ILMASI School (special school for mentally disabled children), 2002
Address: Ludwigstraße 9, 90877 Gersthofen, Germany. Client: Region of Bavaria. Gross Floor area: 5,900 m². Materials: solid wood, shell construction, nail-laminated timber with "Thermofold" (frost-treated wood) curtain wall.

A sensual building
ARCHITECTS: Despang Architekten

This school, which accommodates 100 mentally disabled children and 40 teachers, was designed as a patchwork of different components and forms. The result is an ensemble of attractive spaces and rooms. The distinguishing feature of this structure is the use of nail-laminated timber elements. The architects describe this as "a consistent texture that add a large measure of sensual stimulation to the building. The deconstructive layers of the timber walls synthesize the effort to strengthen and support the individual pupil while maintaining a solidly united school community." This is a building that is best experienced with the senses: in addition to its changing moods of light and shadow, it can be felt, heard, smelt and - as resins bleed from the wood - even tasted. Wood features here in a wide variety of forms: in durable, white-pigmented, oiled spruce walls; in sturdy doors; in the floors of the upper level; in handrails and coattacks of fumed oak; and in the larchwood canopy above the classroom courtyard.

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