

SANTA ELENA HOUSE > ROOF STRUCTURE

The cottage is roofed with a thin, waterproofed and slightly sloped concrete slab. Disposable bamboo boxes were arranged on a brick pattern to form the underside of the slab while it was being poured. Traditional for this area, such method of casting concrete has provided a beautiful ceiling texture. The wood decking is levelled right over the slab. Planks are separated from each other, so that the water filters through and drains down. Storm water is collected and evacuated in a concrete channel drain that runs at the back of the roof deck and continues down the slope.

PROJECT: «SANTA ELENA HOUSE»
GEOGRAPHY: MEDELLIN © COLOMBIA
DESIGN: ANTONIO SOFAN
PHOTO: CARLOS TOBON



Santa Elena, a farming area up in the mountains to the east of Medellin (Colombia), hosts a group of 17 small villages. Most of the surrounding land, including the Arvi Natural Park, is state owned and protected. Building density is restricted to ensure that the area will remain a rural setting of rolling hills, great vistas, forests, clean air and water. Vacation houses and weekend retreats scattered across the landscape add to the overall picture, only a few homes here are lived in all year round. It was for this context that Antonio Sofan has designed a small 100sqm cottage on a steep sloped hill, to be approached from a larger house built on the hilltop. «Rather than trying to make an architectural statement, I opted for complementing the superb view with an almost imperceptible mark,» says Sofan. «I wanted the natural landscape to continue its course, so the house is accessed through a very discrete opening in the roof deck, emphasized by a pink mosaic wall. That is all you perceive from above, therefore I call this view the main facade.» Descending the hill to gain the roof entrance, you see how the landscape unfolds and the views change accompanying your progress.

The client requested a specific program of two bedrooms with two bathrooms, a small kitchen and a meditation room. (The roof deck naturally becomes a lounging area and an occasional platform for practicing yoga.) All of these spaces are arranged in a line and threaded by a vista-facing passageway: walking along, you are again accompanied by the landscape. Placing the bathrooms at each end of the house, the designer screens them off by reducing the windows to an irregular pattern of glass blocks; for those inside this creates a pixelated abstraction of the pine tree forest, which flanks the site on both sides. The minimalist interior with white walls and light grey ceiling does without heating and air conditioning systems. The air gets barely cool at night, so the cork plank flooring proves enough to maintain the heat captured during the day.