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STAIRS MORE THAN A VERTICAL CIRCULATION ELEMENT¹

Abstract

Stairs were first used by people to raise their shelters in order to protect them from the dangers on the ground and to provide them access to things at high altitudes. In later periods, people built temples that were raised with steps to reach God (or what they considered sacred) and to show their power. Initially built with limited materials and simple forms, the staircase gained different shapes and textures with the use of reinforced concrete and steel after the industrial period. This building element, which has a very important place in the discipline of architecture, has always been intertwined with the cultural, religious and linguistic structure of the society. For this reason, staircase has semantic, symbolic and psychological sub-identities alongside its function. Sometimes it was a monument that was placed in the memory of a society and sometimes it was an art object depicting the most important thought of an artwork. And in architecture, stairs define the space, affect the space and even form the space. Thus they have gone beyond being a building element. In this study, the symbolic, aesthetic, artistic, monumental, experimental and multifunctional characteristics of the stairs are emphasized through examples and an alternative classification to the existing classifications in the literature is proposed.

Keywords: Symbolic, Sculptural, Artistic, Monumental, Stairs

¹ This study is produced from the master thesis written by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

DÜŞEY SİRKÜLASYON ELEMANI OLMANIN ÖTESİNE GEÇEN MERDİVENLER

Öz

Merdiven; önce insanların barınmak için yaptıkları mekanları yükseğe taşımak, ve yüksekteki isteklerine erişmelerini sağlamak amacıyla kullanılmıştır. Daha sonraki dönemlerde tanrıya, kutsal saydıkları şeylere ulaşmak ve güçlerini sergilemek için basamaklarla yükseltilmiş tapınaklar inşa etmişlerdir. Başlarda sınırlı malzeme ve basit formlarla inşa edilen merdivenler, endüstri dönemi sonrasında betonarme ve çeliğin kullanılması ile farklı biçimler ve dokular kazanmıştır. Mimarlık disiplini içinde her zaman çok önemli bir yere sahip olan bu yapı elemanı her zaman toplumun kültürel, dinsel ve linguistik yapısıyla içiçe olmuştur. Bu sebeple merdiven kendi işlevinin yanında semantik, sembolik ve psikolojik alt kimliklerle donanmıştır. Kimi zaman bir toplumun hafızasına yer eden bir anıt, kimi zaman da bir sanat eserinin en önemli düşüncesini betimleyen bir sanat objesi olmuştur. Mimari olarak da mekan tanımlayan, mekanı etkileyen hatta mekanı oluşturan merdivenler, bu haliyle bir yapı elemanı olmanın ötesine geçmiştir. Bu çalışmada merdivenin sembolik, estetik, sanatsal, anıtsal, deneysel ve çok fonksiyonlu olma özellikleri örnekler üzerinden vurgulanarak literatürde yer alan sınıflandırmalara alternatif bir sınıflandırma önerilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sembolik, Heykelsi, Sanatsal, Anıtsal, Merdiven

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the staircase in architectural design and architectural history is indisputable. From the first shelters built to protect human beings from nature to ziggurats, from Modern designs to contemporary architectural works, stairs have always been an indispensable part of the buildings. It is both the sheath and supporter of the movement. And probably no building element has been as interesting as the staircase.

In a building construction the staircase has an own design process in itself. It requires a lot of technical mastery not just to function properly but also to be ergonomically correct and to articulate with the space. It is one of the few building elements in which a student who is a beginner of architectural formation has difficulty to comprehend from a technical point of view although he / she often meets it in daily life. Since it is the most important vertical circulation element, the staircase is explained in detail in many ways from construction systems to materials, from calculation in design to application details. Unfortunately, the experience process between the user and the stairs and how the various types of stairs affect this process are often not adequately included in this detailed teaching. However, the staircase has many different features beyond being a vertical circulation element. It has emerged as a means of transporting but has undergone continuous development and transformation in function, structure and form. Thus it has evolved into a symbol, monument or a space of its own.

The symbolic use of the staircase can be seen in many civilizations throughout history. As a symbol of the divine, religious and mythological ascension, the number of steps of the staircase has been interpreted in different ways by many civilizations. As a result of some mythological beliefs, ancient civilizations used the number of steps in their temples as a symbol of holiness. In addition to this, the emotions and thoughts that are wanted to be felt by the audience in many

branches of art such as literature, cinema and painting are explained by using the symbolic meaning of the stairs. As the visual characteristics of the staircase came to the fore, its character and aesthetic value began to override its function. It has become an important statue, a monument that adds symbolic and artistic values to its place. In other words, it has become the “heart” of the space both in terms of function and semantics.

When the studies on the subject of stairs in Turkish literature are examined, it is seen that the contents are mostly about the structural and functional properties of the stairs. There are not many studies on the effects of the staircase on the space and the user. However, this is a very important part of architectural design, and even a user who has not studied architecture has often witnessed that the staircase in daily life goes beyond its function. Based on this thesis, this study aims to examine the relationship of stairs with space, user and environment, to show that stairs are not only vertical circulation elements, and to underline the fact that they not only lead the user from one point to another but also shape the space and add artistic, aesthetic and symbolic values to it. In this context, the paper proposes an alternative staircase classification that emphasizes the psychological, artistic, aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the staircase, rather than the classifications in the literature.

A Brief Look at the Stairs in the Historical Process

In order to protect from the dangers on the ground and to reach an object at a high level, stairs carried the human being to the upper elevations. Since its inception, it has been in a continuous development in terms of structure, function and form. When we look at the timeline of the history of architecture, the staircase has changed from being a tool that transports people from one point to another in a vertical direction and became a structure that creates satisfaction beyond consciousness, such as reaching to God, living an inner journey or raising status.

The staircase design dates back thousands of years (Campbell & Tutton, 2014). It is difficult to say precisely who invented the first stairs. Besides, there is no linear history of the stairs. However, it is seen that the oldest stairs in history are quite simple structured stairs obtained by simply cutting and stacking materials such as stone or brick. The remains of a short staircase were found in the site of the Tarxien Temple and Safleni Hypogeum in Malta dating back to 3600–2500 BC. Grand stepped buildings like pyramids or ziggurats were created by early civilizations in Mesoamerica and Mesopotamia. And in many civilizations, especially graves, places of worship or official buildings are seen to rise with a few steps. This staging, especially in the sanctuaries, creates a favourable environment for ceremonies (Tutton, 2014).

In the Middle Ages and later stairs became not only a functional element, but also an element that adorns the structures and shows the status of the owner. After the French Revolution, the staircase became a podium where aristocratic women exhibited their expensive clothes. After the 19th century, the modern staircase was formally enriched and diversified with the use of glass, steel and concrete. The end of the 19th century is considered the golden age of stair construction. The Scottish architect, Peter Nicholson, developed a mathematical system for the staircase which has directed many artists and architects to use stairs in their works (IE, 2017).

In other words, developing technology, construction systems and invention of new materials have played an important role in the design of stairs in different forms and functions. Stairs were built with many different materials and construction systems from concrete to steel, wood to glass, stone to terracotta. The staircase is no longer a structural element attached to the walls,

but an independent component that can be released in the space alone. This has made the staircase a masterpiece in which architects show their creativity by making different designs. Stair forms can be flexible, fluid, organic, dynamic, allowing both the designer and the user to cross the limits of their imagination. In short, architects are not only concerned with the shapes of buildings and facade designs; at the same time, they expressed their own style with the stairs. A good staircase turned into a design feature in architecture and became an architect's signature (Broto, 2014).

Stairs Beyond a Vertical Circulation Element

"The Staircase is a living organ of space."

A Quote from the Movie "the Architect" (Parker, 2016).

The staircase is an element encountered not only in architectural discipline but in many branches of art such as painting, music, literature and cinema. The stair is a movement, a rhythm, a harmonious, the stairs are ascension, reaching a place, the time, accumulation, experience, etc. This is an indication that the ladder is not only a circulating element but also an element that holds all the vitality of life.

The staircase that contains such different semantic elements in terms of human life cannot be reduced to just one building element in architecture. Indeed, there is a similarity between the ladder and the heart, one of the most important organs of the body. Just as the heart is responsible for pumping blood throughout the body, the steps are equally responsible for the vertical circulation of the space. Likewise, the regular rhythm of the stairs is similar to heart beating and breathing. The relationship between the staircase and the body is not limited to similarity. The staircase is the structural element in which the structure meets the body in the most concrete and direct way. The feet touch the steps, the hand touches the handrail. The handrail gives confidence to the body. The number of steps is engraved in the body's memory. Therefore each body experiences the staircase differently. This diversity of experience applies to each user and for each different use of the same user.

Therefore, the staircase is one of the most important factors affecting the space organization. Deciding the position of a staircase in a design is an important and distinctive process. It is important to shape the space and add an aesthetic value to it while guiding the user spontaneously, without leaving any doubt, towards a different place. Because the position, shape and material of the staircase directly affect the space (Sarı, 2000) and the user's perception of space.

Today, different and new approaches are displayed on the stairs and they become extremely impressive in terms of structure and aesthetics. The staircase, which defines the space, provides great benefit to the character of the space. A correctly designed staircase can act transform as a guide, sometimes as a sculpture, as a monument or a furniture. Thanks to its sculptural, monumental, symbolic and multifunctional features, a standard staircase cannot be dispensed with despite the presence of elevators and escalators.

AN ALTERNATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF STAIRS

In the literature, stairs have been classified many times according to form, function, material and construction system. However, these classifications do not refer to any of the other relationships that stairs establish with the space or the user. A staircase that can establish a proper connection with the user and space is more than a structural element in semantic, symbolic or spa-

tial terms. Therefore, this study proposes an alternative classification of stairs in addition to the existing classifications in the literature. This classification may also be an auxiliary checklist used to examine whether the staircase has gone beyond its function once it is ergonomic, works well and it's all technical and structural problems have been solved.

When classifying, the designer is expected to answer some questions (Table-1) on the form, position, meaning and character of the ladder.

Table 1. Formation of Alternative Classification of Stairs

QUESTIONS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF STAIRS	SYMBOLIC	ARTWORK EXPERIMENTAL	SCULPTURAL	MONUMENTAL	MULTI FUNCTIONAL
Is the staircase a status indicator?	✓		✓		
Is the staircase a popular object?	✓			✓	
Is the staircase a symbol object of the past?	✓		✓		
Does the staircase have an abstract meaning?	✓				
Does staircase affect the psychology of the user?	✓	✓			
Is there a paradox on the staircase?		✓			
Is the staircase a part of the metaphorical narration?		✓			
Does staircase encourage physical activity?		✓			✓
Is digital technology used on the staricase?		✓			
Does the staricase contribute to the environment other than providing circulation?		✓	✓	✓	✓
Is the staricase suitable for social activity?		✓			✓
Is the staricase a part of an experiment?		✓			
Is the staricase in the centre of the space?			✓		
Does the staricase have a historical meaning?				✓	
Does the staricase exist in the space as an independent and unique object?			✓		
Does the staricase act like a sculpture?			✓		
Does the staricase bring identity to the space?	✓		✓	✓	✓
Does the staricase have a special meaning for society?				✓	
Does the staricase have a connection with an event?				✓	
Is the staricase transformed into another space for another function?					✓
Is the staricase also a furniture?					✓
Does the staricase increase space usage?					✓

According to the answers given, the stairs can be categorized as:

- Stairs with symbolic values
- Participants in an artwork
- Stairs as an experimental project

- Sculptural stairs
- Those who are also a monument
- Multifunctional

Stairs with Symbolic Values

Since ancient civilizations, the staircase has been a symbol of spiritual and mythological ascension. Even the number of steps of the stairs was considered important and made different meanings by many civilizations. In some towers and old temples, the number of steps is considered auspicious, or the result of some mythological beliefs. The ascending staircase to the sky symbolizes a climb to the holy and the stairway descending downward expresses the mystery, the unknown and the depths of the unconscious (Eliade, 1952; Erickstad, 2012; Lorek, 2019). Therefore, the stairs may be identified with any belief, cultural value, or a tradition of society from the past or present and be endowed with a different metaphoric meaning than its real function. In these cases stairs are considered to have a symbolic value (Table-2).

Table 2. Some Examples for the Stairs with Symbolic Values (URL-1,2,3)

STAIRS WITH SYMBOLIC VALUES	NAME- DESIGNER YEAR LOCATION MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	IMAGES
Staircase is a status indicator. Staircase is a popular object.	KUKULHAN PYRAMID STAIR MAYA CIVILIZATION 8th century B.C. CHICHEN ITZA MEXICO NATURAL STONE	There are 91 steps on all four stairs of the pyramid. With the top platform, the total number of steps reaches 365, which corresponds to 365 days of the Mayan calendar.
Staircase is a symbol object of the past. Staircase have an abstract meaning.	APOLLO 11 SPACECRAFT STAIR NEIL ARMSTRONG 20 JULY 1969 SPECIAL METAL MATERIAL	Neil Armstrong took the first step using the stairs, when landing on the moon. This unforgettable photograph of Neil Armstrong has become a classic and the staircase was one of the symbols of this discovery.
Staircase affects the psychology of the user.	GIZA PYRAMIDS ANCIENT EGYPT 3000 B.C. EGYPT LIMESTONE GRANITE BASALT	The staircase is the symbol of reaching the gods.

Stairs as an Artwork

“A stair not worn hollow by footsteps is, regarded from its own point of view, only a boring something made of wood.”

Franz Kafka (2010)

One of the most beautiful works of Turkish literature is Ahmet Haşim’s poet: The Staircase. Here stairs represent the connection between birth and death. They symbolize a life time with its ups and downs. Every step left on the staircase; is the expression of the years left behind. (Saka, 2011).

Indeed, the steps eroded by use are traces of the interaction of the human body with the stairs. It is the course of human movement and the choice that the body makes unconsciously. It's the experience. Erosion on steps is important evidence that allows a partial understanding of behavioral responses (Templer, 1992). Therefore, the staircase was used as an art object (Table-3) which expresses life, experiences and difficulties in many art branches, especially in literature, painting and cinema.

It is possible to see the famous staircases used as symbols and icons in the cinema in the video of Editor Albert Gomez combining scenes from 37 different films. In the short film created also by Gomez, the succession of the stairs scenes shows the transition between periods, styles and movements. With this short film, the effectiveness of the staircase in cinema is revealed (Gomez, 2016).

Stairs Serving to an Experiment

Experimental projects are actions that emphasize a situation in society, measure the reactions of individuals, or offer people different experiences when seeking answers to any problems. They are often the transformations of a physical experience into a spiritual experience. In experimental projects, most of the viewers should be attracted and they should be able to understand or communicate the work. The preparation process of this type of work usually involves research and development phases (Bassett et.al, 2013; Suri et.al, 2014).

The most important element that serves the experimental coexistence of art and architecture is the staircase (Table-4). Piano Stairs is one of the most remarkable experimental projects in the intersection of architecture and art. The project disrupts the mediocrity of daily life; examines the reactions of people. It is aimed to make people return to an active life by making the act of ascending steps more fun. Piano Stairs, where people can hear note sounds by their each step, was built next to the escalator in the Odenplan subway station in Stockholm. The project was quite successful, the stairway sometimes turned into a group activity and sometimes a socialization platform. The results showed that more people used stairs than usual on that day. It was understood that it is possible to give people the motivation for movement (Peeters et. al, 2013).

Similarly, the endless Olafur’s Stairs in front of the KPMG Office Building defines the empty courtyard by giving the people a sense of endlessness. Diminish and Ascend, created in 2013 by artist David Mc Cracken in Bondi, Australia misleads the perception of visitors and creates the feeling of a staircase leading to infinity and offers surprise experiences to visitors.

Table 3. Some Examples for the Stairs as an Artwork (URL-4,5,6)

STAIRS AS AN ARTWORK	NAME- DESIGNER YEAR LOCATION MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	IMAGES
There is a paradox on the staircase.	RELATIVITY M.C. ESCHER 1953 NETHERLANDS WOODCUT	In the picture, real and unreal are mixed. The figures return to where they started. Relativity, mathematical paradoxes and illusion are depicted with undefined stairs.
The staircase is a part of the metaphorical narration.	JACOB'S STAIRS PAINTING SCHOOL OF AVIGNON MUSEE DU PETIT 1490 FRANCE OIL PAINT	The staircase between the earth and the heaven that Jacob dreamed of in the Torah is depicted. This staircase symbolizes divine power and ascension.
Staircase affects the psychology of the user. Staircase can be an experiment object.	INCEPTION CHRISTOPHER NOLAN USA 2010 STEEL&WOOD	In the movie, the deep and surreal effect is created with the Penrose Stairs.

Table 4. Some Examples for the Stairs Serving to an Experiment (URL-7,8,9)

EXPERIMENTAL STAIRS SERVING TO AN EXPERIMENT	NAME- DESIGNER YEAR LOCATION MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	IMAGES
There is a paradox on the staircase. Digital technology is used on the stairs.	KPMG STAIR OLAFUR ELIASSON 2004 MUNICH GERMANY STEEL&WOOD	The Staircase is a double-helix structure and form an endless view. Olafur's staircase gives meaning to an empty courtyard.
Staircase encourages physical activity. Staircase contributes to the environment other than providing circulation. Staircase is suitable for social activity.	PIANO STAIRS FUN FACTORY& VOLKSWAGEN 2009 STOCKHOLM SWEDEN SENSORS& SPECIAL SOFTWARE	The designers turned the staircase into a giant piano keyboard where people can hear note sounds by their each step. The project was quite successful and encouraged physical activity.
Staircase affects the psychology of the user. Staircase is a part of an experiment.	DIMINISH& ASCEND DAVID MC CRACKEN 2013 AUSTRALIA ALUMINIUM STEEL	The staircase misleads the visual perception and looks like a way leading to infinity. It gives visitors the feeling of being able to go to eternity. In fact, this stair cannot reach anywhere.

Sculptural Stairs

Starting from antiquity, architecture and sculpture have been two different disciplines that are related to each other. In ancient times, statues of god figures and emperors were generally made. In the Baroque and Gothic periods, sculptures were used to hide the structural elements of the building. During the Renaissance, sculpture used the space as a podium. With the emergence of new and different materials after the Industrial Revolution, sculpture and ornamentation using sculpture in general were separated from architecture (Mirea, 2019). Nowadays, as a result of the fact that building elements can be produced with different materials in different shapes, they also become sculptural objects.

Stairs are the main building elements that can be transformed into sculptures. Sculptural staircases (Table-5), while performing their main circulation function, are also interesting and assertive as a work of art exhibited in their space. These stairs, which usually rise on their own in the centre of the space or in a void, give high aesthetic value to the space where they are located and become the focal of the user's attention thanks to their unique character. These stairs, engraved as dynamic, provocative, courageous, independent, free, strong and beautiful in the minds of the viewers, are mostly in a clearly perceptible contrast to the rest of the space as they exhibit a strong glory due to their materials, structural structures and designs.

Stairs as a Monument

A monumental staircase is a staircase that associates a space, date or event with its meaning or reputation. They have often been the scene of an important event or identified with an important event. In some cases, the staircase became monumental as a result of the public interest. The biggest difference from the symbolic stairs is the absence of the conditions of being a symbol object of the past. In other words, the monumental stairs do not have to be built in the past. According to their designs, they can be built for functional or demonstration purposes.

The monumental staircases (Table-6) not only give identity to the space they are in, but also have an important role in terms of social memory. These stairs are more than just a building element, they are the guards of memory.

Multifunctional Stairs

Today, due to the increasing population, sustainable concerns and scarcity of residential areas, the living space of the people is getting smaller and smart solutions with more functions in less places gain importance. Therefore, designs where small areas are equipped with multiple functions are very common. This also has an effect on staircase designs.

Stairs offer multiple solutions for small spaces and go beyond their main function. With the help of movable and modular staircase designs, stairs transform into a dividing element, into a storage area, a viewing terrace, sitting, resting or a working area, while transferring people from one level to another. Sometimes they even become a playground for children to play fun games. The staircase, which undertakes different functions at the same time (Table-7), meets many user requests and solves spatial problems. The staircase becomes a saviour that provides confidence, comfort, easiness and convenience for the user.

Table 5. Some Examples for the Sculptural Stairs (URL-10,11,12)

SCULPTURAL STAIRS	NAME- DESIGNER YEAR LOCATION MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	IMAGES
<p>Staircase is located in the centre of the space.</p> <p>Staircase exists in the space as an independent and unique object.</p> <p>The staircase acts like a sculpture.</p>	<p>EXPERIMENT. STAIR</p> <p>CEBRA ARCHITECTURE</p> <p>2017</p> <p>DENMARK</p> <p>STEEL&COPPER</p>	<p>The staircase, inspired by DNA's spiral structure, emphasizes the function of the building and symbolizes the science center.</p>
<p>Staircase contributes to the environment other than providing circulation.</p> <p>Staircase gives identity to the place.</p>	<p>ATRIUM TOWER STAIRS</p> <p>TOMER GELFAD& ODED HALAF</p> <p>2016</p> <p>ISRAEL</p> <p>STEEL&WOOD</p>	<p>The staircase resembling a tree trunk with its irregular curved form fills the space like a statue.</p>
<p>Staircase is a status indicator.</p> <p>Staircase is a popular object.</p>	<p>LIVRARIA LELLO STAIRS</p> <p>XAVIER ESTEVEES</p> <p>1906</p> <p>PORTUGAL</p> <p>WOOD</p>	<p>The red steps are like flowing from one floor to another. The sculptural staircase is the most dominant element in the space. It attracts more attention than the books in the bookstore.</p>

Table 6. Some Examples for the Stairs as a Monument (URL-13,14,15)

STAIRS AS AN MONUMENT	NAME- DESIGNER YEAR LOCATION MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	IMAGES
<p>Staircase is a social, cultural and touristic place.</p> <p>Staircase is a symbol of a city.</p>	<p>BAORI STAIRS</p> <p>KING CHANDA</p> <p>9th century B.C.</p> <p>INDIA</p> <p>NATURAL STONE</p>	<p>This structure, which consists of 3500 steps, allows the local people to reach the water level easil. These symmetrical staircases are one of the most famous monumental buildings of India.</p>
<p>Staircase contributes to the environment other than providing circulation.</p> <p>Staircase can be associated with an event.</p>	<p>KRITERION STAIRS</p> <p>MVRDV ARCHITECTURE</p> <p>2016</p> <p>NETHERLANDS</p> <p>STEEL</p>	<p>The staircase has a height of 29 meters, a length of 57 meters and 180 steps. The purpose of this monumental staircase is to represent the 75th anniversary of the reconstruction of the city after the bombing in World War II.</p>
<p>Staircase is popular object.</p> <p>Staircase have a historical meaning.</p>	<p>VESSEL STAIRS</p> <p>THOMAS HEATHERWICK</p> <p>2019</p> <p>USA</p> <p>STEEL&COPPER</p>	<p>This staircase, which is visited by many tourists, resembles a giant honeycomb. It is already monumental in its region.</p>

Table 7. Some Examples for the Multifunctional Stairs (URL-16,17,18)

MULTI FUNCTIONAL STAIRS	NAME-DESIGNER YEAR LOCATION MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	IMAGES
<p>The staircase is transformed into another space for another function.</p> <p>Staircase is also a furniture.</p> <p>Staircase increases space usage.</p>	PANORAMA HOUSE STAIRS	<p>The staircase is located in the centre of the house. This staircase has many functions as being a storage, a library, a reading area, a working area, a home cinema, a slide and a playground.</p>
	MOON HOON		
	2011 SOUTH KOREA WOOD		
<p>Staircase contributes to the environment other than providing circulation.</p> <p>Staircase encourages physical activity.</p>	BINHAI STAIRS	<p>The staircases are shaped around the light-emitting sphere. The steps of the library stairs are also used as an access area to shelves, provides space for book reading, resting and sitting.</p>
	MVRDV & TIANJIN URBAN DESIGN 2017 CHINA STEEL&CONCRETE		
Staircase is suitable for social activity.	TERMEH OFFICE STAIRS	<p>The wave-shaped staircase encourages users to walk around the building. This staircase also creates the connection between the roof and garden.</p>
	FARSHAD MEHDIZADEH ARCHITECTS & AHMAD BATHAEI 2015 IRAN STEEL&BRICK		

CONCLUSION

The staircase, which is often referred to by its function, is actually a structural element filled with cultural, artistic, experimental, social, symbolic and psychological elements. It can connect with people physically and psychologically. This is why in the advanced technology era, elevators and escalators cannot reduce the value of a standard staircase. Ascending the stairs is not just getting from one level to another. It is a process, a journey. It can even be likened to a life process. The first step is birth, the last step is death, and among them are the stages of life. A staircase can be an important symbol for the society or can be a reminder of an important event. It can be a social place where groups gather and spend time together or it can be a focal point attracting visitors. It can be part of an experiment or a work of art.

Also in the discipline of architecture, stairs are more than a building element. The staircase, a three-dimensional structural element in which standing and moving actions coexist, affects both space and user. A staircase that is aesthetically and functionally well designed and applied can always improve the space and add different features. While an aesthetically well-designed staircase glides through the void, that void is no longer an emptiness, but a volume under the influence of the staircase. It can define a space on its own or/and it can create their own habitat and create a social, resting or working space. And sometimes it is the staircase which gives the space its unique identity.

Therefore, a good design of the staircase is also the design of the atmosphere in the space. A good designer can use the staircase to reach a different action, idea, discipline or field, starting from its main function and concentrating on other features. With different and well-designed stairs, it is possible to create a chain reaction and add value to the space, city and even the country. Today, the staircase that has been flooded by millions of visitors is the biggest and real proof of this. By developing different projects and designs on stairs, solutions can be produced for the problems in the society and different perspectives can be gained.

This study emphasizes once again the importance of the staircase which has been an indispensable place in architecture since the early periods of history. The staircase not only circulates the body vertically within the physical space, but also communicates with it. For this reason, it deserves to be remembered for its features other than its function, form, material and the construction system. Based on the symbolic, psychological, artistic and aesthetic aspects of the staircase, the study categorizes the stairs with a classification not found in the literature. In this context, he presents the ladder as a powerful design element to the reader through different examples within the categories: symbolic, artistic, experimental, sculptural, monumental and multifunctional. The classification consists of an interpretation which is the return of architectural views of the authors. It may also be a starting point for different and broader classifications of different researchers.

As a result, although the staircase is widely included in architectural education, it is mostly an element that stands out with its technical features. However, it is thought that the social, cultural, psychological and experimental aspects of the stairs, which constitute the main idea of this study, will create great awareness especially for designers and design students. When all aspects of the stairs' interaction with the user are handled, the spaces will be better defined and become impressive.

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