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ADAPTATION PROPOSAL FOR THE SEAT OF THE WARSAW ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS' FACULTY OF SCULPTURE

When the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts regained its original seat on Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie Street in 1973 and made it the new location of its Faculty of Sculpture, Oskar Hansen as the only architect employed in the department was commissioned to design the interiors and took it as an excellent opportunity to create adequate space for Open Form didactics. His teaching methods had been introduced into the academy's curriculum since he took over of the Planes and Figures Composition Studio in 1953—a two-year course in basic composition that continued in both name and content the prewar didactics of Wojciech Jastrzębowski, enriched by Hansen with the assumptions of Open Form theory. Yet it was not only his studio at the academy that he had in mind when readapting the 1930s building—used after the war by the Warsaw Power Plant—to the needs of art education. The commission became for him a chance to extend the theory of Open Form beyond the curriculum of a single studio and, through spatial design, to establish it as a ground rule for education in the entire department.

While designing a complete alteration of building's interior, Hansen decided to depart from conventional rooms and create a flexible, open-space workplace for students and teachers. This spatial change was meant to evolve the academy on from masters' studios, where the dominant role of a single pedagogue, a student's submission and the arbitrariness of grading given tasks was the incarnation of what Hansen conceived as Closed Form didactics, to a new community-oriented way of teaching and learning.

His design embraced both building and curriculum, divided into serviced and servicing zones, as in his housing projects. Students and the didactic program both fit into the first category and were to be serviced by a board of teachers and by the adaptive, multifunctional space of the studio and additional workshops. The curriculum, composed of elective tasks shaped individually by each student, had no specializations or determined length of studies. With this absence of master studios and teacher-student hierarchy, the board of teachers became elective consultants for all works and could be asked for advice individually or in groups at any time, according to student needs. Lack of spatial divisions was meant to result in extensive collaboration between teachers and students, to create a community learning jointly, and to encourage interdisciplinarity in design, free artistic search and spontaneous creation of artistic groups.

However, the space also guaranteed the possibility of working alone, thanks to small partition walls that could be assembled by students within the open-space studio to create sep-

arated spaces. An additional place planned within Hansen's adaptation of the building was the Room of Propositions, dedicated to students' experimental works, where they could propose their own concepts to enhance the faculty curriculum. Together with the gallery for student works facing the banks of Vistula River, which passed next to the building, Hansen's adaptation of the new seat of Faculty of Sculpture was meant to guarantee an effective connection of academy curriculum to its surroundings, making students sensitive to the needs of contemporary society, in which they would work after graduation.

In December 1980, with overwhelming support from the students, Hansen was elected dean of the Faculty of Sculpture. Introduced provisionally in January 1981 as an official pedagogical method by the Council of the Faculty of Sculpture, but still parallel to functioning master studios,¹ Hansen's Open Form didactics did not receive positive feedback from the board of teachers. In March 1981 these protests resulted in his resignation as dean. Limited from then on to his own studio with only one student, Open Form didactics at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts finished with Hansen's retirement in 1983. His adaptation of the seat of the Faculty of Sculpture, begun but never completed, remained—as with much of Hansen's work—only on paper. However, it echoes sometimes in new propositions for the academy, first and foremost in the JEMS design for the extension of the same building, in 2008.

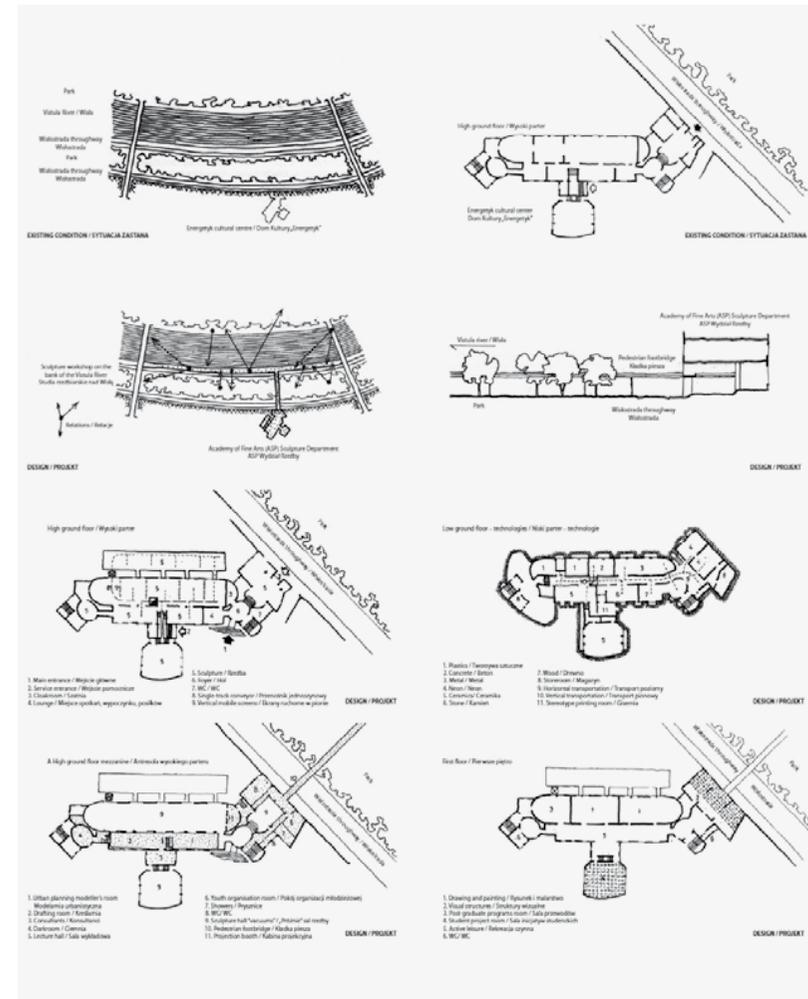


FIG. 1, 2 ADAPTATION PROPOSAL FOR THE SEAT OF THE WARSAW ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS' FACULTY OF SCULPTURE, DESIGN: OSKAR HANSEN, 1973

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See Oskar Hansen, "Czy potrzebne są zmiany w naszej uczelni," *Numer. Pismo wydawane przez Komisję Zakładową NSZZ «Solidarność» Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie*, no. 1 and no. 2, 1981.