

# Habitat – structure and form, design experience in teaching interior design

**Emilia Malec-Zięba**

[emi.arch@op.pl](mailto:emi.arch@op.pl)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0296-5223>

Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts,  
Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to take a closer look on this issue in the context of design experiments carried out in the Interior Design Studio by second-year Interior Design students, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University. The formula adopted in the studio is seeking the form, analysing, building structures, experiencing, discussing and making presentations. In designing we refer to numerous disciplines. The design process combines both visual arts, technical and sociological disciplines. The project is conducted with reference to the issues of building a structure of specific content, with distinctive signs of a residential space. The idea of a residential space is built based on material and emotional categories, an analysis of structures that serve equivalent functions, as well as inspirations drawn from culture and science. The presented designs show the multifaceted nature of interpreting and understanding of the residential space. Design education is an endless process that is constantly changing despite the adopted rules and methods, thus making it continuously relevant to exchange experiences and update knowledge on the subject.

**Key words:** interior design, project experience, education process

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## Introduction

Residential space is one of the most significant and, frankly, one of the basic areas of human existence. The notion of 'residing' does not relate solely to the space of a flat or a house, but also refers to experiencing this area emotionally. The contemporary understanding of 'residing' has a wide context. The concept of a 'home' should not be then examined only in technical or spatial categories, but also with regard to the psychical and emotional aspect. Experiencing a residential space is not only its material and physical layer, but also the spiritual aspect and a man's emotional relation towards his or her own place, 'home'. The idea of a residential space may refer both to the Le Corbusier's *machine-à-habiter*<sup>1</sup> and the Eliade's philosophy that determines the interior of a house as the *imago mundi*<sup>2</sup>, the centre of the world, the sanctuary. Home, the place we reside in, is an area approached in the most individual way. The development of common instructions for shaping residential spaces is hindered particularly by requirements and predispositions of each and every human being. Certain spaces force specific conduct, while the spectrum of human needs has no limits. That's why as Frank Lloyd Wright said "There should be as many (styles) of houses as there are kinds (styles) of people and as many differentiations as there are different individuals. A man who has individuality has a right to its expression and his own environment".<sup>3</sup> Thus, in designing residential spaces we refer to numerous disciplines. The design process combines both visual arts, technical and sociological disciplines. The place of residence ought to meet the needs and the mode of functioning of a given person, form his or her own world and reflect that person's identity.

1 Le Corbusier, 2012, p. 137.

2 Eliade, 1992, pp. 33–34.

3 <http://freshome.com/2012/09/03/10-great-architectural-lessons-from-frank-lloyd-wright/>.

The interior designer's role is to create friendly places by, i.a., choosing the right structure of the space, scale, forms, colours and textures; to seek the most appropriate form and composition with obvious understanding of the users' needs and oftentimes to specify these needs and bring them to light. An architectural form is nothing else but an arrangement of elements, a shape. Form can be seen, heard and it allows us to decipher the meaning of a work of art. Nowadays, form is in general meaning a manifestation of the internal structure of an item, the complete framework of its part. In a narrower sense, it is the shape, the appearance of a given item. Herbert Read claimed that form is an intentionally devised shape a man gives to the product of his own hands.<sup>4</sup> Composition is an important element of architecture, formed by means of elements juxtaposed in a way that allows them to create a harmonious whole. It is defined as an intentional attempt to obtain a visual result by means of skilfully selected qualities of its constituents, i.a., colours, shapes or textures, which are arranged either by analogy or by contrast.<sup>5</sup>

## Assumptions of the design project

The term 'residential space' was used in the title intentionally with the aim to mark the distinct non-literal character of the interpretation of this type of space, the possibility to refer to the specific idea constructed for the purpose of a design project. This paper is an attempt to take a closer look on this issue in the context of design experiments carried out in the Interior Design Studio by second-year Interior Design students, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University. The aim of the course is to provide knowledge on well-informed shaping of the human's imminent surroundings and to develop the capacity to create and implement one's own design concepts based on thematically diverse design project assumptions, thus provoking design thinking. The formula adopted in the studio is seeking the form, analysing, building structures, experiencing, discussing and making presentations. A residential space design combined with a working area is one of the design projects executed in the studio. The idea of a residential space is built based on material and emotional categories, an analysis of structures that serve equivalent functions, as well as inspirations drawn from culture and science. The project is conducted with reference to the issues of building a structure of specific content, with distinctive signs of a residential space. The design project was divided into two stages. In the first stage, one had to build six spatial arrangements with conflicting qualities: stagnation/dynamism, emptiness/excess, luminescence/darkness, horizontality/verticality, openness/closure, chromaticity/achromaticity. Any technique applied in the work was acceptable. The aim was to build a form of a consistent composition, to analyse and seek ways for finding one's own individual answer to the subject in question. The predefined spatial arrangements reflect the nature of various compositional arrangements and effects used in interior design, serve as structural elements of the space and a starting point for the next stage. The second stage consisted in transferring these compositional and formal experiences to the implementation of a concept concerning a space with residential features and a well-defined arrangement as regard to functionality, utility, composition, and with reference to the human scale. The creative expression from the first stage served as the starting point for implementing the project and was intended to have been translated into functional forms corresponding to the idea of 'residing'. The residential space was to be combined with the working area (a studio) in either a horizontal or a vertical arrangement. The implementation method depended on the individual approach and the set programme, which was intended to take account of the specificity of the prospective user's needs and lifestyle. Users were assigned to a given space both in accordance to the characteristic traits of the designed compositional arrangement and typical features of a given user. In each case, this identification was preceded by an analysis of a future user's needs and the possibilities to adjust and transform a given spatial arrangement or arrangements.

4 Read, 1973, p. 66.

5 [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kompozycja\\_\(sztuki\\_wizualne\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kompozycja_(sztuki_wizualne)).

## Analysis of selected designs

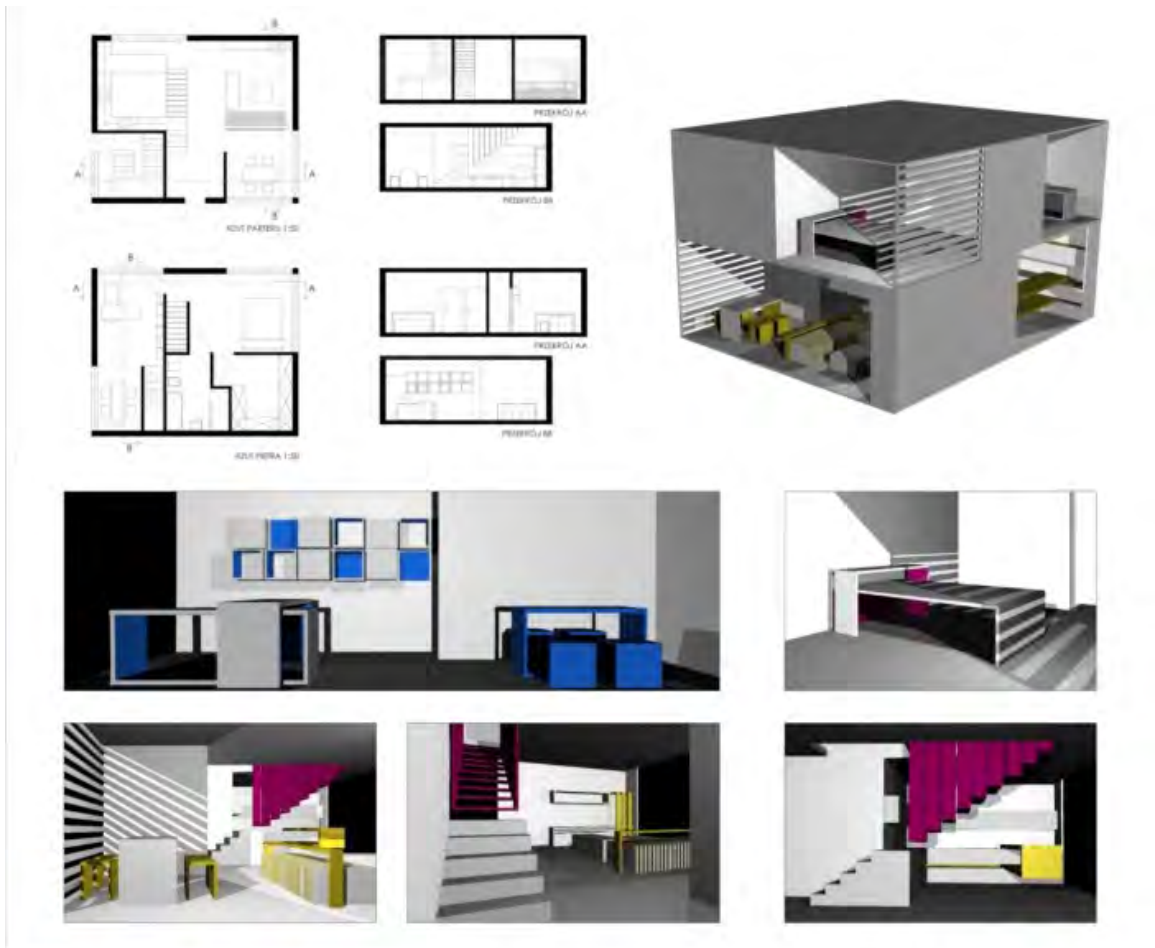
The method proposed in the project allowed me to perform an analysis of various issues occurring in its the course and to experience the multidimensional nature of design. The aim of design education is to improve sensitivity to the surrounding reality and to allow one to perfect his or her observational and analytical skills, the ability to define needs and to build proper relations, the capacity to create one's own vision, to develop spatial forms that correspond to specific requirements. The design project that the students were challenged with aimed to allow them to go through the entire process that in each case resulted in an original design.

The proposed solutions varied to a considerable extent and showed the diversity of how a residential space can be interpreted and understood. One of these involved a literal approach to the subject, which consisted in an attempt to conform to the functional programme of the residential space and the workplace as thoroughly as possible. The areas developed in the design involved a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom and a studio. The other method of implementation involved finding a way to convey a certain message of 'residing', picturing the concept of a residential area as opposed to a working area; an interpretation of the residential function as a space of relaxation, leisure, privacy, whereas the function of the working area was interpreted as a space dedicated to experiencing and collaborating. Owing to the initially adopted spatial and compositional references, each time it was possible to approach this project in an individual manner. In a way, these references served as a starting point for further design decisions and space-shaping methods. Simple arrangements with a geometric form, in which the role of a composition element is played by either a cuboid or a cube contributed to designs that offer typical traditional spatial solutions with a full functional programme for users with identifiable needs, such as an architect, a photographer, a writer. In turn, solutions developed using atypical forms and original methods were related to the ideological perception of residential space and most often dedicated for users with atypical needs, such as a dancer, a weaver, a performer. The techniques employed in the implementation of this project involved both modern computer technologies and traditional manual methods.

An example of a realistic approach that identifies functional solutions in the designed space is Agata Śliwa's design. An interesting approach to the compositional arrangement from the first stage becomes a good source of inspiration for a residential interior and an architecture studio. The solution is based on surfaces and strips of varying width that make up individual spatial arrangements. In the design, which refers to both the form of the entire space and furnishings, each area was additionally marked with a colour code. The well-devised functional arrangement planned on two levels corresponds to the assumptions of the project just perfectly.



**Fig. 1.** Design: Agata Śliwa – step 1; phot. author

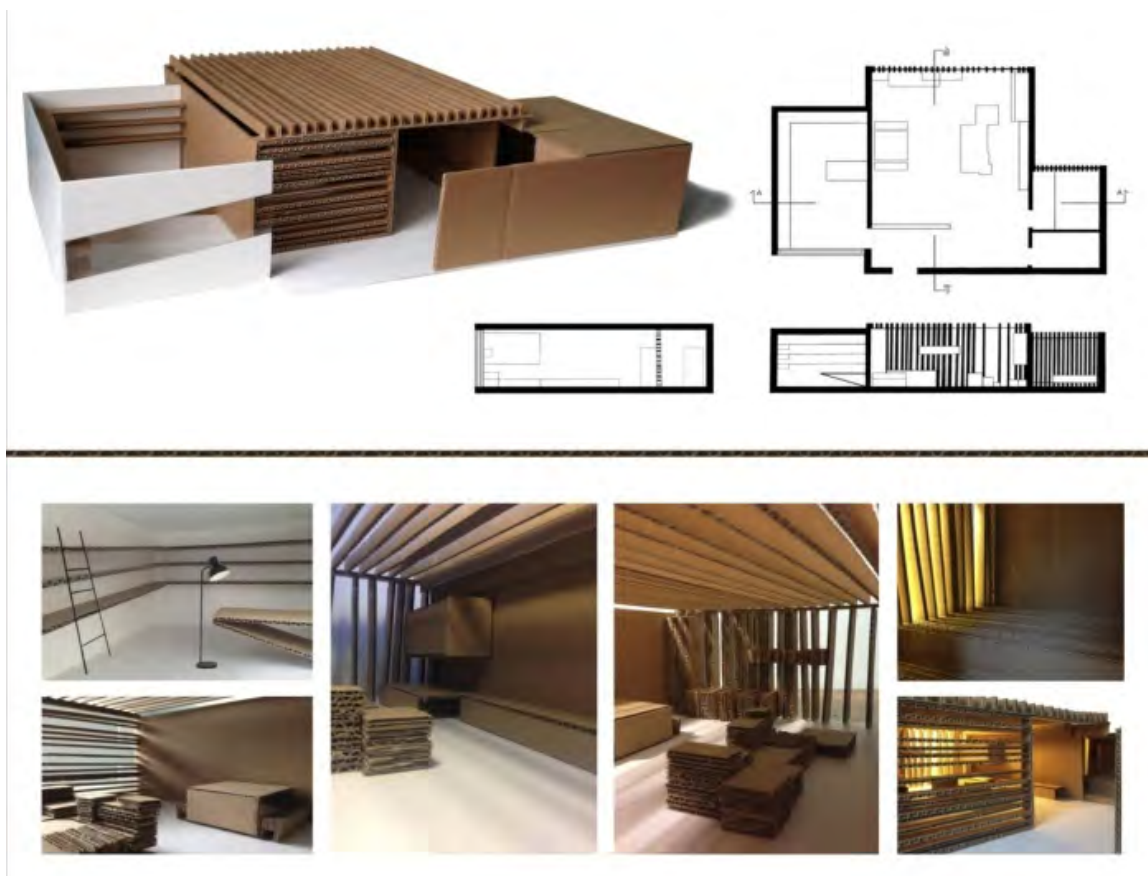


**Fig. 2.** Design: Agata Śliwa – step 2; phot. author

Another example with a literal reference is Julia Bondar's design. Likewise, it employs the rhythm of simply defined surfaces with a distinct structure of a corrugated texture. The work presents a dedicated space for a writer. Both areas were planned on one level. The writer's office is a minimalist element added to the whole, seamlessly linked to the residential interior with abundant structures, resulting in a sophisticated compositional contrast.

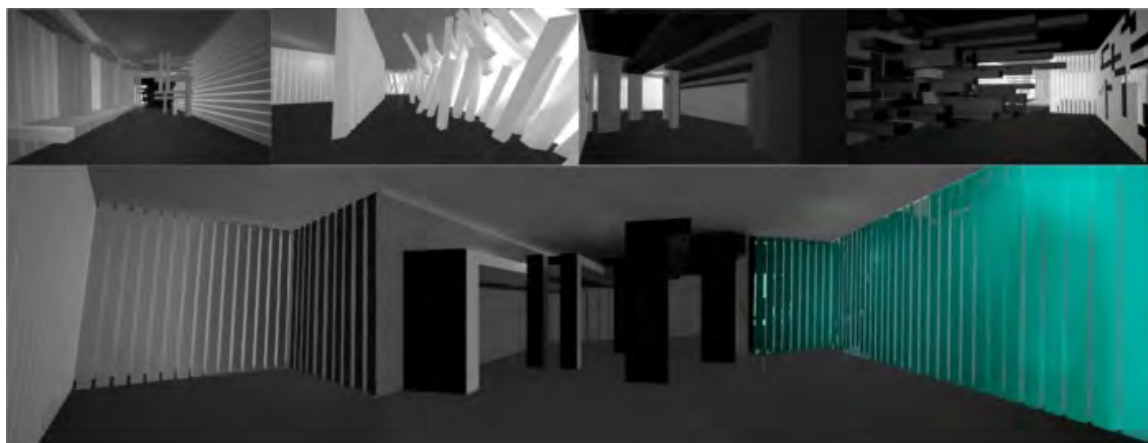


**Fig. 3.** Design: Julia Bondar – step 1; phot. E. Malec-Zięba



**Fig. 4.** Design: Julia Bondar – step 2; phot. author

Another example is Maria Shapoval's design. The author composed spatial arrangements using simple cubic forms further employed in the design of the interior. The outcome is a residential space for a photographer combined with a studio. The residential area constitutes a distinct form in the entire space, whereas its function was planned on two levels: the lower level is closed and is contrasted with the upper open layer with a view on the studio. The studio area is reached through a hall of a dynamic structure that gradually becomes calmer with horizontal and vertical arrangements of furnishings.



**Fig. 5.** Design: Mariia Shapoval – step 1; phot. author



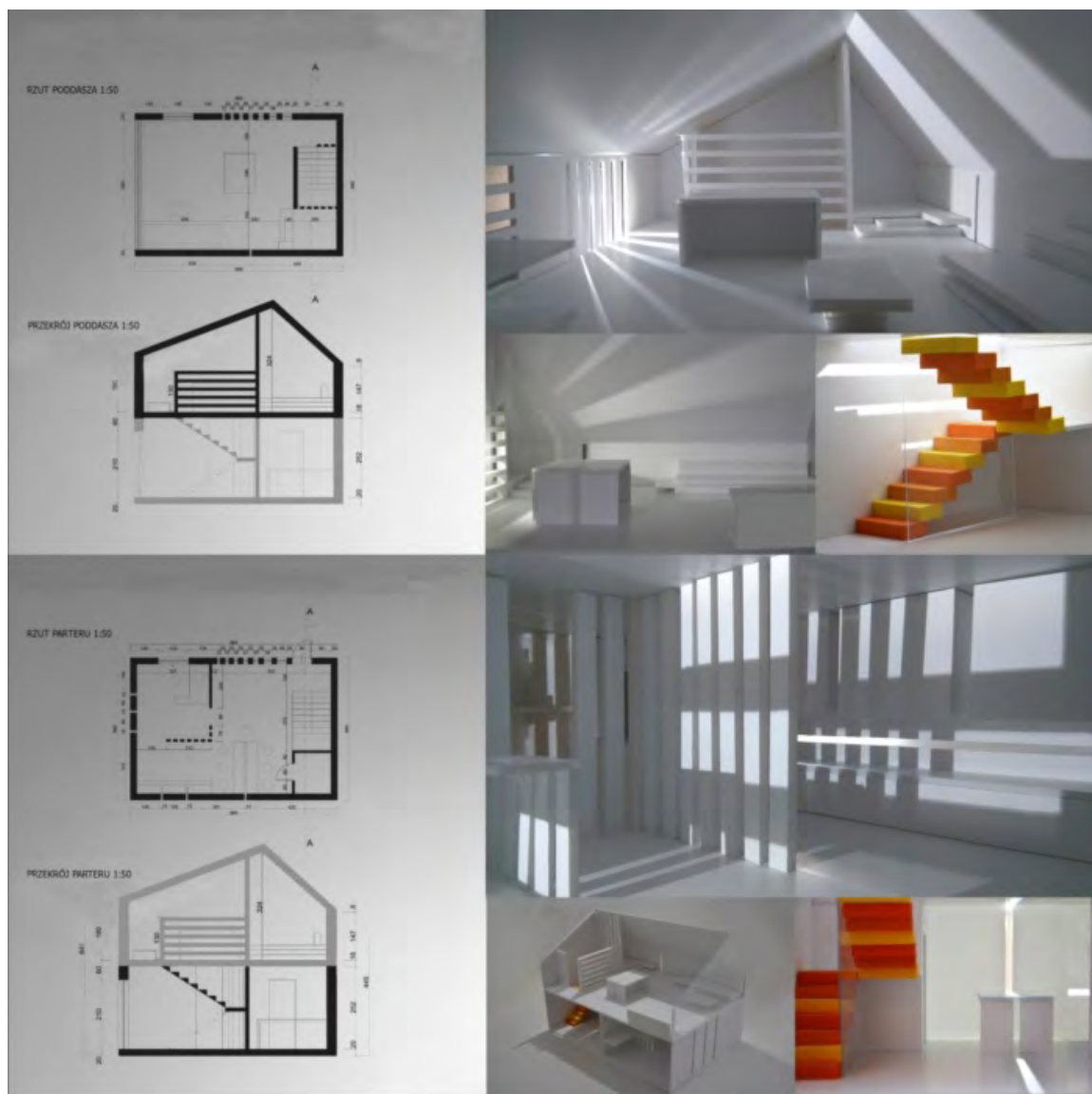


Fig. 6. Design: Mariia Shapoval – step 2; phot. author

Yet another solution is presented in Justyna Kokoszka’s design, in which sophisticated compositions of cubic forms define a space for an architect. The spatial arrangements from the first stage proved an excellent starting point for further work. The forms and rhythms were translated into a functional context using a relevant scale and composition. The design involves a functional working area on the lower level and a residential area on the upper level. These are interconnected by means of a strong colour accent.

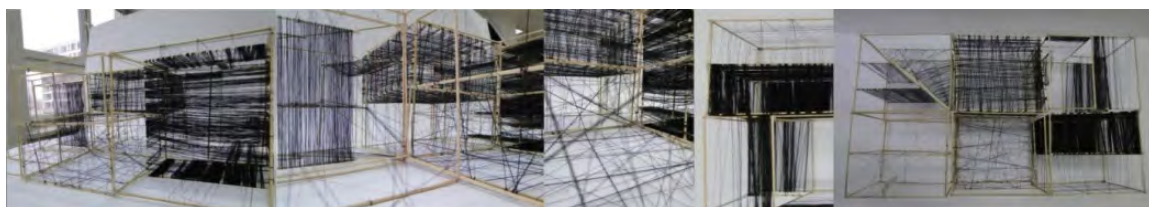


Fig. 7. Design: Justyna Kokoszka – step 1; phot. author /E. Malec-Zięba

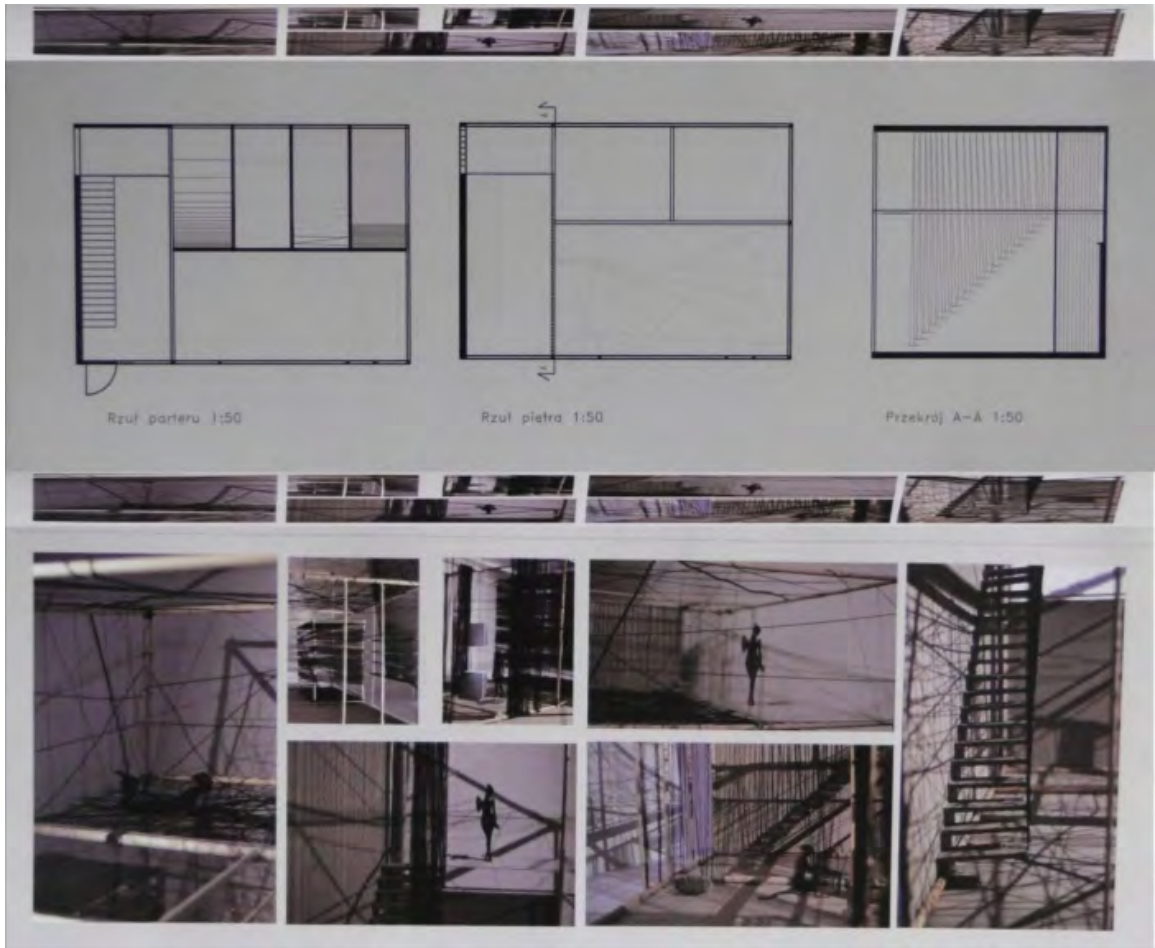


**Fig. 8.** Design: Justyna Kokoszka – step 2; phot. author

An example of a symbolic non-literal approach to the 'residential space' issue is Anna Boiko's design. The somewhat metaphysical space was 'woven' using openwork cubes. The rhythm of the thread creates a story of an enigmatic space of a weaver's work and life. The simple form conceals an ephemeral realm of a studio and a weaver's workshop on the ground floor and a personal sanctuary upstairs.

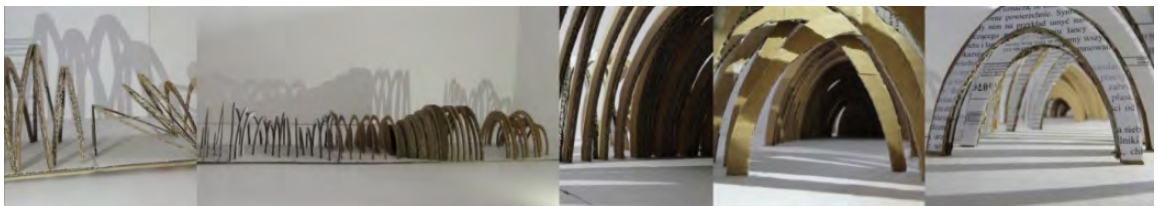


**Fig. 9.** Design: Anna Boiko – step 1; phot. E. Malec-Zięba



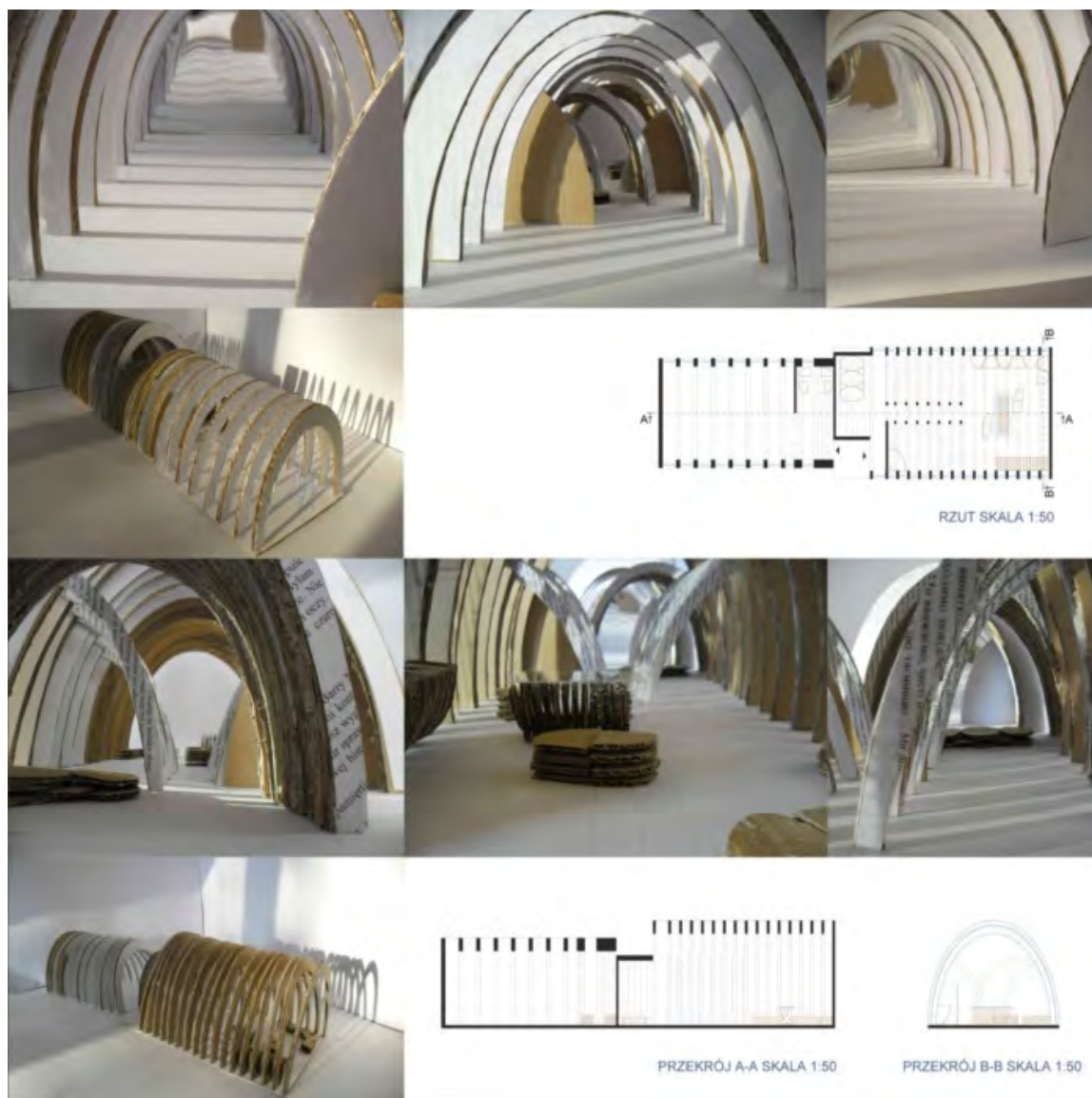
**Fig. 10.** Design: Anna Boiko – step 2; phot. author

In contrast, Mariia Yatsiuk employed the form of an arch as the leading element in her design. Multiplication combined with the varying rhythm, scale and forms used in her work create an arrangement of a distinct composition; a tunnel of varying dynamics that serves as a starting point in a space developed for a dancer. In her design, the author transforms shapes she had devised for functional purposes by referring to a single-level arrangement of the tunnel. The arched shape defines the entire space, giving rise to a workout room and a flat with symbolic furnishings.



**Fig. 11.** Design: Mariia Yatsiuk – step 1; phot. author /E. Malec-Zięba





**Fig. 12.** Design: Mariia Yatsiuk – step 2; phot. author

Another example is Paulina Kuca's design, which concerns a residential space for a graphic designer. Cubic frames that define the volume of the space were somewhat filled and outlined using a strip that marks surfaces and forms, resulting in powerful linear graphic arrangements. This unconventional work provides a highly personal space. The flat has a closed character and is distinguished by straight lines, whereas the working area is dynamic and open. The play of light and shadows that fill the interior adds to the blurred transition between the real and the unreal.



Fig. 13. Design: Paulina Kuca – etap 1; phot. author /E. Malec-Zięba



Fig. 14. Design: Paulina Kuca – etap 2; phot. author

Yet another interpretation is a design by Wiktoria Białecka. This work has an exceptional composition. The author suggested here the spatial form of a spiral with flexible membranes of varying transparency stretched across the spiral, resulting in subsequent spatial arrangements. This atypical approach gives rise to a metaphysical design of a space for a performer. The effect is an interactive space of experiences and projections, as well as a symbolic residential space, which is as individual as *imago mundi* itself.



**Fig. 15.** Design: Wiktoria Białecka – step 1; phot. author /E. Malec-Zięba

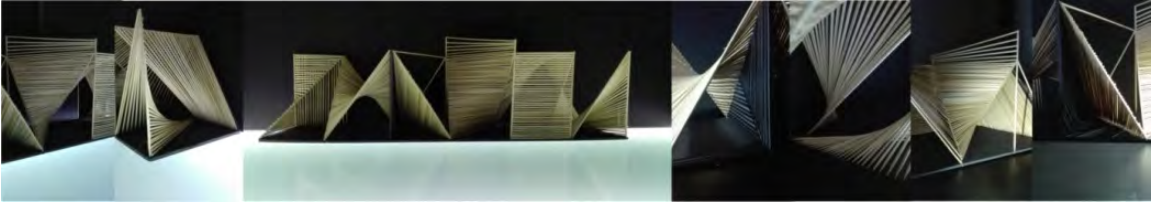


**Fig. 16.** Design: Wiktoria Białecka – step 2; phot. author

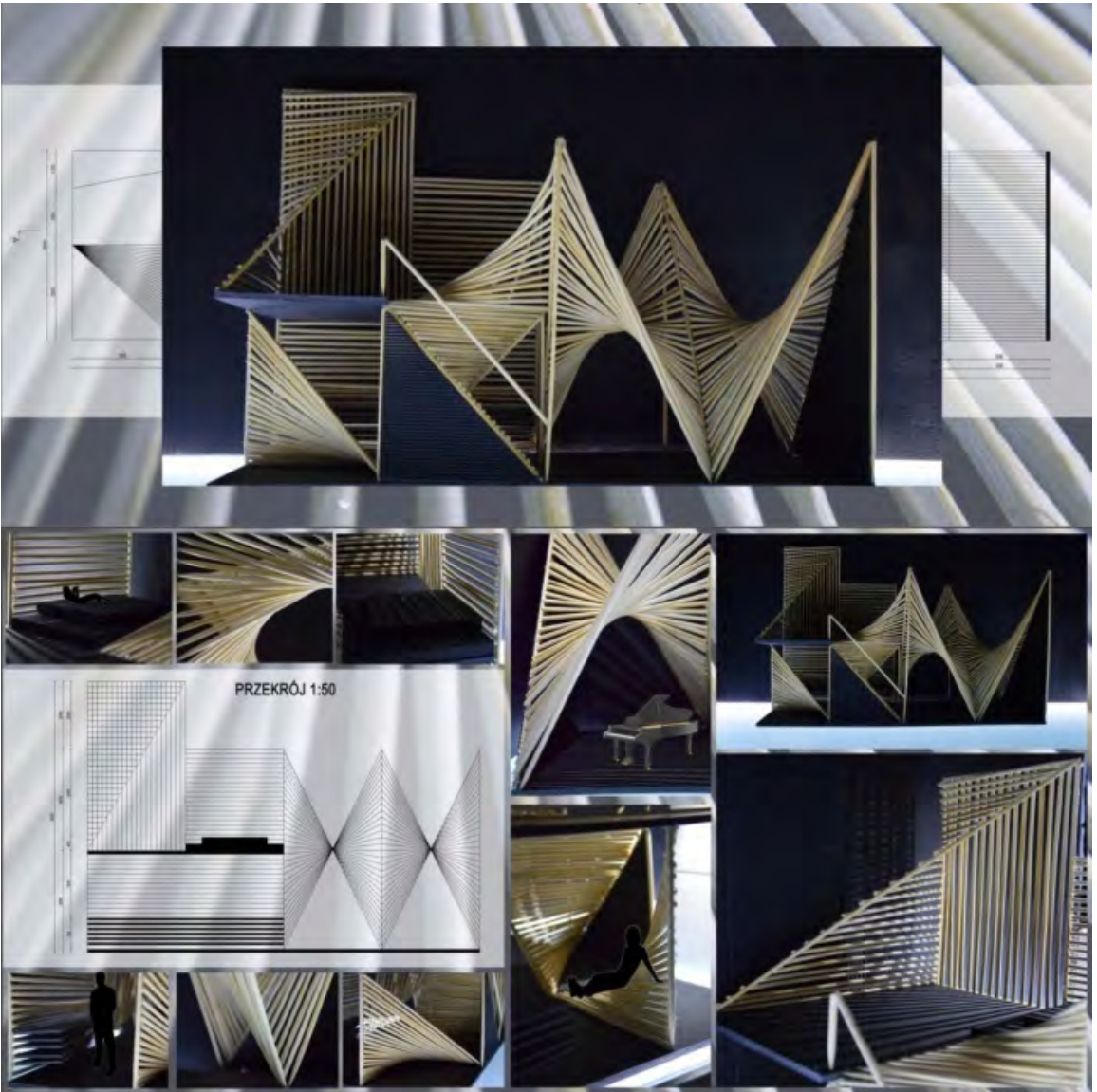
Whereas an example that can be said to fall in-between these two approaches to interpreting a residential space is Sonia Jarczyk's design. It involves a space for a musician, planned with much artistic sensitivity. The design constitutes a play of openwork forms made of a masterful composition of wooden elements – sticks, and is a play of light in the interior. The residential space with a calm and static composition is contrasted with a powerful and dynamic form of the working area – music. This design involves both elements that are plain



functional and those that create the ambiance. The whole work is highly consistent, while the composition of the forms used is elaborated and creates the ambiance of this interior in most splendid way.



**Fig. 17.** Design: Sonia Jarczyk – step 1; phot. author /E. Malec-Zięba



**Fig. 18.** Design: Sonia Jarczyk – step 2; phot. author



## Summary

The presented designs show the multifaceted nature of interpreting and understanding of the residential space. They serve as an example of how one might examine fulfilment of needs of various users of residential spaces. They show methods for composing and organising a place for leisure and work, bringing the spectrum of needs to light. Here, the focus is put on the creative development of solutions, the search for the form. The scope of different approaches to implementation applied in this project proves the importance of a wide context of employed methods in the didactic process. Spatial imagination is best shaped by traditional work with a model, one's own real experience, sketching. The creation of technical documentation is assisted by CAD software, whereas 2D and 3D graphic software proves helpful in creating visualisations, rendering and making presentations. By combining these possibilities, one can get the best results, which is oftentimes disregarded in the process of teaching young designers. Many artistic colleges and schools employ original curricula developed based on both theoretical knowledge of design methods and tutors' experience in design. Moreover, academic conferences dedicated to the subject of teaching methodology are also organised with an attempt to answer to question of how design arts should be taught, how to reconcile traditional methods with new technologies, or whether methodology does not restrict the freedom to create. These issues are still valid and absorbing, while changes in the area of design techniques, particularly those pertaining to design presentation methods, require the applied methods to be constantly verified and the need for lifelong learning. Design education is an endless process that is constantly changing despite the adopted rules and methods, thus making it continuously relevant to exchange experiences and update knowledge on the subject.

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## Habitat – struktura i forma, doświadczenia projektowe w nauczaniu architektury wnętrz

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**Streszczenie:** Referat jest próbą przyjrzenia się temu zagadnieniu w kontekście doświadczeń projektowych prowadzonych w ramach przedmiotu Projektowanie architektury wnętrz na Wydziale Architektury i Sztuk Pięknych Krakowskiej Akademii im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego. Formułą pracowni są poszukiwania formy, analiza, budowanie struktur, doświadczenie, dyskusje, prezentacje. Projektując odnosimy się do wielu dyscyplin. Proces projektowy integruje w sobie zarówno dyscypliny plastyczne, techniczne jak i socjologiczne. Zadanie projektowe prowadzone jest w odniesieniu do zagadnień budowania struktury o określonych treściach, o znamionach przestrzeni mieszkalnej. Idea przestrzeni mieszkalnej jest budowana w oparciu o kategorie materialne i emocjonalne, o analizę obiektów o analogicznej funkcji jak i inspiracje ze świata kultury i nauki. Prezentowane projekty pokazują różnorodność interpretowania i rozumienia przestrzeni zamieszkiwania.

Nauka projektowania to niekończący się proces i mimo przyjętych reguł i metod nieustannie ulegający zmianom, zatem niezmiennie aktualna jest wymiana doświadczeń i odnawianie wiedzy w tym temacie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** architektura wnętrz, doświadczenia projektowe, proces kształcenia

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