

Pocket parks. Student drawings and contemporary projects in Krakow

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The development of modern cities contributes to the shortage of green spaces within their boundaries. It is necessary to utilize and revitalize undeveloped spaces into small gardens, providing residents with a place for recreation, relaxation, and education. Pocket gardens (or mini-park) strengthen the relationships between people, places, and their history. These interventions, tailored precisely to a specific location, transform constraints into a resource that generates a new quality of space. Small gardens are excellent research tools in architectural education, both through observation and creation. Their small scale and “adaptability” teach an economic approach to design and architectural education.

The article presents new topics for students of the Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology (Poland), introduced in freehand drawing classes:

pocket garden of dreams – drawing from imagination; inspiration with organic form in the creation of architecture in a small garden – plein air; small gardens in Krakow – drawing from nature.

The article also presents selected contemporary pocket parks in Krakow. They are characterised by a high degree of functional and thematic diversity. They refer to the context of the places and provide engaging outdoor educational spaces that combine recreational and cognitive functions. Pocket parks allow residents to connect with nature, which is particularly important for the elderly, children, and people with limited mobility.

The article concludes that Krakow’s pocket gardens improve the quality of urban space and residents’ lives, encourage various social activities, and promote an active and healthy lifestyle. They have significant ecological, social, and urban planning potential, which is why they are increasingly considered an important element of sustainable urban development. In the education of future architects, they serve as inspiring examples of small-scale projects that address the ongoing depletion of space and resources in the modern city.