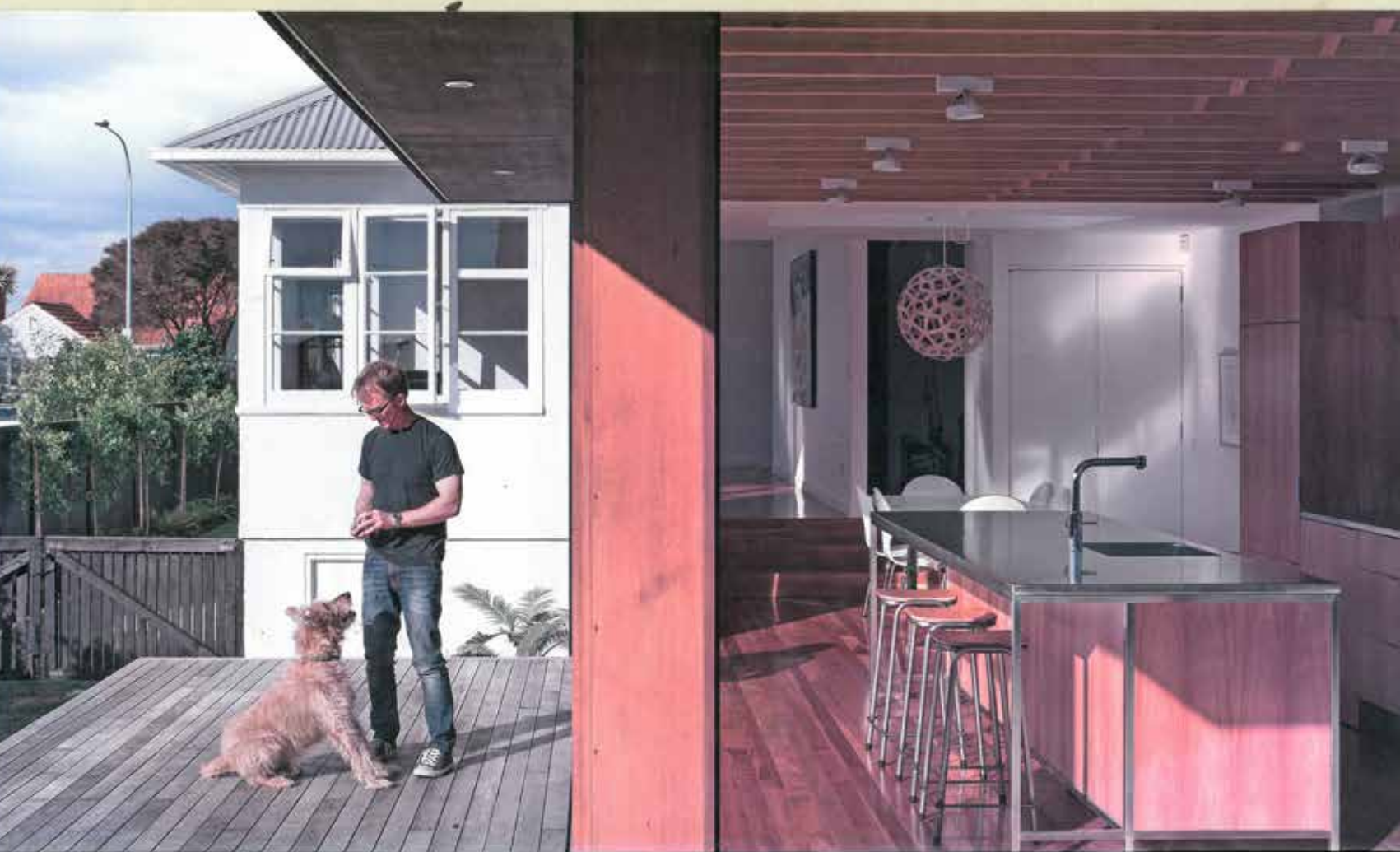


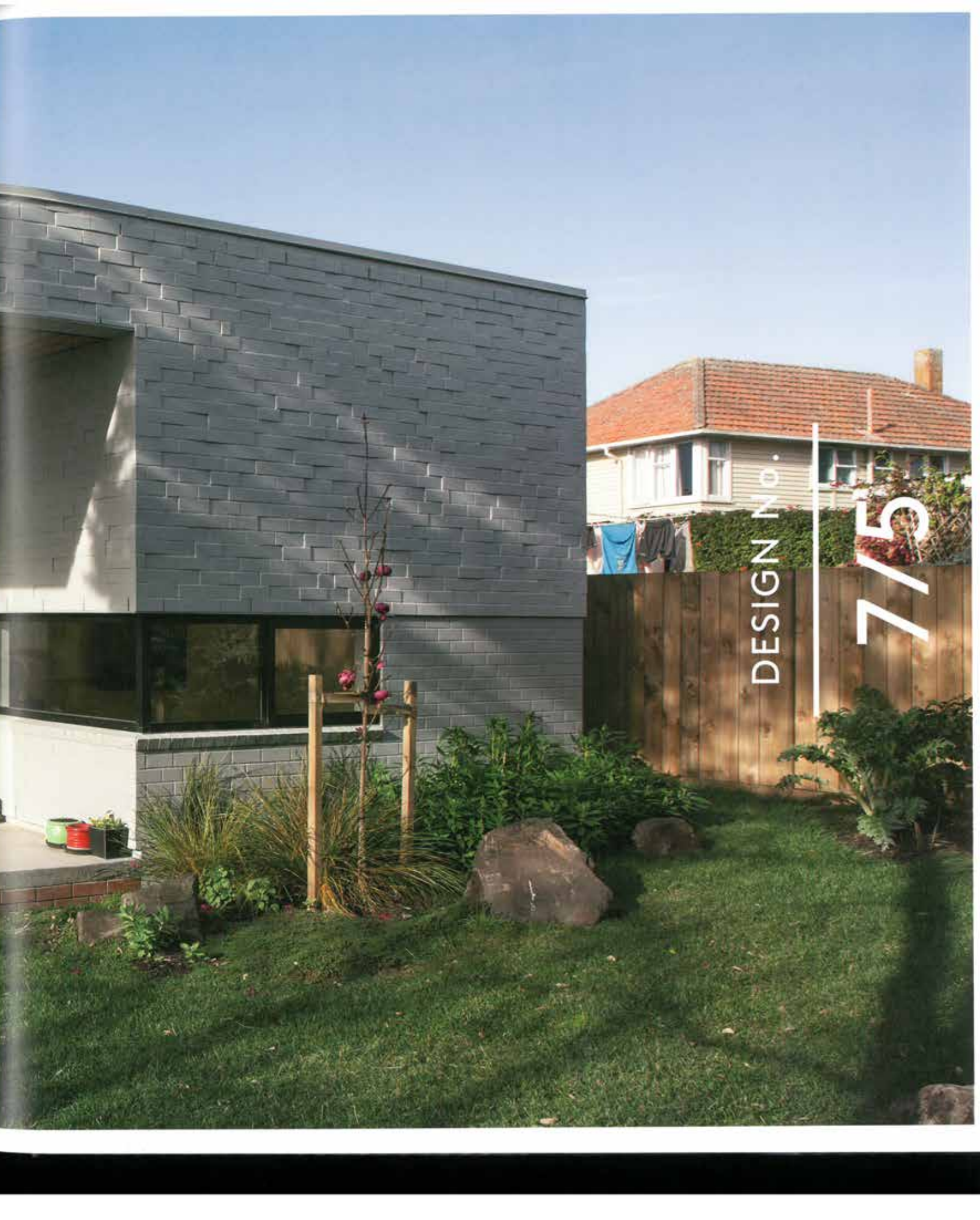
BEYOND THE STATE

NEW ZEALAND STATE HOUSES
FROM MODEST TO MODERN

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PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON DEVITT







DESIGN No.

77/5





PREVIOUS: The openness of the modern addition contrasts with the enclosed brick cottage, but similar materials and colours tie the two together.

OPPOSITE: A simple glass link connects the unit with the addition, leaving the existing back wall virtually untouched.

LEFT: The stair leads down into a large open-plan living room and kitchen.

THE 70-YEAR AGE GAP BETWEEN THIS AUCKLAND STATE HOUSE UNIT AND ITS ADDITION IS EXPRESSED BY A COMPLETE PHYSICAL SEPARATION. A GLAZED LINK CONNECTS THE TWO FORMS, AND COMMON MATERIALS AND COLOUR RELATE THEM AESTHETICALLY.

State houses are notoriously difficult to add on to. They are self-contained little forms with a strong unifying roof and low eaves that defy an easy solution. A traditional way to extend them that doesn't destroy the integrity of the roof is to build a small lean-to, a common detail found in many original designs. But when a larger space is required – as in the case of this kitchen and living room addition in Westmere – it takes some ingenuity to preserve the state house heritage.

When Alex Moffatt and Robert Hughes first considered adding an extra room to their unit, they imagined a multi-purpose space in the backyard, perhaps off the old garage. But during the concept-design process with Glamuzina Paterson Architects, the project evolved from a single room to a broader discussion about the future, raising a family and how they might do that on the site. With 500 square metres of land they certainly had the space, and the quiet street and reserve just over the back fence all pointed to an addition that could suit their needs long term.

BELOW: The original unit has a charming and understated street presence; there is no hint of the transformation out the back.

RIGHT: The small front porch has a screen wall with a window to let in light.

OPPOSITE: A few steps flanked by mature trees lead up to the front of the house.



Alex had bought the state house unit back in 2000 before she met Robert, and was very fond of it. 'I was drawn to it because it had a very solid feeling, which felt good for my first home,' she recalls. 'It has beautiful matai floors, it's warm and I love the light we get through the big windows. Robert and I were really happy with the original house, we just needed more room.' They felt strongly that the character of the existing building needed to be maintained and protected.

Architects Aaron Paterson and Dominic Glamuzina supported the idea to leave the unit intact and build something new and separate at the back. It opened up some interesting options and avoided all the issues and expense of connecting into the existing tiled roof. 'The unit is such a simple, singular form, and our response was to create another strong form as a counterbalance,' explains Dominic. 'We saw a mass that could be low and grounded, letting the unit have prominence, but then we relate them through similar materials.'

The state house duplex sits fairly high above the ground, so by digging down slightly at the back the architects have been able to set the top of the addition in line with the existing eave (but two-and-a-half metres away). This makes a clear dimensional relationship between the two, and respectfully marks the unit as the main form. The new building is wrapped in brick but with a rusticated texture, and a plinth that no longer defines a foundation wall, but traces window and door openings. These are subtle architectural plays, but they create relationships and distinctions between the two buildings.





Various domestic functions now have very distinct zones in the new plan: the unit has the bedrooms and bathrooms, and the addition has the open-plan living area and connection to the garden. It was an obvious split to make: the existing small, self-contained rooms could remain untouched, their scale and detail preserved, and the new rooms could be large and open.

In the unit, the original living room has become the main bedroom, a beautifully proportioned room with a large northern window and fireplace. Adjacent to it the old kitchen has been divided for a wardrobe and laundry, and the meals recess has become an en suite. What was the old washhouse (laundry) and back porch is now a hall that connects the front door with the glazed link and the addition.

There is a one-metre drop from old to new, which is transitioned via the glazed link and staircase. Moving from the 1930s building to the addition is signalled by this dynamic change in height and experience of going 'outside'. The link has floor-to-ceiling glass so the garden and weather encroach, contrasting with the solidity of the interiors. 'The planting here is designed to create a colour block of green filtered light,' explains landscape designer Xanthe White. 'There is a beautiful contrast between the very graphic architecture and the "wildness" of the garden.'

The architects and owners have respected the little unit, and created an addition that is a contemporary interpretation of its solid form and materials. By separating functions, they have not had to compromise the layout and scale of the original, and have allowed the new building to be open and connected to the garden.

ABOVE: The new part of the house is open plan, contrasting with the small rooms of the original.

OPPOSITE TOP: A skylight brings light into the far corner of the kitchen.

OPPOSITE LEFT: Adjacent to the kitchen is a TV snug that can be closed off for sound control.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: The TV snug is dropped down below ground level with a small strip window and skylight. Painting by David Bromley.



BELOW LEFT: The garden design pulls together different characters to tie in with the different eras of the house.

BELOW RIGHT: Alex and Louis enjoy the patio in the afternoon sun.

OPPOSITE: Sunlight floods the interior and highlights the simple geometric forms of the addition.



