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March 31st, 2026
ABERTO5
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Publication
Author
Artist
Financial Times
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Take me to Casa Bola, Eduardo Longo's UFO-like masterpiece

Nearly 50 years after its completion, the spherical home in São Paulo is opening its doors



© Tinko Czetwertynski

Edwin Heathcote. Photography by Tinko Czetwertynski

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Eduardo Longo's Casa Bola is an astonishing thing. Vibrantly coloured, the spherical, completely bizarre UFO-like residence, designed and built by the Brazilian architect from 1974, sits atop a low-rise structure at the border of three central São Paulo neighbourhoods and can't help but elicit a smile.

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This year, the ball-shaped house will be the focus of [ABERTO5](#), the fast-growing platform founded by art adviser Filipe Assis in 2022 that celebrates Brazilian art and design within modernist buildings. Held in some of São Paulo's most enticing, usually private houses (with an international edition last year in Paris), the 2026 programme will centre around Longo's eccentric, visionary project – and home. “The ball was going to be temporary,” says Longo. “But I've ended up living there for 50 years.”



Longo (right) and Filipe Assis © Tinko Czetwertynski

Now aged 83 – but looking at least a decade younger, his thick white hair intact – Longo maintains a seemingly effortless charm. He is talking alongside Assis on a video call from summery São Paulo. The two met last year, when Assis approached Longo about collaborating for Aberto. “The house is so unique,” Assis says. “I'd always admired it. It's very disruptive. There's nothing else like it here in Brazil, or anywhere else.”

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It is both a rich boy's toy and a self-built eccentric masterpiece

Longo built the house himself, employing a framework of bent steel tubes and ferrocement (a composite material composed of mortar reinforced with light steel mesh). He also handcrafted every aspect of its all-white interior. The space is compact, with a small bedroom and a curving double bed, carved into the space by Longo. The bathroom is minimal, with womb-like fluid curves. The kitchen is like a yacht galley, with a sinuous combined work surface and table, but the living space at the top, with its big windows and domed ceiling, is expansive.

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Casa Bola's living room © Tinko Czetwertynski



The dining room, with furniture designed by Eduardo Longo © Tinko Czetwertynski

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Anyone who has ever lived with a curved wall knows how tricky it is to accommodate conventional furniture. That's amplified a million-fold in a sphere. You notice immediately that there is no "stuff". Apart from a few kitchen items and some clothes, there are no books, records or decorative objects. It can't be an easy way to live. Longo shrugs. "I can find everything I need in the city outside," he says. "I don't need so many things." A sentiment he took to extremes when he turned his Porsche Cabriolet into a pick-up truck.

Aberto will open up the house to the public for the first time, turning it into a gallery featuring more than 60 sculptural works by artists including [Sarah Lucas](#), Leonor Antunes, Laura Lima, [Adriano Costa](#) and [Tomás Saraceno](#). Many pieces, including Luiz Zerbini's, respond directly to Casa Bola, others obliquely. The fun will continue with a takeover of the Avenida Brigadeiro Faria Lima (Casa Bola sits between it and Rua Amauri), which will host 15 works of public art and extend into Longo's gallery on the same block. "At first we wanted to have the whole exhibition in the Casa Bola," Assis says, "but it's only 100 sq m, so it would have been the smallest Aberto ever. The gallery was empty and 1,000 sq m, so now it's the largest."



A west-side view of Casa Bola in São Paulo © Tinko Czetwertynski

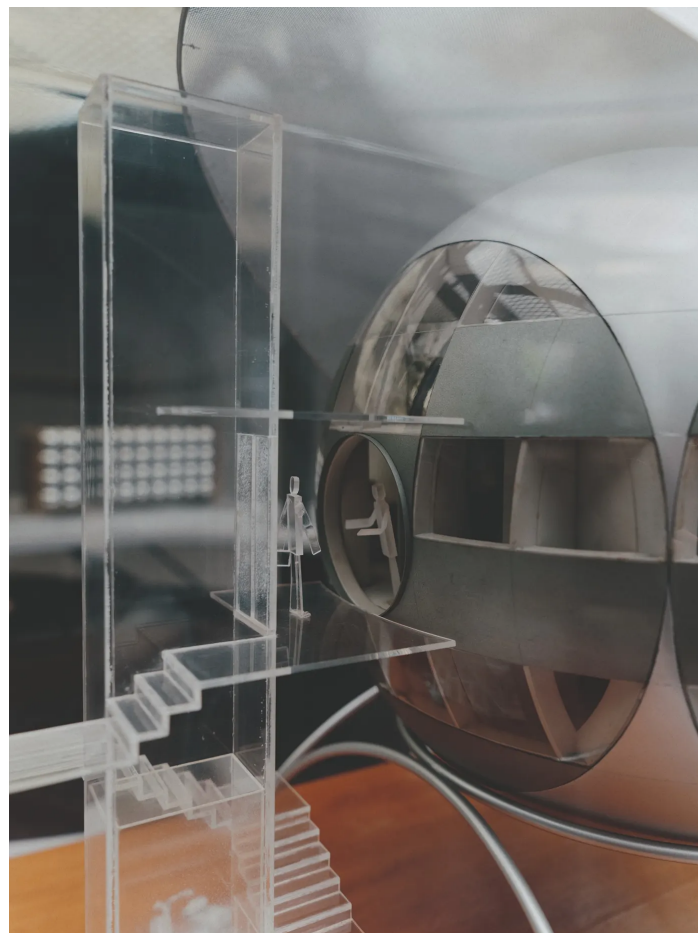
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By the time Longo started designing Casa Bola in 1974, he had already established a reputation as a builder of remarkable houses, none of which sat neatly even in Brazil's diverse pantheon of modernism. At that time, the modernist Oscar Niemeyer was in exile in Paris and, in São Paulo, the scene was dominated by brutalists, including the brilliant Vilanova Artigas and Paulo Mendes da Rocha (the revered Pritzker Prize-winning architect). Heavy mass concrete was king. Longo's early houses were also exercises in sculptural concrete – one in the form of what he calls a “mountain”; another with a pair of pyramidal roofs; others with de Chirico arches and chunky brutalist features. But his work didn't quite fit in. “I had no master and no followers,” he says cheerfully. “I was very young, shy and I was not well-regarded by the left-wing architects of the time. My family were coffee planters; they were very rich and they believed in me. I had commissions, so I started to build houses in my third year of studying.”



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Unit model of Apartamento Bola (2010) that was never built © Tinko Czetwertynski



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A fantástica viagem de Eduardo Longo by Luiz Zerbini, 2026 © Pat Kilgore 2026, Courtesy of Aberto and Fortes d'Aloia & Gabriel

But why a ball? “I was fed up with too much concrete,” Longo says. “Too much material, too much effort and too much stuff. It was a dream of the lightweight.” He began his masterpiece with a small building at ground level, two distinct parallel structures with roofs sloping in opposite directions, one an office, one a house. “I had a dream of making the lightest apartment possible. It isn’t just about the balls,” he says, as he shows me one of his extraordinary early drawings of globular dwellings, “but about the space between them. You can see the sky.” Stacked on top of each other, these space-age structures evoke some of the utopian ideas of bubble living and cosmic symbolism that appeared in the late 1960s, most notably from Buckminster Fuller, creator of the geodesic dome, but also the Viennese group Haus-Rucker-Co, and the British architectural theorist Reyner Banham. “I needed to try to build one,” Longo says, “to see if it worked.”

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Longo (left) and Filipe Assis on the winter terrace © Tinko Czetwertynski

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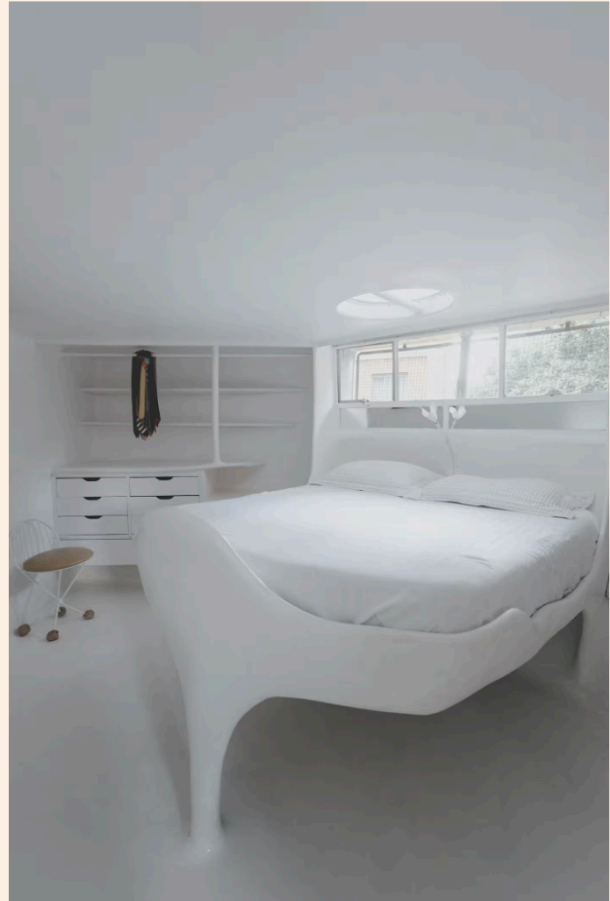
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The exit slide facing Peruíbe Street © Tinko Czetwertynski



The master bedroom © Tinko Czetwertynski

Casa Bola's space-age aesthetic might place it firmly in that particular historical moment (Assis jokingly suggests it sits somewhere between the architecture of *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*), but the house was pioneering in its efforts to use recycled materials and as little concrete and other materials as possible. Longo built it with his own hands; it is simultaneously a rich boy's toy and an eccentric masterpiece. Yet it achieved a degree of public engagement that evaded much of the output of the leftist brutalists.

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Although it is only now being officially opened to the public, the building has always had a public element. “Because the house was up above the structure, I was able to open the ground floor to make a passage through the block,” says Longo. At one point this arcade had a café and shops inside. A yellow slide sticking out of the bottom of the globe like a tongue provides an enjoyably quick exit down to terrace level. “People used to drop in just to use the slide,” says Longo. During the 1970s he kept open-house at cocktail hour, a revolving cast of characters popping in throughout the evening, drinks and snacks replenished by a maid, making the place a Paulista institution.



Longo and Assis in the living room © Tinko Czetwertynski

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After Longo had completed Casa Bola and another globe house for his parents in the Morumbi neighbourhood of the city (“They hated it, they only lived there for a year,” he grins), he gave up making new buildings. “From the 1970s, I refused new commissions, I accepted only refurbishments and renovations,” he says. Adds Assis, in confirmation: “Paolo Mendes da Rocha called Eduardo his best client because he always passed the work on to him.” Longo was ahead of his time; other architects are now adopting this approach (including the French practice Lacaton & Vassal, whose motto is “never demolish”), believing that intelligent reuse is the preferable alternative.

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ABERTO5 is on show until 31 May

This philosophy chimes with the wider purpose of Aberto, which exists to redirect the spotlight onto often neglected or forgotten modernist masterpieces in unexpected places. It’s difficult to comprehend how such a building could have been sidelined but now, with Aberto, the house is set to reclaim its status as a centre of public attention. “I was almost being forgotten,” says Longo. “Aberto has given me a huge boost.” Says Assis: “Eduardo is always changing things on the house. It’s like an ongoing project for the