



EXCLUSIVE + RENOVATIONS

# Before & After: Confetti-Like Brick and a Secret Passageway Bring Whimsy to a Melbourne Edwardian

By Stacey McLachlan / Photos by Shannon McGrath and Peter Clarke – March 5, 2021

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**This House Never Ends takes its name from a meandering plan that encourages a family of four to explore.**

“This house never ends.”

This was the review of Steffen Welsch’s son, on site to explore the architect’s latest project: the renovation and expansion of a historic Edwardian weatherboard house in a charming Melbourne suburb. The observation was so astute that it gave the project its name.

While most modern Australian homes are open-concept, the German homeowners of This House Never Ends were keen to bring a more compartmentalized, European approach to their 2,734-square-foot space.



The result is a cascade of cozy rooms that draws you through in unexpected ways—a delightful labyrinth, as Welsch’s young architecture critic noted, that feels weighted with possibility.

“You walk through, and there’s something else and something else and something else,” says Welsch. “It was designed so you always have a choice to go in different directions.”

## **Before: Courtyard**



Before: The backyard was a blank canvas for the sleek design to come.



## After: Courtyard



Solar panels line the roof to soak up the Australian sun. The home doesn't use any gas—the cooktop is induction, and heating and hot water come from a heat pump.



The house has a front door, but it's actually not the main entrance: That's found around the side, via a soothing, wood-lined courtyard. It's a natural space for outdoor entertaining, too, thanks to the built-in fireplace and bench.



## Before: Backyard



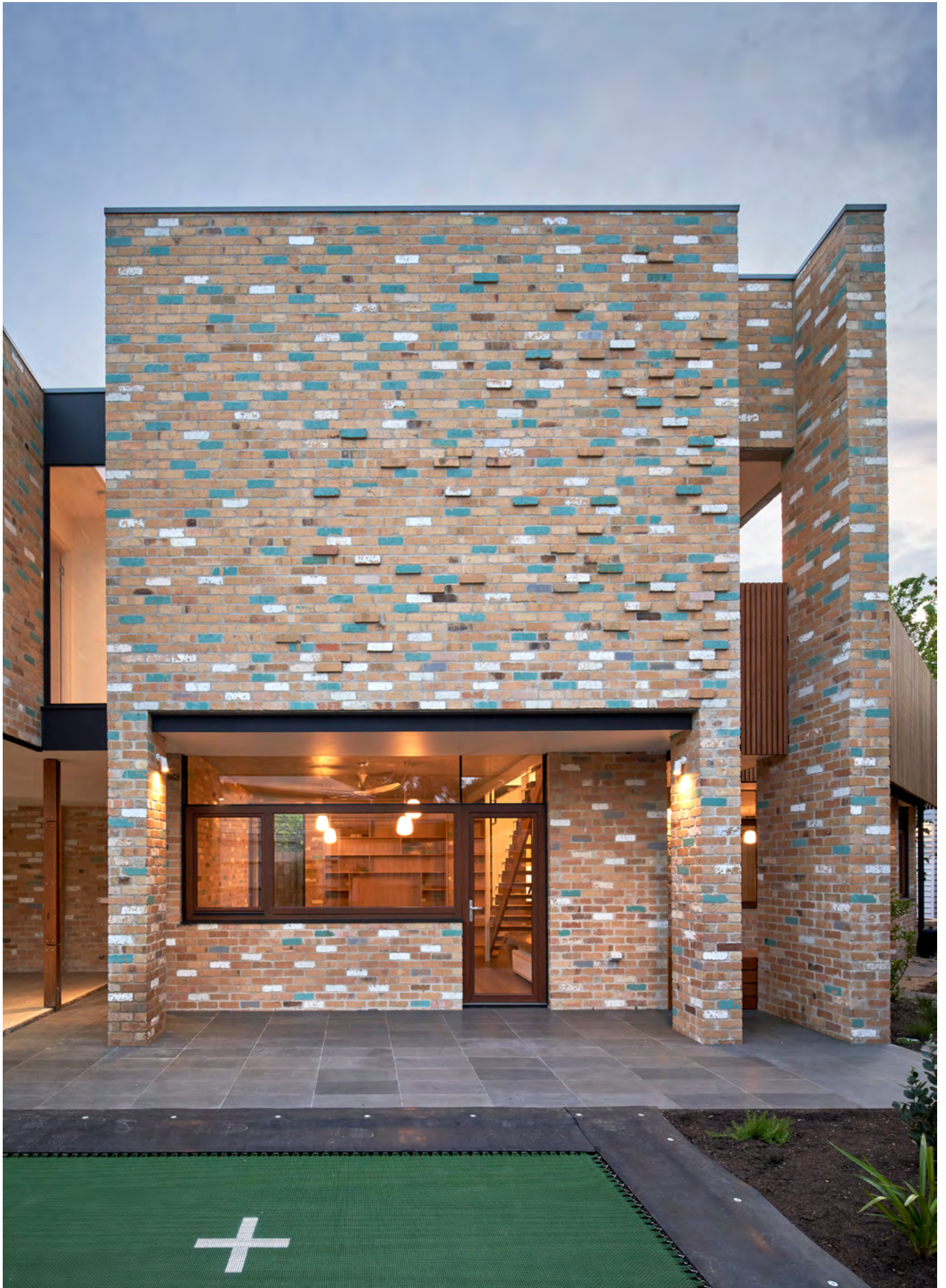
Before: An exterior shot of the original home, featuring a little bit of brick detailing of its own.



Before: Ramshackle sheds were taking up space on the property, and were removed to make room for a more practical home expansion.



## After: Backyard



The exterior of the home, with its playful sprinkle of blue and white bricks, matches the interior finish, creating a connection between indoors and outdoors.





Built at a 45-degree angle on the site, the home stretches out over the property to make use of every inch of land. The unusual layout also gives every room a vista into another space.





For the exterior, a mix of materials work together: the brick of the new house, the weatherboard of the previous house, and a timber screen to connect them. “It’s a link between old and new,” says Welsch.

### Shop the Look



**Knoll Bertoia Side Chair**  
Design Within Reach  
**\$894**



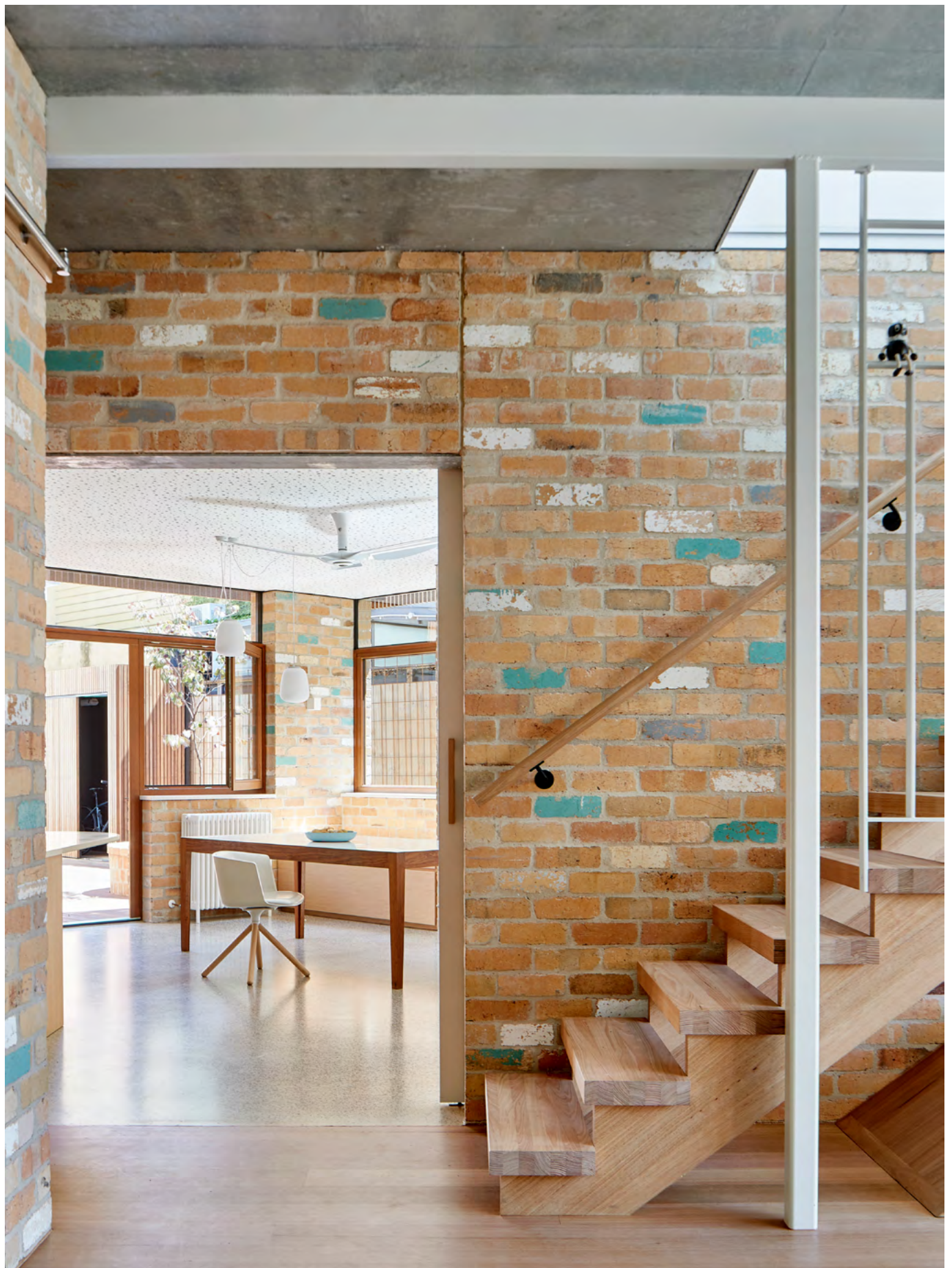
**Foscarini Gregg Pendant**  
YLighting  
**\$514**



**Carl Hansen & Søn Wegner Coffee Table**  
Design Within Reach  
**\$3,175**

Terraces lead onto other terraces. A secret passageway in the closet connects the rooms of the homeowners’ daughters (“Like The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,” says Welsch). Under the stairs, a little built-in seat offers a surprising spot for rest and contemplation...or, for the adventurous, a boost to help you climb out the window. “You might sit under the stairs and think, ‘Oh, I might climb outside,’” says Welsch. “When somebody has those moments of discovery, that’s my favorite bit of the house.”





The project's signature material was discovered on a trip to a recycled brick yard, where Welsch and the homeowners found light, cream-colored bricks and fell in love. "It was a decision made on the spot," explains Welsch. The original plan was to find darker materials that would make the home feel more cozy and cave-like, but the way these bricks reflected the sunlight was just irresistible. "You don't necessarily expect that soft light feeling from a material like brick."





The blue, white, and gray paint on the bricks is original. “The bricklayer offered to clean them off, but we just wanted to leave them as they are, to show the history of the material,” explains Welsch. “It has a story: It’s been used before, now it’s being used again, and it may be used again in the future.”



An acoustic ceiling balances out the sound that might otherwise bounce off of the concrete floor and brick wall during a rousing dinner party. (Bonus: The sound-dampening holes in the ceiling panels add a hit of pattern.)





The little blue pulls on the built-in timber cabinetry were sourced from a local maker in a hue specifically chosen to match the bricks.





The wardrobes in the girls' rooms are secretly connected through one cabinet door—an example of the whimsy and wonder Welsch infused throughout the home.





The subway tiles in the bathroom echo the pattern of the bricks elsewhere in the house. Strategically placed windows let the daylight flow in, even during bath time.





Woodcraft Mobiliar created built-in cabinetry in almost every room of the home, keeping furniture needs to a minimum.

For Welsch, a “never-ending” house has another meaning, too: “When you think about your home, it develops and evolves along with you.” The homeowners’ two daughters are in elementary school now, but when they’re teenagers, they’ll be using the home in a totally different way. Hopefully the door to Narnia, though, will stay in use for years to come.

### **Project Credits:**

*Architect of Record and Interior Design:* [Steffen Welsch Architects](#) / [@steffenwelscharchitects](#)

*Builder/General Contractor:* [Renovation One](#) / [@renovationone](#)

*Structural and Civil Engineer:* [Webbconsult Structural Engineers](#) / [@webbconsult](#)

*Landscape Design:* Henry Architects

*Cabinetry Design/Installation:* [Woodcraft Mobiliar](#)

*Sustainability Consultant:* [Blue Lotus Energy Rating](#)

*Town Planning Consultant:* [Plans in Motion](#) / [@plans\\_in\\_motion](#)