



César Manrique in Las Piconeras,
Gran Canaria, 1969.

César Manrique: The Architect and Protector of Lanzarote

There is an island in the Atlantic Ocean that was created entirely by the brutal forces of nature, shaped by repeated volcanic eruptions that destroyed even the last bits of the fertile lands of its native people. On this island, the island of Lanzarote, with a surface similar to that of the Moon and Mars, an artist urged to pay tribute to the volcanic landscape and the unconditional rawness and beauty of his homeland. César Manrique used Lanzarote's dreary, lunar lava plains and rock-covered hills as his canvas and built architectural and urban projects all around the island in the search of expressing harmony between humans and nature. Manrique, also a painter, sculptor, urbanist, and environmental activist, contributed to the economic and social functionalism of his native land in an unprec-

edented way. With his exceptional ability to combine nature and artifice, he created gardens, lookouts, designed cultural centers, and led touristic and shoreline reforms on many of the Canary Islands as well as way beyond the archipelago. César Manrique Cabrera was born in 1919 in Arrecife on the island of Lanzarote, one of the volcanic islands of the Canary Islands, just off the coast of North Africa. Born into a typical middle-class family, Manrique would spend his childhood summer vacations just by the island's most beautiful natural beaches like the Famara beach. The time spent there at their family house and its surrounding tranquil nature left an enduring impression on him. Manrique fought in the Spanish Civil War voluntarily but refused to talk about it when he returned to the island in 1939.



César Manrique with family and friends by Famara beach on Lanzarote, ca. 1934.



LIVING IN MADRID AND NEW YORK

After the war, he entered the Canarian La Laguna University to study architecture, a technical program he abandoned after two years. In 1945, Manrique decided to pursue an artistic career instead and moved to Madrid to enter the San Fernando Fine Arts Academy. After the academy, as a freshly graduated painter and art professor, Manrique started exhibiting his work on a regular basis both in Spain and abroad. He had been living and working successfully in Madrid for almost two decades when, in 1964, following the advice of his cousin who was a psychoanalyst and writer based in New York City, Manrique traveled to the Big Apple. In New York City.

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People in New York live like rats. Humans were not created for this. There is a necessity of coming back to Earth. That's how I feel. I miss the purity of nature.

