



PRIVATE
RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX
HARMONY IN
WOOD
Novacella, Italy
CHRISTIAN SCHWIENBACHER

This residential complex in Novacella, designed by Christian Schwiembacher, rises in stunning surroundings, only a stone's throw from a famed Augustine abbey, and near the Isarco river and extensive apple orchards.

The design for the three buildings, made entirely using LignoAlp wood, offers a balance, desired by the client, between opening up to the landscape and privacy, while also dialoguing with the architecture of the nearby abbey.

The buildings each have a rectangular plan, but the axes of orientation rotate with the changing depth of the lot, allowing each building to enjoy different views and providing added privacy.

As the abbey and surrounding buildings have double pitched roofs, the decision was made to follow this tradition for each of the three houses, but the axes of the horizontal edges of the roofs are shifted such that the gutters become inclined, making the appearance of these relatively simple façades more dynamic. Seen from the abbey, the structures look compact and uniform, but from the other side - the countryside - the compositional variety is more easily discernible, with an alternation of solids and voids created by the covered loggias on the second floor and the resulting shaded spaces on the first floor. This adds another touch to the internal-external dynamics.

The wooden structure created by LignoAlp sits on a base of waterproof concrete that is the same for all three buildings.

The above-ground walls were built using a rigid frame system. The walls and roof are insulated using wood fiber of various densities. The walls are





also clad externally with a ventilated façade created using wooden slats.

The floor between the first and second levels was created using the "Brettstapel" system, a solid timber construction technique using timber posts and dowels that requires no glue. These were then coated white and left as such, forming the ceiling for the lower level. The roof beams and planks were also left exposed, but covered externally with metal sheets.

On the façades, the variously sized wooden slats were placed vertically, creating a uniform yet vibrant pattern. The choice of grey is another touch to integrate the building into nature and the built environment.

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