

About time

São Paulo

Preface

Hidden in a leafy, historic corner of São Paulo, Casa CSF has stood as a quiet expression of Brazilian modernism since the 1940s. Now it is experiencing a new lease of life as young architect Felipe Hess combines original and new design.

Writer
Joann Plockova

Photographer
Nelson Kon



01

The Jardins neighbourhood in São Paulo is an upscale residential area where homes hunker behind high walls. So although the architect Felipe Hess had grown up in this sedate area, even he didn't know that behind one of those walls hid a low-slung house designed in the late 1940s by the modernist architect Zenon Lotufo.

Lotufo spent his entire life in São Paulo, where he built both homes and public buildings. Incredibly this single-storey white house with brick external side walls and green iron grating on the windows was occupied by the original owners until just four years ago. In their late eighties and looking to simplify their lives, they sold the house to a young family with three children and an affinity for good design. "The husband, in his forties and CEO of a large airline company, loves modernist architecture," says Hess who got the call to make the airy residence better suited to contemporary living.

Sharing the family's vision and working side by side with them for almost two



02



03



04



05

- 01 Back garden with view of original windows and rooftop water tank
- 02 Entrance with view beyond ceramic wall
- 03 Architect Felipe Hess
- 04 Veranda with garage behind perforated wall and eating area on left
- 05 Living room with Jorge Zalszupin tables and Florence Knoll sofa
- 06 Outdoor fireplace on veranda with José Zanine Caldas chairs
- 07 View of façade



06



07

years, Hess began by looking at Lotufo's other buildings. "I noticed the organic and round details," he says. "They were the key to my interventions." So now in the garden a guava tree passes through a circular opening in the roof of the newly constructed outbuilding that functions as a playroom for the children, while the home's original garage has been knocked down to make room for an inviting semi-outdoor living area.

A key addition to this area is a ceramic white wall. It is perforated with small holes and blends beautifully with the rounded skylights in the ceiling of the curved veranda. From the street, a whisper of the modernist home inside is apparent from the garage's external brick wall, which is covered in greenery and accompanied by a large jaboticaba tree.

Inside, the light-filled residence's entire lower level benefits from the original two-toned parquet floors. "We brought them back to life," says Hess. "In the bedroom area the previous owners had covered them with carpet so it was a great surprise when we removed it and

found out that the whole house had this wonderful floor.”

The majority of the rooms have a direct connection to the garden – including the four bedrooms with four bathrooms, which Hess was able to create by rearranging the original plans – and the family’s appreciation for contemporary art and mid-century furniture can be seen throughout.

New pieces were added to the existing collection and together Hess and the family chose the best place for each. In the dining room, where a violin decorated by Sandra Cinto sits on one wall in a glass case and a painting by Daniel Senise hangs on another, there is a wooden dining table by Jorge Zalszupin and chairs by Geraldo de Barros. The living room includes a sofa by Florence Knoll, a pair of Liceu de Artes e Ofícios rocking chairs, a Sergio Rodrigues chair and a bright painting by Os Gêmeos.

From here a new granite staircase – the same material used for the floor of the veranda – leads to the second-storey



01

Felipe Hess

When the architect was commissioned to work on Casa CSF he was just 28 years old and less than two years into his own practice. Born in São Paulo in 1984 and a graduate of the city’s Escola da Cidade, he founded his eponymous firm in 2012 following five years working with renowned Brazilian architect Isay Weinfeld.

With a team of five young architects – including Lucas Milher, who worked alongside Hess on Casa CSF – the studio works on a variety of jobs that range from commercial to residential. They also include a number of interior projects, from an apartment in Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro to the We Hostel Design in São Paulo. With each of the studio’s projects, Hess is committed to creating a unique identity with a particular attention to details and finishes, as well as a 1950s influence.



02



03



05



07

- 01 Playroom incorporating existing tree
- 02 View of veranda and tropical garden
- 03 Pared-back bathroom
- 04 Master bedroom
- 05 Barbecue and eating area on veranda
- 06 Stone path through garden
- 07 Original window



04



06

addition. Housing a home cinema and office, the space has Brazilian teak floors and built-in furniture designed by Hess; made of dark Brazilian walnut, the pieces match the dark wood of the two-toned parquet floors downstairs.

Hess is happy that he has met the challenge of maintaining the original home’s cosy scale of living despite the additions. “The main challenge was creating a second floor that wouldn’t ‘fight’ with the existing architecture,” he says. “All of the new constructions were very

respectful. If you didn’t know the house from the beginning you could imagine that it has always been like this.”

Today this inviting home maintains its discrete presence on the street. While it has been beefed up for its new inhabitants it’s still very much a quiet achievement of Brazilian modernism and one that Hess is very glad he got to engage with, even if it took him 15 years to get beyond its walls. “The clients are very low-profile people and this is a house for a contemporary and simple way of life,” he says. — (M)