1. Principle elevation plan for Demeter railway station

2. The boulevard Karlbergsvägen, Demeter at its far end

3. Section of Demeter’s interior structure
Introduction

Demeter is a critique against monolithic structures, patriarchal if you so wish, in Stockholm’s townscape. This critique concerns architectural bodies and works of public art. As an alternative the project suggests something with an almost fragile quality, and simultaneously monumental. It is both a piece of art and an architectural solution for an intricate infrastructural problem: the railway-system. Demeter is the name of a new railway axis in Stockholm.

1. Theoretical Context

An early example of gender aspects in architecture is found in the architect Inigo Jones’ (1573-1652) Roman Sketchbook, ill. 4. The entry is dated Friday 20th January 1614. Here we find a dichotomy consisting of a feminine interior and a masculine façade. In the interior “imagination [is] set free, and sometimes flying out, as nature herself does, often extravagantly, to delight, amuse and sometimes move us to laughter” Jones writes. Implicitly he describes his view of a woman. He continues with a description of the interior’s boundary, the façade: “in architecture the outward ornaments ought to be solid, proportional according to rules, masculine and unaffected”.

The expression of importance is ‘masculine’. Façade materials ought to be in parity with the buildings status, whereas the interior could be of less solid and subordinated material. Ornaments should be kept within the building. Thus Jones defines architecture as a binary system, a dichotomy between the ‘masculine’ façade and the ‘feminine’ interior.

This passage by Jones is central for the conceptualisation of masculine representation in Anglo-Saxon architecture, and its normative hegemony. Its impact can still be traced around us.

2. Site Context

Stockholm’s transport system – rail, road and water – is under-dimensioned. It seems within reason to expect the system to collapse in a not too distant future, if something does not change radically.

A main reason is the population increase. The popu-
lation in Stockholm County doubles every fifty year. At the turn of the previous century Stockholm housed about five hundred thousand inhabitants, today well beyond two million. Within another fifty years the region is expected to house four million inhabitants. The curve is progressive. ii

A nave in the infrastructure is Stockholm Central Station. The situation at the central station is chaotic. The Central Station’s effective capacity in square meters is under-dimensional. It regards underground as well as overground tracks, even including a soon accomplished underground train platform. The soon two hundred year old philosophy of one sole central station should be replaced by a plural system of stations.

3. Representation Concept

Demeter’s representation emerges from one stage of a black peony poppy’s cycle, its flower. iii Historically the poppy is associated with several layers of meaning: consolation, fertility and eternal life. Our choice is the Ancient Greek association between the poppy and the goddess of fertility Demeter. It is an understandable connection considering the fact each poppy’s seed-vessel contains thousands of seeds. The meaning of a poppy, set in the context to the project Demeter however, should be interpreted as associative and poetical.

The relation to a human body is essential. The aim is to suggest a sensual experience of space, as if being inside a body of a kind, to the traveller or commuter. The frivolous female interior, as described by Inigo Jones, transgresses to an exterior.

Demeter sets the human being in focus. We imagine the ground floor as a vast empty space, perhaps covered with a floor of soft greenish Swedish marble, resembling the colour of the Baltic Sea. We imagine a dome above it, irregular and almost as if floating, partly perhaps even mobile. Demeter is a cathedral for travelling.

The technical aspects of the station are situated one floor below ground level: platforms, trains, busses, taxis, ticket machines, information-desks, kiosks, and restrooms. iii 1, 2, 3

Demeter proposes two sister stations just outside the present borders of Stockholm city connected by a train-tunnel; Tomteboda to the north, and Årsta to the south. iii 6, 7, 8 These locations are situated within the proximity of present expanding areas, and surrounded by an existing supporting infrastructural web, and finally sparsely exploited areas inviting to new needed housing developments. Establishing two equally important stations at these sites would re-define the notion of Stockholm’s centre, as a result.

The suggestion offers new track-space to commuter trains within the region and to other regional centres such as Uppsala, as well as future bullet trains to Oslo, Helsinki and Copenhagen. The locations offer a possibility to include existing minor railways such as Roslagsbanan to the national system.

4. Methodology

As a rule an artist rarely contributes to the actual planning process of a building or development site at the genesis of an architectural program. Public art seems to be an addition to a building scheme rather than a
organic part of it. There are exceptions naturally. The Demeter project aims to reverse this hierarchal principle. The process is horizontal and discursive.

Summary
Demeter addresses gender-aspects in art and architecture. Theoretically it reverts the philosophy of Inigo Jones and its historical impact. In practise it suggests an element of the solution to Stockholm’s precarious infrastructure. Its methodology includes theoretic, artistic and architectural practises, in a transdisciplinary alternative sense. Perhaps more than anything else it contributes with another dimension to the notion of public art. Demeter is a multi-layered project in opposition to the predominating patriarchal matrix of our era.

Demeter is a collaboration between Jan Hietala and Moneo Brock Studio Madrid.

Notes
i Roman Sketchbook, Inigo Jones, Friday ye 20 January 1614, fol. 76v. © Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees

ii Stockholm County population 1700 - 2025, Stockholms Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB, and Statistiska centralbyrån