

# FACING DESIGN

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# new beginnings

"It was important for us to use bricks, but we wanted to mix it up a little and use them in a slightly different way to how they'd been used in the original structure."  
— David Saunders

An exposed brick wall indoors helps create a seamless transition between an original Californian bungalow and a new addition.

Renovating a property on a large scale always throws up its fair share of challenges – not the least of which is how to connect the old with the new.

When architect David Saunders from S2 Design in Melbourne was faced with that problem on this project in south-east Melbourne, the answer was obvious.

"The original house was constructed from brick, so it made sense to carry that idea through the new addition at the rear of the existing house, partly to provide a link between old and new." But rather than pursue the obvious route and position the bricks on the exterior of the building only, Saunders decided to do something a little different. "It was important for us to use bricks, but we wanted to mix it up a little and use them in a slightly different way to how they'd been used in the original structure. Leaving them exposed indoors helped us achieve that."

But Saunders will admit that the concept wasn't initially well received by the owners. "I think it's something about the link that bricks have with the '70s – people can be reluctant about using them, particularly indoors. But I think used in this way they give the interior a sense of durability, which was important for the clients who had a young family, but also a sense of quality and monumentality. You know that in 10 or 20 years time, the brickwork is going to look just as good as it does today. Originally the clients proposed to paint or render the brick wall, but I persuaded them to wait until the project was complete before they committed to that decision, and it's stayed."







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Then there was the fact that, in conjunction with the concrete slab floor, the bricks provide a massive amount of internal thermal mass and outstanding temperature control within the dwelling throughout the year.

Opting for a red brick to match the existing brickwork as closely as possible, Saunders took a number of other steps to make the journey from the existing part of the house into the new addition a seamless experience, including keeping the ceiling height consistent throughout and reusing an original door and skirting boards within the new construction.

"We wanted to keep as much of the existing home as possible. Being an older building, I felt it had a significant amount of heritage value, but also from an environmental perspective, demolishing and rebuilding a solid brick house just for the sake of rebuilding it seems incongruous to me.

"Where possible we practice adaptive reuse by restoring and renovating existing buildings – we see this as one of the greatest acts of recycling."

And if this project is anything to go by, it's a philosophy that makes for fascinating architecture. While the street side of the property retains its almost Edwardian character, out back it's all about linear design.

"My personal agenda was to impose a strict geometric, linear and minimal approach to this design.

"But the design for this house was also inspired by the site – not only taking into consideration usual aspects like access to sunlight but also because it is quite an unusual shape. And then, as with any project, it was

a matter of coming up with a design that would take the client's lifestyle requirements into consideration. Essentially they wanted us to demolish the existing kitchen, laundry and meals area and incorporate new versions into a large open-plan living area at the rear complete with lots of natural light and ventilation." With a young family, the clients also wanted Saunders to create a family-friendly house that had plenty of storage.

"In that respect, I think this is actually one of the best residential solutions we've ever completed," says Saunders. "When you've got young kids around, it's easy for a space to look cluttered a lot of the time. But because of the integrated storage solutions, everything has its place so it's not difficult to keep the space tidy. 'Wear and tear' often becomes noticeable quite quickly but the materials we've used help with the durability aspect."

It was also high on the clients' wish list that the new living area be blessed with views out into the garden – which explains the inclusion of glass 'walls' along the northern and eastern sides of the renovation.

"They open right up and are designed to encourage natural light and ventilation into the area, but also to provide views and access to the outside."

In fact, partly because of this, Saunders labels the rear open plan living area as his favourite feature of the home. "It really inspires a sense of liberty through the apparent dissolution of boundaries.

"In other words, there's a distinct lack of confinement out there, which makes the space an incredibly inspiring place to be."

