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The Facade of De Majestic Bandung: Uncovering the Philosophy Behind Colonial Heritage

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ABSTRAK

The city of Bandung, nicknamed the "Paris of Java," boasts a rich history and culture reflected in its colonial buildings. One prominent building is the De Majestic Building, an architectural icon located in the city center. The building's facade, with its distinctive ornaments and details, not only serves as an aesthetic element but also holds philosophical messages about the history, culture, and ideals of colonial society. As a significant visual representation, the facade reflects the values, beliefs, and aspirations of the community at the time of its construction. This study aims to uncover the symbolic and philosophical meanings contained in the visual elements of the De Majestic Building's facade, such as materials, forms, ornaments, and proportions. Furthermore, the development of colonial architecture in Bandung was influenced by complex social and political dynamics, where the colonial style was not only a reflection of aesthetics but also a manifestation of Western cultural power and dominance. This study also explores the adaptation of the De Majestic facade to the changing times and its relevance in the current social and cultural context. Through an examination of the interaction between architecture and society, the De Majestic facade reflects collective aesthetic aspirations rooted in history. This research is expected to contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, so that future generations can recognize and appreciate the colonial architectural values contained in the De Majestic Building. The research methodology uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis, including literature studies, observation, and visual analysis. The results of this study emphasize the

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role of architecture as a medium of cultural communication, which demonstrates the unique identity of Bandung's colonial heritage and the impact of the interaction of Western and Eastern cultures in the early 20th century.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The city of Bandung, known as the "Paris of Java," has a rich history and culture that is reflected in a number of historic buildings that hold stories of the past. One of the buildings that attracts attention is the De Majestic building, an icon of colonial architecture that stands in the heart of the city (Riany et al., 2021). The facade of this building, with its distinctive ornaments and details, not only functions as an aesthetic element, but also holds a deep philosophical message about the history, culture and aspirations of society during the colonial era (Victoryana & Hartono, 2023).

As a significant visual representation, a building's facade reflects the values, beliefs, and ideals of the society at the time of its construction (Utami, 2023). In the context of De Majestic, the facade functions as a communication medium that conveys certain messages to the public (Christina, 2017). Through an in-depth analysis of the visual elements of the facade, such as materials, forms, ornaments, and proportions, this research aims to reveal the symbolic and philosophical meanings contained within it. Every detail on the facade reflects a unique architectural identity and becomes an integral part of the broader historical narrative (Idrus et al., 2024; Youns & Grchev, 2024).

In addition, the development of architecture in Bandung during the colonial period was influenced by complex social and political dynamics (Tamimi et al., 2021). The colonial architectural style is not only a reflection of aesthetics, but also a manifestation of the power and dominance of Western culture (Purnomo et al., 2017; Shalimar & Winarto, 2024). In this context, the De Majestic building serves as a symbol of the colonial era which was full of challenges. This research aims to identify how building facades adapt over time, and how the values contained within them remain relevant in today's social and cultural context.

Through this study, the interaction between architecture and society is revealed, where the facade of De Majestic reflects aesthetic aspirations and collective identity rooted in history. This research is expected to contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, so that future generations can recognize and appreciate the values of colonial architecture such as De Majestic.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

Colonial architecture is architecture that combines Western and Eastern culture (Ismuhadi & Safyan, 2023; Tamimi et al., 2020). This architecture emerged through the work of Dutch architects and was intended for the Dutch people who lived in Indonesia, in the period before independence. In 1906, Bandung obtained municipal status with autonomy covering an area of 1,922 hectares. This change encouraged an increase in the European population in Bandung, which then gave rise to the idea among European elites and colonial officials to create a city that met European standards of comfort. The city of Bandung during the colonial period was planned very carefully, where the city planning was formulated in the Master Plan Gementee Bandoeng which took place during the period 1918 - 1923, with development focused on the needs of European society (Izzati et al., 2023).

In the development of colonial architecture that blended Western and Eastern cultures, a new movement emerged that added a distinct color to Bandung's urban landscape: Art Deco architecture (Solikhah, 2024). This style, which became popular in the late 19th century to the early 20th century, reflects the aesthetic and functional transformation in response to the increasingly complex needs of European society in a city that had been carefully planned based on the Master Plan Gementee Bandoeng. The influence of Art Deco in Indonesia comes from Dutch architects, such as C. P. Wolff Schoemaker and A. F. Aalbers, who are known for

their geometric decorative elements on their exterior walls (Santoso, 2017). Furthermore, the development of Art Deco architecture in Indonesia tends to be simpler, characterized by curved line patterns and cylindrical shapes. Decorative arts at the end of the Art Deco period are related to the modern dynamic style and plastic architecture, better known as "*streamline*." Style *streamline*, also called Ocean Liner, refers to a building with a curved mass at the end of the plane.

Along with the development of colonial architecture that blended Western and Eastern cultures, as well as the emergence of new movements such as Art Deco, it is important to understand how the elements of the building facades in this architecture reflected aesthetic and functional transformations that suited the needs of European society in Bandung. The facade is not only a marker of architectural identity, but also functions as an important element in creating comfort and beauty in the city. According to D.K. Ching in (Savitri, 2013) describe the facade elements designed to show the image of the building, including :

2.1. Wall

Walls, as a basic form in architecture, define three-dimensional space through characteristics such as shape, color, size, and texture (Rahayu, 2016). Vertical walls are effective in delimiting space, and to attract attention, they are often decorated with texture, color, and ornamentation. Ornaments on the facade, such as the play of colors and varied materials, must be relevant to the function of the building.

2.2. Column

A column is a reinforced wall element, standing upright from the foundation upwards, and is often used in building facades, especially formal buildings (Amin, 2023). A row of columns creates an open gap and provides protection, while also emphasizing the direction of entry. According to the Historic Architecture Sourcebook (1997), Columns have a structural function as supports for vertical loads and can be cylindrical in shape, and can be structural or non-structural.

2.3. Openings in the wall

Openings in walls, such as windows and doors, have a major impact on lighting, privacy, and views (Vidiyanti et al., 2020). Openings can be placed on a flat plane, at an angle, or between planes. The maximum opening indicates an outward orientation, while the minimum indicates an inward orientation. In display design, there are two main principles: "To hold" or accommodate, and "contain" or limit.

2.4. Entrance (pintu masuk)

Entrance is the front part of the house that serves visitors, including the door and supporting structures (Wahyuni et al., 2020). Entrance doors can be divided into three types: flush, recessed, and recessed. Flush doors maintain the continuity of the wall, while those that jut outward and inward serve to achieve by shading and integrating the outdoor space into the building.

2.5. Roof

The roof is the main part of a building. This part is very important because it functions as protection from excessive sunlight and rain.

2.6. Balcony

A balcony is a part of a building, usually on the second floor, that projects outward or inward. Its function is to provide a place for residents to enjoy the view from above.

2.7. Color and Material Finish

Color in the environment according to urban designer and author Dorothy Kamin is:

- As a space dividing element
- Can identify functions

- Estimating temperature
- Affects mood
- As a personality project / image building

2.8. Signboard (Sign)

Signs and symbols on the facade serve as store identity indicators, distinguishing one store from another. This sign can be a three-dimensional plane or letter, adapted to the function of the facade. These signs provide information about the store, such as logos, symbols, and advertisements.

The De Majestic Bandung building, as a concrete example of colonial and Art Deco architecture, integrates facade elements that reflect a blend of cultures as well as rich aesthetic and philosophical values, which contribute to the identity of the city of Bandung. According to (Angelia & Widiwati, 2021), Aesthetics will be created with the composition in a design. A good design composition will show balance, rhythm and emphasis, scale and proportion, and harmonious unity. Apart from that, there is also sensitivity in selecting visual elements such as materials, shapes and textures, and it is also supported by fulfilling technical aspects, namely function and structure.

3. METHOD

For the study of the De Majestic building and its facade, the research methodology used is a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis.

3.1. Literature Study

Literature review is a crucial step in research methodology, involving the collection and analysis of various written sources to understand the context, theories, and findings relevant to the topic under study. In the context of the study of the De Majestic building, the literature review aims to explore information about colonial architecture, Art Deco, and the cultural and historical values embodied in the building's facade.

1. Source Collection: Searching for journals, books, articles, and other documents related to colonial and Art Deco architecture.
2. Source Analysis: Reading and analyzing content to find themes, arguments, and evidence that support the research.
3. Information Synthesis: Combining findings from multiple sources to form a more comprehensive understanding of a topic.

3.2. Observation Method

The observation method is a data collection technique that involves direct observation of the research object. In the context of the study of the De Majestic building, this method was used to record visual elements on the building facade, such as shape, materials, ornamentation, and proportions.

3.3. Visual Analysis

Visual analysis is the process of assessing and interpreting the visual elements contained within a research object. In De Majestic's study, this analysis focuses on element identification, interpretation of meaning, and contextualization.

4. DISCUSSION

To find out the philosophical value of the facade elements of the De Majestic building, this study will review the elements that form the facade as written according to D.K. Ching in (Savitri, 2013), which cover:

4.1. De Majestic Facade Wall

The facade walls of the De Majestic building reflect rich philosophical values related to cultural identity, history, and social function. As a primary structural element, the walls not only serve to support loads but also represent cultural identity. The wall design, which combines colonial and local elements, reflects the interaction between Western and Eastern cultures. The ornaments and architectural details on the walls symbolize colonial influence, reflecting the aspirations and power of the colonial society.



Figure 1. De Majestic Facade Wall
(Source: Author, 2024)

The sturdy walls, made of durable materials, demonstrate resilience, making the building a symbol of strength and stability in the face of changing times. With their towering height, these walls create a sense of protection for both residents and visitors.

4.2. Column

Columns serve as the main supports of buildings, reflecting strength and stability. With their elegant designs, often adopting classical European styles, they represent the social status and power of their owners. This creates an aesthetic image that reflects prestige and luxury, as well as the aspirations of colonial society to adopt Western lifestyles.



Figure 2. De Majestic Facade Columns
(Source: Author, 2024)

Through its majestic columns and ornamentation, De Majestic became a physical representation of these aspirations, commanding attention and exuding an aura of elegance. This served as a reinforcing element of the colonial elite's identity, making it a symbol of luxury and power within the social and cultural context of the time.

4.3. Openings in the wall

Windows serve as a link between interior and exterior spaces, symbolizing openness. The use of stained glass, with its geometric pattern design and natural color combinations, on the windows of the De Majestic building has its own philosophical value. Stained glass is often used as a symbol of social status. Houses with stained glass windows indicate wealth. Dominant geometric motifs (squares, straight lines) give an orderly, stable and classic impression.



Figure 3. De Majestic Window Design
(Source : Author, 2024)

This kind of pattern is often associated with the values of simplicity, order and harmony and the use of colors such as green, blue and earth brown gives a natural and calm impression. Green is often associated with nature, growth, and peace, while blue is often associated with sky, water, and tranquility. Earth brown gives a warm and natural impression.

4.4. Entrance

The "De Majestic" entrance design serves not only as a physical access point but also as a powerful visual statement. It combines aesthetic and symbolic elements, creating a deep and inviting impression. Its philosophical values, such as luxury, strength, elegance, and honor, reflect the identity of this space.



Figure 4. Entrance to De Majestic
(Source: Author, 2024)

The use of wood and vertical lines conveys a sense of stability and strength, symbolizing a solid foundation and resilience to change. The gold color and striking logo signify honor and high status. The predominance of dark brown wood and gold in the logo creates a sense of luxury and elegance, as gold is often associated with wealth and high social status.

4.5. Roof

The roof of the De Majestic building, with its Art Deco design, holds a rich and deep philosophical value.



Figure 5. Art Deco style building roof
(Source: Author, 2024)

The curved sides of the building are a hallmark of Art Deco architecture, although only one or two sections employ this design. Art Deco style buildings often have flat roofs, as opposed to the pitched roofs of most buildings. The curved design creates balance and a more harmonious and comfortable space. Meanwhile, flat roofs provide flexibility in the use of space, reflecting innovation that is able to adapt to changing social needs. The combination of a flat roof and curved sides creates a dialogue between stability and dynamism, as well as modernity and tradition.

4.6. Color

Color in buildings serves more than just aesthetic purposes; it also reflects emotion, identity, connection to nature, cultural context, and aesthetics and function. The color combinations chosen can convey deeper meaning to the architecture and surrounding social interactions.

The De Majestic building uses a variety of colors that reflect the Art Deco style and the colonial architectural context. Some of the colors found in this building include dark brown, commonly used on wood and walls, which creates a warm and natural feel; white, the base color on the walls, creates a clean and elegant impression and highlights architectural details; and gold, the ornaments, which symbolize luxury.

4.7. Signboard (Sign)

The signboard or sign used reflects the identity and function of the building.



Figure 6. Kala Ornament and De Majestic Logo
(Source: Author, 2024)

At the top of the building is a Kala ornament, symbolizing the god of time. This ornament reminds visitors to De Majestic to cherish every moment and savor their experience. Furthermore, the ornament adds to the building's visual beauty.

Kala is depicted on the facade of a building. In Javanese mythology, Kala is often depicted as a giant figure associated with the phenomenon of a solar or lunar eclipse. According to the myth, Kala, also known as Rahu, was a giant who once drank the water of immortality, and his body fell to earth and turned into a wooden mortar. In Javanese tradition, during an eclipse, people would pound the mortar in the hope that Rahu would release the sun or moon

it had devoured. Since Rahu only has a head, the sun or moon it devoured will return after the eclipse ends.

This myth inspired C. P. Wolff Schoemaker to incorporate the Kala head element into the design of the De Majestic Building. The Kala head, with its bulging eyes, grinning mouth, and protruding tongue, is mounted on the top of the building's "tube," giving the impression of strength and protection, which aligns with the Kala symbolism in Javanese mythology.



Figure 7. Floral Ornaments
(Source: Author, 2024)

Besides Kala, another ornament adopted from local Indonesian architecture is floral ornamentation. In the De Majestic Building, these floral ornaments are presented in the form of small pieces strategically placed on several parts of the building's facade. These ornaments are located below the Kala ornament, as well as above and below the windows on the second floor, enriching the facade's appearance with a harmonious decorative pattern.

The application of these floral ornaments not only serves as an aesthetic element, but also reflects the influence of local culture that blends with the colonial architectural design. With its detailed arrangement, these ornaments add visual dimension to the building's facade, reinforcing the impression of symmetry and balance. The presence of these floral ornaments emphasizes the fusion of local traditions and European styles, which gives the De Majestic Building a distinctive character as an example of the integration of colonial architecture with elements of Indonesian culture.

The "De Majestic" logo, which uses tablature (musical notes) looks like a row of roofs, reflecting the world of music and performance, and emphasizing that this building is a place to present art and music.

5. CONCLUSION

The De Majestic Building in Bandung is a prominent example of colonial and Art Deco architecture, reflecting the city's rich history and culture. The building's facade serves not only aesthetic purposes but also holds profound philosophical significance, encompassing the interaction between Western and Eastern cultures and the aspirations of society during the colonial era. Facade elements such as walls, columns, openings, and roofs show a strong cultural identity, a symbol of social status, and an openness that invites visitors.

This study also illustrates how De Majestic's facade has adapted over time while remaining relevant in today's social and cultural context. With a focus on heritage preservation, this study contributes to an understanding of the importance of preserving colonial architectural values for future generations. Through a thorough analysis of the visual elements, we can understand the relationship between architecture and society, and how the building continues to serve as a symbol of art and culture in Bandung.

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