

ALLEYS OF CHICAGO

by Susan Leith



EVERYTHING HAS
BEAUTY, BUT
NOT EVERYONE
SEES IT.

CONFUCIUS

ALLEYS OF CHICAGO



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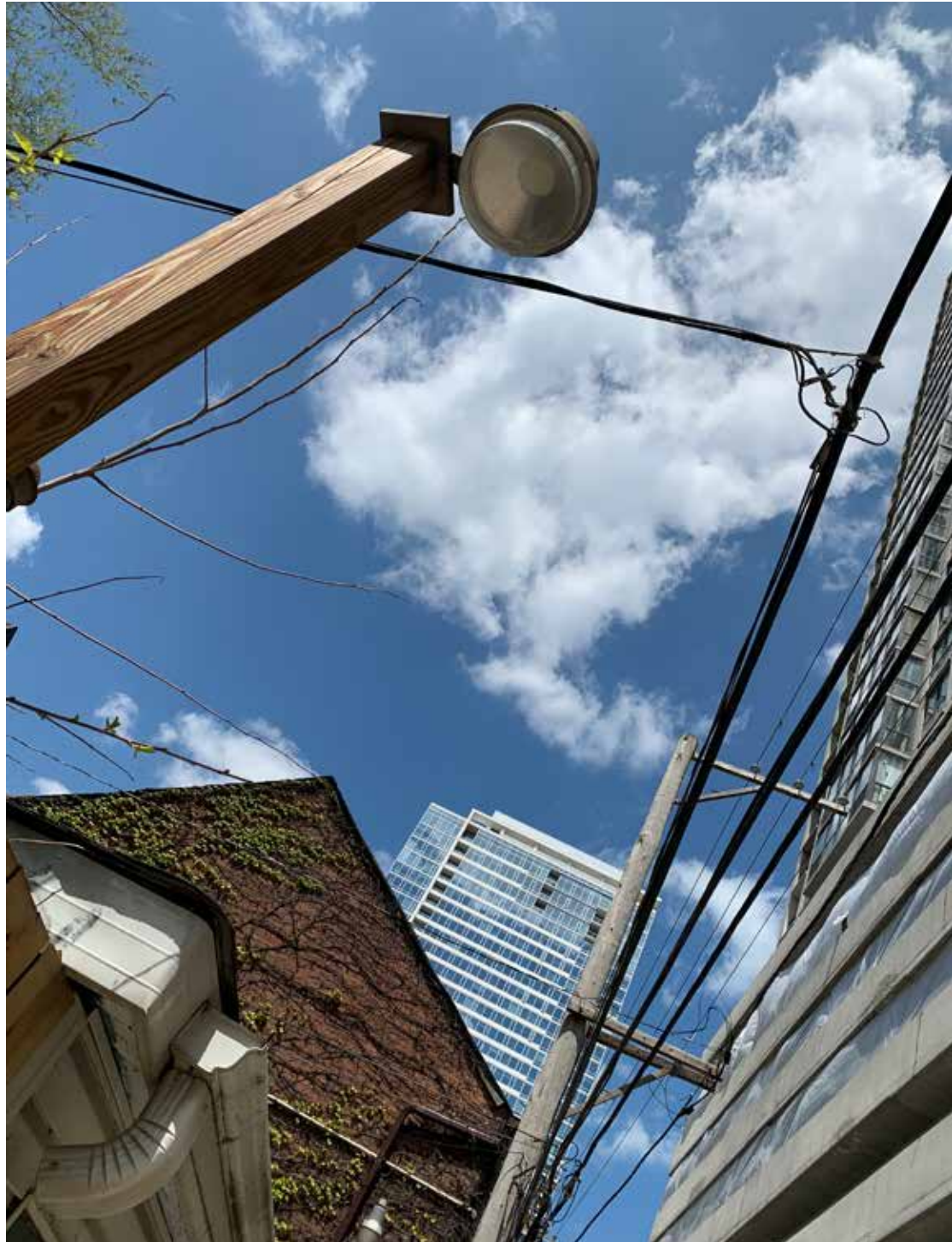


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Sometimes garbage cans contain fun and colorful surprises.

A L L E Y S

Chicago has 1900 miles of alleys - the distance between Chicago and Mexico City. Before I first came to Chicago four years ago, I'd neither seen nor heard much about alleys. Alleys were both new and mysterious to me, and I felt compelled to explore the unknown.

Most people think of alleys as places for garbage waiting to be picked up by anonymous men on large, noisy trucks that have dangerous-looking moving parts. People avoid alleys, not only on walks, but even on bikes or cars.

There's a kind of dread that surrounds the occasional necessity to dash down an alley. Alleys equate to a danger of the unknown.

As I explored Chicago alleys for the first time in my life, I found them to be intriguing and sometimes beautiful. I found myself looking up and down, not just forward. I found beauty in the colors, shapes and textures all around me as I explored this other world within a great city.



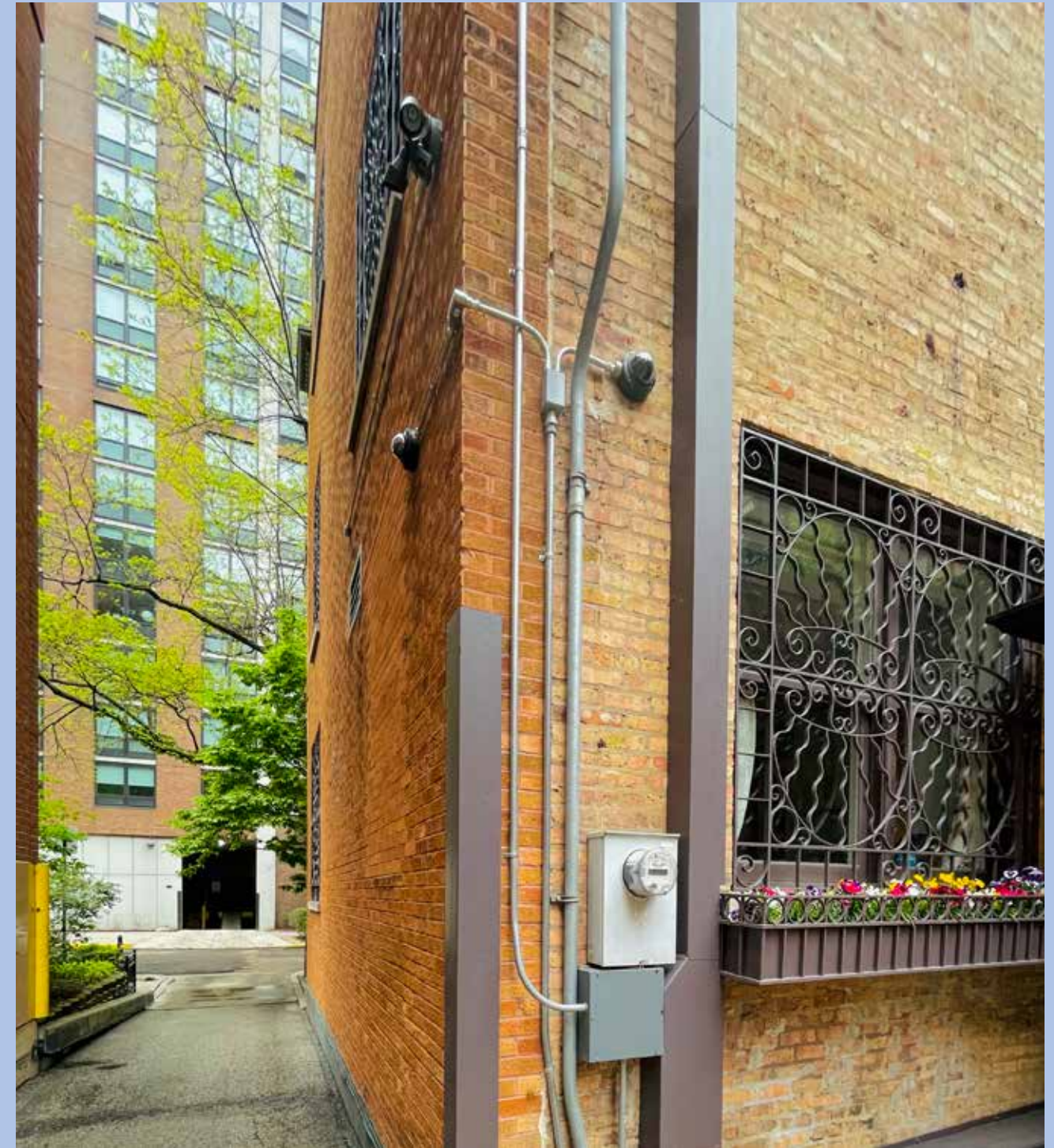
CAMERAS



Even in Chicago alleys you are being watched.



The hooded snake clings to the red bricks watching the action below.



These two cameras appear to hold hands as they watch over different directions in this alley.

LOOKING UP

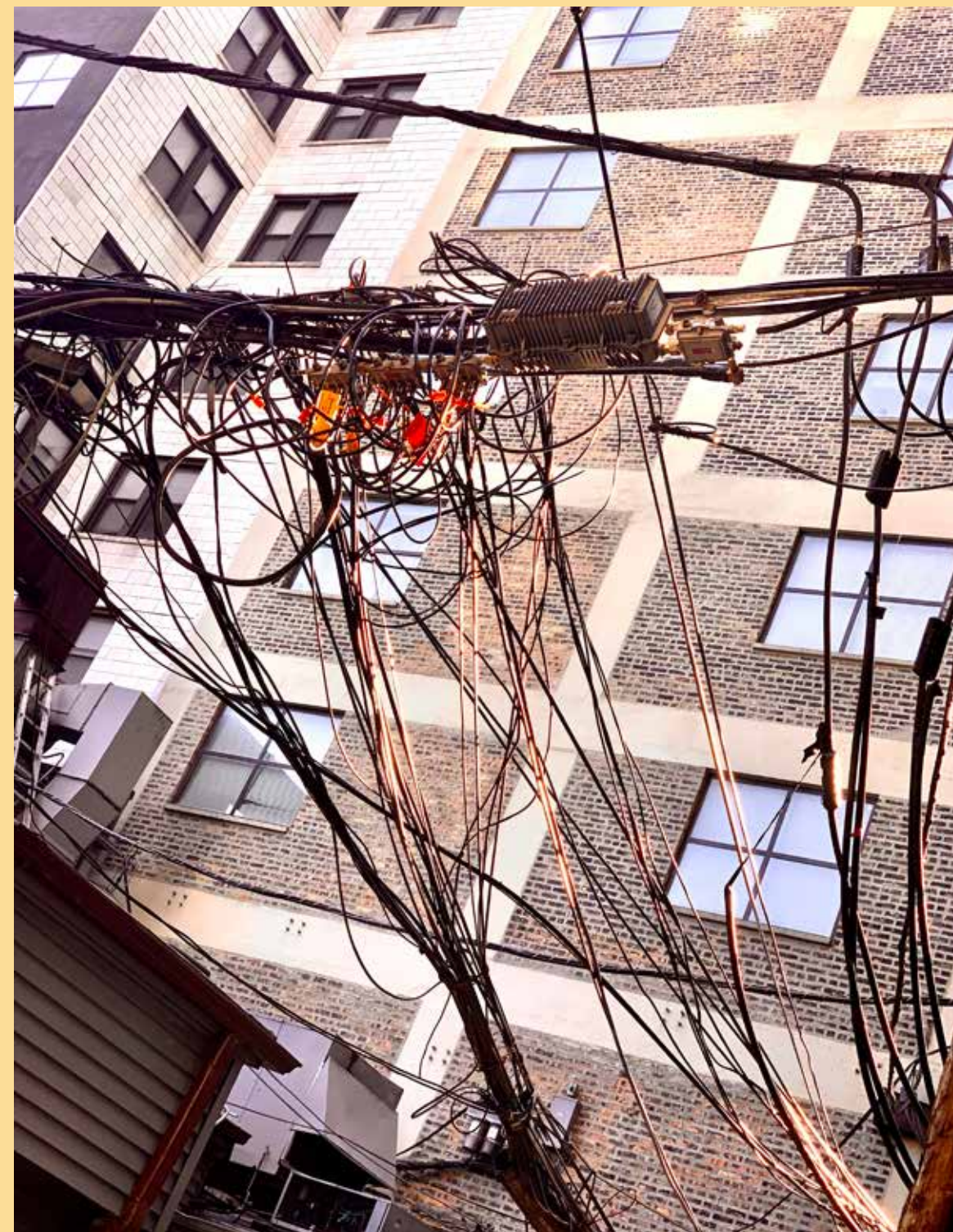
POWER
WIRES



What a mess -how can anyone figure out what each wire connects to?



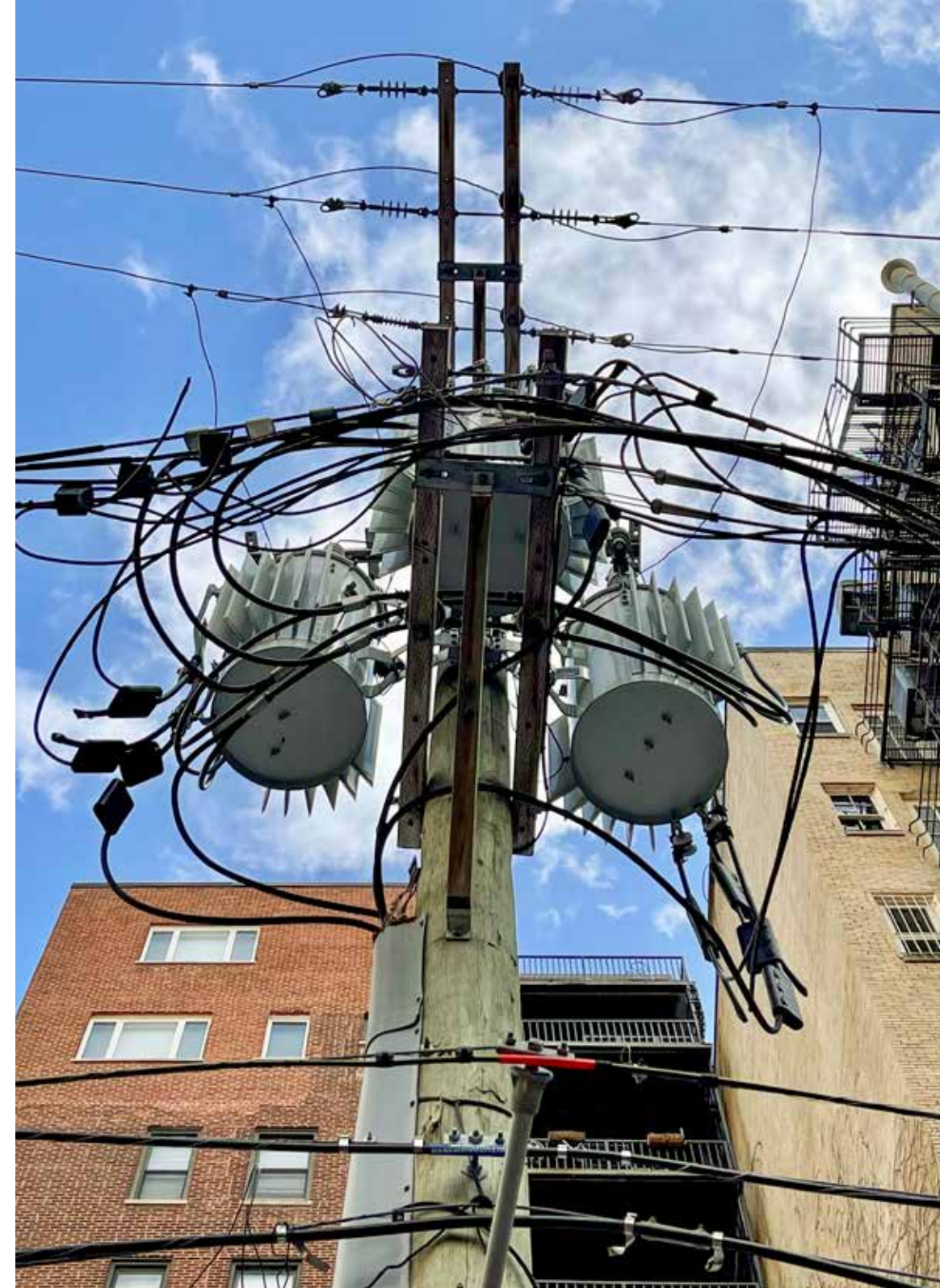
The bird-like spaghetti-mix of wires flies through a beautiful mix of complimentary colors; blue/orange and blue/yellow.



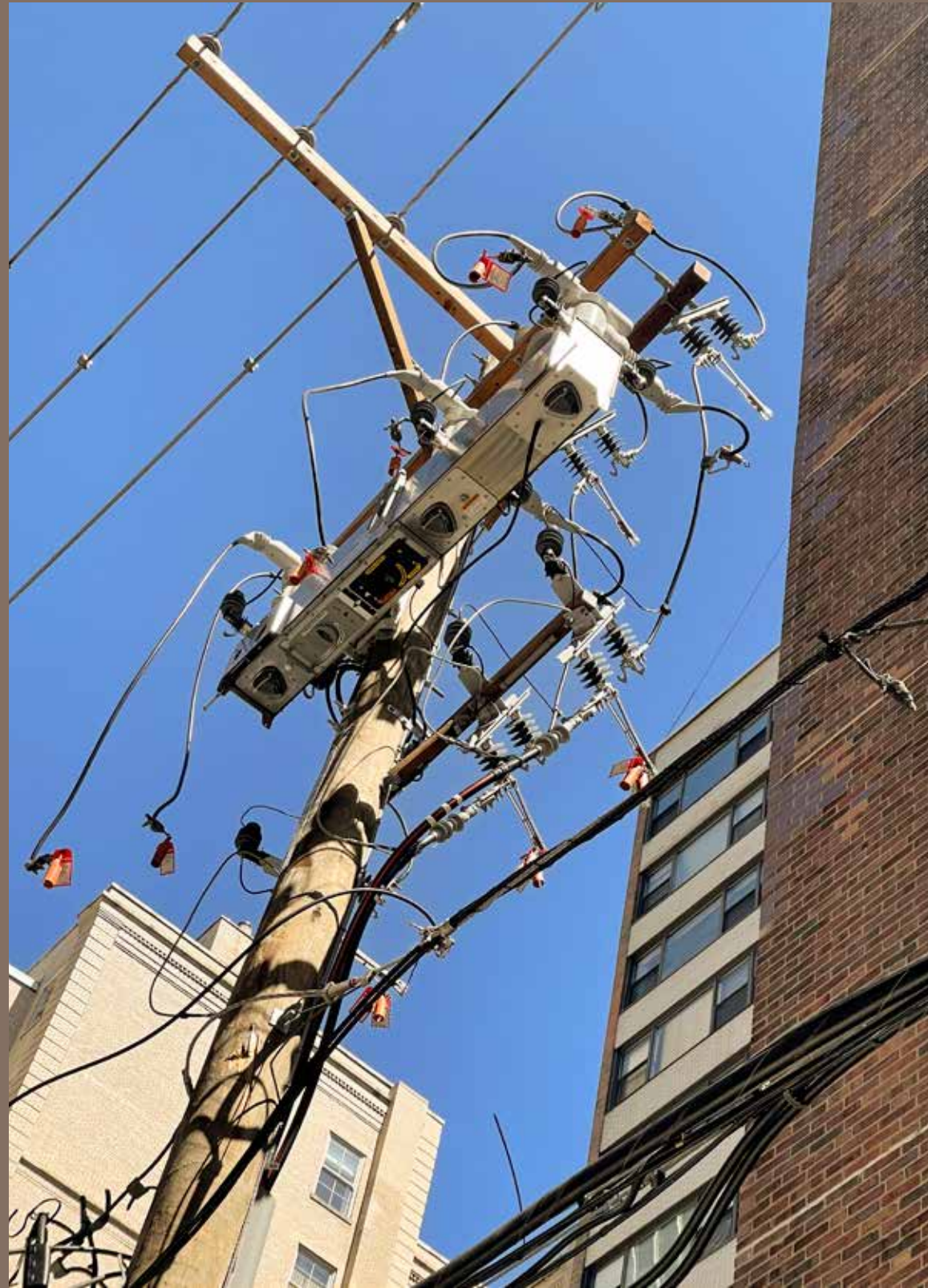
These windows form squares inside of squares inside of squares surrounded by different colored bricks. The sun illuminated wires hide red and orange bird-like shapes. The geometric uniformity of the squares and rectangles in the background contrast with the uncontrolled mess of the wires in the foreground.



The vertical poles split the colorful orange/green on the left and the colorless beige on the right and there is balance in the repetition of both vertical and horizontal lines.



The warm colors of the buildings contrast with the cool colors of the sky and pole. The two cylinders and the pole look like the eyes and nose of a giant insect.



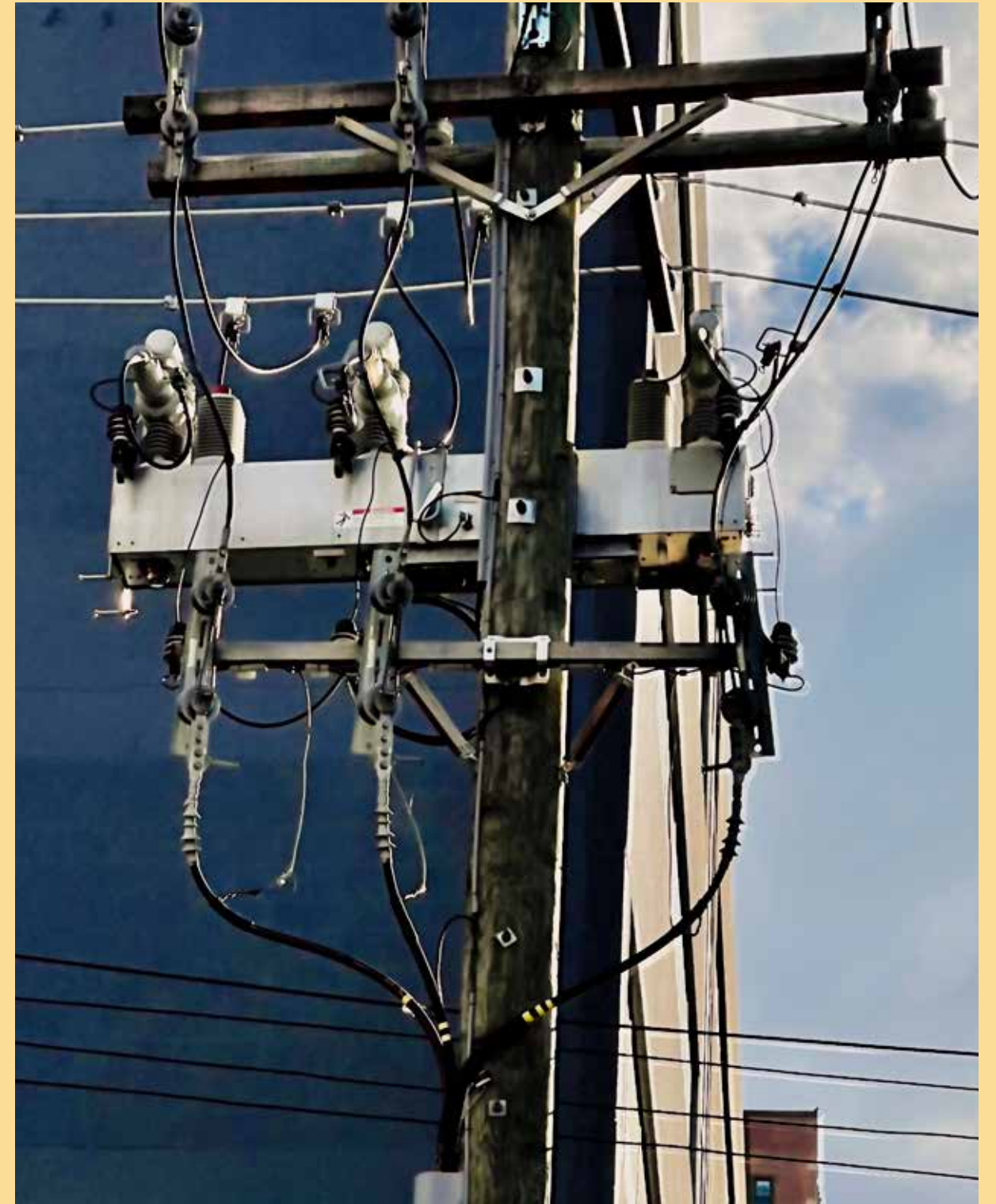
I like the shape of the power pole against the blue sky with bits of orange resembling butterflies.



The expanse of blue sky contrasts with the vertical structures stretching upward on the right. The short lines of bright red add interest.



I'm fascinated by the skeletons-like shapes and how they mingle with the other shapes in the photos.



The placement of the pole lines up with the edge of the building and is off center. Things in the center are not usually as interesting as things off center. The cloudy blue sky softens the strong lines of the pole and building.

WALLS

LOOKING FORWARD

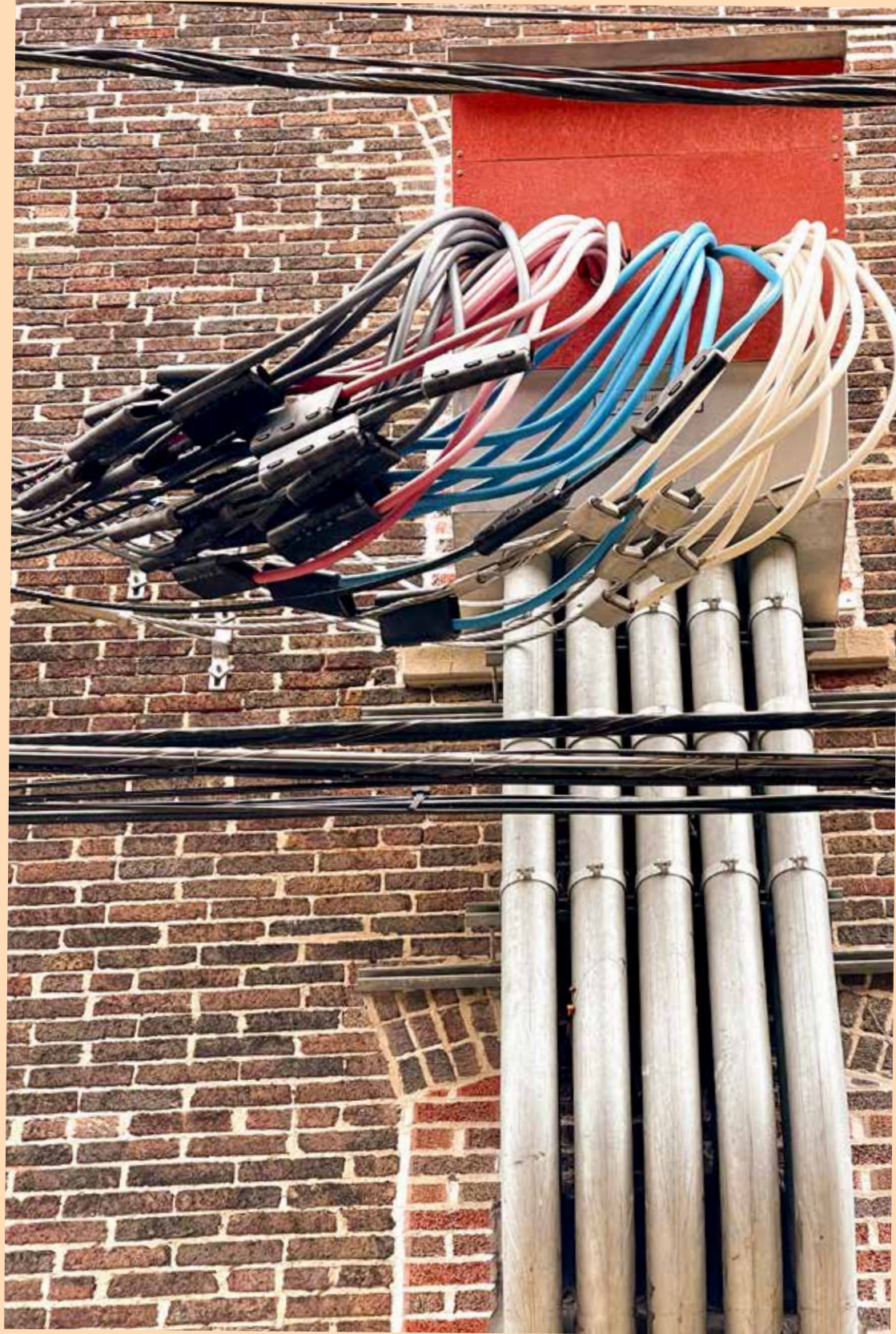


The bent metal casts an interesting shadow over the soft background of complimentary orange sand greens.

Look for

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AND
TEXTURE



Colorful wires and pipes look like a flower on the wall, blowing in the wind.



Why are some windows bricked over while others are not? And why don't the windows match?



Wires embrace and dance on a brick wall.



Why are these poles and wires going in different directions and what are they for?



What a terrific mix of colors and textures.



A head with a strawberry ear peers out at me.



Colors, shapes and shadows blend together.



A no police order sign replaces a no parking sign.



Soldier-like uniformity in front of a red cross.



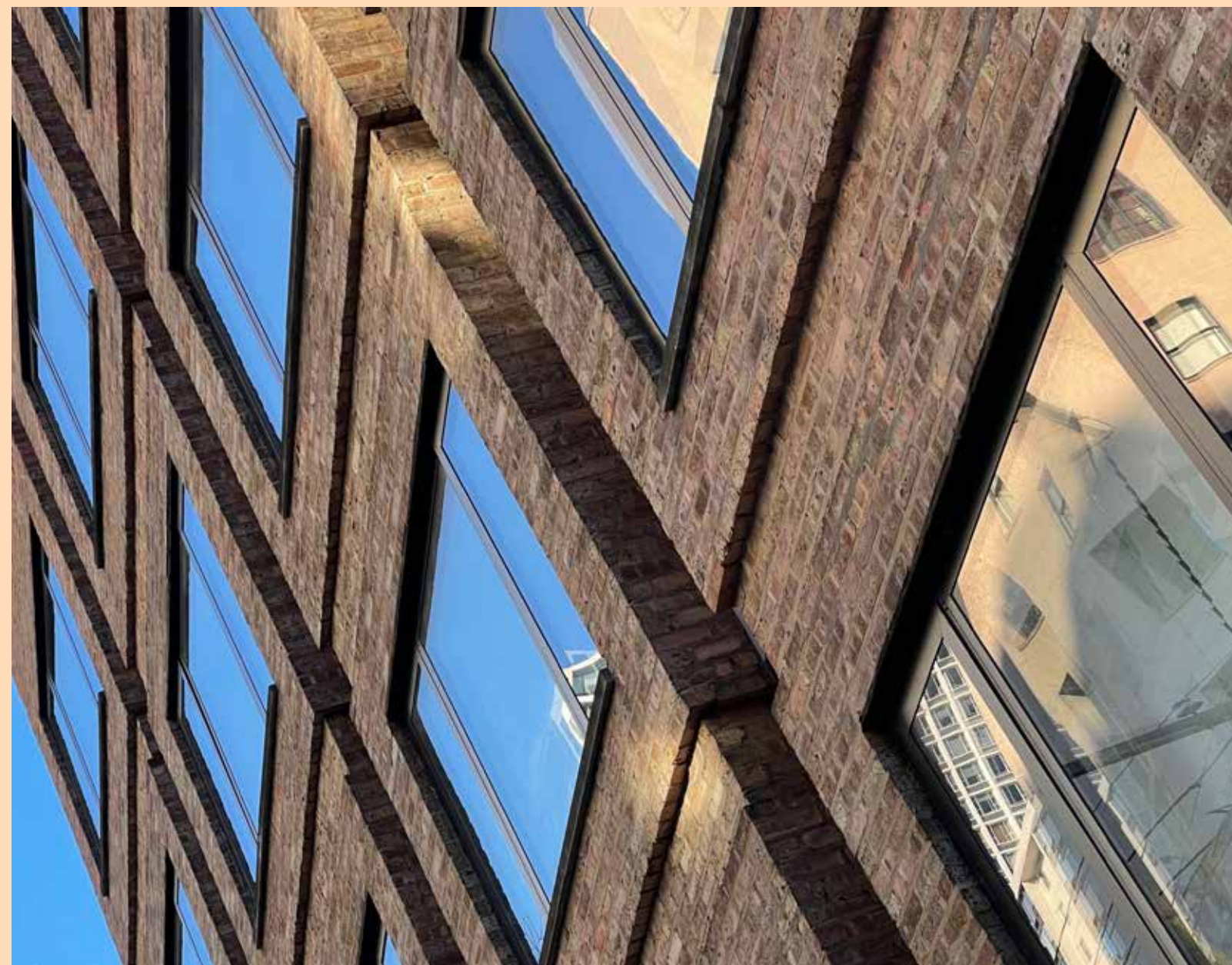
Alley humor.



This signage on brick resembles a mosaic.



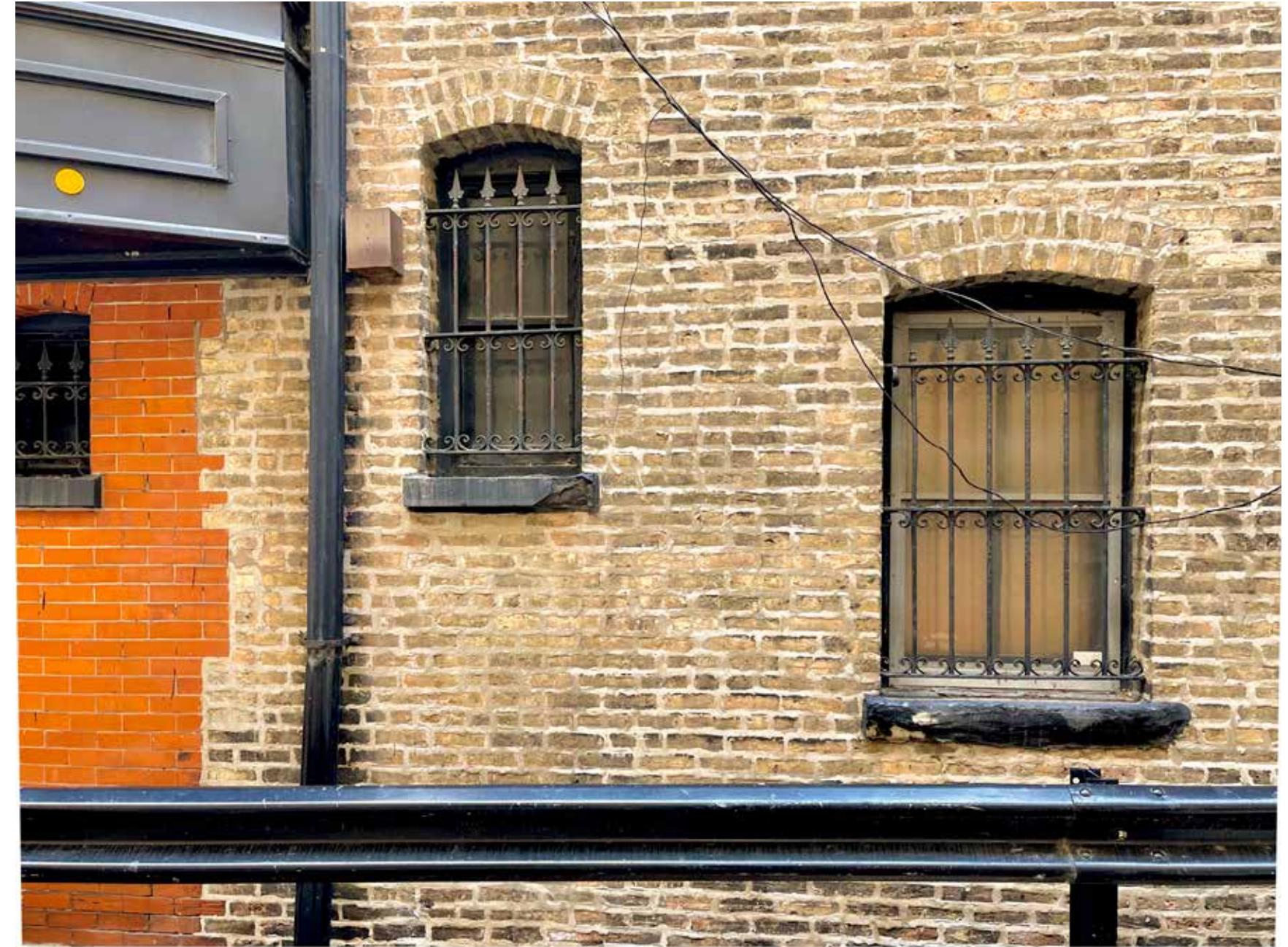
A mix of duct work architecturally interesting windows with a drab looking high rise in the background.



Reflections create buildings within buildings.



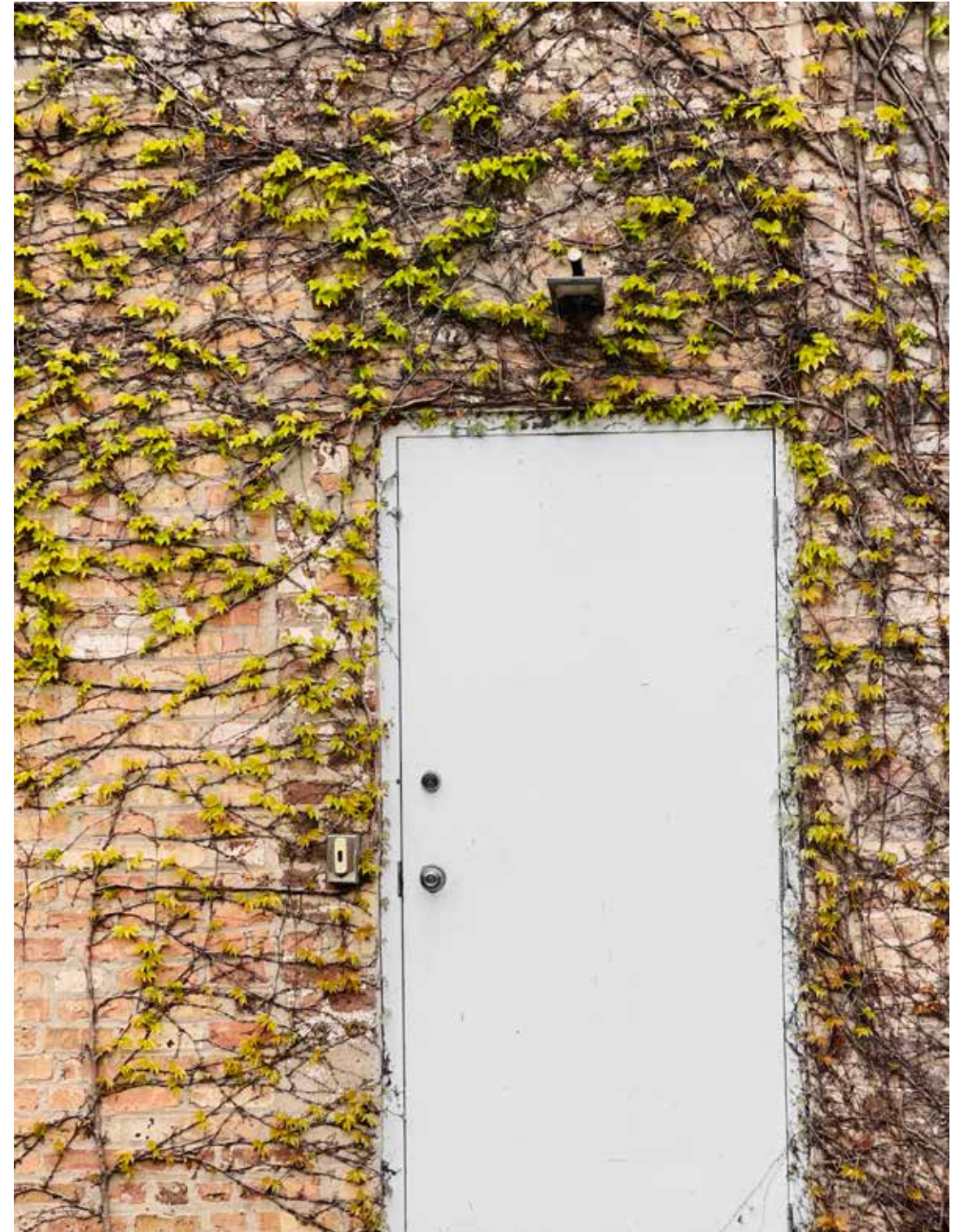
A basketball hoop, almost lost in a collection of shapes and colors.



The bright oranges edge is irregular and random with other elements off center and protected by a metal guardrail.



Do the bars on the windows keep people in or out?



The vines are respectful of the door's needs.



The chipped paint against the smooth glass adds interest in an image of angles, reflections and colors.



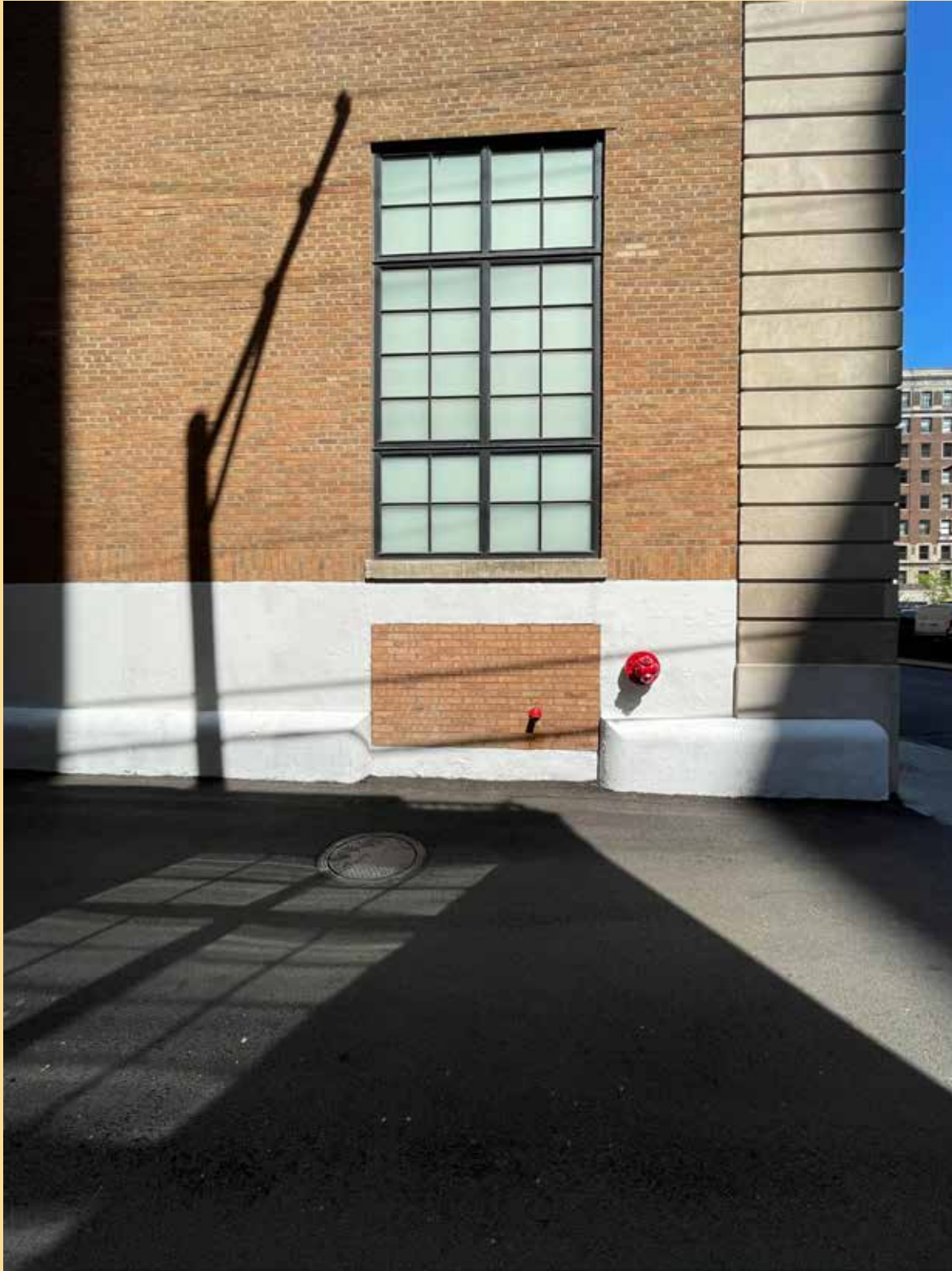
The top of the window is the only rounded feature of a picture otherwise made up of all angles and lines.



Are the bars protecting a priceless piece of art?



So many different colors, but was someone trying to break in to the window on the left?



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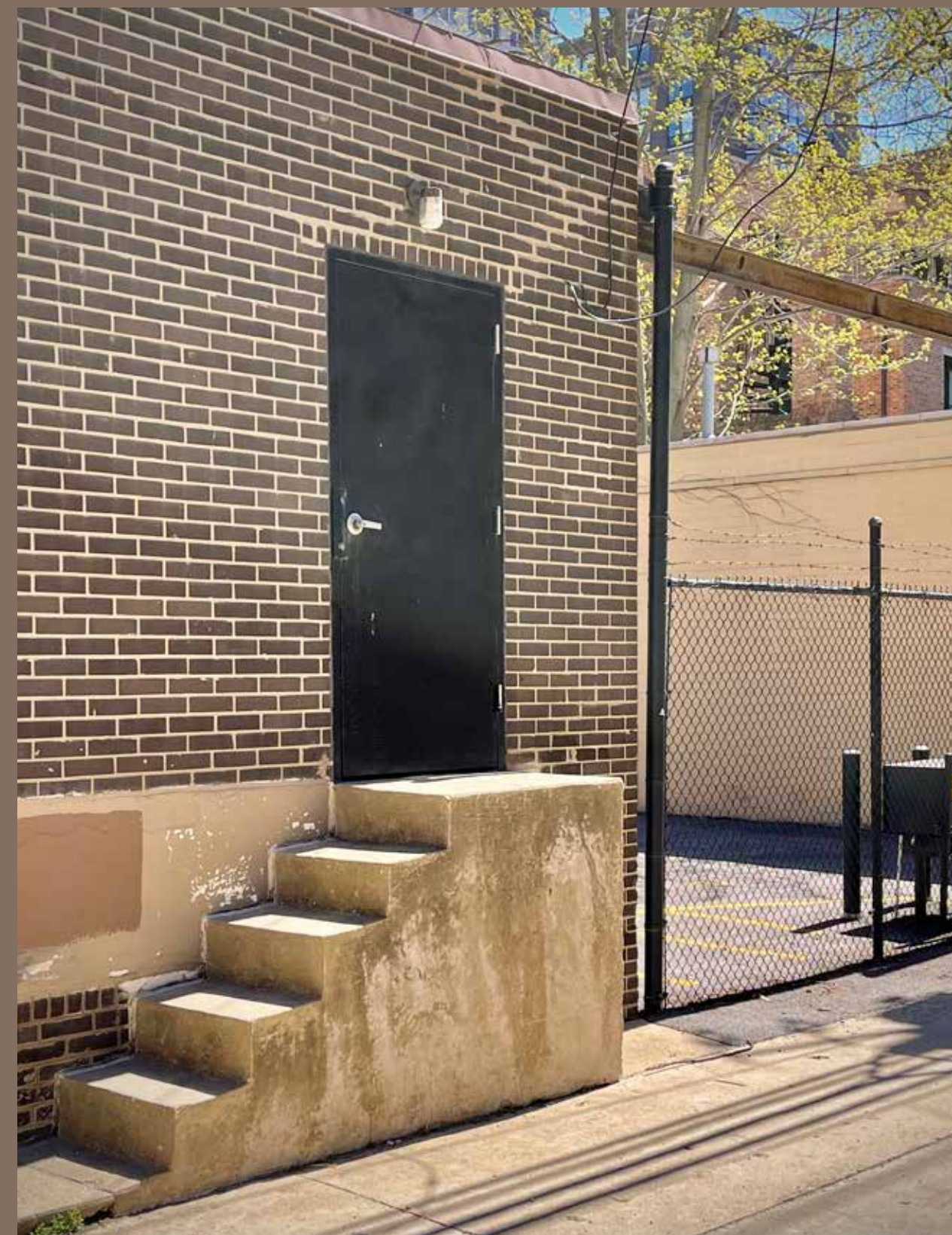
TO
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So much going on here.



This window doesn't look like it belongs in an alley.



Stairs in need of a railing.

ALLEYS & COURTYARDS

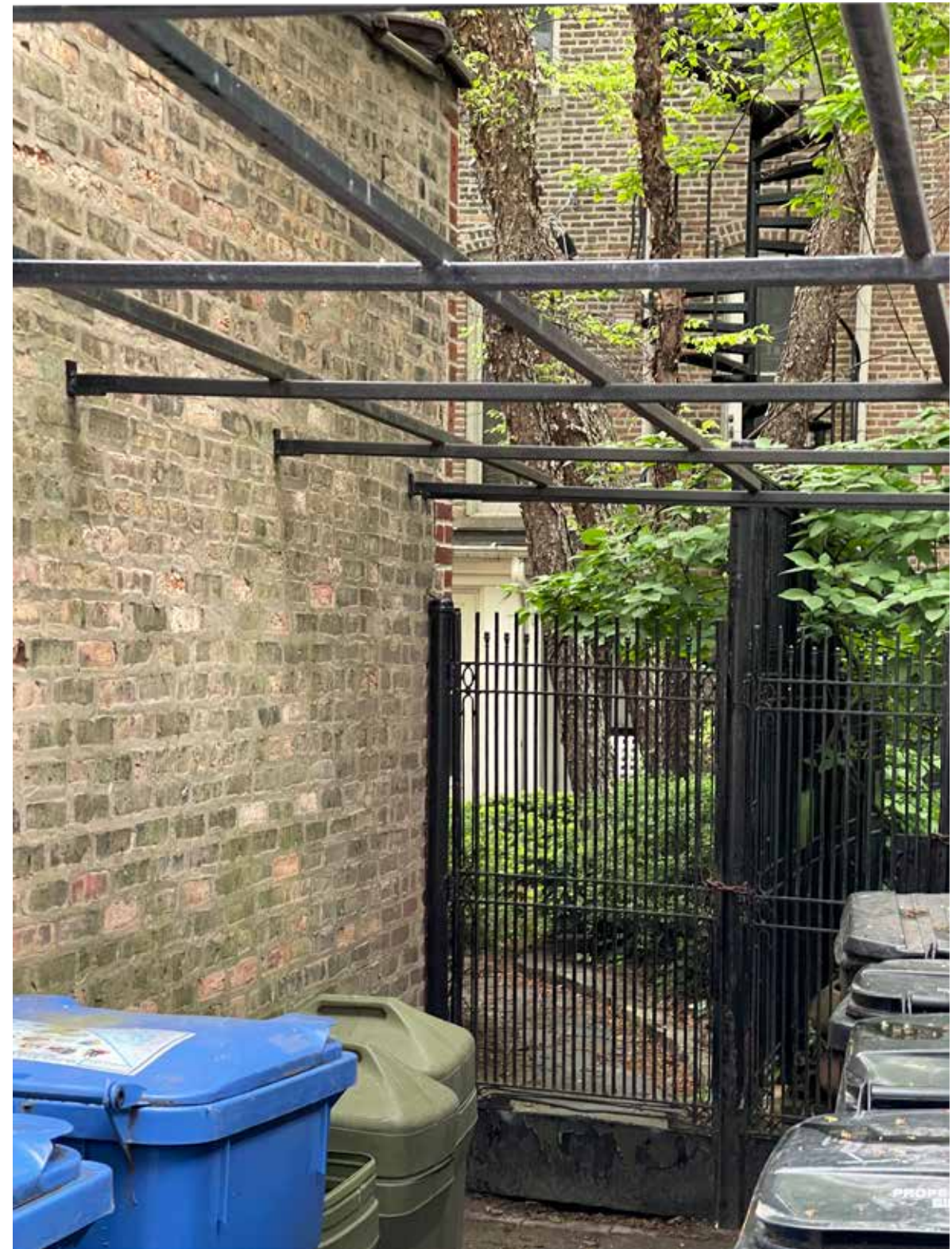
LOOK SIDE TO SIDE



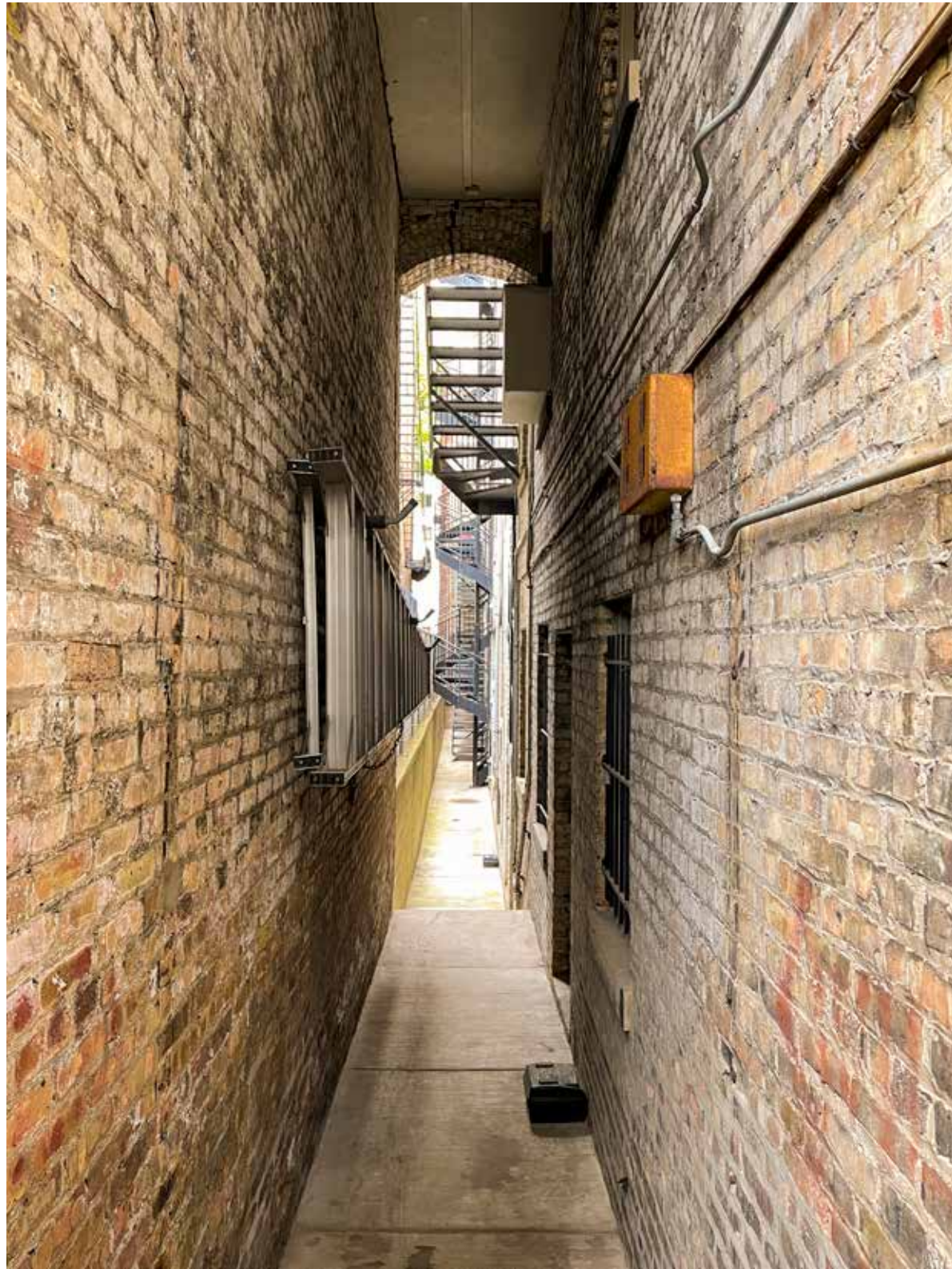
A black snake guards this narrow passageway.



What's behind the fence?



Why are thee support beams above the garbage cans?



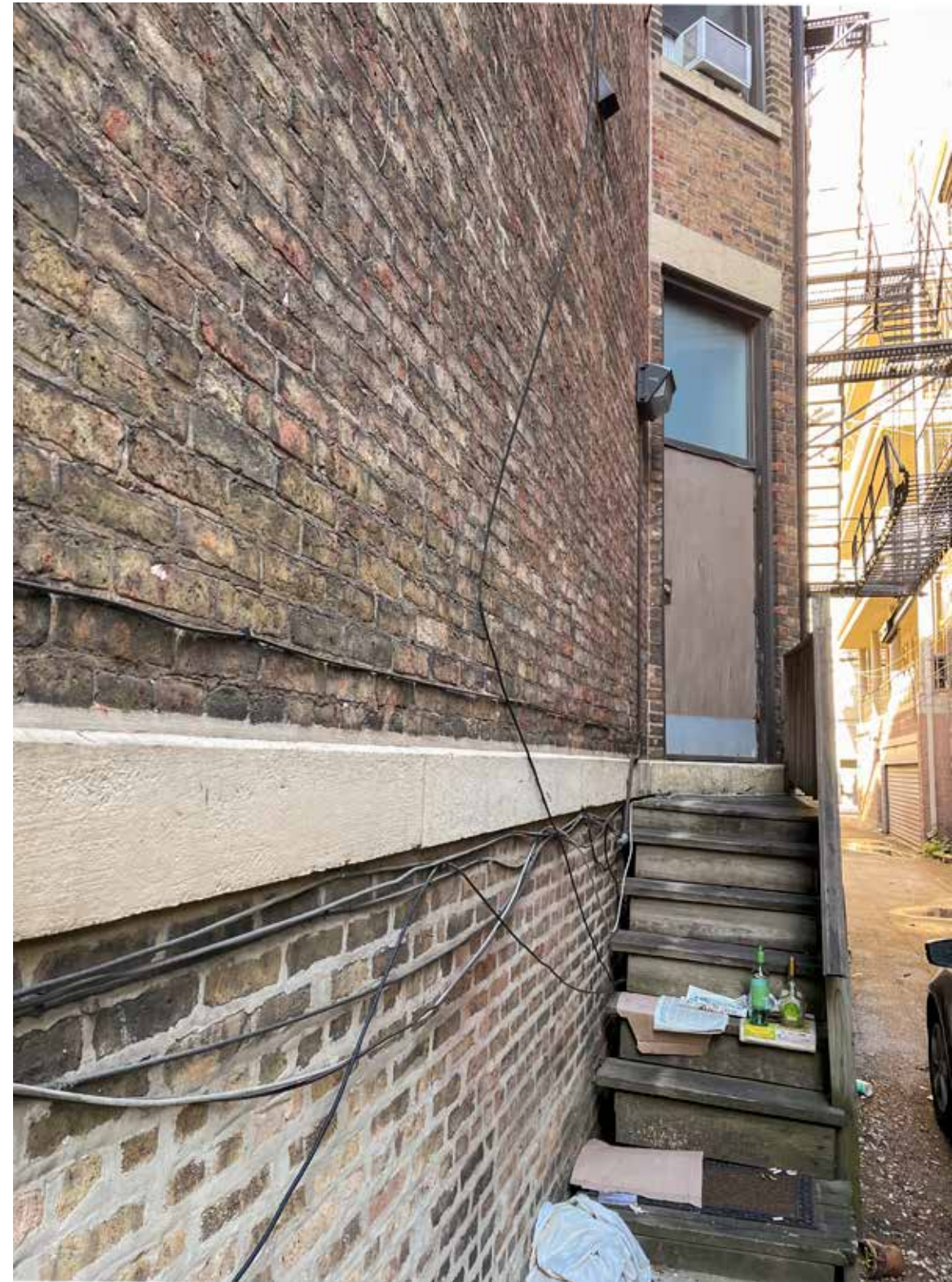
So many steps and a ladder.



The object on the bridge is a BBQ.



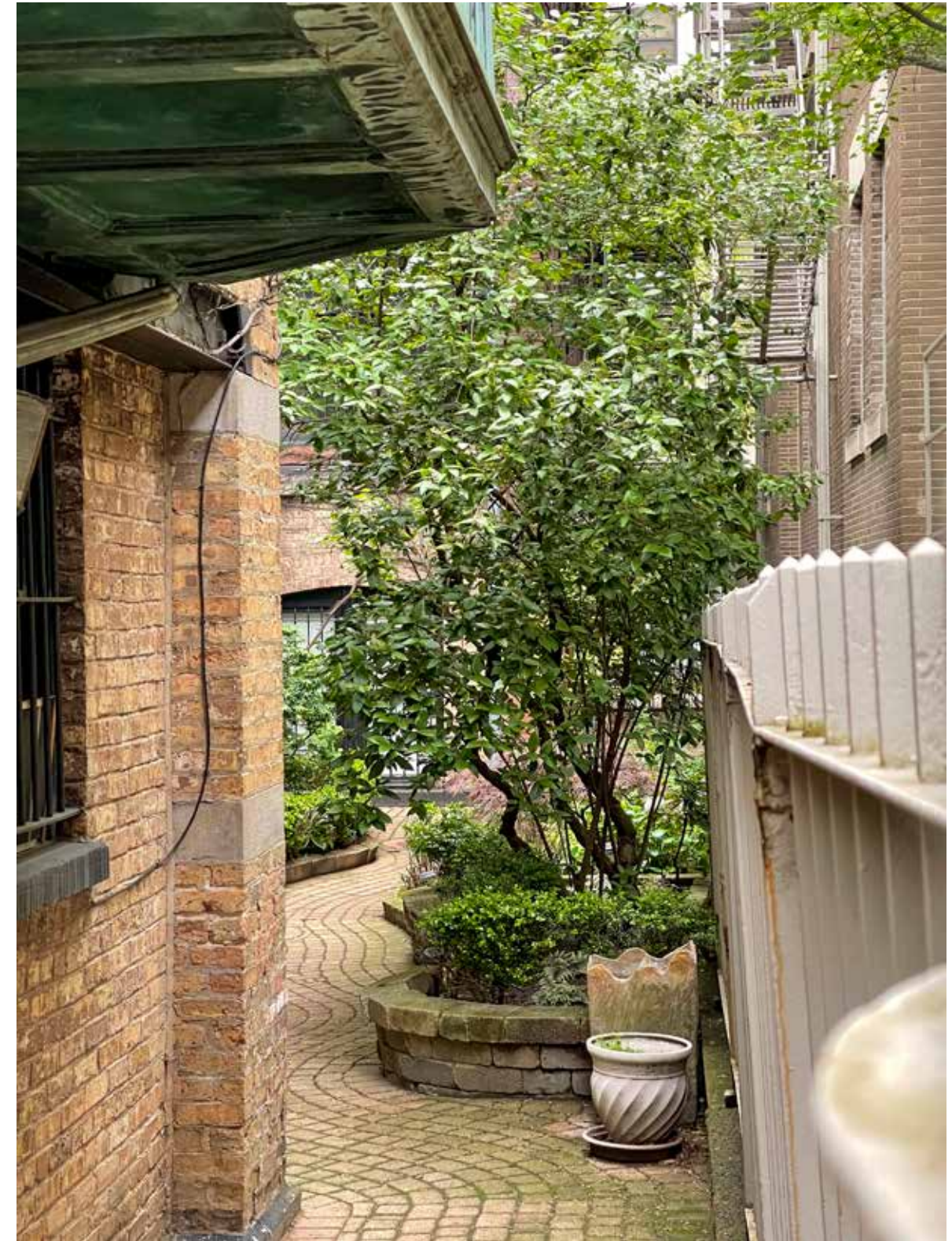
Clean up on aisle nine?



Be careful on this stairway.

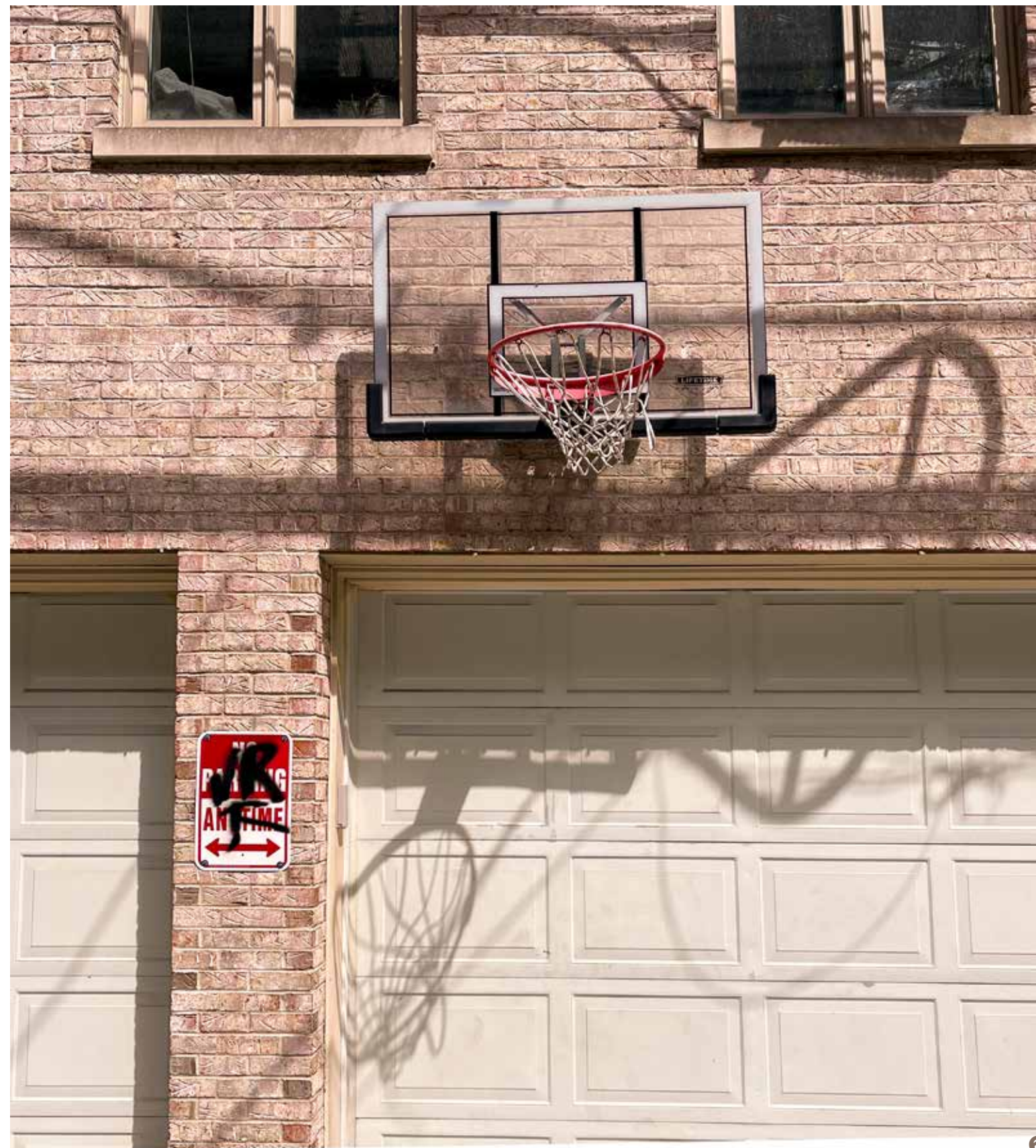


A tree is the only sign of life.



A garden in the alley, so inviting.

ALLEY HOOPS



I liked the shadows on this one.



Lots of gray with a touch of color... Also the metal between the garage and hoop is interesting - if a ball goes through won't it hit that?



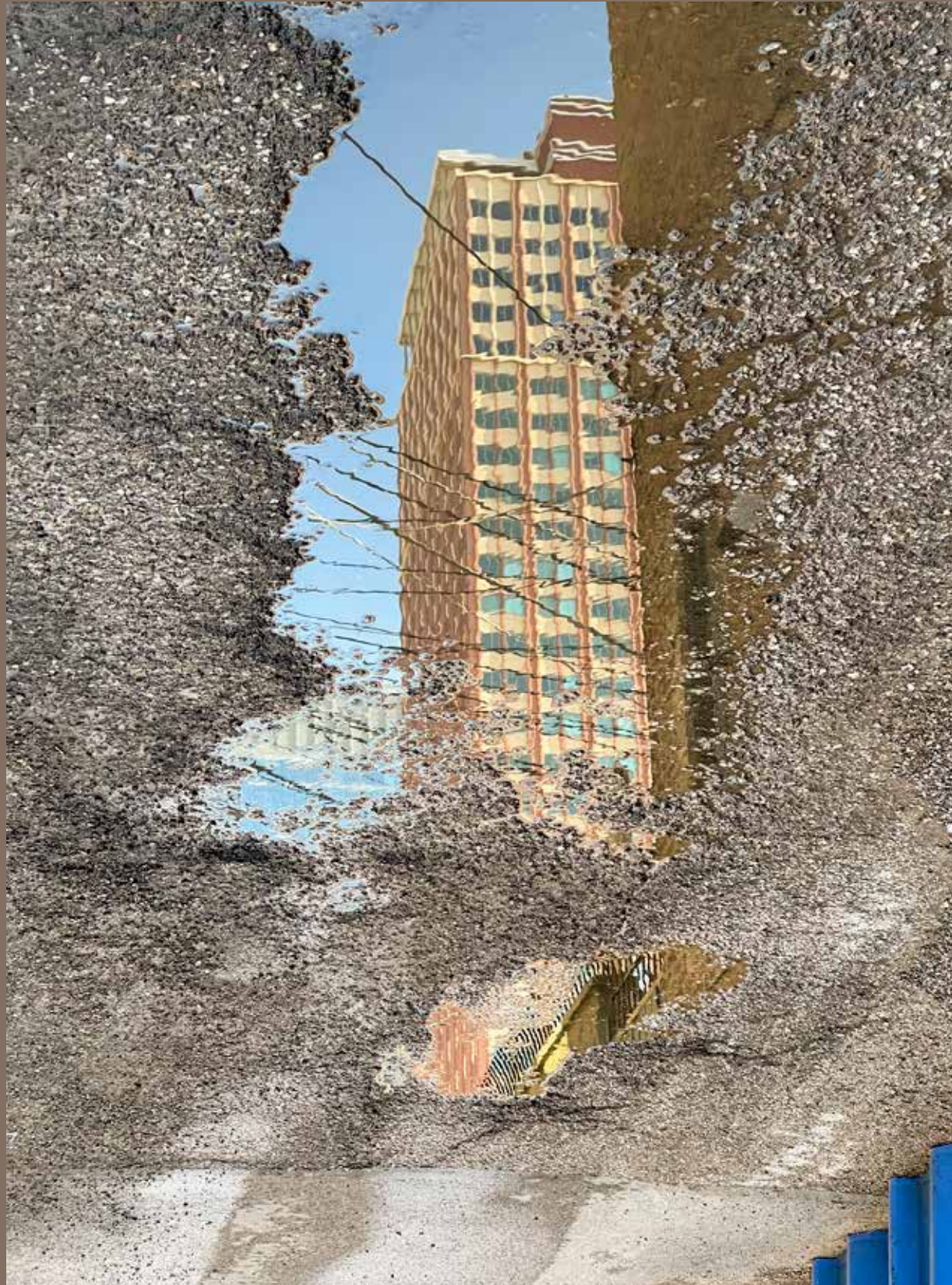
There is so much going on here. The softness of the hoop and net, the shadows that pick up the Spalding logo, the looped wires in front of the dark blue sky, repeating lines and angles, and the different brick colors and patterns.



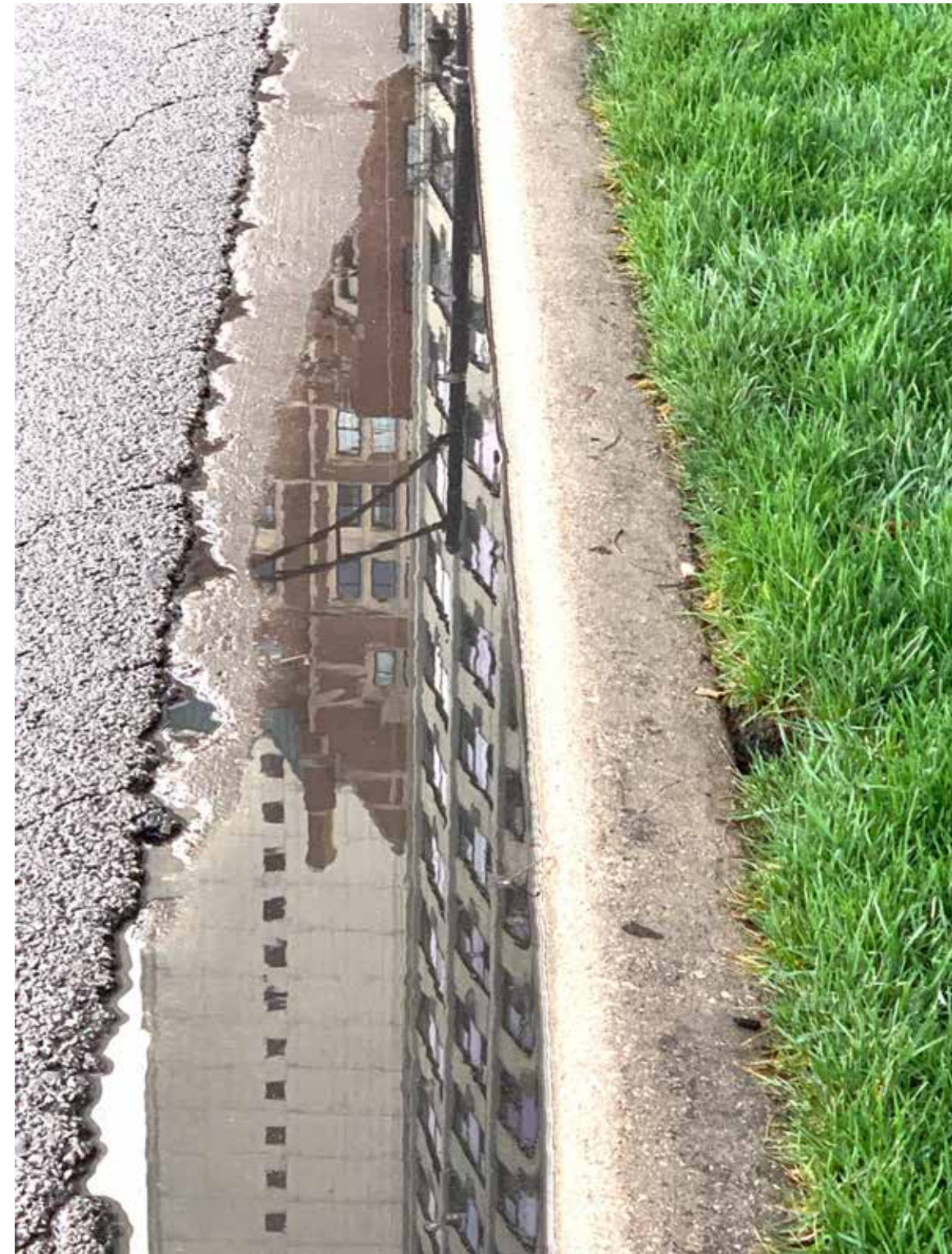
A reflection resembling a pastel, watercolor or a portal to another world.

LOOKING DOWN

PUDDLES



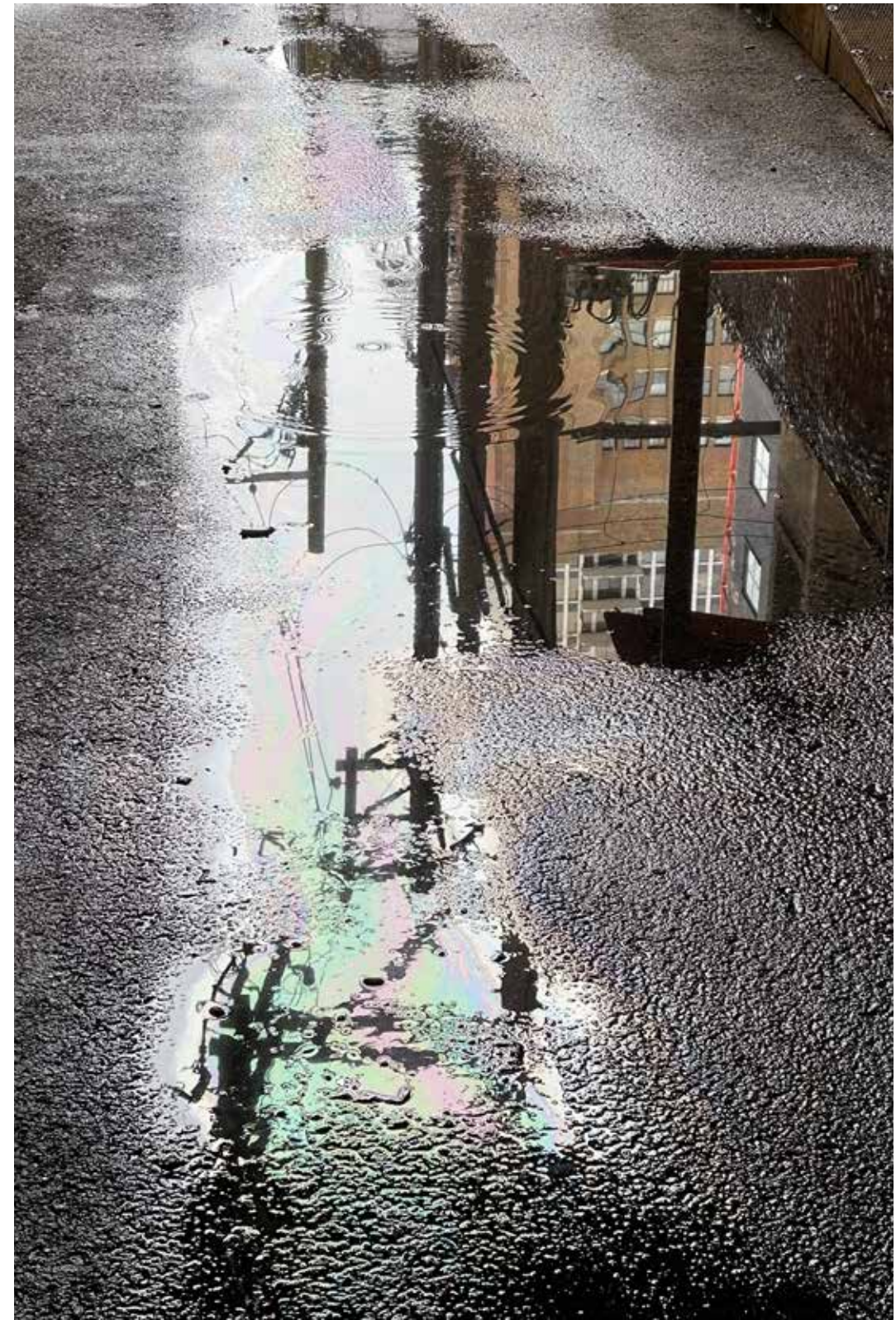
Reflections pull structures from outside the alley into the alley.



The green grass and black tar frame this image on the water.



Lines on the water point the way to an intersection ahead.



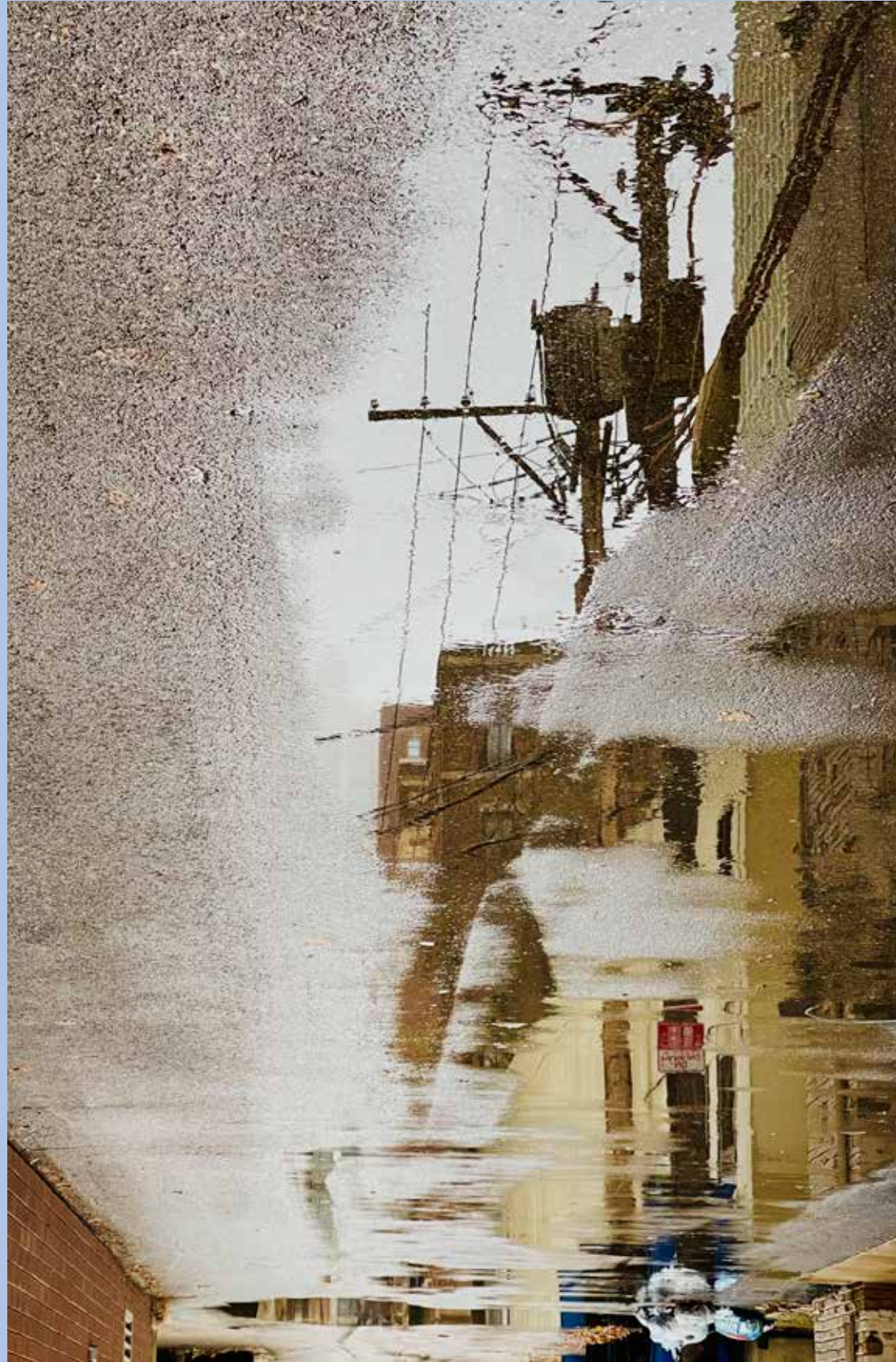
Oil on water changes the color and texture of the reflection.



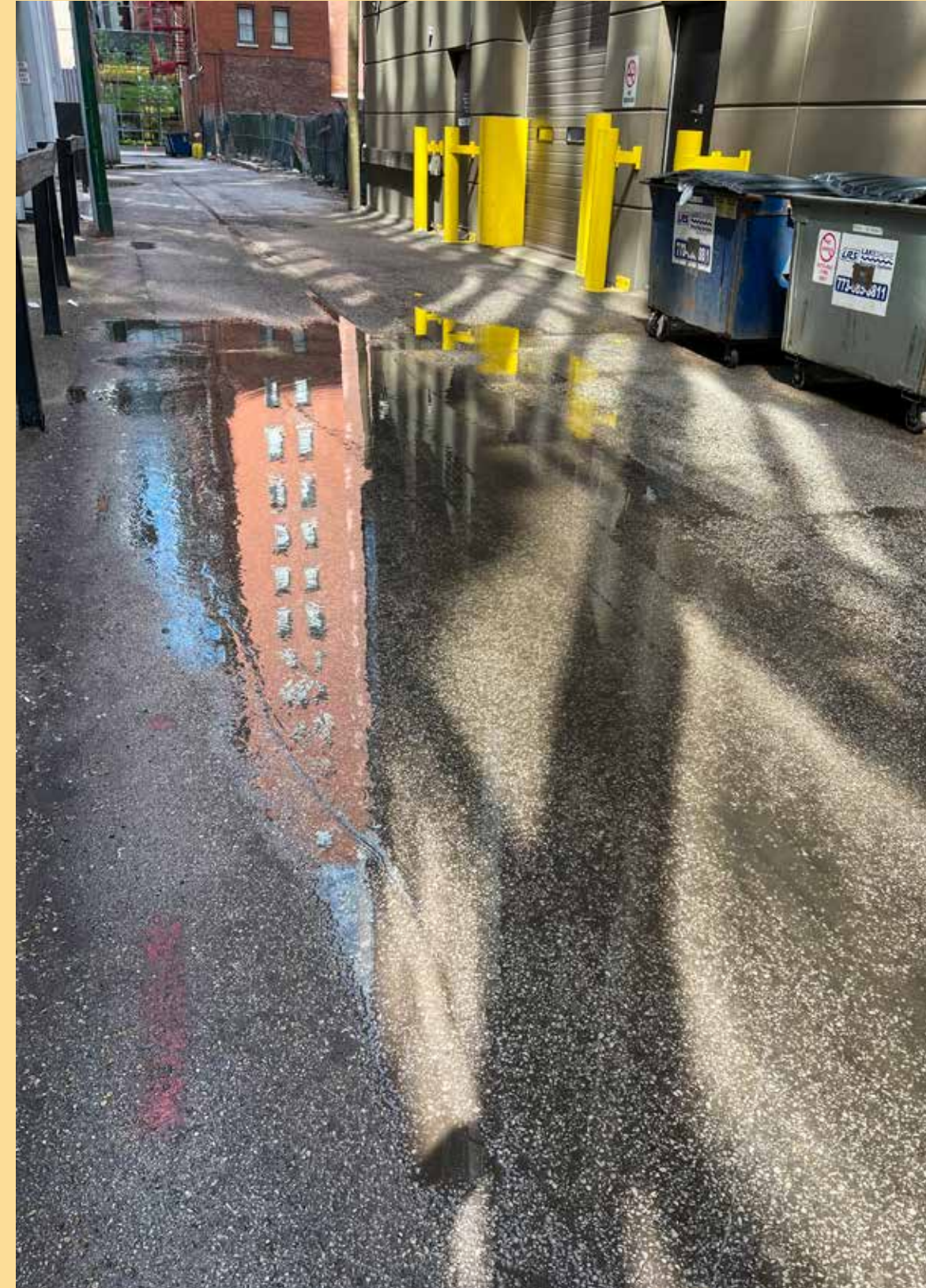
Beautiful concentric circles created by raindrops.



Unusual texture created by a strong wind blowing across the water.



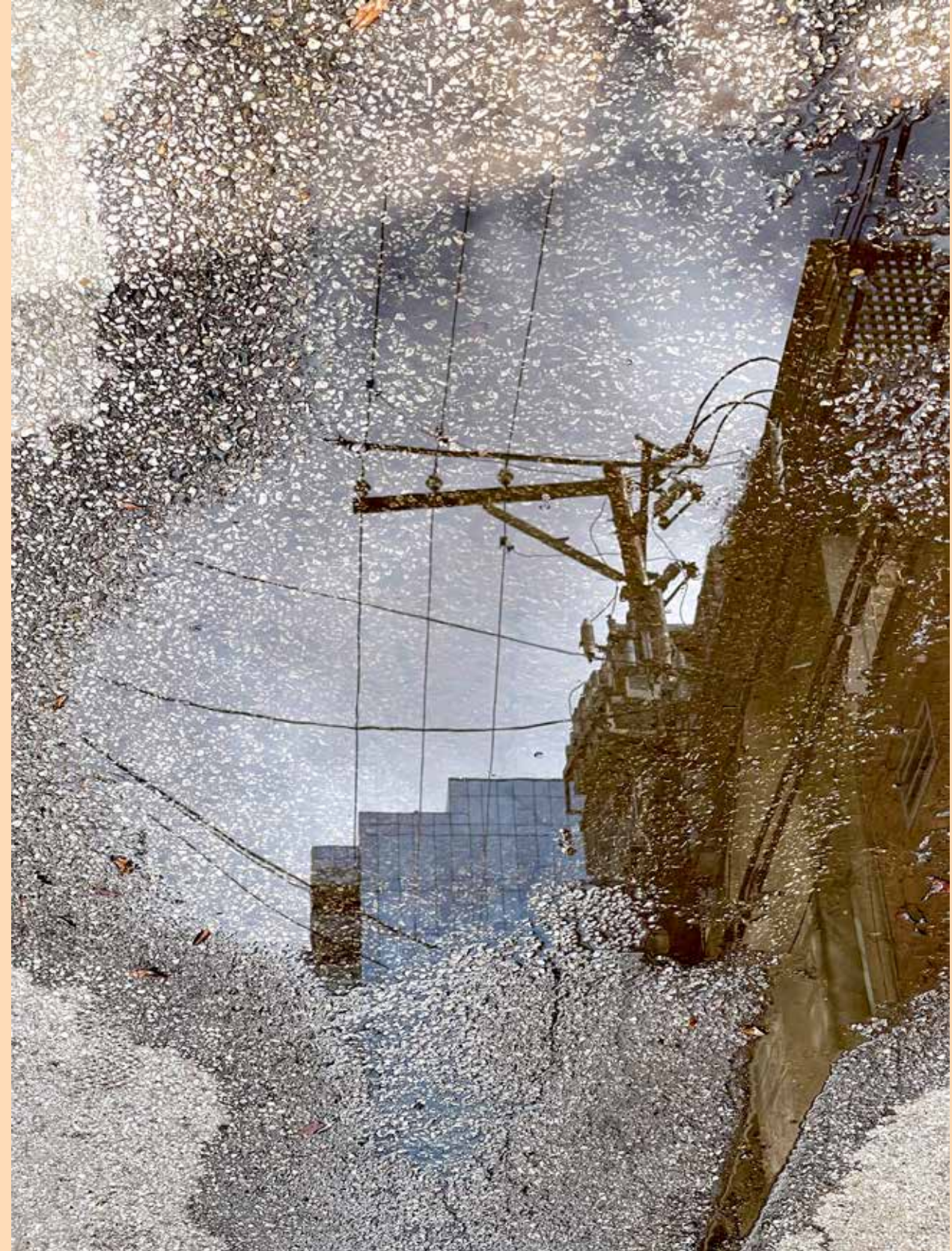
The upside down buildings in the lower corners are a giveaway that the photo has been flipped.



The reflected yellow poles create the illusion of an obstacle in the road.



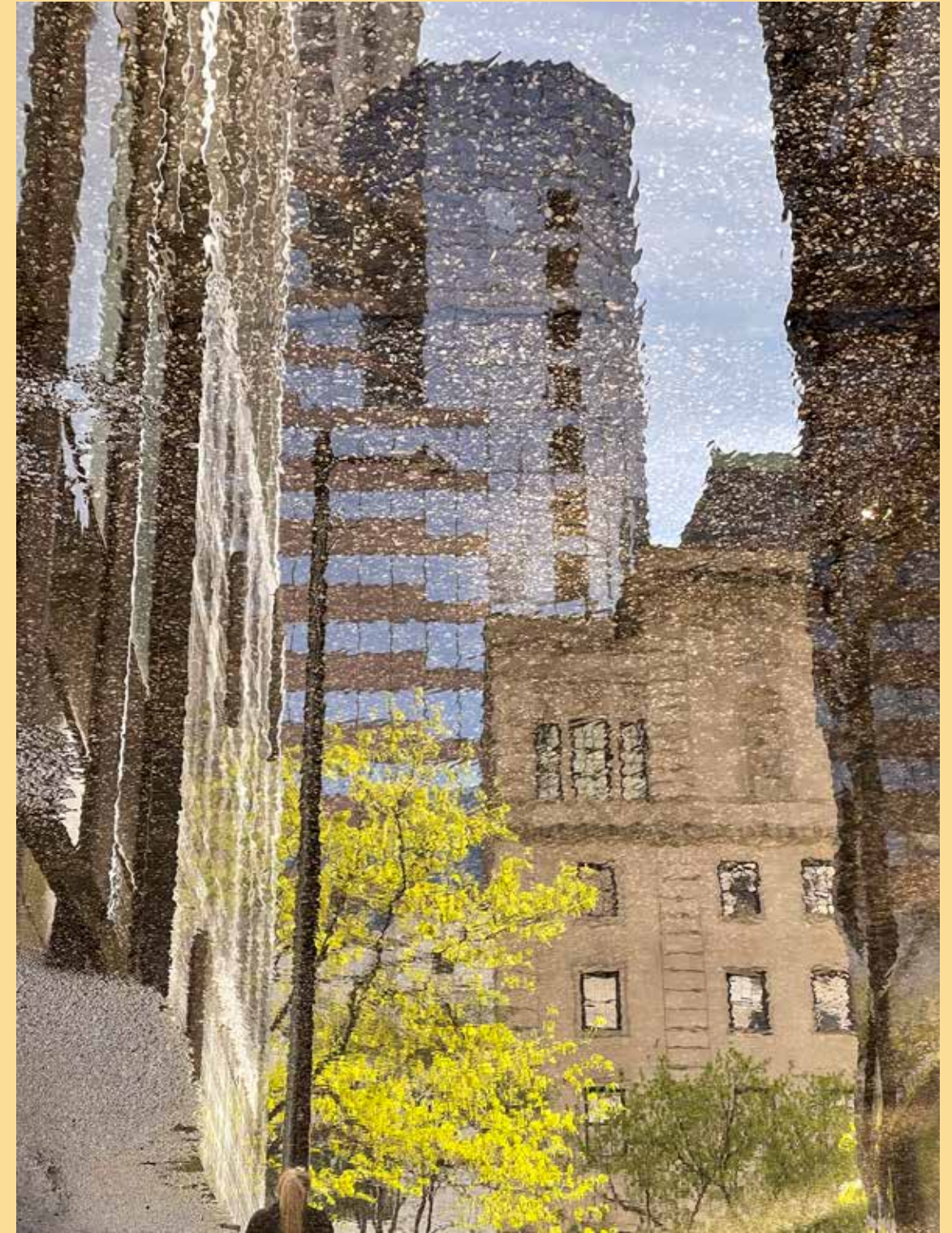
An explosion of color created by oil and water.



Black tar in the foreground creates a 3D effect.

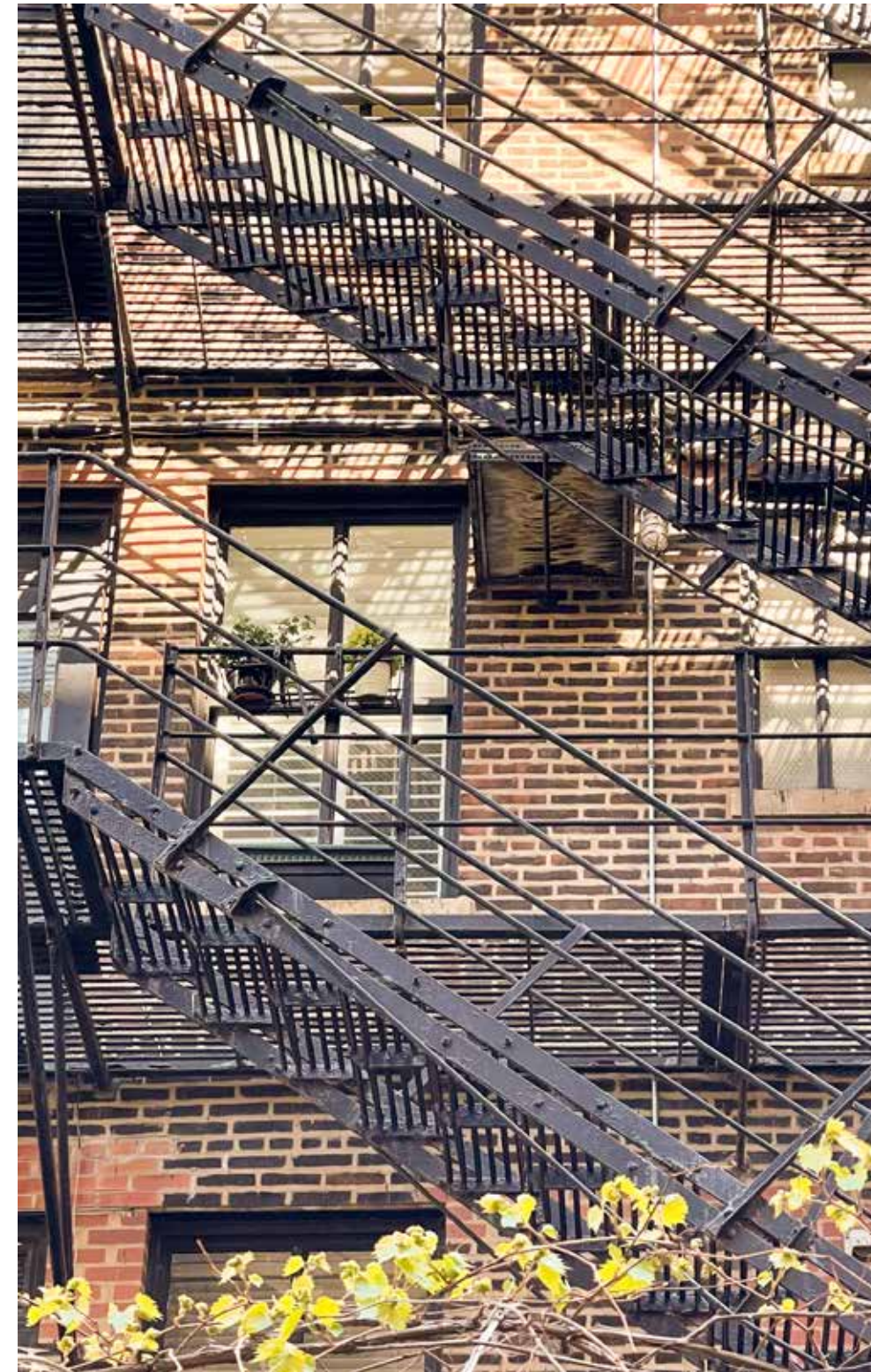


The shiny, modern building in the reflection contrasts with the rusted and drab appearance of the alley.



A quintessential Chicago view.

BACK PORCHES & FIRE ESCAPES



Yellow leaves in the foreground.



A blast of fire escapes and wires.



Interesting geometrics here: the angle of the stairs with repeating lines and the fence at the bottom.



The monster on the right appears to be eating the fire escape.



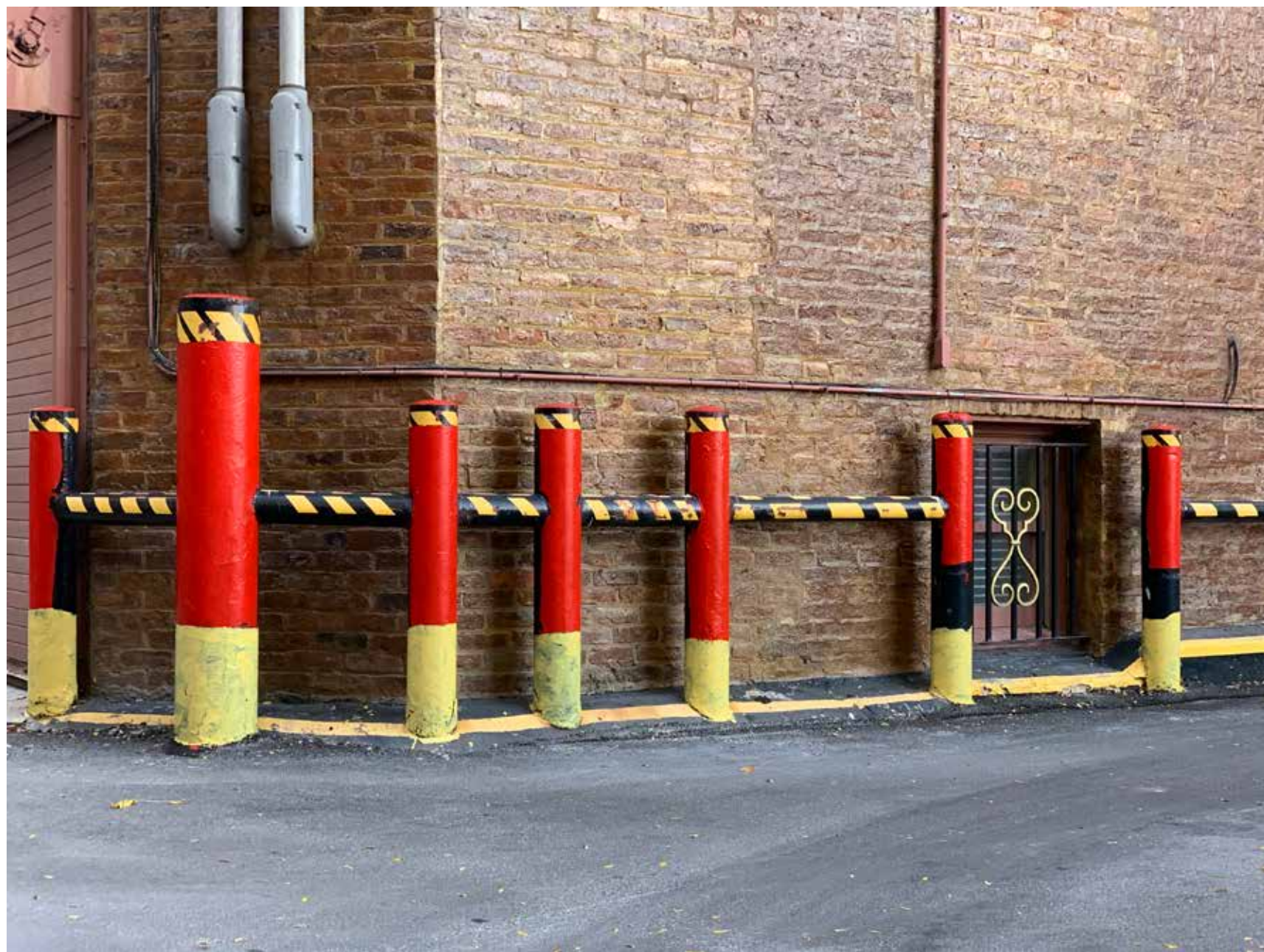
Horizontal ivy and vertical ivy meet, forming a background to a diagonal staircase.



The connected back porches are the buildings fire escape.



UP, DOWN, EVERYWHERE COLOR



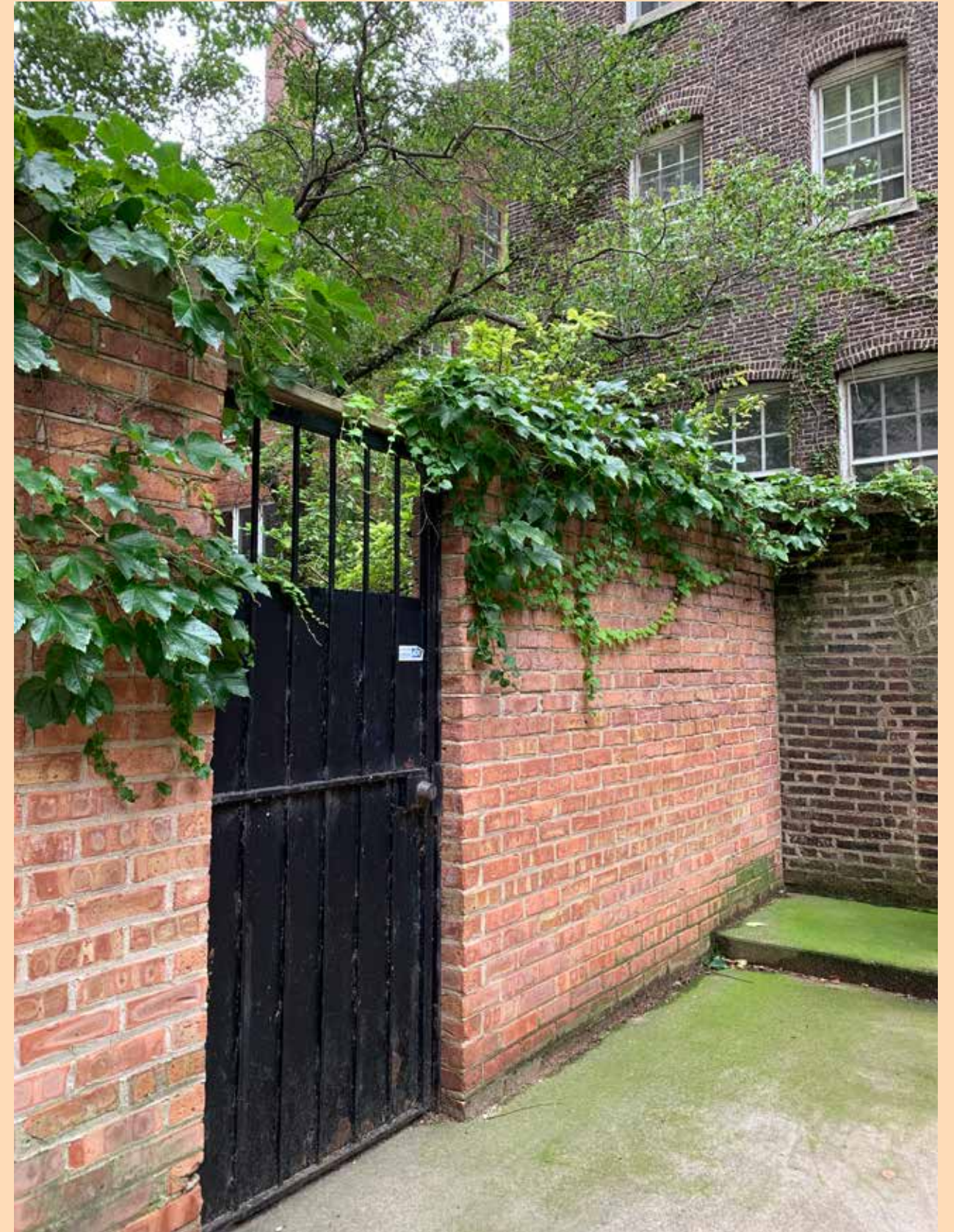
Rigid soldiers with striped caps and yellow boots.



Color is always a welcome site in often colorless alleys.



Plants and greenery add a homey touch to this alley.



The greenery adds softness to the brick wall.



Not your typical alley decor.



A splash of color stands in sharp contrast to the black tangle of wires.



Totally unexpected views are seen from the alley on this and the next page.



THE END

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ALLEYS
BY SUSAN LEITH