



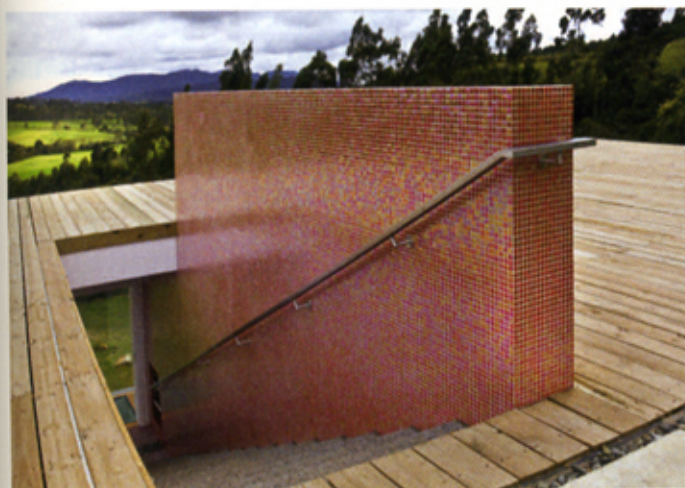
Interior and exterior of the house designed by Antonio Sofán on a hillside to the east of the Colombian city of Medellín. The house is set in a nature conservancy park. That stimulated the architect to take a low-impact approach with his design. In fact, the house only touches the hill at one spot - where the roof contacts with the ground. Moreover, the roof contains the entrance, which is marked by a pink mosaic wall.

The interior design is both spare and effective. There are bathrooms at either end, followed by two bedrooms. The living area also serves as a meditation space. The windows, which are set at varying levels, are planned to constitute dramatic frames for the landscape.

The house was constructed with a view to maximum energy saving, making heating and air-conditioning unnecessary.



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## the house on the hill in colombia

Now and then unusual architectural works of art come about in and around the Colombian city of Medellín. For instance, the architect Antonio Sofán designed a small cottage in the hills of Santa Elena east of Medellín - a structure that engages beautifully with its natural surroundings. It has been built on a slope, with the entrance in the roof. From the front door, a simple interior unfolds against the imposing scenic backdrop, with a scattering of windows to frame the views.

Santa Elena is a rural farming area in the mountains east of Medellín. It is composed of 17 small villages called 'veredas'. For townspeople in the valley, the hills evoke fresh air and pleasant temperatures. Most of the land around Santa Elena, including Arvi nature park, is owned by the State and is a protected region. There are strict zoning regulations to ensure the area's original character is retained.

Nevertheless several houses have been built in and around the village that are primarily intended as holiday homes. Only a few are occupied permanently, by the descendants of German, French and Italian immigrants. The house designed by the architect Antonio Sofán is on a hillside. In 2007 he was commissioned to design a cottage with a floor area of 100 square metres. Rather than make an architectural statement, he opted for a solution that engages with nature.

"I wanted to avoid interrupting the natural surroundings with my plan. Accordingly, I designed the entrance in the roof, calling that the front elevation. The entire design has been geared to tying nature into the form of the architecture", the architect explains.

The brief was clear: two bedrooms and two bathrooms at either end, a small kitchen and a meditation space. The vistas from all rooms are framed by windows of varying sizes at varying heights.

There was no need for heating or air-conditioning, since temperatures here are fairly constant. On cooler evenings the materials used indoors, such as cork flooring, serve as a heat source by releasing the heat they have stored up during the day. Rainwater is collected in a concrete channel running along the entire length of the upper part of the house, where the building and the ground meet.

The interior of the house is simple. All the walls are white and the ceilings have been painted a pale, cool grey shade. In the bathrooms the architect took a more dynamic approach, with tiled walls in white and three shades of blue. The dynamic is further reinforced by mirrors applied at strategic places in the ceiling. The glass shower walls are finished with a silk screen of a photo depicting a water droplet. And to spice things up, the lavatories are without doors, but are screened off with silk curtains.