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MoDusArchitects

TARTAN SCHOOL BY
MODUSARCHITECTS:
Weaving new threads between
education and community

Architecture office MoDusArchitects www.modusarchitects.com has unveiled the **Tartan School, an extension to an existing school building** located on the outskirts of Terlano's town centre, nestled in the Adige Valley between the South Tyrolean cities of Bolzano and Merano.

Tartan School is both a renovation of, and an intervention to, an existing school—an unwieldy 1990s U-shaped structure that had been modified in the early 2000s and that, like many small-town schools, combined a number of different programs into one. To accommodate the growing population, the township of Terlano decides to enlarge the school and opts to maintain the existing structure while adding onto it.

Like many small townships lining the alpine valleys of South Tyrol, Terlano's expanding center pushes up against the surrounding vineyards and apple orchards which is where, at this edge, that the school finds itself. This adjacency to both town and field is registered by the schools formal and chromatic strategies, all of which is set against a larger landscape of the traditional alpine fare of reference points and vistas: the historical church tower to the south, the steep mountainside to the north not to mention the medieval profiles of the Neuhaus Castle looking west.

With an economy of means approach, MoDusArchitects offers new ways in which the three, distinct educational programs of the Nursery School, the Kindergarten and the Youth Center could share fewer but more generous common spaces between them while also making them available to the larger community as needed.

“The school derives its name from the plaster facade of the building, which emulates the patterning of tartan fabric — a textile that conveys a feeling of warmth and familiarity.”

— affirms Sandy Attia, co-founder of MoDusArchitects together with Matteo Scagnol.

The two buildings (existing and new) negotiate the site's 4 meter north-south change in grade. The two separate entrances to the Nursery School and the Kindergarten are located on the upper ground floor level (L00) along the North edge of the property, while entry to the Youth Center is located on the South-facing side of the building on the lower ground floor level (L-01).

The **Nursery School** (ages 0-3) occupies the upper ground floor level (L00) of the existing building while the **Youth Center's** position remains unchanged at the lower ground floor level (L-01) of the existing building.

The new wing houses the various functions (group activity rooms, napping room, reading area) of the 4-classroom **Kindergarten** (100 children, ages 3-6) with the dining hall and movement room / gym located at the lower ground floor level (L-01) in relation to the outdoor playground.

This lower level is designed to create **a communal floor dedicated to the three programs** so that the small auditorium (50-person capacity), the dining hall, and the gym form a series of distinct rooms that can become part of the public domain for events, school recitals, community meetings, etc.

Although connected in plan and section, MoDusArchitects' addition necessarily works as an adjacent, semantically separate piece to the clumsy profiles of the existing school; **the truncated, zigzagging volume on trapezoidal legs is like a new neighbor that wedges itself between the old school building and the large, winery next door.**

The rough surfaces of the **plaster facades are embossed with a two-tone green tartan pattern** that works in tandem with the large windows that gently bob across the south facade on cue with the angled rooflines. With the inset windows at the lower ground floor level (L-01), the trapezoidal wall cutouts become columnar supports framing a loggia that mediates the pivotal indoor-outdoor movement between lunchtime and playtime. The schoolyard is contiguous to the town's public playground in the continuing efforts to bolster synergies, making the most out of finite resources.

The interiors weave together the disparate spaces of the existing structure and the new addition through a **curated selection of robust materials and surface treatments**. Distinguished by the brick-red resin flooring, the design of the MDF, custom-built furniture creates a palette of warm tones for the wardrobes and the built-in reading and activity nooks found for example in the Kindergarten's common areas. Ceiling mounted acoustic panels punctuated by wooden profiles provide a soundscape able to absorb the noise levels of the children as they move around the school freely in their conquest of space.

Tartan School is a certified **"ClimateHouse A"** building; the windows, wall and roof insulation of the existing school were replaced to improve the thermal efficiency of the building envelope. In this way, the two structures had similar energy performance characteristics, thereby affording more flexibility in the connections between the two structures.

Tartan School is part of MoDusArchitects' decades-long work in educational spaces, with an archive of more than twenty projects in the field, be it completed buildings, projects in the works, competition proposals or publications on the subject. With an interdisciplinary approach, their work delves into the reciprocal

relationship between learning and learning environments, examining how the fields of pedagogy and architecture can fuel unexpected solutions to the time-honored program of the school building.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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CREDITS

PROJECT NAME ADDRESS	Tartan School Via Chiesa 30 39018 Terlano, Province of Bolzano South Tyrol, Italy
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ARCHITECT	MoDusArchitects (Sandy Attia, Matteo Scagnol)
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PROJECT TEAM	Sandy Attia, Matteo Scagnol, Laura Spezzoni, Lavinia Antichi
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CLIENT	Municipality of Terlano
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COMPETITION PHASE	2017
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DESIGN DEVELOPMENT	2018—2019
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CONSTRUCTION PHASE	2021—2023
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SCHOOL OPENING	September 2023
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EXISTING BUILDING (GFA)	1.366 sqm
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ADDITION+EXISTING (GFA)	2.567 sqm
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PLAYGROUND	960 sqm
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CONTRACTOR	Unionbau SpA
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STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING Planteam – Günther Zöggeler
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING Energytech – Norbert Klammsteiner
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING Roland Thaler
SAFETY ENGINEERING 3M Engineering Srl

SELECTED
SUBCONTRACTORS

Mechanical and plumbing installation: Schmidhammer srl
Electrical installation: Elektro MM srl
Sheet metal work and copper cladding: Holzbau Lechner srl
Plaster facades: Alema srl
Resin flooring and paint finishes: Bodenservice srl
Wood and tile flooring: Copama
Metal fabrication: Inoxferdi srl
Windows: Askeen srl
Doors: Ferplac
Custom-built furniture: Gampenrieder srl
Standard furnishings: Trias OHG

FURNITURE Dusyma, Widmaier, HUSSL, Billiani, Fermliving, Noo.Ma, Nofred

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