Philippine Modern Architecture

Architecture for me is a living art that is timelessly magnificent. A good illustration of this is the pyramid of Egypt. It has been constructed a very long time ago yet it is still being preserved and treated as one of the treasures of the world. I believe that my philosophy is definite enough to comprehend on what architecture is. There are many structures here in the Philippines that have been considered as a living art. There were several processes of constructions before reaching into the contemporary style. Officially, the modern architecture started in 1920’s yet it acquired its eminence in the 1940’s after the Second World War.

I believe that architecture has no dullness at all. If artists, especially architects shall not stop in innovating, the word monotony will be eliminated. The structures give us life. It gives human an inspiration. It also gives people each day the reason why to have worthwhile living. Without it, no one shall have the chance to explore and expound different boundaries. Let’s think out of the box.

To give us further information about the Philippine modern architecture, let’s unravel the Philippine architecture’s history. Indigenous dwellings and geographical considerations started it all. Ancient individuals started settling their shelters via organic materials depending on what is in abundance. Their houses were also dependent on the weather and the location where they are being situated to.
The Philippines has an archipelago of 7000+ islands with more than half of the land mountainous and hilly. It has a land area of 300,000 square kilometres, 17500 kilometres coastline, and the exact measurement of 4 degrees from the equator. The weather is hot and rainy and a high humidity has always been the case. Several typhoons can bring floods and strong winds and even occasional earthquakes. So we are always advised to log trees only if it has an enough supply by planting again another one. Ethnic people already considered these endeavours in constructing their respective shelters.

In the old age, the building materials were wood, bamboo, leaves, stones and clay. Because of the very limited construction materials, the indigenous Filipinos were only able to construct small houses. Here is another fact, the houses before were portable. Due to their hunting routine, they are forced to move from one place to another. The oldest known portable shelters in the Philippines, excluding the caves were the lean-to. The lean-to was thus invented, from a frame made of tree branches and twigs, using leaves and fronds for sidings. A screen resting on the ground and held up at an angle by one or several poles, the lean-to is both roof and wall, protecting dwellers from rain and the heat of the sun. The lean-to is not even an enclosed place. It is just like a shield for an unwanted natural calamity. Moreover, the Bahay Kubo was eventually yielded. From there, basic cross sections of a house were discovered and studied.

Planning patterns were eventually analyzed. When people realized that there should be a school for them to study, a municipal hall for the leaders and a road for passengers, they started to explore city planning. It is proven that even before; Philippine architecture has already been established. Planning is very important. Having a proper behavioural stress circuits and proper zoning is very important. To be a good architect, we should be able to produce an ease environment for the stakeholders.

Way back in ancient periods, geographical aspect in construction was already considered. The upland from lowland houses is different from each other because of the fact that cool air rises over the warm one. People also started to consider the macro level of town planning, urban design, interior design and landscaping. They have been very contextual with their adjacencies because they didn’t have the choice to use other materials only until the age of industrial revolution.

The Industrial Revolution was a period from the 18th to the 19th century. There were major changes in every aspect of livelihood. The cultural conditions were transformed because of the adaptation of its influence. The technological and economic process unraveled new ideas. It was in capable of producing new essential things. It has been marked as the major turning point of human history. Without the industrial revolution, people will unfortunately live in ignorance.
Furthermore, manual labors were lessened because of the machines that were invented. More eccentric edifices were born. The industrial revolution started in United Kingdom which eventually spread out around the world. However, it was a decade or two before it came here in the Philippines. Other countries already started their new way of construction.

I guess some people would say that Philippine has no architecture because of our late adaptation to what is current in the other countries. But I certainly don’t agree that we have no architecture. We are rich in architecture. Form the day we started our own signature house which is the bahay kubo, the creativity of people were already revealed. Architects here in the Philippines are very competent. In fact, international architectural firms hire Filipino architects to work into their respective companies.

Speaking of international architecture, modernism has been the dominant style in the 1920’s. The most important figures in Modern architecture had established their reputations. The big three are commonly recognized as Le Corbusier in France, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius in Germany. Frank Lloyd Wright was also one of the most famous and vivid American architects. He is also one of my favorite architects. Falling water is his masterpiece. It is a vacation house for the Kaufman family. the AIA (American Institute of architects) described it to be “the most famous residence ever build” and “the best all-time work of American architecture”.

Furthermore, here in the Philippines, I can continually see buildings that are very westernized. Flat roofs and simplification of form were emerging in the different kinds of buildings. Adequate design strategies evokes in every intelligent building I see here in the Philippines, especially in Manila.

Aesthetically, Philippine modern architecture looks like other buildings in other countries, especially in the western side of the globe. However, this doesn’t mean that we are a copycat. We are not an impersonator. Filipinos have our own style. We are not going to let our dignities down. Since a modern architecture is classified by simplification of forms and less creation of ornaments, architecture therefore will come out of more or less same ideas. Design philosophies and styles is where it is being classified and differentiated.

I have written few discourses about modern architects and their grand buildings. The last one was the SDA building of Architect Eduardo Calma. Like what I’ve said in my discourse regarding it, Architect Ed Calma is excellent. He was able to scheme buildings contemporarily. The SDA
building is one of the most modern buildings I’ve ever seen here in the manila. It is entirely covered by glass and supported by steel frame. The other structure that I love is the CCP Complex of Leandro Locsin. Though brutal architecture is not my type, I still like it. It is humongous and heavy to look at yet it juxtaposes the feeling of lightness. The water feature in front of the edifice makes the building look as if it is floating. I have never been inside the building but I’m looking forward to sit in the gallery and feel the uplifting feeling watching the rapturous enactments. The new Greenbelt 5 at Makati is also gorgeous. It suggests a very modern environment. Filled with vegetation in the exterior and interior, it breezes fresh air which adds up to its exquisiteness.

I studied architecture because I aspire to be one of the architects who shall contribute stunning buildings someday. I believe that even a piece of architecture will have a great part in the society as long as it satisfies and relish humanity. I want to be a modernist architect. I want to be recognized as one of the great modern architects. The Philippine Modern Architecture started to emerge in the 1945 after the World War 2. The first buildings of the modern era were conceived early in the 20th century. Modern architecture was adopted by many influential architects and architectural educators, however very few "Modern buildings" were built in the first half of the century.

I believe that Filipino architects have more to show to people. The aptitudes and talents they’ve got are incomparable. Other architects have proven their talents outside the country and I am confident that there are still many architects who have been working hard in their profession. I am proud to be a Filipino. There are many things to be proud of in our country apart from architecture. I just would like to say that even though many architects are just starting to do extravagant buildings, I know that we can be better than others. It’s never too late; the developments of the inventions are continually progressing until now.