This modest family villa in the suburbs of Tokyo is an ingenious solution to the perennial Japanese problem of lack of space. In their previous house, the family appropriated the roof as an informal outdoor terrace, extending their living area. When they came to commission a new dwelling from the young partnership of Takaharu and Yui Tezuka, the notion of the roof as an external room became the starting point for the design.

Hadjian is about one hour by train from Tokyo and despite its suburban character, resonates some older historic parts. The house occupies a corner plot with good views of Mount Kobo across a valley to the south. The single storey pavilion-like volume is compactly organized, with cellular bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and study spaces flanking the main living area. Lightweight sliding partitions separate these more private areas from the main space, so that if family circumstances change, then the interior can be easily reconfigured. Overlooking a small garden, the south side is fully glazed, with a narrow veranda running along its length. The main street facade is composed of austere plates of raw concrete. Interiors are luminous and uncluttered, lined with panels of structural plywood. The overall sensation is rather like being inside a musical instrument.

But it is the roof that demands most attention. Floating like a broad-beamed hat over the house it forms a generous, multifunctional extension to the living space. Gently inclined (at a pitch of 1 in 10), it acts as an

UP ON THE ROOF

Topped by a roof deck that doubles as an external room, this family house is an inventive if vertiginous response to Tokyo’s lack of space.