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# ARCHITECTURE AND EXPERIENCE – PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH INTEGRATION CLASSES NO. 151 NAMED AFTER THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKÓW

# ARCHITEKTRA I DOŚWIADCZENIE – SZKOŁA PODSTAWOWA Z ODDZIAŁAMI INTEGRACYJNYMI NR 151 IM. UNIWERSYTETU JAGIELLOŃSKIEGO W KRAKOWIE

Abstract

The architecture of *Primary School with Integration Classes No. 151 named after the Jagiellonian University* in Kraków, completed in 1987–1989 at 2 Wacława Lipińskiego Street, inspired reflections on architecture and experience. The school was designed by architect Mieczysław Gała – the author and the chief designer, and his team. The design was developed in 1984–1986 at the Kraków Design and Research Office for General Construction. The architectural idea and spatial concept of the school are based on formally distinct sectors serving particular age groups of pupils and preschool children: the older children's sector, the younger children's sector, the central sector containing the school forum, administration, library and reading room, the dining sector, and the sports sector. The individual sectors were composed around the school forum – a space for recreation and integration of the school community. The architectural idea and form, composition and detail, the welcoming character of the school interiors, and facilities for people with disabilities contribute to the quality of the architecture and shape a sense of community, positively influencing the experience of preschool children and pupils in accordance with the idea of inclusive education.

Keywords: *architectural composition, architectural form, architecture of Kraków, semantic themes of contemporary architecture*

Streszczenie

Architektura Szkoły Podstawowej z Oddziałami Integracyjnymi nr 151 im. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie, zrealizowana w latach 1987–1989 przy ul. Wacława Lipińskiego 2 w Krakowie, inspirowała rozważania na temat *architektury i doświadczenia.* Autorem i głównym projektantem szkoły jest architekt Mieczysław Gała z zespołem. Projekt opracowano w latach 1984–1986 w Krakowskim Biurze Projektowo-Badawczym Budownictwa Ogólnego w Krakowie. Idea architektoniczna i koncepcja przestrzenna szkoły opierają się na wyodrębnionych formalnie sektorach dedykowanych poszczególnym grupom wiekowym uczniów i dzieci przedszkolnych – sektorze dzieci starszych i sektorze dzieci młodszych, sektorze centralnym – mieszczącym forum szkolne, administrację, bibliotekę i czytelnię, sektorze żywieniowym oraz sektorze sportowym. Poszczególne sektory zakomponowano wokół forum szkolnego, przestrzeni rekreacji i integracji społeczności szkolnej. Idea i forma architektoniczna, kompozycja i detale, przyjazny charakter wnętrz szkoły i udogodnienia dla osób z niepełnosprawnościami współtworzą jakość architektury i kształtują poczucie wspólnoty, wpływając pozytywnie na doświadczenie dzieci przedszkolnych i uczniów, w myśl idei edukacji integracyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe: *architektura Krakowa, forma architektoniczna, kompozycja architektoniczna, wątki znaczeniowe architektury współczesnej*

*Architecture as an art of interpreting geometry is a game played at the scale of the building, place, and city, a game for perfection understood as the pursuit and search for relationships between traditional standards of correctness and experimentation in the art of building, a game for quality measured ... through an identity made convincing by coherence, the impeccable appearance of a whole composed of elements regarded as good, through Vitruvian decorum, and appropriateness created by the architect.*[1]

Maria Misiągiewicz

## 1. ARCHITECTURE AND EXPERIENCE

Experiencing architecture is shared by the entire society: designers, contractors, investors, residents, users, passers-by, tourists, the architectural community, critics, and architectural historians. We experience architecture in many dimensions. The conception of a future work of architecture has its source in the imagination of the Architect-Creator. Architecture first exists in the form of sketches, conceptual drawings, and a model, followed by the construction project and the detailed design. The design materialises during construction in the form of a building with physical parameters defined by the architect. Experiencing architecture is connected with formal and technical issues, usability, and accessibility.

The experience of the art of architecture is connected with emotional responses and spirituality. Architecture affects the recipient through architectural form and composition – a mass or several masses, a structure and materials together with their colouring and texture. The Architect-Creator determines the individual character of a work of architecture and the way in which a building is integrated into a place, giving architecture meaning within the space of a city, town, village or open landscape. Architecture gives identity to a place, contributing to the significance of a street or square, and over time becomes a value and part of culture.

In technical terms, experiencing architecture is connected to the structural stability of a building and the appropriate selection of structural solutions. A structure may serve only a load-bearing function, but it may also be exposed in the building mass or interior, becoming an aesthetic element of the design. Through external and internal installations, built architecture should provide users with a sense of comfort associated with access to utilities, appropriate temperature and air humidity, air exchange within interiors, and energy efficiency.

Experiencing architecture is connected with programme assumptions and the spatial concept adopted by the architect, the area and geometry of usable spaces, an appropriate amount of daylight and acoustics, in accordance with the principles of designing residential architecture, educational architecture, buildings for culture, healthcare, transport, workplaces, and sacred architecture. Today, an important issue in architectural design is taking into account the needs of different groups of users and accessibility for people with disabilities.

The Royal Capital City of Kraków is one of the oldest, most important, and most beautiful cities in Poland and Europe. In the year 1000, Pope Sylvester II established the Diocese of

[1] M. Misiągiewicz, *Architektoniczna geometria*, Wydawnictwo DjaF, Kraków 2005, p. 117.

Kraków[2]. Following Gniezno – the first capital of Poland and the metropolitan seat of the Polish ecclesiastical province – from 1038 Kraków served as the second capital of Poland. It was a place of royal coronations, an important cultural and commercial centre, and an academic city home to Poland's oldest university, the Jagiellonian University.

Experiencing the historic architecture of Kraków is associated with the beauty, monumentality, picturesque character and grandeur of its most valuable sacred and secular buildings, which constitute a foundation of Polish identity and cultural heritage. When experiencing outstanding examples of twentieth-century architecture in Kraków, we admire the elegance and rationalism of Kraków modernism and original, exceptionally valuable examples of Kraków postmodernist architecture.

In 1910, a competition was held to develop the regulatory plan for *Greater Kraków*. The winning project, prepared by architects Józef Czajkowski, Władysław Ekielski, Tadeusz Stryjeński, Ludwik Wojtyczko, and Kazimierz Wyczyński, was regarded as the beginning of modern planning in Poland, as well as the foundation of modern Polish urban and architectural thought. It marked the end of Kraków's era as a pre-industrial city.[3]

## 2. ARCHITECTURE OF *PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH INTEGRATION CLASSES NO. 151 NAMED AFTER THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY* IN THE RUCZAJ-ZABORZE HOUSING ESTATE IN KRAKÓW

The Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate forms part of the post-war Greater Kraków Plan prepared under the direction of architect and urban planner Krystian Seibert – Chief Designer of the *General Plan of Kraków* and the *Kraków Urban Complex* – developed in 1971–1978 at the Municipal Urban Planning Studio, the Municipal Design Office, and, from 1977, the Kraków Development Office.[4] The Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate was developed between 1985 and 2000 in the southern part of Kraków, in District VIII Dębniki, within the area bounded by Stefana Grota-Roweckiego, Wacława Lipińskiego, Turonia, Pastelowa, and Zachodnia Streets. Between 1985 and 1993, prefabricated multi-family residential buildings of varying heights (4, 5, and 11 storeys) were constructed according to designs by arch. Anna Basistowa, arch. Jan Lewandowski, arch. Krystyna Leśniodorska, and arch. Maria Czerwińska, who was the author of the urban concept for the Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate[5]. Built between 1997 and 2011, the *Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit*, designed by architect and professor

[2] Since 1925, see: *Historia*, "Archidiecezja Krakowska", https://diecezja.pl/historia/ (access: 10.09.2026).

[3] J. Purchla, *Kraków w Europie Środka*, Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Kraków 2016, pp. 70–72.

[4] The concept of the Plan of Greater Kraków was developed by a team composed of dr hab. inż. arch. Krystian Seibert (1930–2015) – Chief Designer of the General Plan of Kraków and of the Kraków Urban Complex, prof. dr hab. inż. arch. Zygmunt Ziobrowski (1939–2023) – General Designer, mgr J. Bukowski – Chief Designer of the programme, mgr inż. arch. J. Zadrożna – Chief Designer of synthetic studies, mgr inż. A. Janowska – Chief Designer of transport, mgr inż. M. Paszucha – Chief Designer of utility systems and municipal engineering, prof. dr hab. inż. arch. B. Malisz – consultant, and the Kraków 2000 Scientific Council, see: K. Seibert, *Plan Wielkiego Krakowa*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków–Wrocław 1983, p. 10.

[5] *Osiedle Ruczaj-Zaborze*, [in:] A.H. Stachowski (ed.), *Encyklopedia Krakowa*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Kraków 2000, p. 857.

Witold Cęckiewicz and erected at 13 Stanisława Rostworowskiego Street, became the architectural and symbolic landmark of this part of Kraków.

In the Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate in Kraków, architect Mieczysław Gała designed the *Ruczaj Zaborze Primary School* at 2 Lipińskiego Street and an unrealised primary school at Zachodnia Street. He also designed residential complexes at 16 Stanisława Rostworowskiego Street, built between 1993 and 1995. Educational architecture occupies a special place in this architect's work; from the beginning of his professional career, he approached the form and composition of each school and educational complexes individually[6].

In 1984, at the *Kraków Design and Research Office for General Construction*, architect Mieczysław Gała prepared the conceptual design of the Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School, which received First Distinction in the Education category at the Review of Design Works organised by the National Association of General Construction Design Offices[7]. The technical design of the school was developed in 1984–1986 by a team consisting of: chief designer and author arch. Mieczysław Gała, architectural collaboration arch. Marta Kozielec, arch. Ewa Kasz, arch. Witold Sztorc and arch. Jarosław Kazior. In 1991, the Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School in Kraków was included in the catalogue and presented at the exhibition *Contemporary Cracow Architecture*, organised by the Council of the Krakow Branch of SARP in conjunction with the CSCE Symposium on the Cultural Heritage[8].

*Primary School with Integration Classes No. 151 named after the Jagiellonian University in Kraków* was planned at 2 Wacława Lipińskiego Street, in the north-eastern part of the Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate in Kraków. The school site is bordered to the north by Stefana Grota-Roweckiego Street and to the east by Wacława Lipińskiego Street, while to the south and west it adjoins 5- and 11-storey prefabricated multi-family residential buildings and a recreational area.

The architectural idea of the *Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School* by architect Mieczysław Gała was aimed at architecture integrated with its place, positioned on the axis of two pedestrian routes running from the housing estate, and above all, at architecture supporting the inclusive education of children, while also serving as a place for meetings and cultural events of the local community. The spatial concept of the school is based on formally distinct sectors dedicated to particular age groups of pupils and preschool children: the older children's sector (DS), the younger children's sector (DM), the central sector (SC) containing the school forum, administration, library, and reading room, the dining sector (SŻ), and the physical education and sports sector (SP).

The architectural form of the *Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School* in Kraków is created by a composition of rectangular solids – functional sectors – articulated by setbacks and projecting cylindrical stairwells. The architectural composition was planned according to the discipline of the right angle, around the main space of the central sector S.C., grouping functions associated with the social life of the school and containing the school forum – a multifunctional space for school ceremonies, meetings and student recreation. Architect

[6] Arch. Mieczysław Franciszek Gała (1939–2020) – graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at the Cracow University of Technology (1958–1964), see: commemorative website https://architektmieczyslawgala.com (access: 10.09.2026).

[7] *Letter of congratulations from The Kraków Design and Research Office for General Construction in Kraków*, dated 4 October 1985, from private archive of arch. Mieczysław Gała and arch. Monika Gała-Walczowska.

[8] From the private archive of arch. Mieczysław Gała and arch. Monika Gała-Walczowska.

Mieczysław Gała planned the main entrance complex of the school at the corner of the building facing the Ruczaj Zaborze Housing Estate. This distinctive architectural motif is formed by the cylindrical volume of the main staircase, enriched by overhanging elements of the structural frame – columns and beams – flanked by entrances in the form of glazed vestibules. The spatial composition of the main entrance was emphasised by the terracotta colour of the structural frame, highlighting its openwork structure against the white façade. Unrealised elements of the school architecture visible in the axonometric drawing are the roof skylights, which were intended to introduce daylight into the hall and into the corridors of the teaching sectors. The spacious interior of the school forum was given a double-height volume, while the amphitheatrical seating arrangement and the red-painted truss structure supporting the flat roof are aesthetic features of this space. On the main entrance side, an entrance hall was located directly adjacent to the school forum, together with a school shop, scout room and youth club. On the ground floor of central sector C, doctors' offices and interest rooms were planned, while the first floor contained the teachers' room, management offices, office, archive, and library with reading room. On level -1, cloakrooms, storage rooms and technical rooms were located. In the immediate vicinity of the central sector, a dining room was planned, opening onto an external atrium with catering facilities belonging to the dining sector SŻ. The teaching sectors located in opposite wings of the building were dedicated to individual age groups of pupils. To the west, the older children's teaching sector DS was located, based on a system of subject classrooms supplemented by specialist rooms, ending in the unrealised design with an external amphitheatre surrounded by a pergola. On the sunny southern side, the younger children's teaching sector DM together with the pre-school section was located, supplemented in the design by summer classrooms in the form of external terraces, which were not constructed. In the north-eastern corner of the school forum, the sports sector SP was located, containing two gymnasiums and ancillary facilities. On the eastern side, an external sports area with playing fields, a running track and recreation areas was arranged. The dynamic composition of the Ruczaj Zaborze Primary School building creates external courtyards for student recreation between the teaching sectors and the sports sector, with additional entrances planned from these courtyards.

The horizontal architectural form of the school is complemented by the vertical composition of the façades, defined by the rhythm of pilasters, columns, and glazing. The façades are predominantly white, combined with terracotta-coloured sections, diversified by white accents arranged according to a square module. Window and door metalwork was designed in red, while some glazing retains square modular divisions corresponding to the divisions in sections of the façade. The colours and interior design of the school emphasise aesthetic coherence with the external architectural character and façade composition. White dominates the school interior, combined with red sections of walls, window and door metalwork, railings, and the trusses of the school forum and gymnasium, also painted red.

*The Primary School with Integration Classes No. 151 named after the Jagiellonian University* in Kraków, at 2 Wacława Lipińskiego Street, was one of the first educational institutions in Małopolska focused on inclusive education. On the courtyard side, between the sports sector and the older children's sector, an entrance with a ramp and toilets for people with disabilities was designed. Owing to the institution's limited original budget, lifts were designed and installed only in 2010. The school has a room for sensory integration and rehabilitation. Regular integration events and sports competitions are organized, such as Sport-Specjaliada, during which pupils take part in coordination competitions and learn

mutual respect, healthy competition and shared play. The school ceremonially observes the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the Word Autism Awareness Day, reminding the school community of the need for empathy, acceptance, and openness towards others. The accessibility and welcoming character of the interiors and surroundings of the school support the development and inclusive education of pupils and preschool children, while providing a place for recreation for the school community and residents of this part of the Ruczaj Zaborze Housing Estate.

In 2008, the building of *Primary School with Integration Classes No. 151 named after the Jagiellonian University* in Kraków underwent thermal modernisation and partial change in the façade colour scheme. The thermal modernisation project was developed by the Smart Architekci studio from Wrocław. After the façade modernisation, white still dominated the school architecture; however, some architectural details were reduced, the rustication was not reconstructed, and the terracotta colour was replaced with yellow. In 2022, the school was extended by a new sports hall with a climbing wall, fitness room, and gym, designed by ARP Manecki Design Studio from Kraków[9].

## 3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF *PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH INTEGRATION CLASSES NO. 151 NAMED AFTER THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKÓW* AND THE EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

*Architecture is meaning and memory*
Tomasz Kozłowski

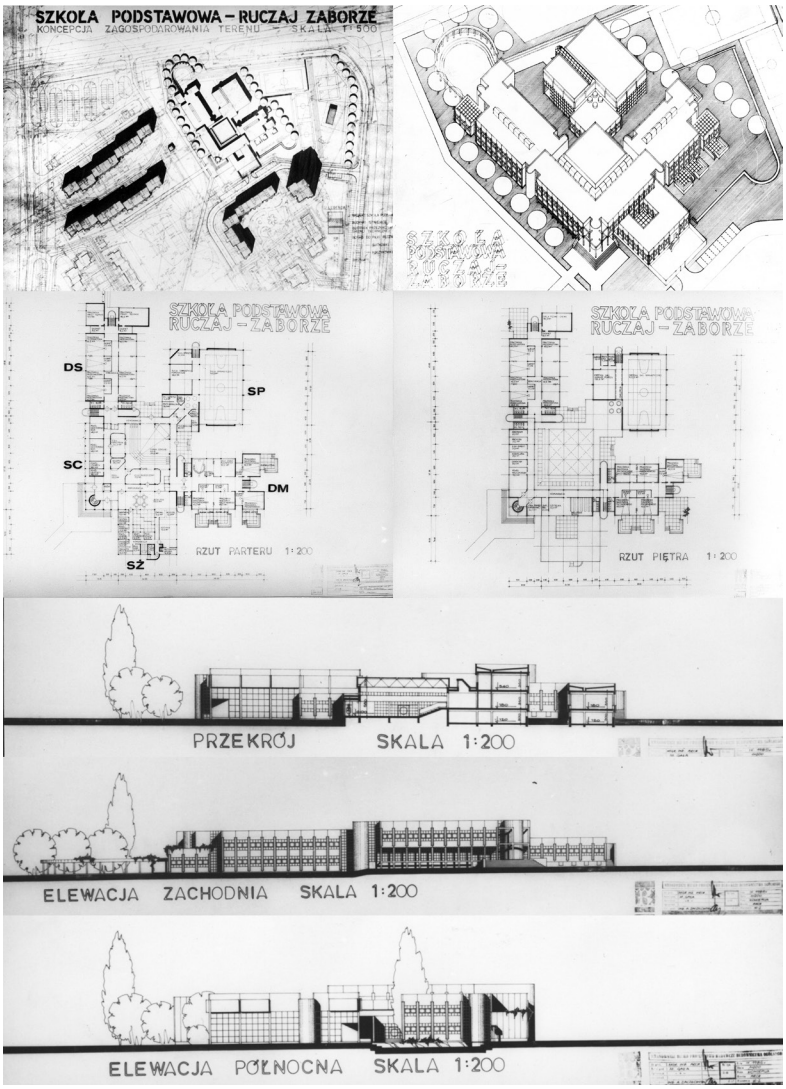
"Architecture should establish relationships between the individual and the community", emphasises Tomasz Kozłowski. "A design is not something neutral; it must embody an implicit vision of the human being and society".[10] The essence of the architecture of the Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School is realised through the synergy between the architectural space defined by the architect and the school community and residents of the housing estate. The architectural idea and form, the spatial concept of the school, composition and detail, welcoming and integration-supporting character of the school interiors and surroundings, and facilities for people with disabilities together contribute to the quality of the architecture and shape a sense of community, positively influencing the experience of preschool children and pupils in accordance with the idea of inclusive education.

Piotr Winskowski translates "the question of the identity of Polish architecture – considered as a component of artistic culture – into a question about the features of spatial forms that carry identity, defined in relation to concepts of intellectual or emotional significance". In this context, he points to the architecture of the *Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School*, designed by architect Mieczysław Gała, and to the unique relationship between the school building and the surrounding residential development, which distinguishes this part of the Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate in

[9] www.spzoi151.pl (access: 9.09.2026).

[10] T. Kozłowski, *Thesis of the International Scientific Conference – Architecture and Experience, Defining Architectural Space – Architecture and Experience*, "Department of Architectural Design", https://dpa.arch.pk.edu.pl/thesis-in-english-2026/(access: 10.09.2026).

Kraków.[11] The *Primary School with Integration Classes No. 151 named after the Jagiellonian University* in Kraków, designed by architect Mieczysław Gała with and team and completed in 1987–1989 at 2 Wacława Lipińskiego Street, is a work of architecture integrated with its setting, helping to shape the identity of this part of the Ruczaj-Zaborze Housing Estate over the years.




Ill. 1. Fragments of the conceptual design of the *Ruczaj-Zaborze Primary School* in Kraków, the *Kraków Design and Research Office for General Construction*, Chief Designer and Author: architect Mieczysław Gała, collaboration: architect Witold Sztorc, Kraków 1984, illustration source: archive of arch. Mieczysław Gała and arch. Monika Gała-Walczowska

[11] P. Winskowski, *Architektura wobec kręgów tożsamości*, [in:] T. Kostyrko, T. Zgółka (eds.), *Kultura wobec kręgów tożsamości. Materiały Konferencji Przedkongresowej. 19–20 października 2000*, Wydawnictwo DTSK Silesia, Poznań–Wrocław 2000, p. 126–127.



Ill. 2. *Primary School with Integration Classes No. 151 named after the Jagiellonian University* at 2 Wacława Lipińskiego Street in the Ruczaj-Zaborze Estate in Kraków. Author and Chief Designer: arch. Mieczysław Gała, architectural collaboration: arch. Marta Kozielec, arch. Ewa Kasz, arch. Witold Sztorc, arch. Jarosław Kazior. The design was developed between 1984 and 1986 at the *Kraków Design and Research Office for General Construction*, construction 1987–1989, photos of the completed project: arch. Mieczysław Gała, illustration source: archive of arch. Mieczysław Gała and arch. Monika Gała-Walczowska

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[2] Kozłowski T., *Thesis of the International Scientific Conference – Architecture and Experience*, *Defining Architectural Space – Architecture and Experience*, "Department of Architectural Design", https://dpa.arch.pk.edu.pl/thesis-in-english-2026/ (access: 10.09.2026).

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[4] *Osiedle Ruczaj-Zaborze* [in:] A.H. Stachowski (ed.), *Encyklopedia Krakowa*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Kraków 2000, p. 857.

[5] Purchla J., *Kraków w Europie Środka*, Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Kraków 2016.

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