Ancient Philippine Art
Ancient Tools
Flake Stone (Taliptip na Bato)

The flake stone was a tool used by ancient Filipinos from the Stone Age up to the Early Metal Age. It was used for cutting, slicing and grating.
Daras na Bato

It is small, grounded and smoothened. It is also made out of a smooth stone type. The cross section is shaped like a rectangle or a trapezoid. It is believed to be used for carving wood.
Pamukpok sa telang balat ng kahoy

It is a tool made of stone and is used to make cloth out of wood. It was made by the ancient Filipinos in Palawan from a stone and was used to stroke the wood until it became almost like thread.
Body ornamentation is an ancient tradition in the society of the early Filipinos. The ornaments are made of stone, metal, crystal, or conch.

Four types of ornaments made of stone and crystal with were found together with the bones of the early Filipinos. Some other areas where such ornaments were found are Kweba ng Bato ng Sorsogon and Kwebang Manunggul, Leta-Leta and Ngipet Duldug in the island of Palawan.

These ornaments are made out of jade, onyx, agate and jasper.

The old ornaments are evidence of the network of the ancient Filipinos to the other neighboring countries in Asia.
Shells (Kabibe)

The most commonly used shells are: Cypraea, Nassarius, Abalones, Cowries, Strombus, Melo Diadem, and Nautilus. They were used by the Filipino ancestors as earrings, bracelet, and chain. Some were even used as spoons and limestone holders.
A necklace made out of grounded and pieces of small shells.
Kwebang Daluyong, Palawan
Lingling-o

The Lingling-or is a type of ear pendant created from jade.
Baybayin or Alibata is the written language of the ancient Filipino.
The pre-Spanish ancestors of the Filipino wrote on leaves, and bamboo. There, they wrote incantations and placed the bamboo in the entrances of their homes to keep out evil spirits.
Sining sa Batong Angono

One hundred twenty-seven drawings of people are scattered in the wall. They were engraved in the walls using a piece of stone. The etching depth is 10 cm up to the blurred lines. The petroglyph is composed of round shape heads with and without a neck drawn above a rectangle or a V-shaped body. The line drawing of the arms and legs are usually flexed and crooked.
Containers
Earthenware cooking vessel

These vessels were made in the Metal Age. They were used by the ancient Filipinos for cooking purposes.
Manuggul Jar (Prehistoric Ceramic Burial Jar)

It was found in Tabon Cave in Palawan and it portrays the journey of a soul after death. This was used as container for the burial of the bones of dead people. This is the first evidence of the artistry of ancient Filipinos. The most amazing part of the jar is the cap with shaped up passenger boat with two figures. It describes their belief that the dead continue to travel to find other life.
Human shaped jar (Bangang hugis at anyong tao)

This container was used for the second burial of the dead. Each of the twenty-nine pots is unique. The head-shaped cap of each person has a different face: sadness, happiness and peace. The heads are different as well. Some are plain and may have holes, while others are painted in red and black. Others also have teeth. Some pots have arms and some pots had woman breasts.
A unique drinking vessel with a yawning mouth from a late Neolithic site in Leta-leta cave in Palawan.
Other jars, vessels, containers

Dug-out-Coffins found in Ayub Cave, Matium, Sarrangani Province - The lid is shaped as head of a human who sometimes have a hand and chest if the deceased is a woman.

Likha - found in the cemetery Calagatan, Batangas. Carved in the jar is a face that is believed to be a portrayal of the soul of the deceased.
Shell scoop
Bul-ol (Anito)

The Bul-ol is a type of a sculpture in the form of human worship to the anitos. According to the beliefs of the natives, the anitos use the bul-ol as their physical body.
Ancient Ifugao Sculpture
What is an art? (accdg. to dictionary.com)
- the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance.

What is a craft? (accdg. to dictionary.com)
-an art, trade, or occupation requiring special skill

The definitions given above are more specific ideas about art and craft. But, simply said…

An art has no purpose. On the other hand, a craft has a purpose.

During the ancient times, if we can classify the artifacts as crafts because, as we have observed, all of them has a purpose: tools, containers, caskets, ornaments/decorations, symbolism, etc. But now that the artifacts are only displayed in museums and are no longer used, we can classify them as arts because they are only exhibited and shown to the people.
Aesthetics
Contrary to popular historical beliefs, the Philippines had a rich culture prior to its discovery by the Spanish expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. It was a thriving society that had established relations with its other Asian neighbors. It bartered gold, pearls, corals, cotton and rattan with the Arabs, Chinese and Japanese traders as early as the 10th century. A copper artifact discovered in 1989 which was dated to 900 B.C. proves the existence of a written script, a distinguishing mark of any civilization.

The Negritos (Aeta, Agta, Ayta) were the first to explore the archipelago around 15,000 to 30,000 B.C. Using land bridges this nomadic tribe settled the Pacific islands including the Philippines. In its midst, other ancient civilizations were also evolving. The Proto-Malays, a Mongol Asiatic race, arrived around 2500 B.C. Unlike the Negritos, who were hunters and gatherers, the Proto-Malays were seafarers and farmers. They built their houses in trees and created fire for cooking. More advanced, they drove the Negritos into the mountains. The next to arrive were the Duetero-Malays, of India-Asiatic race (Indian, Chinese, Siamese, Arabic), that prevailed with a more superior and advanced culture. They have their own alphabet and were able to read and write. They possessed knowledge in metallurgy allowing them to use it for swords, arrows and other weapons. They also used it to fashion jewelry and other adornments. They were skilled boat (balangay) builders and excellent farmers.
The men wore loin cloths (akin to shorts) and short sleeved collarless shirts in different colors that state their social status, red for the datu, blue for nobles and black for the maharlikas. The “putong” was a piece of cloth rolled over the head like a turban. A red putong means that the wearer has already killed a man and one with knitting means that he has killed many men. The women wore “baro” (shirt) and “saya” (skirts) commonly known as “patadyong”. Both were barefoot. Jewelry in the form of bracelets, rings and earrings was usually made out of gold. They even used gold to adorn the teeth. Tattooing the body on the arms (women), chest and even the face was considered beautiful and proudly displayed. Tattoos on the Filipinos were so common that the Spaniards upon seeing them dubbed the islands “La Isla de los Pintados” (island of the painted ones).

Our ancient painting consisted of figures tattooed on the bodies of the warriors. Sculpture was done on stone, clay, wood and gold. Many figures were representations of spirits and gods whom they worshiped.

There was also architecture. Houses were raised above ground. They were constructed out of bamboo, rattan, coconut palm and nipa leaves which were ideal for the warm tropical conditions of the country.

The “Kalingga” and “Ilonggot” of Northern Luzon build houses on top of trees as do the “Bagobo” and “Mandaya” of Mindanao. The “Badjaos” live entirely on their boats.
Our ancestors believed in a supreme being whom they called Bathala Maykapal. They also believed in lesser gods or spirits called anitos whom they also invoked. There was anitos every place they went to—fields, forest, sea, home. They also believed that the anitos, when placed in the entrance of the rice storage, will guard it from thieves and will bring fortune and prosperity to the family.

Ancient Filipinos believed that when a person died, his spirit will go to another world. There were rewards for the good, and punishments for the bad.