

**HOME & DESIGN**

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# TRENDS<sup>®</sup>



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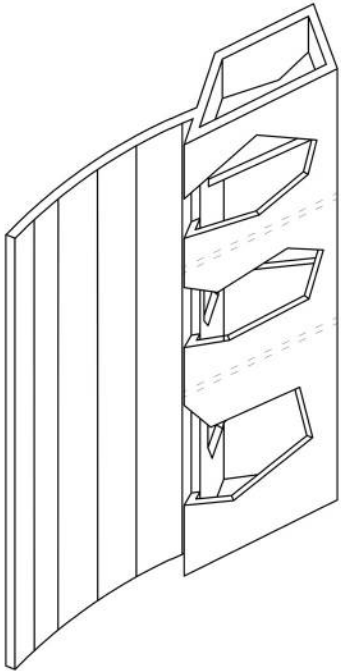
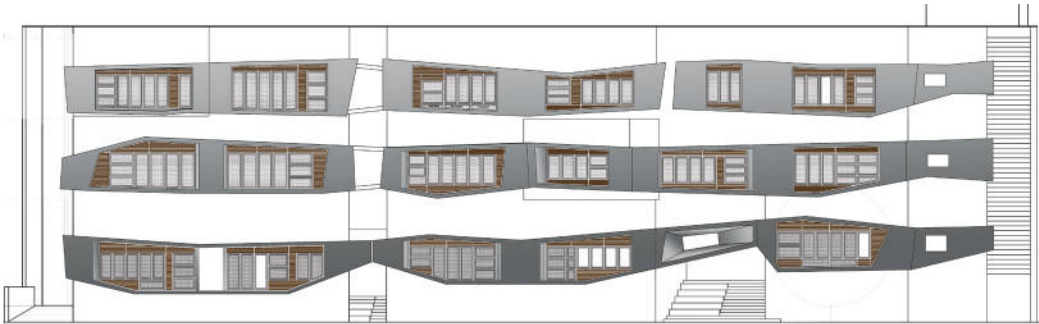
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COLLABORATIVE ARCHITECTURE  
DESIGNS A PRIMARY SCHOOL BASED  
ON THE PLAYFUL LEGO CONCEPT



Located on a 20-acre plot in a north Kerala village, the JDT Islam campus also houses the first Muslim orphanage of India. Formed in early 50s, over the years, the orphanage carries a legacy of philanthropic goodwill to orphans from around the country. When architects Lalita Tharani and Mujib Ahmed of Collaborative Architecture were called on to design the primary school for this orphanage, little did they know that this structure will become one of their most well-known facade designs.

The extremely narrow shape of the site was one of the first challenges that the duo had to face when they started working on the project. Due to its positioning between two existing structures, the school did not receive light during class hours and thus injection of natural light was a key design factor for Tharani and Ahmed.



To add to the conundrum, the architects had to work on a shoestring budget, in a village with limited available skills and resources. The asymmetrical design of the building, which is based on the concept of Lego, acts as a wind barrier and allows for ample natural sunlight to be let inside. Using the semi-skilled village workers to construct the form, the architects have converted the wasted ancillary spaces into an integral part increasing student-faculty interaction. Designed as 'an architectural catalyst', the project sets the tone for future developments and brings in a sense of organisation to the planning of the campus.



According to Tharani, "A child's interest needs to be kept intact especially when it comes to educational spaces. The Lego concept allows a child to grapple with the possibilities of three dimensional forms and the limitless variations by simple shifting of the lego bricks. Like a Lego, it changes form in dramatic ways as one encounter it from different locations points."

For the architects, this school is the perfect example of their ethos i.e. good designs need not be expensive.