

Design Problem:

The project scope is to transform a designated portion of the 6th-floor studio in the Nancy Cantor Warehouse into a fully realized residential environment that is both functional and concept-driven. The design challenge is to create a space that is attuned to the client, supports Alex's routines, is driven by a clear concept, and maintains intentional spatial organization. The goal is to merge practicality with atmosphere, ensuring every choice that is artistic and conceptual, is also intentional and technically sound.

Client Brief:

Alex is a 27 year old guitarist (in a band) who plays late-night gigs a couple of times a week and also teaches private lessons to teens some afternoons. He is earning an online graduate degree in music history. Alex wakes up late when he can, listens to a lot of music, collects vinyl, and reads a lot. He frequently hosts impromptu small, relaxed hangouts. He likes a home that feels lived in and keeps active materials visible; he stays generally tidy without being fussy. He has a 6-year old chihuahua named Bowie.

Concept to Design:

Starting from Alex's brief, the design developed by focusing on how he lives: playing music, teaching lessons, studying for his graduate program, and hosting relaxed hangouts. Early ideation highlighted a pattern of layered textures, visible materials, and a warm, lived-in feeling, which shaped both the first 2D collage and the evolving 3D models. These studies created a visual language of planes, textures, layers, and geometric shapes that carried through the project. Sightlines and sunlight paths guided layout decisions, allowing open flow while separating spaces for socializing, working, and unwinding. Warmth, cohesion, and tidy, open storage support a home that feels comfortable, functional, and intentionally designed.

Who is Alex?

Alex is a hard worker that enjoys work life balance. He is an artistic, outgoing, laid back, and vibrant person. He enjoys low key jam/hang outs and hosting them in his artfully curated space. He likes to garden to calm his mind and has a tiny garden that he tends to lovingly. His need for open storage and visible materials suggests ADHD or possible object permanence difficulties. His dog has his own Zumiez style wardrobe and a set of tiny bowties and matching leashes.

What are his needs?

- Hang out space
- Open but tidy storage solutions
- Able to either have a multiuse space or separate spaces for work and hobbies/activities with friends
- Space and creative storage for books/vinyls/instruments

- Space to teach music lessons, study, and host friends

Initial thoughts?

This prompt felt like a mid-century meets contemporary design style would fit the client. Open shelving and using the walls as creative and vertical storage came to mind as well. Space for books, instruments, plants, and more is necessary as well. The color palette feels like it would be sunflower yellow, sunset orange, shades of green, navy blue, and olive.

For the next part of the project, we were tasked with finding a painting that felt like the clients space to us. I chose the painting (see fig. 1) 1964 by Charles Bunnell. It had the order and complexity the prompt provided while still feeling organic and provided the color palette as well.

From the painting, we were asked to create an abstract collage based on all of the materials provided and assignments completed so far (see fig. 2). This design captures the layered and authentic spirit of Alex's life through abstract qualities rather than literal representation. Warm oranges and yellows convey energy, vibrancy, and social warmth, while greens and navy tones provide grounding, peace, and moments of calm. Rhythm emerges through overlapping shapes and repeated lines, representing movement and flow, echoing Alex's connection to music and his layered, sometimes chaotic energy. The balance between structured rectangles and irregular, organic forms reflects a space that feels intentional yet relaxed, tidy but lived-in. Through color, texture, and rhythm, the design creates an atmosphere that transitions smoothly between energetic social moments and quiet personal retreat, embodying the warm, playful, and layered vibe of Alex's personality.