Spoliarium

The Spoliarium is a painting by Filipino artist Juan Luna. The painting was submitted by Luna to the Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1884, where it garnered a gold medal. In 1886, it was sold to the Diputación Provincial de Barcelona for 20,000 pesetas. It currently hangs in the main gallery at the ground floor of the National Museum of the Philippines, and is the first work of art that greets visitors upon entry into the museum.

The Spoliarium measured four meters in height and seven meters in width. The canvas depicts a chamber beneath a Roman arena, where bodies of dead gladiators are being dragged into a shadowy area, presumably to be put in a bigger pile of dead bodies. Spolarium was painted in a very large canvas and is more or less life size. His painting portrays defeated gladiators in the arena being dragged into a pile of other corpses. On the left side, there are many spectators viewing the spectacle with a variety of expressions, while on the far right side of the painting is a grieving woman in torn and shabby clothing. Horizontal lines are seen in the walls and the people watching the scene. But diagonal lines that denote movement are very obvious and can be seen in the gladiators slain bodies, in the men dragging them and in the floor tiles. There is dominant use of contour lines as shown in the muscles of the arms, legs and backs of the gladiators. In the use of color, there is a governing use of red, mostly seen in the center, that is one of the first things to attract the attention of the viewer. The use of green on the weeping lady's dress creates contrast against the gladiators red dresses. The intensity of the color red is very overwhelming. Almost all of the colors used are warm colors, which is thought to be intentional on the part of the artist. Luna has been known to use colors not simply for reasons of aesthetics but also for their symbolic value.