Architecture of the Philippines

The front entrance of Fuerza de Santiago towering 40 metres high.

The architecture of the Philippines is a reflection of the history and heritage of the country. The most prominent historic constructions in the archipelago are from the Spanish Colonial period, though much Philippine architecture is also influenced by Japanese, Malay, Hindu, Chinese, and American cultures.

The pre-colonial architecture of the Philippines consisted of the Nipa hut made from natural materials but there are some traces of large-scale construction before the Spanish colonizers came but not well documented. An example of this is the pre-colonial walled city of Maynilad although later after the Spanish colonization, dismantled by the Spaniards and rebuilt as Intramuros. There are also other minor pre-colonial walled cities like Betis and Macabebe.

During three hundred years of Spanish colonization the philippine architecture was dominated by the Spanish culture. During this period Intramuros, the walled city, of Manila, was built with its walls, houses, churches and fortresses. The Augustinian friars built a large number of grand churches all over the Philippine Islands. During this
period the traditional Filipino "Bahay na Bato" style for the large mansion emerged. These were large houses built of stone and wood combining Filipino, Spanish and Chinese style elements. The best preserved examples of these houses can be found in Vigan, Ilocos Sur and Taal, Batangas.

After the Spanish American war the architecture of the Philippines was dominated by the American style. In this period the plan for the modern city of Manila was designed, with a large number of art deco buildings, by famous American and Filipino architects. During the liberation of Manila by the Americans in 1945 large portions of Intramurous and Manila were destroyed. In the period after the second world war many of the destroyed buildings were rebuilt.

At the end of the twentieth century modern architecture with straight lines and functional aspects was introduced. During this period many of the older structures fell into decay. Early in the 21st Century a revival of the respect for the traditional Filipino elements in the architecture returned.

Pre-colonial

Prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, the main form of dwelling for a family in the Philippines was the nipa hut, a single room house composed of wood, bamboo or other native materials. Though the styles of the nipa hut varied throughout the country, most all of them shared similar characteristics including having it raised slightly above ground on stilts and a steep roof. Aside from nipa huts, other small houses were built on top of trees to prevent animal as well as enemy attacks.

Colonial Spanish

Spanish colonization introduced European architecture into the country. The influence of European architecture and its style actually came via the Antilles through the Manila Galleon. The most lasting legacy of Spain in terms of architecture was its colonial churches which were designed by anonymous friar.

In this era, the nipa hut or Bahay Kubo gave way to the Bahay na Bato (stone house) and became the typical house of
noble Filipinos. The Bahay na Bato followed the nipa hut's arrangements such as open ventilation and elevated apartments. The most obvious difference between the two houses would be the materials that was used to build them. The Bahay na Bato was constructed out of brick and stone rather than the traditional bamboo materials.

**Bahay na Bato**

The Bahay Na Bato, the Colonial Filipino House, is a mixture of native Filipino, Spanish and Chinese influences. In Vigan, Ilocos Sur, excellently preserved examples of the houses of the noble Filipinos can be admired. In Taal, Batangas, the main street is still lined with examples of the traditional Filipino homes.

**Fort Santiago**

Fort Santiago (Fuerza de Santiago) is a defense fortress built for Spanish conquistador, Miguel López de Legazpi. The fort is part of the structures of the walled city of Intramuros, in Manila, Philippines.

The location of Fort Santiago was also once the site of the palace and kingdom of Rajah Suliman, chieftain of Manila of pre-Spanish era. It was destroyed by the conquistadors upon arriving in 1570, encountering several bloody battles with the Muslims and native Tagalogs. The Spaniards destroyed the native settlements and erected Fuerza de Santiago in 1571.

**Intramuros**

Intramuros, located along the southern bank of the Pasig River, was built by the Spaniards in the 16th century and is the oldest district of the city of Manila. Its name, taken from the Latin, intra muros, literally "Within the walls", meaning within the wall enclosure of the city/fortress, also describes its structure as it is surrounded by thick, high walls and moats. During the Spanish colonial period, Intramuros was considered Manila itself.

**Paco Park**

Paco Park was planned as a municipal cemetery for the well-off and established aristocratic Spanish families who...
resided in the old Manila, or the city within the walls of Intramuros during the Spanish colonial era.

Most of the wealthy families interred the remains of their loved ones inside the municipal cemetery in what was once the district of Dilao (former name for Paco). The cemetery was built in the late 1700s but was completed several decades later and in 1822, the cemetery was used to inter victims of a cholera epidemic that swept across the city.

The cemetery is circular in shape, with an inner circular fort that was the original cemetery and with the niches that were placed or located within the hollow walls. As the population continued to grow, a second outer wall was built with the thick adobe walls were hollowed as niches and the top of the walls were made into pathways for promenades.

A Roman Catholic chapel was built inside the walls of the Paco Park and it was dedicated to St. Pancratius.

**Augustinian Churches**

San Augustine church Paoay, Ilocos Norte, July 2005

The order of the Augustinians, Augustinian Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus of the Philippines, build many churches all over the Philippines. These magnificent structures can still be found all over the Philippine Islands. The Augustinian historians Fathers Policarpo F. Hernández and Pedro G. Galende, coffetable book "Angels in Stone" documents all the churches built by the Augustinians throughout the Philippines over the centuries.

The San Augustine church in Paoay, Ilocos Norte, is the most famous of these churches. This unique specimen of Filipino architecture from the Spanish area has been included in the World Heritage Sites List of the Unesco.
The interior of the San Agustín Church in Intramuros, with magnificent trompe l'oeil mural on its ceiling and walls.

San Agustín Church and Monastery, built between 1587 and 1606, is one of the oldest churches in the Philippines, and the only building left intact after the destruction of Intramuros during the Battle of Manila (1945). The present structure is actually the third to stand on the site and has survived seven major earthquakes, as well as the wars in Manila. The church remains under the care of the Augustinians who founded it.

The San Agustin Church lies inside the walled city of Intramuros located in the capital city Manila, Philippines. It is the first European stone church to be built in the Philippines designed in Spanish architectural structure. The church also houses the legacies of the Spanish conquistadors, Miguel López de Legazpi, Juan de Salcedo and Martín de Goiti who are buried and laid to rest in a tomb, underneath the church.

The church has 14 side chapels and a trompe-l'oeil ceiling. Up in the choir loft are the hand-carved 17th-century seats of molave, a beautiful tropical hardwood. Adjacent to the church is a small museum run by the Augustinian order,
featuring antique vestments, colonial furniture, and religious paintings and icons.

Together with three other ancient churches in the country, it was designated as part of the World Heritage Site “Baroque Churches of the Philippines” in 1993.

Lighthouses

During the Spanish and American era many lighthouses were constructed around the Philippine Islands. The most northeastern Lighthouse can be found in Burgos, Ilocos Norte. An overview of Philippine lighthouses can be found through this link.

The 20th Century

Philippine Architecture during American colonization

After the Spanish American war in 1898 the Americans took over rule of the Philippines until after the second world war. During this period the Americans constructed many Art Nouveaux buildings in Manila. In 1902 Judge William Howard Taft was appointed to head the Philippine Commission to evaluate the needs of the new territory. Taft, who later became the Philippines' first civilian Governor-General,[] decided that Manila, the capital, should be a planned town. He hired as his architect and city planner Daniel Hudson
Burnham, who had built Union Station and the post office in Washington. In Manila, Mr. Burnham had in mind a long wide, tree-lined boulevard along the bay, beginning at a park area dominated by a magnificent hotel. To design, what is now known as, the Manila Hotel Taft hired William E. Parsons, a New York architect, who envisioned an impressive, but comfortable hotel, along the lines of a California mission, but grander.\[2\] The original design was an H-shaped plan that focused on well-ventilated rooms on two wings, providing grand vistas of the harbor, the Luneta, and Intramuros. The top floor was, in fact, a large viewing deck that was used for various functions, including watching the American navy steam into the harbor.\[3\]

Many of these buildings were heavily damaged during the Battle of Manila in 1945. After the second world war many were rebuilt. Many buildings in Manila were designed by the Filipino architect Juan M. de Guzman Arellano.

In 1911 the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the Manila Army and Navy Club at the shore of Manila Bay bordering the Luneta Park. The building consists of a Grand entrance and has three stories that housed the various function rooms and the Hotel rooms. It has been in use far into the eighties however it has fallen into decay and is in need of restoration.

At T.M. Kalaw Street stands on of the remaining structures that survived the liberation of Manila in 1945, the "Luneta Hotel." The Hotel was completed in 1918. According to study by Dean Joseph Fernandez of the University of Santo Tomas, the hotel was designed by the Spanish architect-engineer Salvador Farre. The structure is the only remaining example of the French Renaissance architecture with Filipino stylized beaux arts in the Philippines to date. This famous landmark fell gradually into decay. In 2007 the renovation activities have started and it is hoped that this building will be restored to its old grandeur.
Metropolitan Theater Manila August 2006

The Manila Metropolitan Theatre is an art deco building designed by the Filipino architect Juan M. de Guzman Arellano, and built in 1935. During the liberation of Manila by the Americans in 1945, the theatre was totally destroyed. After reconstruction by the Americans it gradually fell into disuse in the 1960’s. In the following decade it was meticulously restored but again fell into decay. Recently a bus station has been constructed at the back of the theatre. The City of Manila is planning a renovation of this once magnificent building.

The sculptures in the façade of the Theatre are from the Italian sculptor Francesco Riccardo Monti, who lived in Manila from 1930 until his death in 1958, and worked closely together with J.M. de Guzman Arellano. Highly stylized relief carving of Philippine plants executed by the artist Isabelo Tampingco decorate the lobby walls and interior surfaces of the building.

In 1940 the Jai Alai building was constructed along Taft avenue, designed by architect Welton Becket. It has been built in the Philippine Art Deco style. In addition to the Jai Alai game it included the famous "Sky Lounge". Unfortunately, demolition began on July 15, 2000 on the orders of Mayor Lito Atienza. The building is now gone for ever.

The [Far Eastern University (FEU)] FEU was awarded the UNESCO Heritage Award in 2005 for being the only preserved and enduring Art Deco structure in the Philippines. Although the FEU was totally damaged during World War II, the university was restored to its original Art Deco design in the American Period. [1]

The National Monument to Dr. Jose Rizal
The bronze and granite Rizal monument located in Rizal Park, Manila, has long been considered among the most famous sculptural landmarks in the Philippines. The monument is located near the very spot where Dr. Jose Rizal was executed December 30, 1896.

On 28 September 1901, the Philippine Assembly approved Act No. 243, “granting the right to use public land upon the Luneta in the city of Manila” where a monument shall be erected to Jose Rizal.” As conceived by the Act, the monument would not merely consist of a statue, but also a mausoleum to house Rizal’s remains. A Committee on the Rizal Mausoleum consisting of Poblete, Paciano Rizal (the hero’s brother), Juan Tuason, Teodoro R. Yangco, Mariano Limjap, Dr. Maximo Paterno, Ramon Genato, Tomas G. del Rosario and Dr. Ariston Bautista was created. The members were tasked, among others, with raising funds through popular subscriptions. The estimated cost of the monument was P100,000. By January 1905, that goal had been oversubscribed. When the campaign closed in August 1912, the amount collected had reached P135,195.61. More than twelve years after the Philippine Assembly approved Act No. 243, the shrine was finally unveiled on December 30, 1913 during Rizal’s 17th death anniversary.

The Rizal Monument in Luneta was the work of a Swiss sculptor named Richard Kissling. Kissling was only the second placer in the international art competition held between 1905 – 1907 for the monument design. The first-prize winner was Professor Carlos Nicoli of Carrara, Italy. His scaled plaster model titled “Al Martir de Bagumbayan” (To the Martyr of Bagumbayan) bested 40 other accepted entries. Among his plans were the use of marble from Italy (in contrast to the unpolished granite now at Luneta) and the incorporation of more elaborate figurative elements.

**Standalone movie theaters of the Philippines**

During the advent and continuous growth of Philippine cinema in the early 90's, came with the establishment of Philippine theaters in the Metropolitan Manila along with those in the Philippine provinces during the said period. Regular live performances, film showings, and festivals used to be held on the theaters that lead to significant improvements on Philippine culture including film, and performing arts. A number of Philippine cinemas were built within the City of Manila in the 90's, and were designed by
prominent architects and currently recognized as Philippine National Artists, but are closed due to post-World War damages and to give way to these days' city developments.

Examples of Filipino Architecture

Parish of the Holy Sacrifice

The Parish of the Holy Sacrifice is the first circular church and the first thin-shell concrete dome in the Philippines.

The Parish of the Holy Sacrifice is the landmark Catholic chapel in the University of the Philippines, Diliman. Known for its architectural design, the church is recognized as a National Historical Landmark and a Cultural Treasure by the
National Historical Institute and the National Museum respectively. It was designed by the late National Artist for Architecture, Leandro Locsin, which was only one of the five national artists who collaborated on the project. Alfredo Juinio served as the structural engineer for the project. Other Filipino artists contributed to the design of the interior of the church: Around the Chapel are fifteen large murals painted by Vicente Manansala depicting the Stations of the Cross; The marble altar and the large wooden cross above it were sculpted by Napoleon Abueva; The mosaic floor mural called the “River of Life” was designed by Arturo Luz.

The church is adjacent to the U.P. Health Service Building and the U.P. Shopping Center

Bahay Kubo mansion

National artist for architecture Francisco Manosa, on May, 2008 built his own Ayala alabang village Bahay Kubo mansion. With only 3 posts or "haligi", it has 5 one-inch coconut shell doors, 2nd floor, a "silong", Muslim room, sala, and master's bedroom with a fish pond therein.[4][5]

Antipolo Church

The image of "Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage" has been venerated in the church of Antipolo for centuries. The old church that housed the virgin was destroyed in February 1945 when the Americans bombed Antipolo as part of the liberation campaign of Manila. In 1954 a new church was build designed by the renowned Filipino architect Jose de Ocampo. This church is of a coupular design centered around the image of the Virgin. It functions as the center point of the pilgrimages to Antipolo.

Professional Organization and Architects

United Architects of the Philippines

UAP or the United Architects of the Philippines is the Official Voice for Architects throughout the country. The UAP was formed through the “unification” of three architectural organizations: the Philippine Institute of Architects, The League of Philippine Architects and the
Association of Philippine Government Architects. It became the Bonafide Professional Organization of Architects upon receiving Accreditation Number 001 from the Professional Regulations Commission. Thus, UAP was the first professional organization recognized by the Republic.

With the passing of the new architecture law or Republic Act No. 9266, UAP becomes the IAPOA or the Integrated Accredited Professional Organization of Architects.

Architects

The following are the Philippine architects that contributed and lead to the design of the classic Philippine theaters:

- **Juan Nakpil** - Philippine national artist for Architecture
- **Pablo Antonio**
- **Juan Arellano**

Among the modern architects that have shaped the modern Filipino Architecture are Leandro V. Locsin and Bobby Manosa.

**Leandro V. Locsin** (1928-1994), born in the Philippines, has built 5 churches, over 30 different buildings, over 70 residences, and a major landmark of the Philippines in the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

One of the architects who build churches all over the Philippines is **Carlos A. Santos-Viola**.

The moderns Antipolo church has been designed by the Filipino architect **Jose de Ocampo**.

Juan Carlos Eugene Soler[^6] the only Filipino to win the prestigious Glass Architectural Design Competition in Tokyo, Japan.