

Manosa Residence, Metro Manila



Project Data

Architect: Francisco T. Manosa and Partners
Location: New Alabang Village
Completion: 1982

Text by
Brian Brace Taylor.
Documents and photographs courtesy of the architect unless otherwise indicated.

The Manosa Residence offers many reasons to be considered the epitome of an all-Filipino house. Its design is a perfect marriage between traditional styles, materials and culture with modern living and technology. It upgraded the many uses of indigenous materials in different forms such as shell-craft, stonecraft, bamboo-craft, cococraft, rattan-craft and wood-craft; that consequently fused the relationship of architecture with indigenous craftsmanship, thus paving a way for a stronger relationship between architecture, the arts, and the crafts.

Nestled amid the lush greenery of Ayala Alabang Village is the residence of architect Francisco "Bobby" T. Manosa and his family. Very contemporary in plan and design, the house is a take-off of the Philippine *nipa* hut and the ancestral house.

Its wide overhanging eaves and overpowering roofs protect the interior from the natural elements. With the use of these double roofs a dominant high-pitched roof is visually created; at the same time a *nipa* hut texture is imaginatively emphasised by the use of wood

shingles, 50 centimetres to 70 centimetres in length, made from 30% coconut and 70% *apitong* laid in a staggered manner. Although much indigenous materials were employed, technology also had its part in installing them, as in the use of the structural concept of a tripod system that eliminates a column and its footing; the eggcrate pattern floor joists saved as much as 20% on board footage.

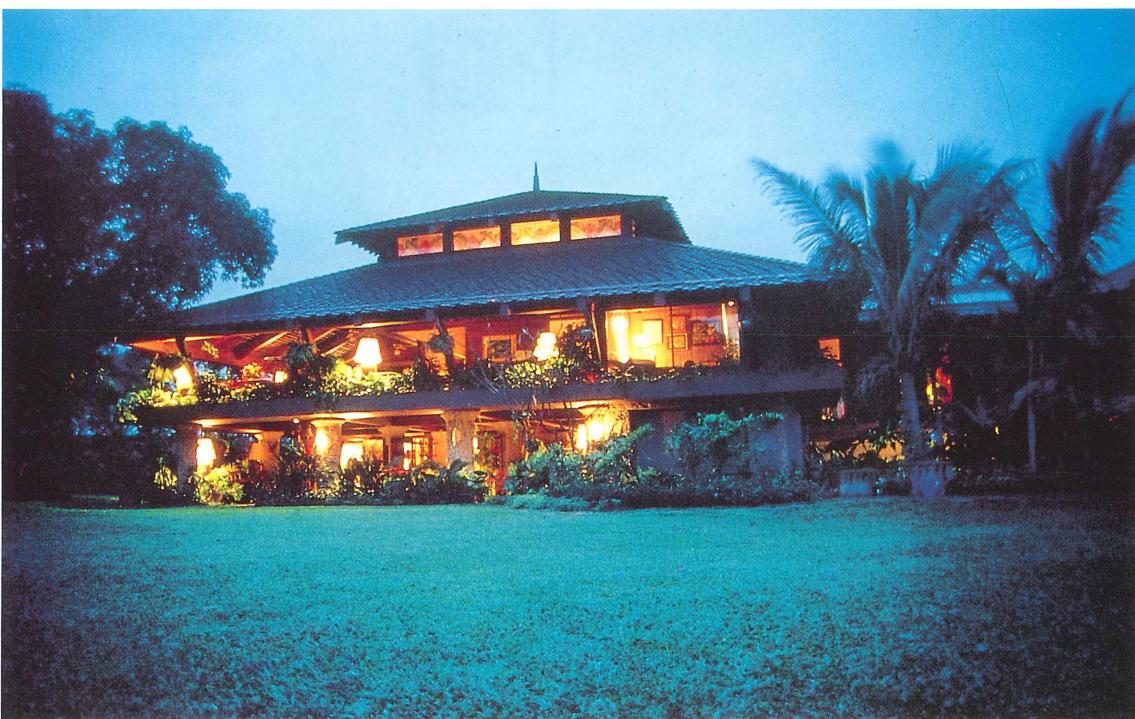
A tour of this residence would reveal that its design developed, enhanced and refined the traditional character of a Philippine house in the context of modern living that is an answer to the needs and lifestyle of the Manosa family. The house was planned in two separate wings, to the north-east is the sleeping/quiet area, and to the south-west is the living/activity area.

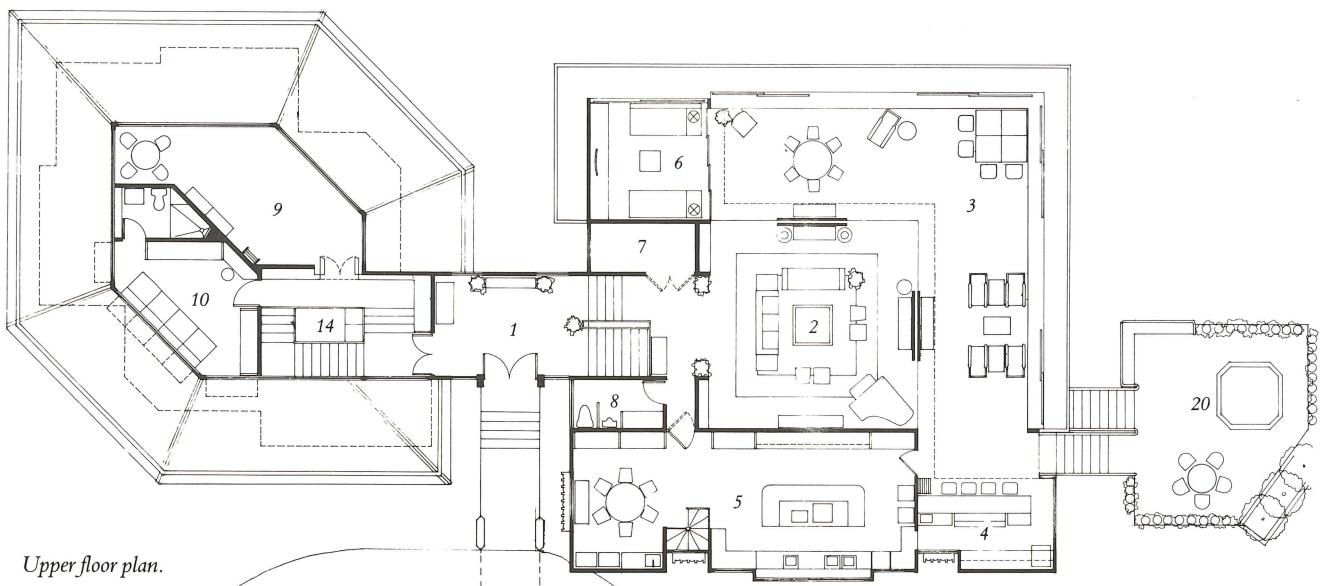
The living room is where one immediately feels the atmosphere of the



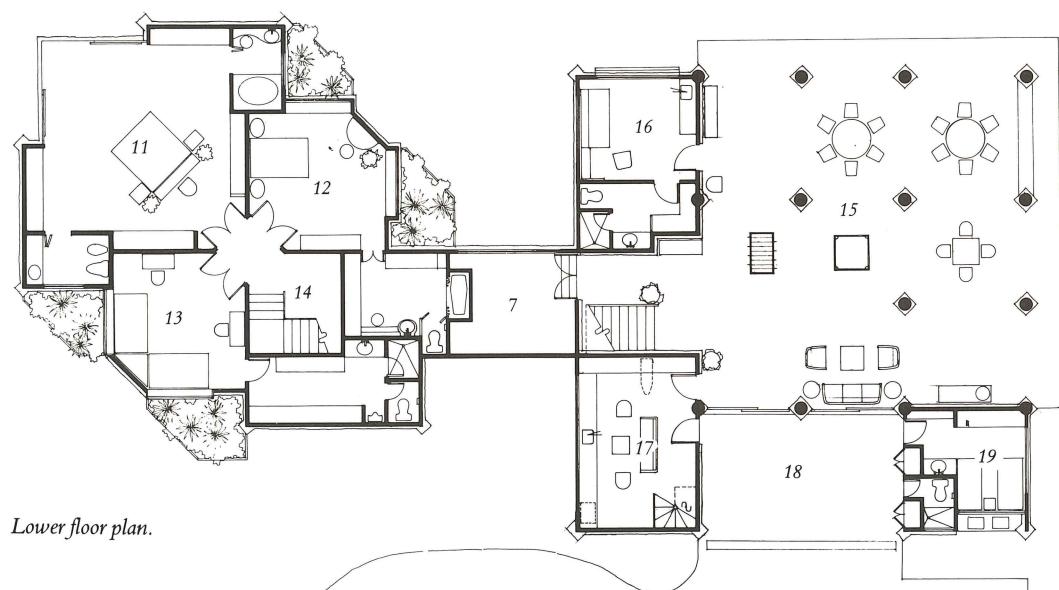
Right: The two-storey Manosa house as seen from a distance resembles the traditional Filipino *nipa* hut.

Below: View of the house at night from the garden side.





Upper floor plan.



Lower floor plan.

- 1. Foyer
- 2. Living room
- 3. Azotea
- 4. Bar
- 5. Kitchen
- 6. T.V. room
- 7. Storage
- 8. Powder room
- 9. Play room
- 10. Helpers' quarter
- 11. Master bedroom
- 12. Girls' bedroom
- 13. Boys' bedroom
- 14. Stairs
- 15. Zaguan
- 16. Guest room
- 17. Utility room
- 18. Garage
- 19. Driver's room
- 20. Spa

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Model of the Manosa residence with the roof removed. The central livingroom, large kitchen, and verandah of the main wing are visible (right), and the children's bedrooms of the sleeping wing (left).

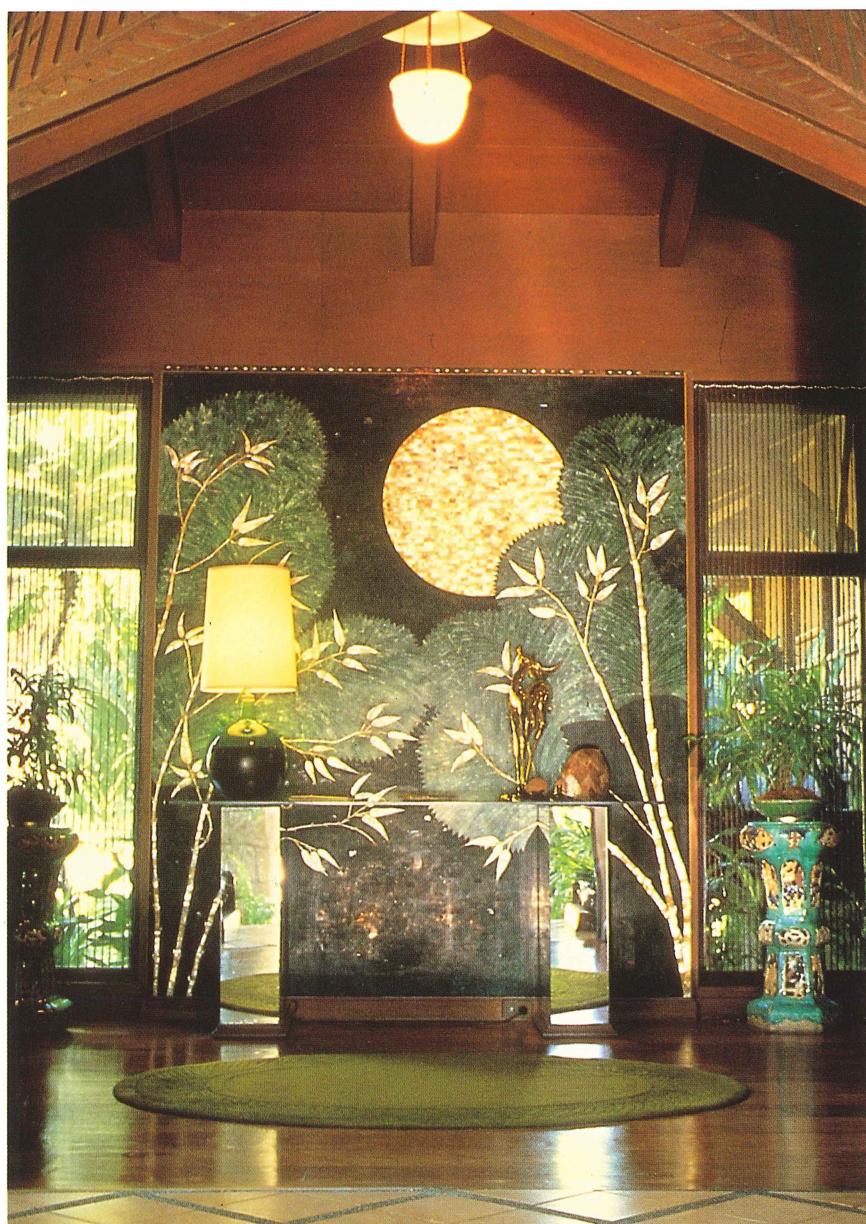
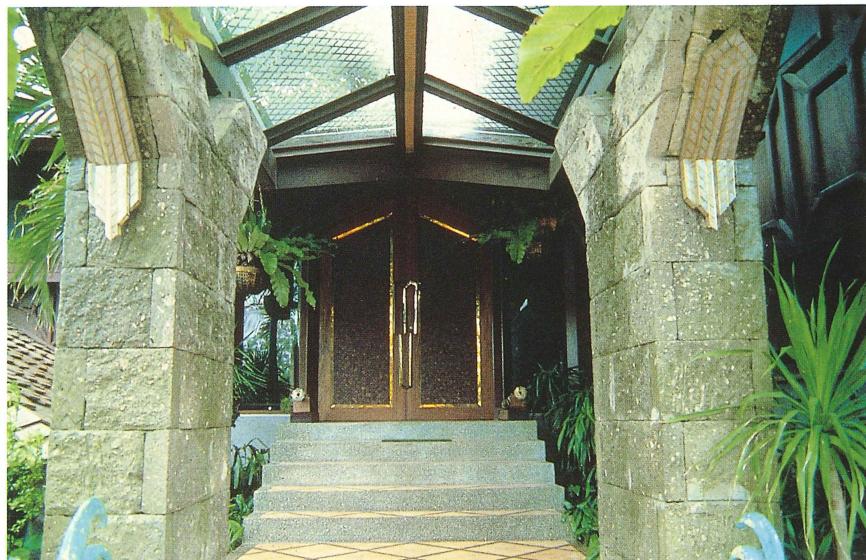
19th-century elegance of ancestral houses, while at the same time it is quite contemporary in character. Its ceiling, like that of the *nipa* hut, exposes the apex of the roof, where the four main structural members meet, and surrounded by a *capiz* clerestory on a banana and *anahaw* leaf design.

The centre of activity and lifestyle of the family revolves around the *balconaje* facing the golf course, where several conversation areas can be found arranged in a L-shaped manner. The roof extension and the inclined supports of this *balconaje* interprets the *tukod* (supports) of the window covers of the *nipa* hut. This provides a very airy and provincial atmosphere, hence a source of natural ventilation. This roof extension furthermore, is aligned with the horizon, for the sky is not seen, thus perfectly eliminating glare in the interiors. Openness and continuity of indoor-outdoor relation is enhanced by the landscaped garden and the plants surrounding the *balconaje*, at the same time providing a cooling effect. Another feature of the house is the absence of a dining room, reminiscent of the one-room-affair of the *nipa* hut. This is a function of the *balconaje*, other than being a social space. The absence of the dining room also reflects the family's lifestyle: one can take his meal anywhere in the living areas.

Other features of this *balconaje* are its *molave* floor and coco wood strips, the wood and brass pull-type ceiling fans that are used in the absence of breeze, the wooden ledge that displays a collection of Philippine hats and baskets, coco shell mouldings, an open ceiling that exposes the roofing nailers and supports and the use of benches all around that serve as railings of the *balconaje*.

The principle of cross-ventilation provided by the interrelationship of every area gives natural thermal comfort, and is thus energy-saving.

The *Tacaloq* room, or the master bedroom, is introduced by the boudoir-console with a glass etching portraying a bird-grass-river nature scene, and serves as a divider and headboard. Then, the surprising sight of actual water at this level (a pond of edible fishes, *pla-pla*, and golden snails plus numerous



Right, above: Main entrance door and canopy.
Right: Entrance foyer to the house with a mural by Raymond Fuentes called "Harvest Moon" executed in Philippine jade, blackpen and mother-of-pearl.



Top: Living and dining area on the periphery of the house is protected by the deep overhang of roof eaves, but allows wonderful views onto the garden and surrounding countryside.

Right: View of the verandah along two sides of the livingroom. Many family activities take place here because it is frequently the coolest, most agreeable spot in the house.

Photographs: Brian Brace Taylor.

Above: From the foyer, stairs lead down to the *zaguan*, an urban reincarnation of the nipa hut's lower floor used for storage in the ancestral house. Here it is an entertainment area decorated with Muslim motifs and bamboo furniture.

fruit bearing trees) is underscored by the twisted axial placement of the bed.

The guestroom is done in all bamboo: flooring, walls, ceiling and furniture. Overlooking this room is the second fishpond where *tilapia* and *hito* edible fishes are raised. These fishes, together with other fishes in the first pond are harvested every six months.

Overlooking the *zaguan* is the edible landscaped garden where a rotation of tomatoes, peanuts, pineapples, garlic, *patola*, and others have taken place. These are planted side by side with ornamentals like *yucca*, *san francisco*, *pitogo*, and others. There is a trellis where climbing vines can creep on.

Ultimately, there is straightforward expressiveness in the use and exposure of the house's columns, rafters, inclined members, and stilts. Through the extensive use of glass doors and panes, and the plan of the open *balconaje* and *zaguan*, man's constant need of relating himself to the outside world is readily answered.





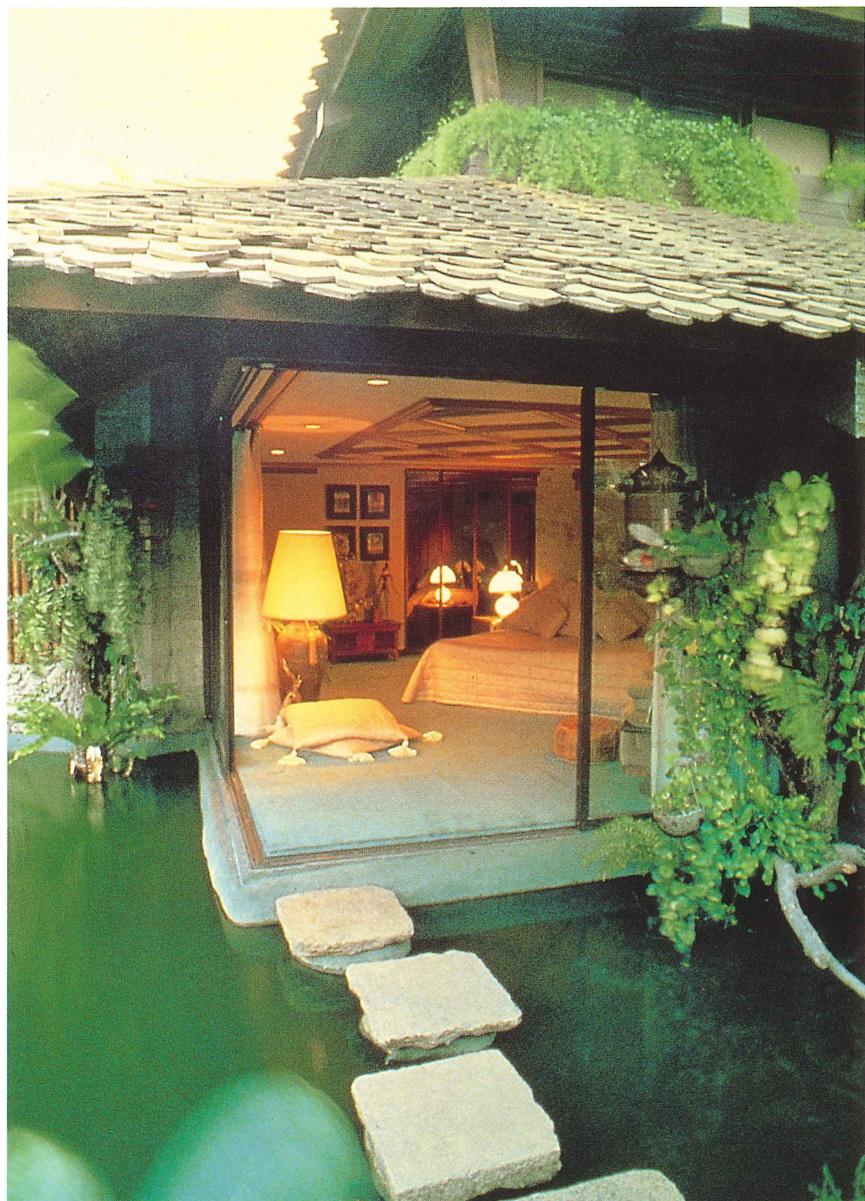


Top: A double-height, formal livingroom is located at the centre of the central-plan main house. Numerous local Filipino woods have been used, some carved and others as panelling simply highlighted with borders of mother-of-pearl.

Left: Wooden handrail with inlay of the staircase leading to a small library.

Below: Detail of wooden panelling in the living-room with blackpen and mother-of-pearl inlay.





Left: View into the master bedroom with pool at the lower garden level.

Left, below: The boys' bedroom is also called the "Kalinga Room" or "Baguio Room" because it uses the colours and ethnic designs of the Kalinga tribe of the northern Philippines.



Bobby Manosa, trained at the University of San Tomas in the Philippines, was in architectural practice with his two brothers until 1976 when he began his own office. He was voted Outstanding Architect of the Year in his country in 1982.

