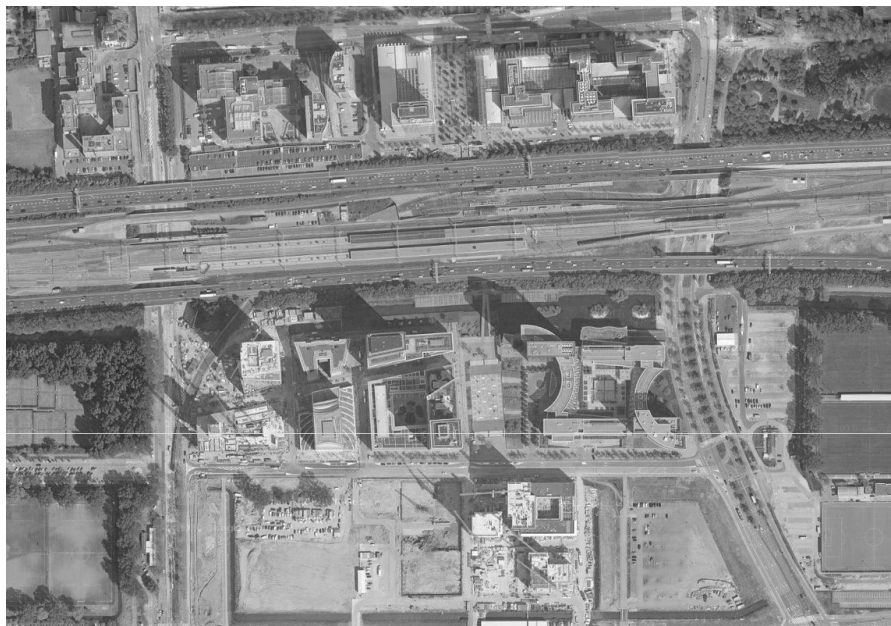


Reflection P5
Amsterdam Zuidas_Gate Wall

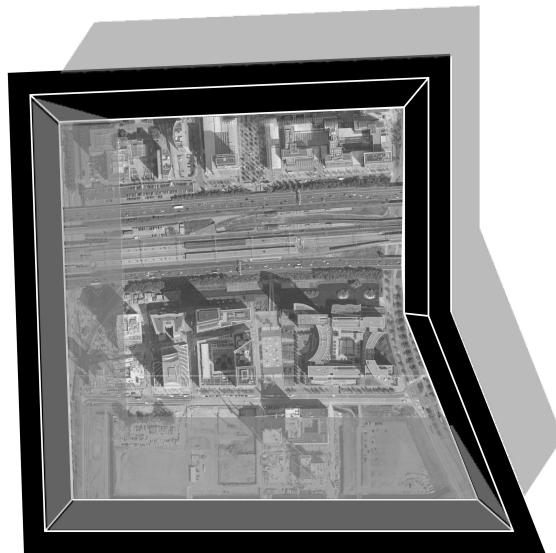
The graduation studio Public Interior is particularly focused on investigating spaces in which people gather together. In these spaces people spend their leisure time, are entertained and consume; moreover these spaces are more and more connected in the form of networks. The studio problem statement is to give vitality to these spaces, precisely in the Zuidas neighborhood, the new city business district in Amsterdam.

In 1998, Amsterdam municipality saw on the south part of the city the perfect place where create the new business point in order to be internationally competitive. According to the municipality it was meant to be the new city centre, well connected to Schiphol airport, crossed by the railway system, surrounded by green areas, with new residential buildings and close to the historical centre; a key point for the development of Amsterdam as international city.

Contrary, nowadays the main feeling perceived is to be disconnected from the surroundings, in a space frequented only by employees in a hurry and where predominate the feeling of exclusion rather than the one of union. Moreover, if we look to Zuidas on a map we can see that its area is defined by the railway and the highway, that cut the area in two parts, and the big roads that run on the west and east border. This generates an island configuration, disconnected from the other parts of Amsterdam.



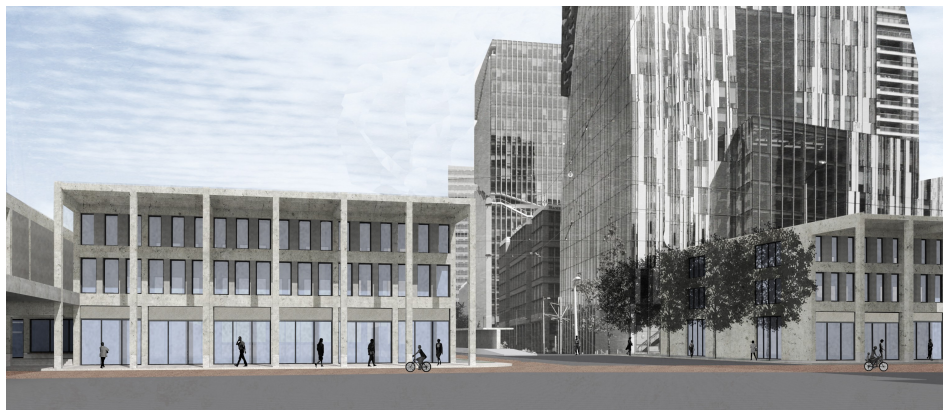
On a conceptual level, the first reaction I had to this condition was to criticize Zuidas underlining its island configuration and making it even more introvert and close to the surroundings. That is because the newly built area like the one around Amsterdam Zuidas can't have the same charm of an historical city centre, which is by nature heterogeneous, lively, permeable and a connection point. In order to make it more introvert and closed to the surroundings I chose to work on the idea of wall. The natural position of a barrier is the border that is why I chose to raise the wall along the perimeter of Zuidas making it like a fortified town.



As J. Zonnevald says *“a city centre has a broader significance. One can only speak of such a centre once a section of the city appeals to people from the whole region, and people from different sections of the population live, work and spend their leisure time in that area.”* Therefore to change Zuidas from a business district into a proper city centre, a mix of functions and people must be brought in it. Moreover, R. Sennet who researched on the border condition claiming that *“In Nature borders are the zones where organisms become more interactive, due to the meeting of different species or physical conditions. The border combines porosity and resistance”*. Because of this the borders could be the right place where people interact and through which they enter Zuidas. I investigated Zuidas' borders and decided to focus more on the west border because it is shared by the business district, the Vrije university and a resident neighborhood. The question that can be arisen now is if different people are really interested in interacting with Zuidas. In order to answer this question I researched on Vrije university students and their habits asking them to fill in a questionnaire. The results have shown that students can enjoy Zuidas if this provide different functions such as evening entertainment and also to the possibility of create a connection between the students' world and the business one. Concluding the research brought me to decide that the design has to involve porosity and resistance in order to create a communication between Zuidas and the surroundings and at the same time criticize the configuration of the area as it is right now. Moreover, the anthropological research helped me to decide the programme needed in order to bring a mix of people in to the area.

The design takes into consideration all the research results. It is developed on the west border of Zuidas, Parnassusweg, and it runs from north to south including the entrance to the train station. In this way it creates a connection between the two sides cut by the railway. I developed the initial idea of the wall into an arcade which allows porosity and interaction. Then a grid of

parallel walls is attached to the arcade on the east-west direction and these walls define three buildings which host the different function. The scheme act also as gate for Zuidas since it is divided by a road that enter the area bringing people to the business district.



The task of the studio was to develop a public interior suitable for different users groups in order to create a liveliness space. Because of this I focus more on the arcade and the train station entrance, the spaces I consider more public interior due to their functions. The arcade acts as gathering point, people walk under this covered space to reach the train station or other destinations and they can find different shops; indeed the function of the arcade is providing a space where people consume. The train station is directly connected to the arcade being an extension of it; the observer, walking towards the platform, first has to walk under the arcade and when he arrives to the tracks he leaves the arcade zone to enter in an outside podium, then he enters the station and finally, climbing the stairs, he is on the platform. The interior perception of these spaces has been accurately studied in order to communicate different feelings. Importance has been given to the choice of the materialization (facades and ground) and the study of the natural light. The choice of having light coming in only through roof openings and the concrete chosen for the structure communicate the feeling of being inside a monumental space. I chose to give to my project a monumental aspect because it represents the gates of Zuidas and the possibility to create connection between Zuidas and its surroundings, like a bridge that connects two sides. At the same time under the arcade the atmosphere is more lively and colorful, full of shops and social activities in order to let the people feel free to interact.



I think that the relationship between the research and the design is quite well visible. Indeed the research helped me to find a clear programme for the buildings, moreover I studied the possibility to transform the border, that could be understood as an “outside zone”, into an active zone of exchange making Zuidas a proper city center. The border become a place of exchange and liveliness thanks to the arcade that leads people, such as students, residents, and employees, to interact. Moreover, the research brought me to define the interior atmosphere I need in order to make the project a space both monumental and friendly. Secondly, I think that the project well reflect the purpose of the graduation studio. Indeed I chose to work on the arcade and the train station as main public interior spaces and I mostly developed them taking into account feelings, atmosphere, materialization and lights, all aspect very important for the interior studies. Moreover, the arcade and the train station act as gather points where people can spend their leisure time thanks to the shops, caffee and restaurant.

To sum up, the ending project has an essential design but at the same time it has a strong potential as urban infrastructure, landscape mark and interior space. Since my first reaction to Zuidas was to criticize it, I chose to develop the design in opposition to the context. The design result shows that the project has been horizontally developed contrasting the high rise towers of the business district becoming a landscape mark that underline the most important border of Zuidas, Parnassusweg. Moreover the project acts as a gate for Zuidas. The project itself is a threshold and by definition people pass through it entering or exiting a place, the project become the main door for Zuidas.

The opposition to the context is marked also by the choice of materialization, indeed the essential and, at the same time, strong materials chosen are completely different from the towers ones and they bring order to the context which otherwise is chaotic. The materials used allows to change the perception of the project from the point of view of a person standing inside the arcade. Indeed walking there the observer feel to be inside a monumental space: high arcade, crude concrete, columns rhythm scanned by the light. At the same time the observer can still find human scale, intimacy and measurements inside this big space thanks to the travertine basement of the columns, which is 1mt high, the travertine on the ground which scans the rhythm of the columns, the benches inside the station that are a place where finding an intimate space and the stairs handrails in the station hall which are carved into the concrete of the exact measure of a hand.

Finally the project match together porosity and resistance, quoting R. Sennet, transforming the border into an exchange zone. It allows porosity thanks to the arcade, that allows a vertical

movement, and the gate function which allows an horizontal movement. At the same time it resistance because of the material used that communicates solidity and strength.