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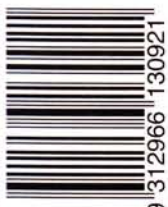
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*pages of*  
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ABOVE & TOP RIGHT: ARCHITECT MATT GIBSON'S LIMITED USE OF MATERIALS AND COLOUR THROUGHOUT THIS TOORAK HOME HAS SPACES BLEED INTO EACH OTHER, CREATING A LOFTY FEEL. TOP, FAR RIGHT: A STAIRCASE PROVIDES ACCESS TO A SPACE PREVIOUSLY UNDERUSED. RIGHT: LOW-HUNG CUPBOARDS THAT REACH HIGH AND A WINDOW SEAT PROVIDE AMPLE STORAGE IN AN OTHERWISE NARROW SPACE. BELOW: VISUAL TRICKERY WITH MIRRORS CREATES THE ILLUSION OF SPACE. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



< Like Steendyk, the Tobias team used a multifunctional approach. Accordingly, a long banquette running the entire length of the back living room also serves as storage. "It's amazing how much you can get in it," says Tobias.

The timber slat wall at the rear conceals the amenity block, which contains laundry, bike storage and a washing line – previously the only thing that managed to fit into the backyard. Difficult and cramped spaces in the top-floor bedrooms, where sloping ceilings were a major restriction, were resolved by using colour to create a different illusion and built-in storage. "We dealt with this through homogeneous colour ... a strong floor colour to ground the room and shift focus to the floor rather than the ceiling," explains Tobias.

Visual tricks such as these were also used by Melbourne architect Matt Gibson in an early 20th-century Toorak house, where the use of mirrors in a bathroom visually extend its space. Originally poorly laid out, Gibson reconfigured the original bathrooms and linen cupboard to create two ensuites and a bathroom in the hallway. The installation of a small spiral staircase also transformed the use of space, now accessing areas underused before the renovation.

The consideration of small spaces in these homes shows how a little restriction can foster big ideas and solutions. VICTORIA CAREY