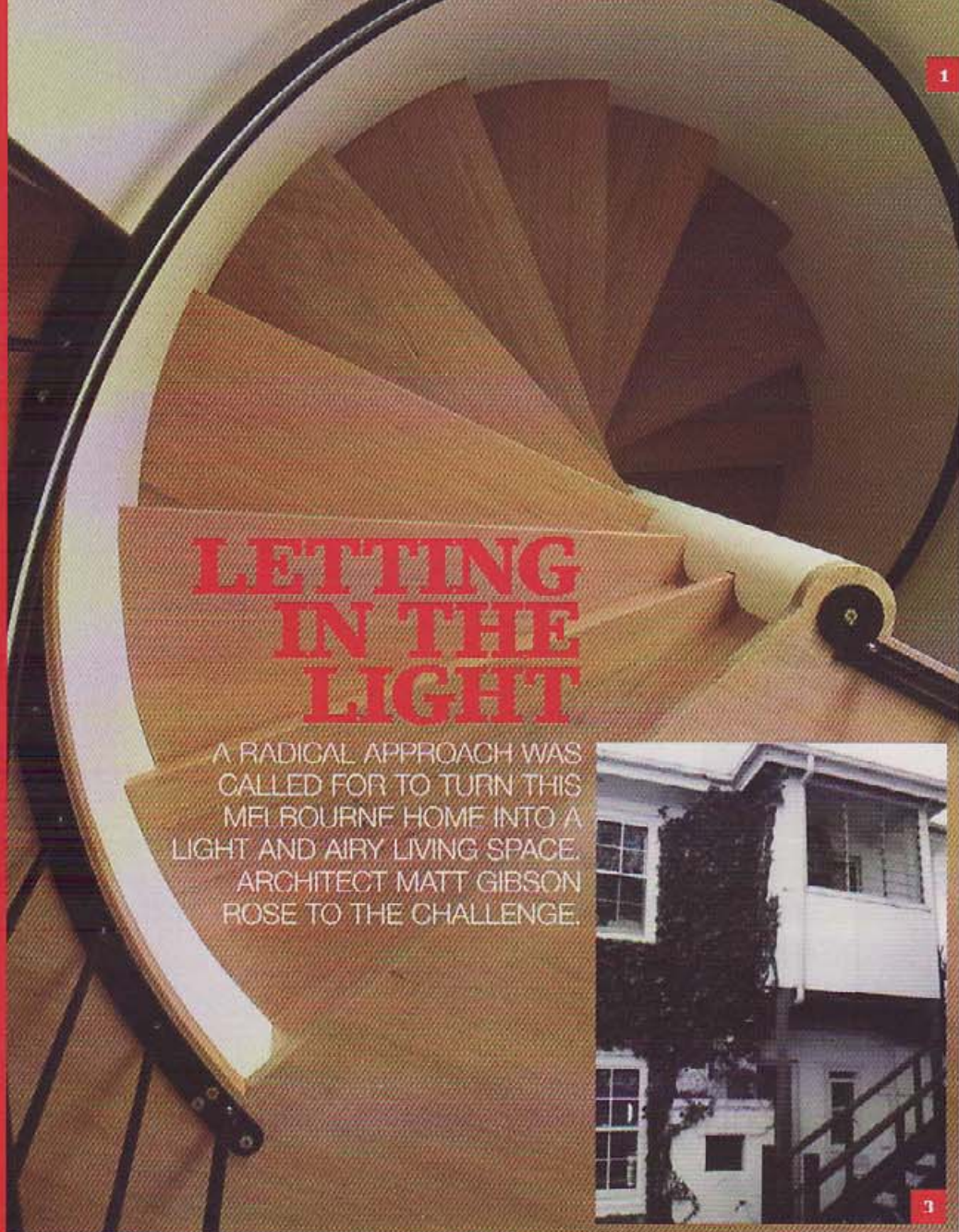
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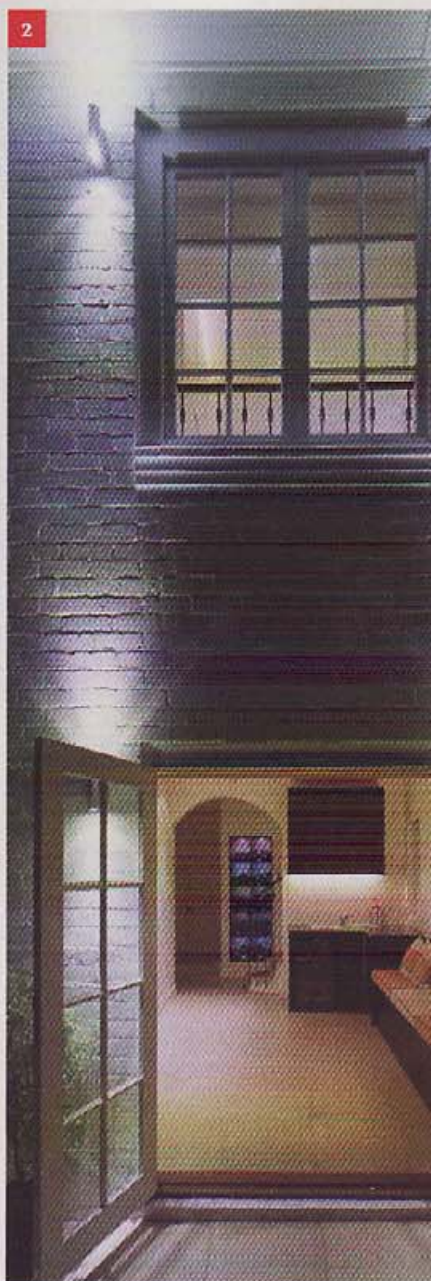


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LETTING IN THE LIGHT

A RADICAL APPROACH WAS CALLED FOR TO TURN THIS MELBOURNE HOME INTO A LIGHT AND AIRY LIVING SPACE. ARCHITECT MATT GIBSON ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE.

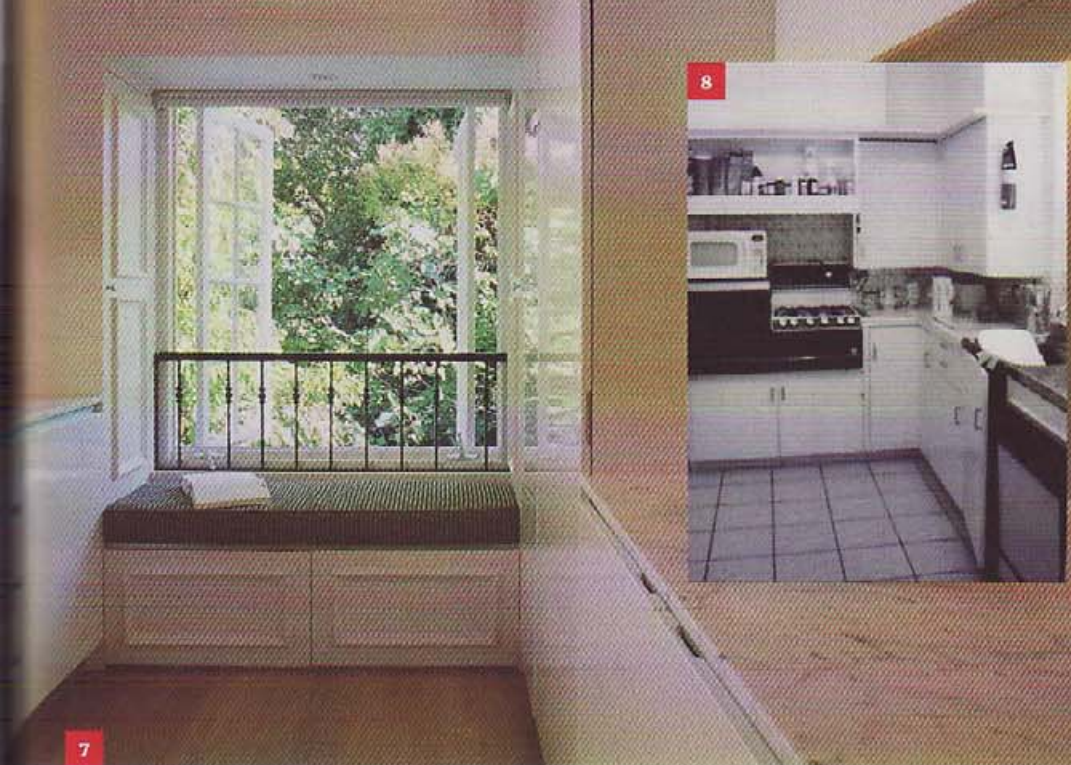


137 A new spiral staircase creates a sculptural form. **138** The rear facade with guest suite, downstairs conservatory area, wine storage and kitchenette. **139** The original rear. **140** Opening up the stairway provided better natural light. **141** The new master ensuite with lined skylight, silvered mirrors and limestone tiling. **142** The original bathroom.

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[7] The new kitchen overlooks the garden. [8] The original kitchen was moved during the renovations by Matt Gibson. [9] Another view of the old kitchen. [10] Gibson upgraded the walk-in wardrobe and master ensuite with feature lighting and mirrored doors to reflect natural light. [11] Benchtops in the new kitchen were finished with bianco giola and finished with zinc splashbacks. [12] A view of the old, enclosed stairway, which was opened up to gain natural light. [13] One end of the kitchen was turned into a breakfast area that can also be used as a home office.



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LOCATION

Nestled among historic buildings in a small court off a tree-lined street – deemed to be one of Melbourne's most prized strips of real estate – this two-storey brick house was designed to function as one large residence, but during its construction in the 1930s it was subdivided (down the middle) into two separate addresses. This division compromised all rationality in the floor plan and resulted in such impracticalities as a rear courtyard which was inaccessible from the ground floor maze of servants' quarters and an upper level which sited a poky kitchen the maximum distance away from the formal living and living rooms.

BRIEF

The clients, a 30-something couple with young children, briefed architect Matt Gibson to transform the dark, cold, introverted structure into a well-lit and ventilated home that retained the formal living spaces at the building's north-facing front but reconfigured the pokier rooms at the south-facing rear. They requested an upgrade of all service areas with a "cafe-feel" fit-out of an open-plan kitchen that could function as both breakfast room and home office. They also wished to work the under-used ground floor into a "summer living" space – with a guest bedroom opening out to a conservatory and the rear courtyard – which could service the needs and secure the privacy of visitors.

SOLUTION

At the rear of the building, where an external stair and enclosed landing space deprived the south-facing kitchen of light, Gibson removed the staircase and filled its void with a large French window that was in keeping with the existing architecture's French provincial aesthetic. The internal staircase and its surrounding walls were also removed (replaced by a space-maximising spiral staircase), thereby creating a family friendly open connection between a rumpus room and the kitchen. The spiral stair also created what Gibson calls a "feature transitional element" between the family area upstairs and the garden/guest quarters downstairs. He detailed the new open-plan kitchen/breakfast/home office zone with banquette seating, new hardwood flooring and a more atmospheric pelmet lighting.

Matt Gibson Architecture & Design, tel (03) 9504 8383.

TEXT BY ANNEMARIE KIELY.



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