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Article

Color in Urbarchitecture of Public Stairs in the World

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Abstract:

There are many urban agglomerations in the world with stepped outdoor communications that characterize the micro-ambient environment. They are mostly exclusively functional, utilitarian, with little artistic decoration and as such unnoticed by users. In this paper, the issue of aesthetic and artistic coloring interventions is being discussed with the aim of visualizing and beautifying the environment. Staircases from different cities in the world where interesting artists, colorful ceramic tiles, mosaics, sprays, warm colors, refreshing tones have created interesting and inspiring compositions of very attractive, fairytale stairs for the stay. Through the ten selected examples in the most diverse locations, great possibilities of artistic activity in the ecourbarchitectural space have been shown. The risers and often the treads of the steps are in the focus of the artist's colorful work. The author emphasizes a skillful combination of colors in surfaces that recovered the spirit of staircase places that had unjustly fallen into oblivion, whose iconological and symbolic value in the image of the city is very significant. It is necessary to give the position of painting of staircase surfaces and generally free areas in cities to artists for creative and artistic repair and planned renovation of existing conditions in the public space.
Key words: staircase; color; art; painting; the spirit of the city.

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The staircase with 70 steps, Scalinata Rakoczi in the city of Targu Mures, in Romania, connects Revoluției street and “Parco Cittadella Medievale” park. It was built in 1902 by Soosa Pal. The name originates from the prince of Transylvania Rakoczi II, who among 1703–1711 pull the strings of the Hungarian revolution against the Habsburg domination. Its vertical surfaces are painted with traditional folk motifs of Transylvania, in July 2014. It is extremely popular and attractive for foreign and domestic tourists for its specific, artistic and visual, ethno beauty. The impression is that the spectacular staircase is covered with a colorful carpet which completes the impression of its non-globalist urbarchitecture, of tradition and spirit of the place of a Transylvanian villager. The stairs are painted in white, black and red color, and they are based on the embroidery of popular costumes and traditional Transylvanian towels. The original water colors in the visual composition faded in time so it was necessary to intervene on the akoczi staircase, using stable and resistant colors (Fig. 1, 2).



Fig. 1 Scalinata Rakoczi – Targu Mures, Romania
http://www.tirgumureseanul.ro/uploads/pics/none27__700.jpg
https://www.facebook.com/DigitalTransilvania/photos/pcb.311146545714289/311146432380967/?type=1&theater
http://thevandallist.com/digital-transilvania-urban-traditional-street-art/

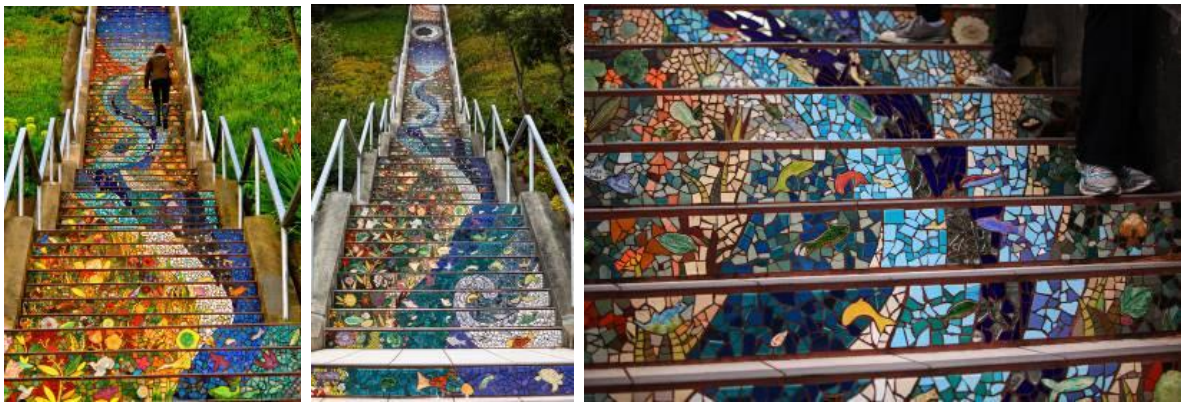


Fig. 2. 16th Avenue Tiled Steps, San Francisco. Creative-stairs-street-art-4-1, San Francisco, California. The Most Beautiful Steps Around The World
https://thegoldenscopeit.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/san-francisco.jpg
http://fc05.deviantart.net/fs71/f/2012/206/6/c/16th_avenue_tiled_step_project_4957_by_cpleblowphotography-d58li7m.jpg

The mosaic composition with 163 steps, in the 16th Avenue in the Golden Gate Heights district in u San Francisco, is the biggest in the world, and contains the contemporary philosophical relation of stars and the sea. The project for realization was initiated in 2003, to connect the neighborhoods of Jessie Audette and Alice Lee Xavier and make them unique, in esthetic terms. The selected artists Aileen Barr and Colette Crutcher, did a visual design which softens the rigid-angled urbarchitecture of the staircase. The mosaic tiles were manually modeled in the form animals, fish and shellfish, and all the neighborhood residents could participate in their installation. The staircase opening ceremony was held on 27th of August 2005, when this communication was pronounced the "16th Avenue of tiled steps". In addition to the attractive coloration, on the left and the right side of the staircase, there are gardens with the diverse flora having also intensive colors, which synthetically complements the impression of this micro-ambient entity. For its extraordinary appearance, it is very attractive to numerous visitors (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Images for Stairs Angers, France
http://www.viralnova.com/amazing-steps/
https://unartemaestra.wordpress.com/2014/03/30/la-street-art-di-mademoiselle-maurice/
https://c2.staticflickr.com/6/5548/10817867096_fcd910d220_h.jpg

In the framework of the ARTAQ festival in Angers, France in 2013, a large artistic-urbarchitectonic project in the sphere of cultural mediation was realized. The artistic action of the installation was entrusted to the French artist Mademoiselle Maurice who had a great experience in designing the streets of Hong Kong, Lyon and Marseilles and Paris. There was a great focus on spatial design and visual remodeling of staircase communication leading towards the cathedral, but also to other buildings in the city: school, kindergarten, riverside walls, entrance to the cathedral. A total of 30.000 origami, folded and wrinkled elements in various colors and sizes was used. This design emphasized this very long communication, where the idea of artistic decoration is in agreement with the harmony of the installation with the historical context of the city. The large staircase is covered with multiple elements of floral design, with an impressive range of warm colors, which create an impression of a huge "flower land" where a visitor can feel naturally and relaxed. This attenuated the impression of domination of artifact structures in space (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Piano stairs in Valparaíso, Chile. Â More Street from Chile
http://www.tuxboard.com/photos/2012/12/piano-escalier-Street-Art.jpeg
https://shoefry.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/img_0838.jpg
http://www.timetravelturtle.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Chile-2012-164_web-lrg.jpg
http://digthisdesign.net/photography/street-art-that-inspires/

The staircase with 29 steps in Beethoven street in u Valparaiso, Chile, is a global attraction and a very valuable urbarhitectonic-iconic symbol of the city. The risers of each step were painted by an inspired and creative unknown artist in black and white invoking a piano keyboard so that they are visually extremely attractive to the users. This artistically significant communication connects two level-separated urban surfaces, but its function has a special meaning. It attracts attention and produces pleasure of the movement in all the passers-by, with its appearance and practicability. It is non-stereotypical, and appears as picturesque and impressive. In the framework of urban architecture, this rustic physical structure has an important cultural-historical position because it retained its original material value. It preserved the formal meaning of the urbarchitecture of the place and brought about a different interaction of the utilitarian and artistic-esthetic which can be interpreted from the variation of the visual essence of the urban image and colors. The authenticity of coloration and the artistic symbiotic expression belongs to the same authorship and same authentic philosophy of preservation of inherited structures in the urban space (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. The Rainbow Colored Stairs Wuppertal, Germany
http://blog.fridayflats.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/wuppertal.jpg
http://livedoor.blogimg.jp/sizen_go/imgs/a/9/a9162208.jpg
https://twistedsifter.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/rainbow-colored-steps-wuppertal-germany-horst-glaesker.jpg?w=800

In the city of Wuppertal, Germany, in Northern Rhine-Westphalia, there is a so called "Holstein staircase", with 112 steps. In the period 2006/2008, German artist Horst Glaesker painted each step using different acrylic colors, which augmented the urban ambient in terms of the exterior quality and unique spatial form. Old street staircase physical structure was converted into a tourist attraction through a successful intervention of the artist. Except for the various colors on the vertical risers of the steps, there are inscriptions of numerous human emotions which inspire the users to visit this micro-ambient and move through different levels. The atmosphere in this space is essentially different. It is more humane and integrative in material terms. The identity of the place is changed by an interpolation of the colored composition. A new expression of functional-esthetic and cultural-historical symbiosis of a modern city is created. The color has become a new tool for a metamorphosis in the urban space, the most complex element in the design of a built-up environment (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Scalinata di Santa Maria del Monte - Caltagirone (Catania), Sicilia
https://unescosicilia.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/caltagirone.jpg
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/Scalinata_caltagirone.JPG
http://www.comune.caltagirone.ct.it/comune.caltagirone.ct.it/images/stories/fotosangiacomo/DSC_4226_1.jpg
http://www.siciliain.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/caltagirone-Scala-di-S-Maria-del-Monte.jpg

The staircase Santa Maria del Monte, with 142 steps and the length exceeding 130 metrs, was built in 1606 in the city of Caltagirone, to connect the old and the new city. Since 1954 the vertical faces of the steps have been decorated with polychrome ceramic tiles produced by Maioliche Artigianali Caltagironesi. Every step has polychrome coating of majolica of the same quality as the one which made this city famous in centuries. The motifs on the tiles are from the period from 10th to 20th centuries, with decorative, elegant figures. Each year in July, for the celebration of Saint Jacob, according to tradition, the staircase is in the evening hours illuminated by the impressive flame of several thousands of torches – "a fiery snake" and of 4000 lanterns, which is an extremely important ceremony with a spectacular effect. In spring, in May and June, the staircase is covered in flowers. Thousands of pots are placed on it. A similar concept of organization of staircase was conducted in Rio De Janeiro by the beginning of 90's by a Chilean painter and ceramic artist Jorgea Selarona called Scalinata Selaron (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Beirut Residents Revolt Against Plan to Destroy Iconic Massad Stairs, Lebanon
http://thevandallist.com/the-most-beautiful-steps-around-the-world/
http://2famous.tv/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/trappa-1-of-1.jpg
http://www.tuttogreen.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Dihzahyners2.jpg

Denizens of Beirut were perplexed when an idea of demolition of an iconic symbol, "Massada" staircase emerged, with the purpose of establishing a new communication on that location. For the local population, this popular destination has a great importance. It is also important to tourists and artists, including the Dihzahyners group which painted the stairs in sequence of beautiful, vibrant colors and geometrical forms. The staircase is also important for circulation of pedestrian traffic and for a respite from noise and pollution in the city streets. It is the main landmark and amenity of Beirut which needs to be imperatively preserved for the sake of historicity and memory of the city. The staircase was created in the early years of the 20th century. It was built from the sea rocks, only to be reconstructed by the mid 20th century and built of solid material. In 2012 another transformation took place, when a group of street artists decorated each step with color. The media and population accepted this artistic-visual transformation with great pride. In 2015, the faded colors on the stairs were renewed (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Stairs "Escadaria Selaron" are located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
http://www.gogorio.it/wp-content/gallery/selaron/scala-selaron-lapa-rio.jpg
https://portodososlados.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/escada-da-lapa-1.jpg
http://www.tuttogreen.it/scale-piu-belle-del-mondo/

This attractive, mosaic staircase with 215 steps, 125 meters long, was created by the Chilean artist Jorge Selaron, during his everyday work across the span of several years. The staircase "Escadaria Selaron" is located between the female monastery Santa Teresa and the city neighborhood of Lapa. It is covered with more than 2000 donated ceramic and mirror tiles coming from around the world. More than 300 tiles were painted by Selaron himself. The artist lived next to the stairs. He realized this for his love of the city of Rio de Janeiro. He favored tiles with blue, yellow and green colors from the Brazilian flag. In 1990, the artist started to restore the dilapidated stairs by selling a lot of his painting to be able to obsessively invest and complete his long and exhausting work on the staircase. This worthwhile, artistic, famous creation was noted by numerous journals, advertisements, documentary films, musical clips etc. In 2009, the staircase was included in the Olympic games marketing of RIO 2016 with the motto „Passion unites us"(Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Colorful Stairs in Rhodes Island. Blue geotagged thevillage steps Greece Symi Islands, Blue Step, Web Design, Blue Stairs, Colors, Greece, Travel, Places, Greek Islands. Symi island colour greece. Colorful Stairs in Rhodes Island. Greek Stairs, Santorini
http://media-cache-ec0.pinimg.com/736x/06/56/ca/0656cae3e308c685ed1119ff5237ac05.jpg
https://farm4.staticflickr.com/3025/2778486635_ba343d1f95.jpg
http://media-cache-ec0.pinimg.com/736x/ae/af/b9/aeafb96538fbd841b91fbe7672772718.jpg
http://www.patrasevents.gr/imgsrv/f/full/973189.jpg

The staircase, artistic coloration compositions on Greek islands belong to the most attractive ones in the world. They are decorated with very vivid colors, with colorful flowers in the pots. Favorable climate of the Mediterranean allowed creation of outstanding micro-ambient entities with beautiful stone and other natural textures. They represent a beautiful cultural-identity addition to nature and to the Mediterranean, authentic, man-scaled urbarchitecture in general. In the examples from the islands of Symi and Rhodes, the exterior images of narrow and multi-leveled streets characteristic of these areas stand prominent. They bring closer the charm of the art in a public urban space, making it personal with a higher level of integration of structures in the scale of cultural and architectonic-design values. It is a kind of serious cultural capital in one community. Coloration of Greek islands demonstrates how treatment of a location as a phenomenological, organic process, with clear contextual-historic and traditional building reflections is a good message (Fig. 10).

In 2013, a retired engineer of forestry, Huseiin Cetinel, spent four days in colorful Istanbul. With some investment and 40 kilograms of paint, the large concrete staircase was transformed, with the help of volonteers, into an outstanding color-rich, attractive comostion with rainbow colors. He successfully remodeled shapeless staircase, in the dilapidated state, into a challenging tourist attraction. When it was all over, Huseiin said that he wanted to „get the smiles back on the people's faces"... „it was time for a rainbow color revolution...". Rainbow Steps, with 145 steps is located in the bohemian district, at the locaiton of Sali Pazari, connecting the Findikli and Cihangir neighborhoods. Soon, after this intervention in the public urban space, there was rainbow color revolution in Turkey in the public sace of many cities. By adding visual quality to the built-up envirnment, the images of the city areas were essentially improved and the action strategy in the synthetic improvement of art and landscape architectue was improved.



Fig. 10. Tophane, Istanbul, Turkey. One set of colorful rainbow stairs in Istanbul
https://photobyismailbirdal.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/img_3756.jpg
http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-Gr3JP8lEDDc/VI7Y3nnV_vI/AAAAAAAAA5c/H4Kw5XyMlfE/s1600/CIMG3321.jpg
https://reclaimistanbul.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/5.jpg

Conclusion

Based on the ten examples from around the world of design of staircase physical structures in the public urban space, it can be concluded:

1. Public art in the public space, made through cooperation of artists and town planning architects and city administration can be of great importance for the total development and innovation, necessary for the renovation of the image of the city.
2. By adding a visual quality to the existing urban physical structures, using color elements, the contemporary art is brought closer to users.
3. In the uses is generated a feeling of pride and belonging to the groups which use public space, by memorizing the events from the collective history, or by creation of a particular image of the community.
4. The examples from around the world indicate how the everyday art leaves the institutional boundaries and goes out to the public to facilitate a general access to the amenities introduced into the cultural sphere and presented to both professional and general.
5. Interpolation of a work of art into a non-conflicting spatial assembly should evolve to the public art, in the form of an intervention in the general public sphere using various artistic forms and contents.
6. Coloration-artistic interventions in the public space can restore and improve esthetic identity of a place in a scenic city space.

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Article Summary ***Design. Art. Industry*, 2019 Issue 6**

Color in Urbarchitecture of Public Stairs in the World
[Цвет в мировой городской архитектуре общественных лестниц]

Аннотация:

Приведены примеры из десяти агломераций мира. В мире существует множество городских агломераций с поэтапными коммуникациями на открытом воздухе, которые характеризуют микросреду. Они в основном исключительно функциональные, утилитарные, с небольшим художественным оформлением и поэтому незаметные для пользователей. В этой статье обсуждается вопрос об эстетических и художественных цветовых вмешательствах с целью визуализации и украшения окружающей среды. Лестницы из разных городов мира, где интересные художники, красочные керамические плитки, мозаики, брызги, теплые тона, освежающие тона создали интересные и вдохновляющие композиции очень привлекательных сказочных лестниц для отдыха. Через десять отобранных примеров в самых разных местах были показаны большие возможности художественной деятельности в экобархитектурном пространстве. Подъемники и часто ступени ступеней находятся в центре красочных работ художника. Автор подчеркивает умелое сочетание цветов на поверхностях, которое воссоздает дух лестничных площадок, незаслуженно заброшенных в забвение, чья иконологическая и символическая ценность в образе города очень значительна. Художникам необходимо предоставить возможность покраски лестничных поверхностей и вообще свободных площадей в городах для творческого и художественного ремонта и планового обновления существующих условий в общественных местах.

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