

GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION



Many uses overlap in an architect's angular, eclectic São Paulo home.

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Architect Tito Ficarelli designed the Toca House for himself and his wife, artist Luiza Gottschalk, their

daughters, a family friend, and their dogs. Glass walls bookend the kitchen/living area on the entry level,

connecting the space to a patio and terrace (above). A ground-level gallery opens to the back patio. Luiza's

art studio sits above Tito's music studio. Both overlook the rear outdoor areas (opposite).

From the street, a concrete wall pigmented in situ by artist Luiza Gottschalk with pale pinks, blues, greens, and yellows hints at the palette inside the São Paulo home that her husband, architect Tito Ficarelli, designed for their family. “The colors of that wall are replicated all over the house,” says Tito, cofounder of local firm Arkitito. “It’s basically a palette of colors picked up from nature.”

A connection to nature was central to Tito’s design for the 3,500-square-foot home, where the couple live with their daughters, 11-year-old Nina and 7-year-old Lola, and their septuagenarian family friend, Mrs. Zelita, as well as the family’s Dobermans, Margarida and Charlotte. The trapezoidal house—the third home Tito has designed for his family—straddles the divide between the bustling Pinheiros neighborhood and a more secluded patch of the Vila Madalena area. >

Colors Luiza chose for an exterior wall (bottom) are reflected throughout the home, such as in the Brazilian green marble floors

in the kitchen/living area, as well as built-in kitchen cabinetry, covered in Salmon Formica. Tito designed the dining table (right).



“The house has forms—a square, a circle,
a triangle—that communicate,
almost like a kid’s game.”

TITO FIGARELLI, ARCHITECT AND RESIDENT





A metal spiral staircase pierces the home's three levels, passing through circular cutouts that mirror the shape of skylights throughout (opposite). A rectangular cut in the floor next to the stairs allows for direct communication between the main and lower levels.



A lime-green bathroom on the lower level (above) has fixtures from Brazilian manufacturer Docol.

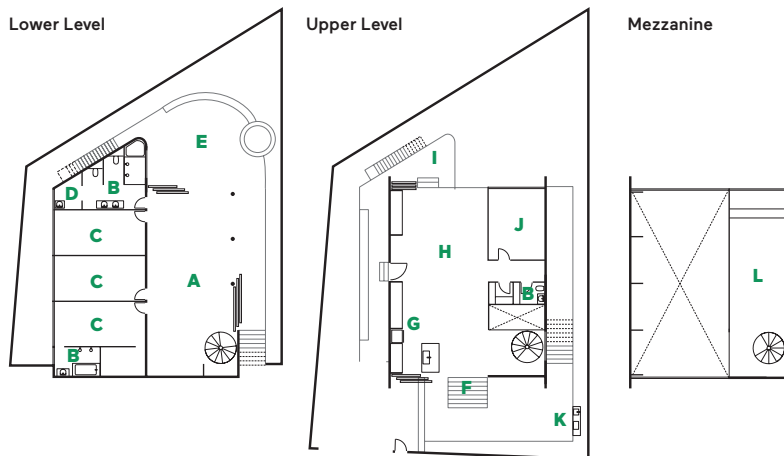
I met Tito on a hot day. We were seated around the long, rectangular dining table that anchors the heart of the house, where the open kitchen meets the living room under the roof's downward slant. Sliding glass doors bookend the space. They open on the east end to a small entry patio with a barbecue pit and to the west provide direct sight lines to the terrace and garden below, as well as to a massive araucaria tree in the distance that towers above the densely vegetated skyline. "When we saw this tree outside, we decided to make it really stand out and emphasize this outlook on the city," says Tito. "This house is where we disconnect from the world."

Toca House takes its name from the Portuguese word for "den" or "burrow." Not unlike the crawl spaces animals build for themselves in nature, the home features strategically placed openings—skylights, clerestories, glass doors, windows—that let in natural light and frame the surrounding landscape.

The home's layout fits together like a puzzle. Three bedrooms and two bathrooms are situated directly below the entry-level kitchen and living area, with what Tito describes as "not a hallway, not a room, really more of a gallery space" that runs the length of the private areas. Luiza designed the gallery's granilite floors with colors and shapes that echo those of the concrete wall at the front of the residence, though here the forms are more figurative, >

● **Toca House** N ↗

ARCHITECT **Arkitito**
LOCATION **São Paulo, Brazil**



- A Gallery
- B Bathroom
- C Bedroom
- D Laundry Room
- E Patio
- F Entrance
- G Kitchen
- H Living Area
- I Terrace
- J Music Studio
- K Barbecue
- L Art Studio

ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES+WRIGHT



“Inside and out, you see the house clearly
in all its layers, its slices.”

TITO FICARELLI, ARCHITECT AND RESIDENT

Luiza designed the gallery's granilite floors with depictions of flora and fauna in colors that harken back to the entry wall's pigmented concrete (below). Sliding glass

doors bordering the north- and west-facing sides of the space open directly to the concrete patio and garden. On the upper level, Luiza's lofted art studio spans the length

of the house below the tall end of the roof's pitch (opposite). Varying ceiling heights and cutouts throughout the home play with conventions of spatial relationships and flow.



depicting various flora and fauna. Sliding glass doors bordering the north- and west-facing sides of the gallery space open directly to the concrete patio and garden. Three metal stilts painted orange make the northwest end of the home look as though it's levitating. Hammocks hang between them.

A metal spiral staircase pierces through the levels “like a corkscrew that goes from top to bottom and structures the whole house,” Tito says. From the gallery, the stairs pass through circular cutouts—which mirror the shape of skylights throughout the home—through the main level to Luiza’s lofted art studio, which spans the length of the house below the tall end of the roof’s pitch. The architect built a small music studio for himself—where he records with his rock band—just below Luiza’s art space, adjacent to the living room. Both Tito’s and Luiza’s

creative spaces overlook the patio and have diagonal views to the curved terrace. Inside, a rectangular cut in the floor next to the stairs allows for direct communication between the main and lower levels. Outside, the same is possible from the terrace, which extends from the living area and overlooks the patio, which has a small, circular pool built into the concrete.

“It’s this idea of piling things up,” says Tito. “We built the house in layers, each with its own nature and material.” This diversity of materials helps delineate the structure’s puzzle pieces. A metal layer (painted bright orange to match the stilts) separates the lower concrete level from the upper structure, which is made of cross-laminated timber. The slanted roof and two sides of the house are clad in dark shingles. “It was important that the house is really made out of what it looks like, no ornaments at all,” says the architect.

Though Tito tapped a wider palette for the Toca House than great Brazilian architects like modernist Oscar Niemeyer or “Paulist brutalist” Paulo Mendes da Rocha might have relied on, his design celebrates composition and texture in the vein of those Pritzker Prize winners. On the home’s main level, for example, green Brazilian marble floors extend across the kitchen and living area, complementing the earthy look of the wooden ceiling panels and built-ins. Soft-pink kitchen cabinetry and a stainless-steel island add subtle, playful contrast.

In that sense, though Toca House was completed in 2022, it feels rooted in São Paulo’s rich modernist and brutalist design history. “It’s a mix of classic and playful, like a tree house, where you come up from the roots,” Tito says. “It’s a designer’s house, but not too attached to any kind of aesthetic, discourse, or style.” ■





A metal layer painted in bright orange separates the home's lower concrete level (opposite) from the upper structure, made of cross-laminated timber and clad in Dual Black IKO Cambridge

shingles. On the ground floor, a terrace extends from the living area via walls of Habitat by Cebrace windows. Orange metal stilts make the trapezoidal structure look as if it's floating.

