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Lanzarote, Jardín de Cactus**

Art, Culture and
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of Lanzarote
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Cabildo de Lanzarote

Text from the forthcoming book *Lanzarote, Jardín de Cactus. The International Carlo Scarpa Prize for Gardens 2017*, edited by Patrizia Boschiero, Luigi Latini, Juan Manuel Palerm Salazar, Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche (translation from Spanish to English by Jason Shilcock).

Lanzarote is the northeasternmost island in the Canarian Archipelago. It is located just over 130 kilometres north-east of Africa, and has a total surface area of just under 862 square kilometres. The northernmost and southernmost points of the island are 58 kilometres apart, and the widest section of the island is 34.5 kilometres. The orography of the island is generally flat, with the highest peak being the Peñas del Chache which are located in the Risco de Famara and rise to an altitude of 670 metres above sea level. The island of Lanzarote is divided into seven municipalities: Arrecife, Haría, San Bartolomé, Teguise, Tías, Tinajo and Yaiza. The *de jure* population of the combined municipalities is 127,457 inhabitants according to 2006 figures. This corresponds to a population density of 151 inhabitants per square kilometre.

Island of Volcanoes

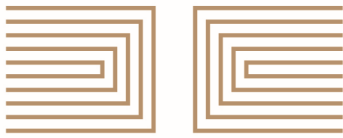
Without a doubt, Lanzarote's defining feature is its geology. Its nature is entirely volcanic and gives it the nickname 'Island of Volcanoes'. A large part of the island was formed when volcanoes (in what is now Timanfaya National Park) erupted between 1730 and 1736, and then again in 1824, and cover approximately 174 square kilometres – almost a quarter of the entire surface area of the island.

Its violent volcanic nature and semidesert bioclimatic conditions, together with its unique physical geography made up of soft mountainous profiles and sweeping planes, have characterized not only the special natural and cultural landscape of the island, but also the very relationship the islanders have to their home.

Lanzarote's natural and human landscape offers a series of original and deeply creative characteristics. Agriculture forms an inseparable part of the island landscape: visitors to the island find that recent lava fields live happily alongside unique growing terrains which make the best use of the special geo-productive and climatic conditions. Around 40 per cent of the total surface area of the island is protected by various different ecological laws.

Art, Culture and Tourism Centres

The origins of the island's Art, Culture and Tourism Centres can be traced back to 1966. After living in New York for three years, César Manrique (1919-1992) – one of the pioneers of Spanish abstract painting – returned for good to Lanzarote, the island of his birth, which was just beginning to welcome a budding tourist industry. Well aware of the uniqueness of the island's landscape, he undertook an ambitious creative project aimed at taking direct control in the area in order to preserve and conserve the local environment. Surrounded by an enthusiastic team, it did not take long for the first results to start to appear: the *Jameos del Agua* (1966-1968), the *Monumento al Campesino* (1968), the *El Diablo* restaurant (1970), the *Mirador del Río* lookout (1973), the *International Museum*



of Contemporary Art, MIAC (1976) and the *Jardín de Cactus* (1990).

The team

A large part of the success of the Art, Culture and Tourism Centres is thanks to both the creative personality of César Manrique, and the invaluable work and enthusiasm of his team who truly believed in the future of the island.

One name that is frequently associated with César Manrique is that of one of his closest co-workers, Jesús Soto, who became infected with Manrique's enthusiasm and who worked on several projects which complete the Art, Culture and Tourism Centres such as the *Cueva de los Verdes* (1964) or the *Ruta de los Volcanes de Timanfaya* (1968).

Lanzarote's economic and social progress over the last forty years is inseparable from these model tourist initiatives which have converted the island into an international reference for sustainable development. The 'Lanzarote model,' also sometimes referred to as the 'César Manrique model,' arose thanks to the forward thinking of the great minds of the time and with strong support from the Cabildo of Lanzarote (the island's local government body). Although the artist might no longer be with us, the Cabildo intends to carry on in the future with the work which has made Lanzarote stand out.

The 'Manrique model' was first seen in 1966 and basically it placed the reclamation and development of traditional local architecture on the island at the centre of future construction. It also proposed integrating the architecture into the natural environment, the preservation and use of sites of natural beauty, the maintenance of the agricultural landscape and the preservation of local cultural values. The idea was to conserve and promote these elements in order to guarantee sustainable development of the tourism industry on the island, bearing in mind Lanzarote's limited area of just 800 square kilometres which was home at the time to 40,000 inhabitants.

The plan, which was launched in 1968, was meant to attempt to ensure optimal development with the help of a series of objective conditions which would balance tourism and the unique nature of the island and human activity. This would include both the effects of the spontaneous activity from the volcanoes on the region and the human adaptations to the land, including agriculture which has contributed so decisively to strengthening the personality of the landscape. Later on, the Art, Culture and Tourism Centres became the perfect synthesis of the influence of the inhabitants on their island.

Montañas del Fuego or Timanfaya

Creator: César Manrique; year of opening: 1970;

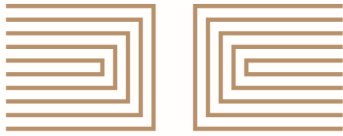
location: Timanfaya National Park, municipalities of Yaiza and Tinajo.

The *Montañas del Fuego* (Mountains of Fire) or Timanfaya are part of a large area of Lanzarote which created by volcanic eruptions on the island between 1730-1736 and then again in 1824. This prolonged volcanic process, which was one of the most spectacular and important events in the history of the volcanism of the earth, changed the morphology of the island drastically and left almost a quarter of it buried under a thick layer of lava and ash.

The volcanic landscape produced by this activity covers a total area of around 174 square kilometres, although the protected area covered by Timanfaya National Park accounts for just 51 square kilometres – the area where the most important eruptions occurred.

The perimeter around these main eruptions are made up of expansive impassable rocky 'AA' (referred to on the island as *malpaís*) and smooth *pāhoehoe* (known as *cordada*) lava fields which are practically unaffected by human activity. This, coupled with the climatology of the island, has meant that the original volcanic landscape has remained almost untouched to this day and is a veritable laboratory where scientists can investigate colonisation processes of both flora and fauna. The exceptional volcanic characteristics of Timanfaya meant that the area was declared a national park in 1974; to this day it remains the only geological national park in the Spanish network.

The *Islote de Hilario* houses another building with César Manrique's distinct fingerprint: *El Diablo* restaurant. Constructed in 1970, this solid building is built on one single circular level with floor to ceiling windows providing light to the inside and acting as a kind of lookout onto the volcanic landscape outside. The outside, which is also curved, consists



of a wall marking the entrance. The entirety of the architectural design is covered in carved dry stone which makes it stand out even more against the dark shades of the volcanic material.

Casa museo al Campesino and Monumento a la Fecundidad

Creator: César Manrique; year of opening: 1968;

location: Mozaga, San Bartolomé municipality.

Right in the geographical centre of Lanzarote, located on a major crossroads offering access to any point on the island, lies one of César Manrique's most symbol-laden pieces: the *Casa museo al Campesino* (Museum House Monument to Farmers) and *Monumento a la Fecundidad* (Monument to Fertility). It is made up of a series of buildings inspired by typical local architecture. It is not an exact copy of any actual building, but rather combines the most characteristic elements of the island's distinct geographical areas. The museum-house contains representative elements chimneys, threshing floors, wells (*aljibes*), patios, carpentry and presses and so on.

Sculpture to fertility. A monumental sculpture known as *Fecundidad* (Fertility), dedicated to the farmers of Lanzarote, stands alone on the horizon. It is made of old water tanks from yachts and various other objects painted and assembled together, forming a collection of visually striking geometric shapes.

Museo Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo (MIAC), Castillo de San José

Creator: César Manrique; year of opening: 1976; location: Puerto Naos, Arrecife municipality.

The *Museo Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo* (MIAC, International Museum of Contemporary Art) is situated in the old military fortress of the Castillo de San José located in the port of Arrecife. The museum was founded in 1975 with the aim of promoting, bringing together and exhibiting the most important works of modern artistic creation. It was founded at the initiative of César Manrique, who personally oversaw the restoration and renovation of the *Castillo de San José*, which lay in ruins at the time. The building's internal structure was hardly changed at all, however the annexing constructions (the area where the restaurant is now located) underwent the most remarkable changes.

Jardín de Cactus

Creator: César Manrique; year of opening: 1990; location: Guatiza, Tegui municipality.

The *Jardín de Cactus* (Cactus Garden) is a magnificent example of an architectonic intervention integrated into the landscape. César Manrique created this audacious architectonic complex whilst maintaining the inseparable pairing of art and nature so tangible in all his spatial interventions. The selection of this extraordinary landscape, as with so many of Manrique's works, dictated the aesthetic solutions used and their content, which have a sense of continuity with and integration into the surrounding landscape.

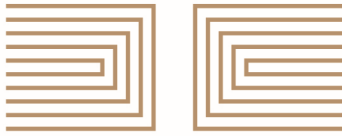
The origins of the *Jardín de Cactus* date back to the 1970s when César Manrique, then in full creative dialogue with the island's landscape, turned his attention to the old volcanic ash quarry at Guatiza. The artist encouraged the Cabildo of Lanzarote, a body with which he worked very closely, to acquire the land, wall in the complex and restore the traditional windmill to complete the garden. However, owing to various events, the original project to build the new Centre of Art, Culture and Tourism would have to wait until the 1980s. The *Jardín de Cactus* was finally opened in 1990, and would become César Manrique's final spatial work on Lanzarote. The large metallic cactus at the entrance and the wrought iron gate stand out as unique referential and emblematic elements that presage the majestic and surprising character of the inside.

Jameos del Agua

Creator: César Manrique; year of opening: 1966-1968;

location: Malpaís de La Corona, Haría municipality.

The *Jameos del Agua*, just like the *Cueva de los Verdes*, can be found inside the lava tube which was produced as the result of the eruption of the La Corona volcano. The *Jameos*



del Agua are located in the section of the tunnel closest to the coast. Their name comes from the lake located inside the tunnel which is a unique geological formation. As it is located below sea level, the water can have only entered the cave as a result of filtration through the stone. The entire site is made up of three *jameos*, or openings at the top of the tunnel: the *Jameo Chico*, which is where visitors enter the tunnel, the *Jameo Grande*, and a third given the name *Jameo Redondo*.

The tunnel, which was formed by the eruption of the volcano of La Corona, is one of the longest in the world at a total length of 6 kilometres. Collapsed partial sections of the roof in the tunnel form structures which are known as *jameos* (a word from the language of the original inhabitants of the island) and which are just openings from which visitors can access the different caves. The more than 6 kilometres which have been discovered run from the crater of the volcano and onto a section approximately 1.5 kilometres long which runs under the water and is known as the 'Tunnel of Atlantis'. Thanks to the uniqueness of its structure, the *Jameos del Agua* are protected by not one but two different environmental regulations: on the one hand, they are located within the *Malpaís de la Corona* natural monument, and on the other they have been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (sssi). They have also been designated a Place of Cultural Interest in the 'Historic Garden' category due to – just like the other spatial pieces created by César Manrique on the island – their important historical heritage values.

The *Jameos del Agua* were the first ever Centre of Art, Culture and Tourism created by César Manrique, and constitute the reflection of one of his main creative pillars: the harmony between nature and artistic creation. The initial work on clearing and preparing the area, necessary due to the structure being abandoned for so long, was started at the beginning of the 1960s. Although construction work took a long time, the first sections of the *jameos* were first opened to the public in 1966. The particular morphology of the lava tube resulted in numerous changes having to be made to the initial project, with the artist having to explore new creative alternatives in order to ensure that the solutions adopted were the most suitable.

Cueva de los Verdes

Creator: Jesús Soto; year of opening: 1964; area open to the public: approximately 1 kilometre; location: Malpaís de La Corona, Haría municipality.

The *Cueva de los Verdes* is located in the north of the island of Lanzarote in the municipality of Haría, and forms part of the vast volcanic landscape of the *Malpaís de La Corona* natural monument. It was formed as the result of the eruptions of the La Corona volcano (dated by geologists to have occurred approximately 3,000-5,000 years ago) and which resulted in the creation of an extensive underground volcanic tunnel, over 6 kilometres in length, which runs from the centre of the volcano to the sea. Two of the island's most important Art, Culture and Tourism Centres, the *Cueva de los Verdes* and the *Jameos del Agua*, form part of the inside of this tunnel.

Mirador del Río

Creator: César Manrique; year of opening: 1973; location: Risco de Famara, Haría municipality.

The *Mirador del Río* is located at an altitude of 475 metres at the top of the Risco de Famara in the northernmost area of the island and enjoys one of the most spectacular panoramic views found anywhere on Lanzarote. It is one of César Manrique's most emblematic architectural creations, embodying his enthusiastic project integrating art and nature thanks to its succession of artistic and architectural details. It is located between two especially significant geological features: on the one hand, the impressive Risco de Famara, and on the other the La Corona volcano, towards which the arms of the large semicircular plaza at the front of the building stretch. This significant building is barely noticeable from the outside because, in a subtle camouflaging manoeuvre, the structure is hidden beneath a heavy layer of rock mimicking the surrounding landscape.