

Reflection report: The Architecture of the Interior

// P5 version

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Studio : The Architecture of the Interior: New directions for the Public Interior
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Project title : **“Reconsideration of NS Station Amsterdam Zuid (Fixing Another Link):
Proposal for A mused Parnassusweg”**

1 The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

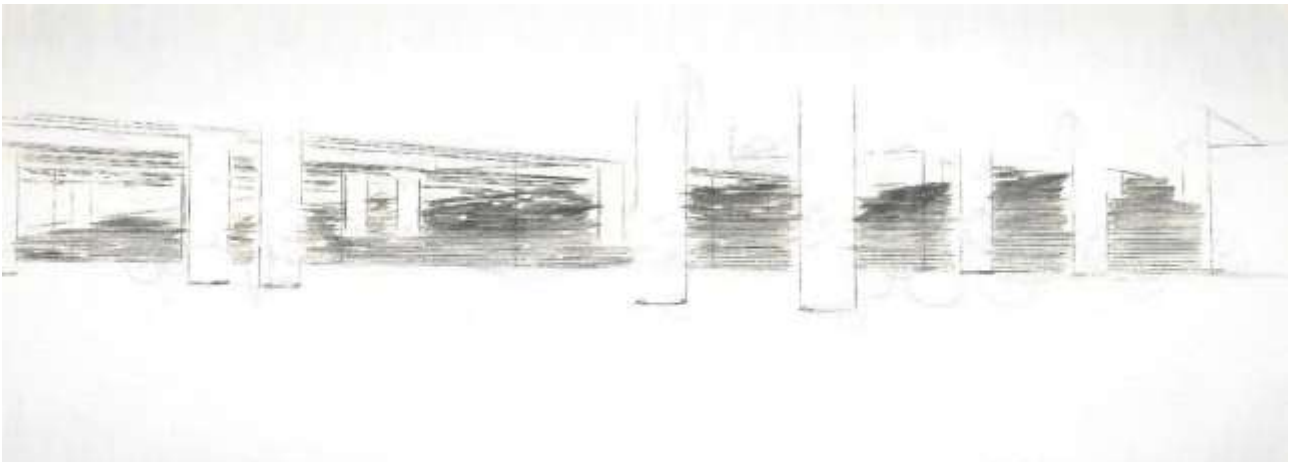
Graduation studio ‘New directions for the Public Interior’ is focused on the architecture of the so called public interiors: spaces in which we gather to be entertained or to consume, spaces through which we travel and we consider to be public. It has particular areas of attention, concerning the organisation, structuring, servicing and materialization of large-scale public environments.¹ More specifically, the studio’s project is concerned with the ZuidasDok in Amsterdam Zuid as a major and infrastructural node. ZuidasDok connects the south of Amsterdam with its newly developed business centre Zuidas to Schiphol airport through its railway connection. NS Station Amsterdam Zuid also functions as the major metro and bus station for traffic towards the city centre.²

In the subject I chose within this studio and project, the focus is on a border of the ZuidasDok area: Parnassusweg. This plan area is dominated by passing traffic and touches upon various domains, zones and user groups. The road functions as an important infrastructural axis which connects Amsterdam Oud Zuid with the southern suburban area of Buitenveldert and has a number of remarkable destination points such as the Amsterdam University, the university hospital (VUMC) and the Amsterdam Parnas courthouse. The main entrance to the Amsterdam Zuid train station is located in the middle of the high rise Amsterdam Zuid business district, but located at the Parnassusweg there is another entrance to the station, a ‘backdoor’ between city and station. It was the interplay between destination and passing through, the dual functioning of the Parnassusweg as both border and connector and the diversity of its surrounding functions and users which caught my attention and interest to this plan area.

While the eastbound main entrance of the station is mainly focused on business people and corporate Zuidas, the Parnassusweg entrance gives stage to the other users of Zuidas: to VU students, residents and scholars. With my proposal for amused Parnassusweg, I state that the station entrance should be transformed from back door to the city to a(nother) full city gate to Amsterdam Zuid.

1 Ibid, pg. 2

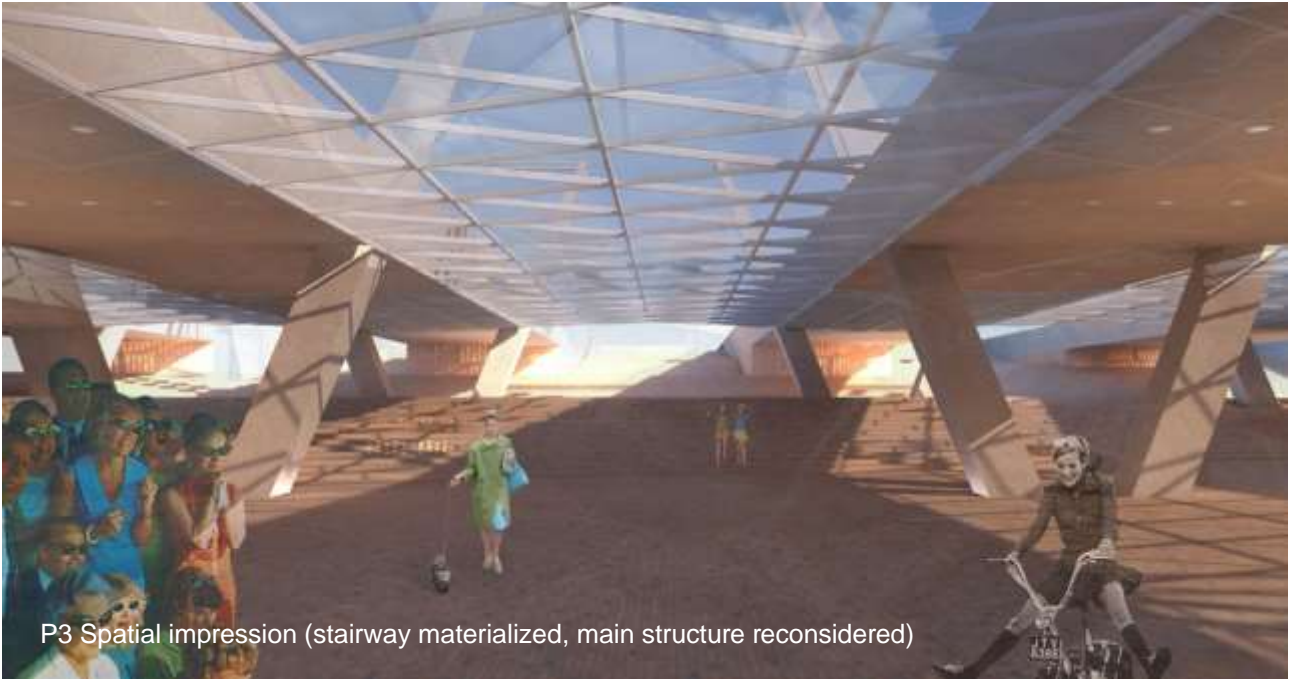
2 Department of Public Interior, Semester book fall 2013, pg. 3



P1 Concept sketch (grand stairs to platforms)



P2 Spatial impression (stairway materialized, functional main structure)



P3 Spatial impression (stairway materialized, main structure reconsidered)

2 The relation between research and design, the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The studio operates by addressing specific exercises and themes, essential aspects of the public interior. For example: place and space, shelter, structure, light, material, ground, features, intimacy, occupation and communication. The design studio was narrowly related to a workshop course in which the students in small group settings made analyses of existing related projects and case studies.³ The architectural, functional, conceptual and social instruments and elements found in these reference projects were explored, developed and tested in a thematic way into potential design locations within the ZuidasDok area. In this workshop set-up there was a distinction between model and type: first different types of public interiors such as large railway station reference projects⁴ as well as other large public spaces were analysed. In later workshops, different physical models were explored, tested and 'pasted' into different locations in the ZuidasDok area. The outcomes of these group workshops served mainly as a source of inspiration for the individual design proposals and as basis for the design assignments.

As the studio's semester book states: "the key to the understanding of the Public Interior project is the user, for the public space, the public interior is dedicated to the user's sense of well-being, his experience and desire"⁵. Therefore, an essential part of research directed by the studio was individual research with a predominant social- or user-oriented approach.

My user specific research consisted out of contextual research, user observations and a user questionnaire. I extensively observed people in their natural habitat to find out how they perceive their environment and thus my plan location. I investigated if and how their sense of place influences user behaviour and movement. The user specific research provided insight into various focal points and design potentials in the plan area, along or intersecting the Parnassusweg. The user specific research played a decisive role in this project, for this graduation started without concrete program requirements and specific plan location. The research functioned as guidance and inspiration for the design and its outcomes motivated essential design decisions and proposals.

One of the outcomes of this thorough user-oriented research was that Parnassusweg in its current configuration solely functions as a road. Due to exponential growth of surrounding buildings and (new) user groups, the public terrain of Parnassusweg is under pressure and asks for redesign. Both Parnassusweg and NS railway station Amsterdam Zuid do not have enough capacity to accommodate the estimated circulation and use. In the near future, Parnassusweg will be surrounded by more VU University, corporate and residential -users. In its current situation, Parnassusweg is not perceived as pleasant public domain. My questionnaire and literature research also indicated that both current and future users ask for accessible, safe and attractive public space.

My answer for the required urban revitalisation of Parnassusweg and the westwing of ZuidasDok was an introduction and implementation of a symbolic meaning of the plan location. The nine muses and the station entrance altogether contribute to the area's sense of place and therefore to the very existence of Parnassusweg and its supporting role within Zuidas. They embed the design in its context and highlight and support user movement from and to the station. They also distinguish potential public, local urban space from technocratic infrastructure and provide opportunity for Parnassusweg to be a street instead of a road.

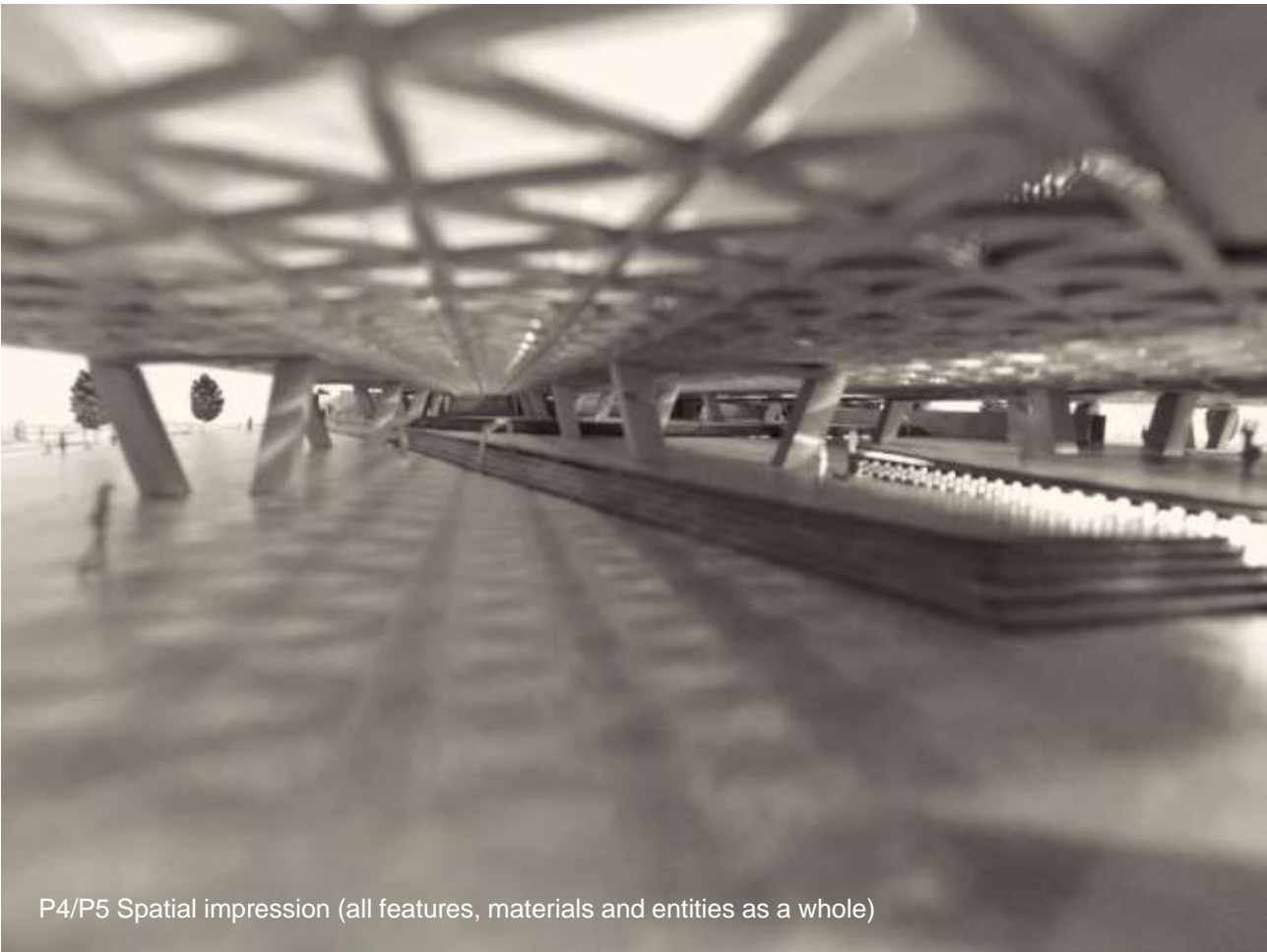
Throughout history and art, artists called upon the muses for inspiration. I unconsciously started to do so as well during my Master studies and graduation at TU Delft. Although the muses are often depicted as beautiful young woman, it is most likely that in this literal appearance they do not exist and have never existed. They represent and symbolize parts of our world and being and help us and all what is around make sense.

In my graduation project, of course the project location and even more important its name Parnassusweg were already there. For me it made sense to emphasize on and elaborate its inspiring potential. One could say that during my graduation, the muses turned out to be my tools for design.

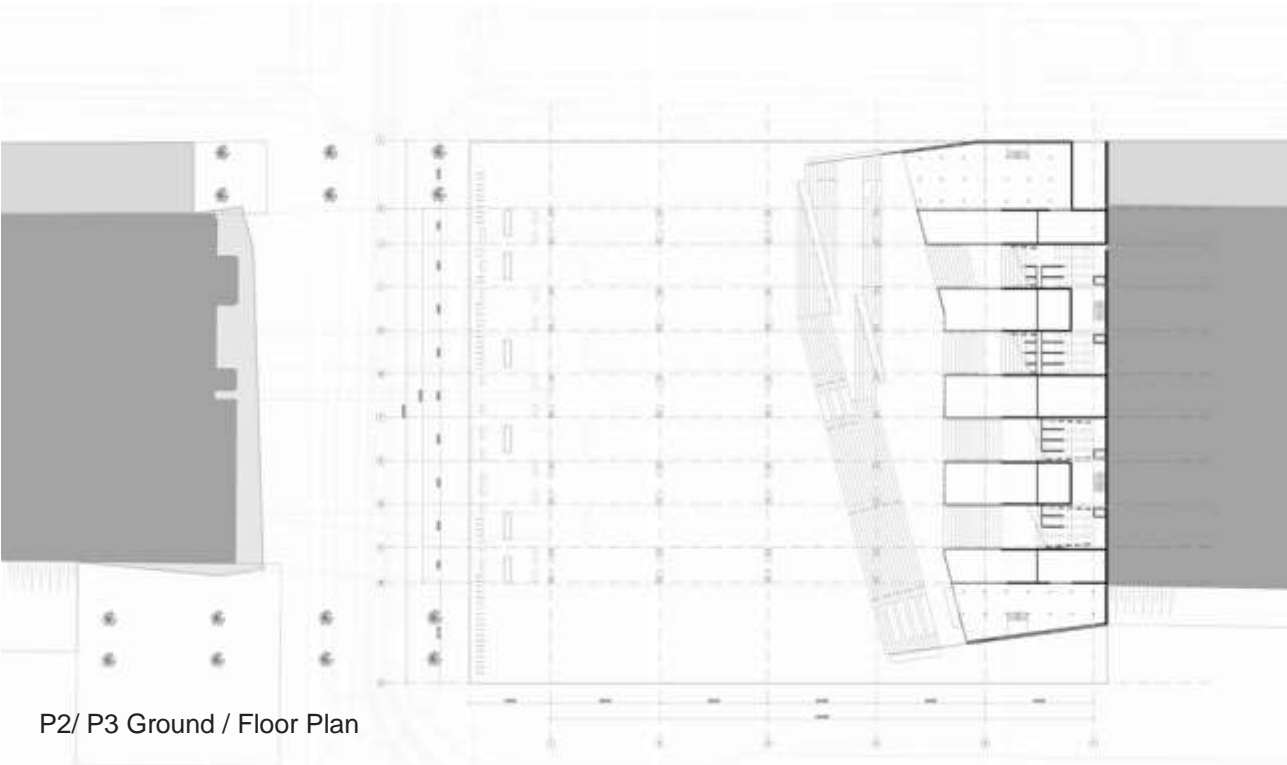
3 Such as the Atocha railway station in Madrid, Grand Central Station in New York but also other large public spaces such as Rialto in Venice and De Meerpaal in Dronten.

4 Such as lighting, shelter, occupation, space and place, material and structure

5 Department of Public Interior, Semester book fall 2013, pg. 3



P4/P5 Spatial impression (all features, materials and entities as a whole)



P2/ P3 Ground / Floor Plan

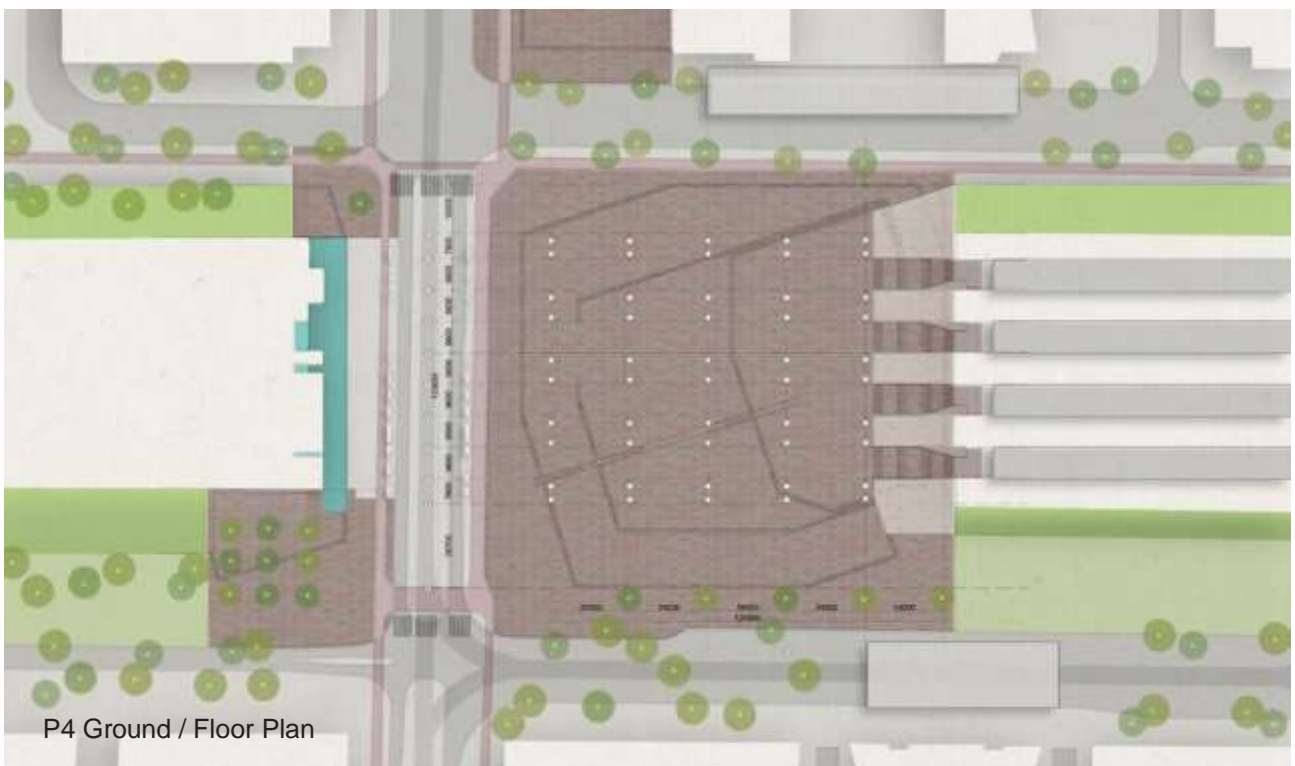
3 The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The nine squares and gardens in the proposed urban scheme remain conceptual and require further development. Nevertheless, their overall strategy is clear: They function as unifying reference points along the currently fragmented Parnassusweg. A tactical positioning and integration of these places along the sidewalks and streetcorners of Parnassusweg, together with the use of tools for design such as materialization, symbolization, form, shape and space, shelter, features and amenities, are all part of this link fixing and wayfinding approach.

Besides gaining pragmatic insight in user movements, -desires, -being, -instincts and getting grip on context and design potentials for the Parnassusweg area, by means of both the research and the design project I aspired to take a position within the field of architecture as place-making profession concerning perception and experience of our built space and the multifaceted sensory aspects and potentials of our built environment.

The main purpose of a new secondary entrance to the railway station - physically connected to Parnassusweg - for me was to create a more appropriate transition from station platform to city life and to embed and integrate the railway station more in its surroundings. The intention was also to give space and shape to the diverse user movements and groups of Parnassusweg as well as to create a uniform connection between the various domains and terrains in between the VU University area and Berlage's Oud Zuid.

The redesign of the NS railway station entrance at Parnassusweg provides a functional connection and transit between city and station, between various means of transportation and accommodates travellers coming from different directions. It also symbolizes Mount Parnassus: home of the nine muses, a place where creation and imagination are encouraged and where the various characteristics of all muses come together as an inspirational and 'significant' whole.



P4 Ground / Floor Plan