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LOVE, VISION, CONSEQUENCE, OR SYNERGY OF NATURE, ARCHITECTURE AND HUMAN

MIŁOŚĆ, WIZJA, KONSEKWENCJA CZYLI SYNERGIZM NATURY, ARCHITEKTURY I CZŁOWIEKA

Abstract

The article addresses the topic of mutual relations between the natural environment and humans in the context of the specificity of César Manrique's architectural implementations, at the same time constituting a pretext for a discussion on beauty, nature and art. The research was based on observation, in situ analysis, and emotional reception (direct contact and perceptual reaction) of selected objects and spaces on the island of Lanzarote, in order to analyze the impact and value of the undertaken design direction.

Keywords: architecture, landscape context, art

Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje temat wzajemnych relacji pomiędzy środowiskiem przyrodniczym a człowiekiem w kontekście specyfiki realizacji architektonicznych Cesara Manrique, stanowiąc jednocześnie pretekst do dyskusji na temat piękna, natury i sztuki. Badania oparto na obserwacji, analizie *in situ*, także emocjonalnym odbiorze (bezpośredni kontakt i reakcja percepcyjna) wybranych obiektów i przestrzeni wyspy Lanzarote, celem przeprowadzenia analizy wpływu i wartości podjętego kierunku projektowania.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, kontekst krajobrazowy, sztuka

1. INTRODUCTION

Places exist on all scales. At one end there is your favourite armchair, at the other there is the whole earth. An important type of place in the middle of this scale is hometown. It is a region (city or rural area) large enough to meet human needs. Attachment to one's homeland can be very strong. What kind of feeling is this? From what experiences does it arise and under what conditions?¹

The maxim quoted by Yi-Fu Tuan in the monograph "Space and Place" aptly refers to the life, way of acting and perceiving the world of the Spanish painter, sculptor, and finally creator of architectural spaces, César Manrique Cabrera,² who focused his activities on pro-ecological

¹ Y-F Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1987, p. 189.

² César Manrique Cabrera – painter, sculptor, architect of Spanish origin, famous for his pro-envi-

activities related to the island of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands. In 1968, after a 4-year stay in New York, he activated his interest in the island's landscape in terms of cultural identity and landscape protection, which consequently influenced the current appearance of the island. Spaces without advertising boards, traditional, small-sized construction, architecture that fits into the natural context, subtly pointing to the existence of humans in its surroundings, are the creator's ideological assumptions that are still being realized today. As a supporter of spatial order, he was not against tourism on the island and expressed the opinion that tourism of appropriate quality had a chance to become the leading economic trend of the island. Traditional construction, repeatable in expression and colour, can be found regardless of the size of the agglomeration, which gives the island area an interesting, uniform character. Sparse greenery, graphite of rocky volcanic substrate and mostly white objects are the three leading colours, constituting the main components of spatial assumptions. Projects by Manrique, created in analogy to nature, distinguished by fluidity of forms and a free, plastic way of shaping, classified as organic architecture, can be an example of a synergistic approach to the design of architectural spaces. Forms "extracted" from elements of nature, often perceived as sculptures, appear as integral components of the landscape marked with a function. These specific compositional continuums with surprising shapes of works of art may indicate humility towards the existing landscape and the changes taking place in it. In this aspect, we should agree with the words of Christian Norberg-Schulz: "Nature sets the directions of man's existential space in a more specific way. Every landscape contains directions and specific spaces that help people find support,"³ awareness and responsibility for oneself, current and future generations, visible in the approach to space design and articulated in César Manrique's architectural implementations, confirms the position of both.

2. THE SYNERGISM OF NATURE, ARCHITECTURE AND MAN IN LITERATURE

Organic architecture focuses on combining harmony between the natural beauty of the landscape and the building. It also includes aspects such as environmentally friendly building equipment and integration with the surrounding environment through the use of natural, friendly materials.⁴

With these words, Krystyna Paprzyca in the article entitled "Nature – Architecture – Man" defines the nature of design activities in relation to the natural environment, which aptly refers to the creative activities of César Manrique, who "designed with the assumption of integrating a building/object with nature. He created a house for himself in the bed of a dried stream. The ground floor of the house has been built-in into rock cavities that were created after a volcanic eruption."⁵ Natural materials, almost no interference in changing the

ronmental work for the preservation of the cultural heritage of Lanzarote; honoured with the Europa Nostra Award in 1986.

³ C. Norberg-Schulz, *Bycie, przestrzeń i architektura*, Wydawnictwo Murator, Warszawa 2000, p. 22.

⁴ K. Paprzyca, *Natura – Architektura – Człowiek*, "Środowisko Mieszkaniowe" 2018, no. 22, p. 143. DOI: 10.4467/25438700ŚM.18.028.8709, <https://repozytorium.biblos.pk.edu.pl/resources/28283> (access: 30.05.2024).

⁵ WG, *César Manrique – architekt, który zaprojektował Lanzarote* [in:] Bryla.pl, 24.05.2024, <https://www.bryla.pl/bryla/7,85298,24768135,cesar-manrique-architekt-lanzarote.html> (access: 30.05.2024).

landscape, conscious use of the natural terrain for functional purposes, are evidence of the designer's synergistic attitude towards the existing natural surroundings. S.E. Rasmussen, in his study, draws attention to the fact that architecture cannot be recognized without close contact with it,⁶ which fits with the idea of shaping architecture in a way similar to nature. Magdalena Szulc comments: "The work of the Spanish artist César Manrique, who claimed that there is no architecture without nature, had and still has a huge impact on the appearance and image of the island of Lanzarote,"⁷ which confirms the belief that the actual effects of respect for the natural environment can contribute to strengthening cultural, social and local identity. The efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of Lanzarote, initiated by César Manrique, have become a conscious policy of the island's authorities and its inhabitants. They initiated a cultural and social movement aiming to maintain its character in a minimalist form referring to the historical and landscape conditions, which had a significant impact on the perception of the effects of these activities by tourists, who are the main source of income for the region's economy. A similar position is expressed by Kamila Ziółkowska-Weiss in her article: "Architects claim that every building of organic architecture intended for people must on the one hand, reflect its inner world, and on the other hand, must become an integral part of the landscape. Such design suggests a more qualitative approach to life."⁸ In this context, places close to nature, located in silence, in non-flashy spaces, scale, nature of the construction and finishing materials used, as well as the use of energy-saving, environmentally friendly construction solutions, are becoming appropriate and popular. The trend of preserving local identity, resulting from the need to respect the existing spatial situation, is currently the leading element of concern for the functioning of the public services sector – including the infrastructure of modern hotels. These issues are resolved by Magdalena Worłowska and Maria Marko-Worłowska in the article entitled: *Ecological Problems in the Green Architecture of the City*, concluding that: "Architecture and ecology have one fundamental common feature – both are the arts of shaping space and relationships between people and their surroundings."⁹ The answer may lie in the assumptions behind the hotel located on the island of Lanzarote, which, in accordance with the trend started in the 1960s by César Manrique and cultivated to this day, in fact, in terms of the nature of the buildings and its dimensions, does not exceed the dimensions that can dominate a person to a significant extent. The system of functional utility zones is intertwined with green areas, annexing its fragments and new plantings, modest in number due to the demanding, volcanic soil. One might be tempted to say that the architecture found on the island tries to imitate nature, fit into its character and emphasize the values of greenery. This motif is raised in the works by Magdalena Jagiełło-Kowalczyk¹⁰

⁶ S.E. Rasmussen, *Odczuwanie architektury*, Karakter, Kraków 2015, p. 35.

⁷ M. Szulc, *Obra total. Wpływ twórczości Césara Manrique na krajobraz przyrodniczo-architektoniczny Lanzarote*, "Studia Europaea Gnesnensia" 2023, no. 25, p. 185.

⁸ K. Ziółkowska-Weiss, *Znajomość architektury organicznej i jej zastosowanie w hotelarstwie w opinii respondentów*, "Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis, Studia Geographica" 2021, no. 16, p. 25. DOI: 10.24917/20845456.16.2, <https://rep.up.krakow.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11716/11935/AF339--2--Zi%03%b3%c5%82kowska-Weiss--Znajomo%c5%9b%04%87.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (access: 6.06.2024).

⁹ M. Worłowska, M. Marko-Worłowska, *Problemy ekologiczne w zielonej architekturze miasta*, "Proceedings of ECOpole" 2011, no. 5(1), p. 344, <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/126755> (access: 6.06.2024).

¹⁰ M. Jagiełło-Kowalczyk, *Organiczna forma przeszłości*, "Środowisko Mieszkaniowe" 2013, no. 11, pp. 180–184, <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/344674> (access: 6.06.2024).

and Lidia Klein¹¹ referring to the assumptions of modernism, open to meeting human needs, based on a scientific perception of the world, criticizing cubic compositions of architectural objects, and calling the former much more friendly buildings with complex forms, but reflecting functional and spatial relationships while corresponding with nature. As Anna Gałęcka-Drozda points out in her article:

The island is covered by a development plan that, since Manrique's activity, has consistently reproduced the basic principles of landscape protection and shaping. This is expressed, among others, by the traditional cultural landscape. The contemporary architectural form of buildings, especially rural ones, does not differ from those from several decades ago¹²

and seems to correspond seamlessly with the landscape conditions. In today's world of modern construction investments, where we are dealing with a kind of race of technological challenges, associations with the island of Lanzarote and the main creator of its form tend to drive towards human-friendly architecture. Importantly, the result is a product different from the classically understood tourism, i.e. a space subordinated to investments focusing on mass tourism and maximum use of usable space to increase financial profits. Alicja Świtalska describes the atmosphere of the island: "Lanzarote is untypical, dark and mysterious and its characteristics are reflected in Manrique's installations."¹³ Thanks to precisely defined development directions, numerous visitors and tourists visiting corners of the island help maintain its natural landscape. The importance of the connections and influence of the perception of space together with the way it is shaped is emphasized by M. Natkaniec-Papp, raising issues regarding spaces "created and/or generated by humans, who through their actions give them appropriate functions and meaning and mark them with various emotions."¹⁴ This, in turn, translates into the entire phenomenon of creating a natural and architectural landscape, constituting a factor that deepens local and cultural identity, thus affecting the standard of living of both residents and visitors.

3. VALUE OF A PLACE – SPACE, EMOTION, ARCHITECTURE

...nowadays architecture has become a luxury product. At worst, it is something that is admired but not lived in. It is designed for cameras, as a source of visual stimulation that is meant to speak to us, taking the form of giant pants or splashing fish.¹⁵

¹¹ L. Klein, *Natura architektury – o inspiracjach organicznych we współczesnej architekturze*, "Sztuka i Filozofia" 2007, no. 30, pp. 14–150, https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Sztuka_i_Filozofia/Sztuka_i_Filozofia-r2007-t30/Sztuka_i_Filozofia-r2007-t30-s144-150/Sztuka_i_Filozofia-r2007-t30-s144-150.pdf (access: 6.06.2024).

¹² A. Gałęcka-Drozda, *Twórczość Césara Manrique w służbie ochrony krajobrazu Lanzarote = César Manrique's artworks in service of Lanzarote's landscape protection*, "Przestrzeń i Forma" 2019, no. 19, p. 242, <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/370256> (access: 7.06.2024).

¹³ A. Świtalska, *César Manrique – the man who turned an island into a work of art = César Manrique – człowiek, który przekształcił wyspę w dzieło sztuki*, "Space & Form" 2026, no. 56, pp. 274, https://pif.zut.edu.pl/images/pdf/pif-28/DOI%2010_21005%20pif_2016_28_E-02_Switalska.pdf (access: 9.06.2024).

¹⁴ M. Natkaniec-Papp, *Postęp technologiczny a środki współczesnego kształtowania przestrzeni egzystencjalnej człowieka*, "Systemy Wspomagania w Inżynierii Produkcji" 2018, no. 7(3), p. 9, <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/113357> (access: 9.06.2024).

¹⁵ T. Dyckhoff, *Epoka spektaklu. Perypetie architektury i miasta XXI wieku*, Karakter, Kraków 2018, p. 376.

A kind of production of architectural forms, moving higher and higher in the “arms race,” it is taking on increasingly strange shapes, difficult to implement, requiring specialized calculations and technology. It evokes emotions, takes your breath away, gives value and adds prestige. It requires attention, design precision, and financial resources. It can take one’s breath away, literally and figuratively casting a shadow over the existing architectural context. It can also be overwhelming. Arouse respect and humility towards itself with its greatness. However, does such action have a positive impact on people emotionally? Is deprivation through scale the most important goal of architects? Tom Dyckhoff sums up his monograph this way: “before change occurs, the city of spectacle will develop. [...] Architecture simply migrates, as it always does, to where there is money and power.”¹⁶ And here, in contrast, we should look at the heritage of the work of César Manrique, who also left behind a spectacle of diversity of architectural forms, but on a different scale, friendly to man and nature. Using the values of the natural landscape, he shaped modern, spacious interiors and facilities inspired by the traditional architecture of the island. He combined the already existing structures of the existing landscape with the components of classic building materials introduced into the game, allowing the former to manifest priority (Ill. 1).



Ill. 1. Realizations by César Manrique: (a) César Manrique Foundation, Taiche, Lanzarote, Spain – the main entrance to the facility is located below ground level; (b) Jameos Del Agua Stage Theatre, Haria, Lanzarote, Spain – almost without human intervention, using the natural properties of the lava cave space, an excellent level of acoustics was achieved. Photos by K. Słuchocka.

The César Manrique Foundation, visible in the illustrations and open to the public, is located in a house designed by the artist, who lived there between 1968 and 1988. The technologies used and the natural conditions paved the way for action within, not only the newly erected structures, but also the spaces carved out of the lava flows created by the volcanic eruptions that took place on the island between 1730 and 1736. “This 3 000 square metre building engages in constant dialogue with the natural surrounds on its 30 000-square metre lot and beyond: here, volcano and architecture blend in mutual respect.”¹⁷ This opening up of seemingly new horizons of creative activity has made it possible to “break free from the representation of dull everyday life and common shapes,”¹⁸ making full use of the forces

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 378.

¹⁷ Volcano House. César Manrique Foundation. Tahíche [in:] Fundación César Manrique, <https://fc-manrique.org/en/casas-museo-visitas/fundacion-cesar-manrique-tahiche/> (access: 10.06.2024).

¹⁸ Thesis in English 2024 [in:] International Conference – Defining the Architectural Space, <https://dpa.arch.pk.edu.pl/thesis-in-english-2024/> (access: 10.06.2024).

of gravity and the laws of nature. The traditional architecture of Lanzarote, incorporating functional elements of modern, or even timeless, design (large windows, spacious areas, overhead lighting, etc.) together with the use of natural volcanic structures to help illuminate the interiors have produced a living space that is original and unique in character and layout. The picturesque colour scheme, the lush vegetation penetrating into the interiors and the presence of basalt of the presented forms create a unique atmosphere of the place, marking the establishment with an individual touch, keeping with the trend of César Manrique's designs. The colour contrasts – the white of the architecture, the black of the lava, the volcanic ash, the green of the plantings and the complementary accents of orange, red, turquoise of the water – are components of autonomous works of art. Significantly, their foundation is not based on costly investments based on complex structures with modern structures, but is based on the offer of spaces shaped in a natural system with complementary human action.



Ill. 2. Casa Museo de César Manrique, Haria, Lanzarote, Spain: (a) space “entering” the interior – the natural landscape intertwining with the architectural form; (b), (c) respect for greenery and skilful combination of existing and introduced matter; (d) interior courtyard with swimming pool; (e) the interior of the atrium with a pond in an organic form; the whole fits into the shape of a volcanic depression; (f) interior of the courtyard with visible fragments of buildings and islands of greenery. Photos by K. Słuchocka.

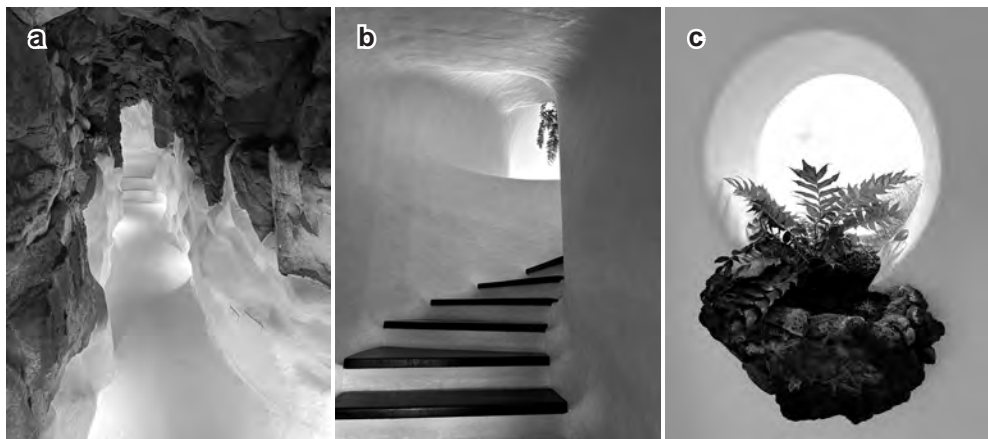
The brilliance of these assumptions can be found in the effect of the connections and the intertwining of visions striving to create manifestations of the freedom of human life in union with nature (Ill. 2).

Also, the perseverance, passion and belief that it is possible to create non-standard architectural interiors with functions adequate to the user's expectations seem to be a manifestation of the ability to successfully materialise one's visions almost without restriction and renouncing originality.

4. LOVE, VISION, CONSISTENCY – WHERE ART ENDS AND ARCHITECTURE BEGINS

Every new construction implies an intervention in a specific historical situation. The quality of this interference is determined by whether the new succeeds in imparting features that enter into a sense-making relationship of tension with the existing. For in order for the new to find its own place, it must first stimulate us to see in a new way what already exists.¹⁹

With his words, Peter Zumthor gets to the heart of the assumptions which guided César Manrique. The artist's aesthetic ideal, called art-nature/art-nature,²⁰ brought together various modes of artistic expression derived from landscape art (Ill. 3).



Ill. 3. Selected examples of utility spaces at the intersection of design and fine arts, Lanzarote, Spain: (a) interior of living space – communication, Casa Museo de César Manrique, Haria; (b) staircase, Mirador del Río viewpoint, located on the cliff of Risco de Famara; (c) spatial composition – solidified lava, greenery and light, museum building, Jameos del Agua. Photos by K. Słuchocka.

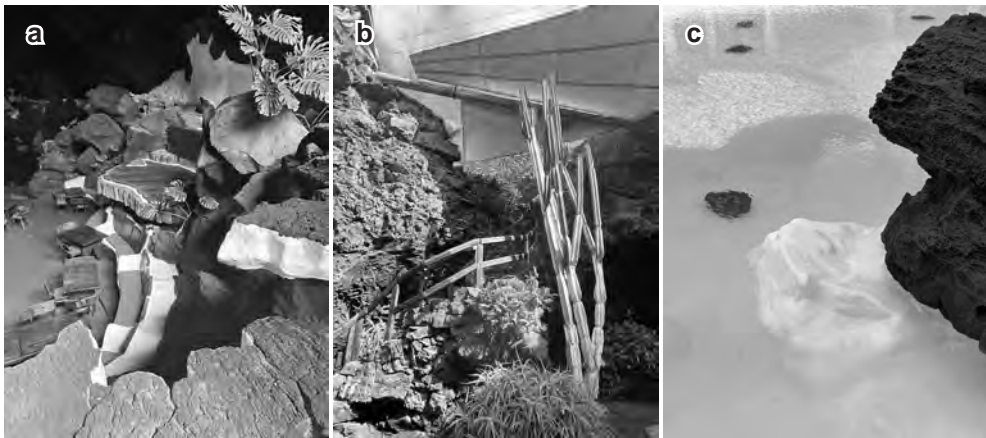
The cave formations created by the artist: Jameos del Agua, the Cactus Garden, Mirador del Río, the Timanfaya National Park, his house in Taro, which houses the César Manrique Foundation Museum, important points on the tourist map of the island, are recognisable and fascinating. To this day, they still exude a boldness in their decision-making, bordering on

¹⁹ P. Zumthor, *Myślenie architektury*, Karakter, Kraków 2010, pp. 17–18.

²⁰ César Manrique Foundation, <https://fcmannrique.org/inicio/> (access: 10.06.2024).

madness when considered in terms of classically conceived architectural forms. Corridors located between the rocks, guided by light seeping from hidden springs or marked by white uneven surfaces with the addition of compositionally well-thought-out steps leading upwards, are intricately woven jigsaw puzzles. These are non-obvious spatial games in which there are no losers. Victory in the form of a multiplicity of sensations as a result of dealing with thoughtful detail, with surprising forms in unusual roles, with the play of light and shadow, is won by anyone who is allowed to be in their vicinity.

The texture of the structures offers the possibility of a deeper, sensory perception of the spaces in question. The haptic recognition of the terrain completes the picture of the totality of César Manrique's unique creations, which enter nature's territory without permission and annex it, piece by piece, without harming it in any way. Rather, his actions help to expose interesting fragments of nooks, crannies and crevices, showing us that any place is suitable for creating a space that is unconventional, functional and at the same time unfamiliar with the existing environment (Ill. 4).



Ill. 4. Jameos del Agua cave spaces, Lanzarote, Spain: (a) relaxation zone – a restaurant space in a cave with separate seating areas; (b) roof over part of the restaurant in the Jameos del Agua cave; (c) play of colours and textures, edge of the swimming pool in Jameos del Agua. Photos by K. Stuchocka.

The author's play on available materials, which are boldly integrated into the chosen space, constitutes the building blocks for the interiors and exteriors of the buildings, often appearing as a temporary installation. The example of the roofing over a part of the restaurant in the Jameos del Agua cave is reminiscent of the works of artist Christo Yavashev, who used a great deal of creative freedom to spread large-scale textiles (orange gates in New York in Central Park, the sacred torii gates in Japan) wrapping objects with them (the parliament building in Berlin), optically connecting the mountain slopes on opposite sides of the canyon. As a representative of land-art, he spoke out in the field of art and expressed his protest against consumerism, extravagantly and eccentrically gaining publicity as well as the expected reactions. The initiator of the maintenance of the individual character of the island of Lanzarote worked differently. Determinedly, with small steps, he meticulously and passionately annexed the areas that harmonised with his visions, giving them new, important meanings in the landscape. He slightly altered the landscape to paint it in his own way, but in

a way that opened up new possibilities for tourism. Without excessive interference, without overusing scale, respecting the context and in harmony with what was around him. Often hidden in the depths of crevices, catching the scarce rays of light, the effects of his creative activities constantly delight visitors with their aesthetics, choice of compositional elements, balance of proportions and construction of a hierarchy of impressions.

Devoid of boundaries, the two worlds of pure art and design art together respond to the challenge posed by the question: are art and architecture on an equal footing? Is this question generally valid, given that it is difficult to find even a thin line clearly marking one or the other? Function, usability, ergonomics being the distinguishing components in architectural design, are a nod to the future audience-users. And in this case, the spaces, shared with nature, created precisely for human use, form the basis for sculptural activities and modelling of interiors in an original and comfortable way of living.

5. CONCLUSIONS

César Manrique's architectural work is a model example of in-depth analysis and sensitivity to the surrounding landscape as well as cultural and architectural context, resulting in a concept that is coherent in conception, concerning the establishment of a way of spatial planning and architectural design throughout the island. A holistic approach, derived from respect for tradition, the natural environment and its resources, attachment and love for the homeland, combined with a limitless imagination, has translated into a way of life for the island's inhabitants, the popularisation of the area and the development of tourism, despite the unusual in nature approach to the general policies of the tourist economy sector. The lack of outdoor exercise, mental fatigue, stress, the weakening of psycho-physical condition, caused by the unhygienic way of life of the inhabitants of large urban agglomerations, imply a lack of satisfaction and a weakening of motivation to act. These factors translate into an increased demand for spending free time in a human-friendly environment. Such a *genius loci* can be found in the spaces designed by César Manrique. The humanly-like scale of his residential and public buildings, the homogeneous, bright colours, the inclusion of inanimate nature elements in the composition, which form the basis of the construction of specific forms, or their use as artistic supplements that emphasise the charm and style of the premises, is a unique and original vision that brings together a timeless idea based on tradition, culture, simplicity and symbiosis. An idea that also supports human existence on many levels – environmental, social, cultural and economic.

An additional factor positively influencing the evaluation of the assumptions in question is the peculiar duality of perception and the inextricable link between the fields of design and visual arts, which is responsible for the unparalleled and at the same time unique character of all César Manrique's realisations.

His consistency in the pursuit of architectural parameters – permanence, utility and beauty – in the context of natural space has implied the appearance of works of fundamental importance for the preservation of heritage, character and identity of the island. And just as nature can be said to be unique, the spaces created by the artist and located throughout the island of Lanzarote are a unique example of a unique approach to the problem of shaping space, taking into account the relationship between man, the environment and the future.

A summary of the parameters systematising the indicated relations and the effects of the creative activities can be found in the table (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Dependencies and effects of César Manrique's creative activities based on spatial creations observed on the island of Lanzarote; own study.

No.	Causes and dependencies	Effects of creative activities
1.	Deepened awareness of existential needs with respect for the past and the specificity of the place	Visible concern for preserving the heritage and identity of the island's space
2.	Recognizing the potential of the natural environment	Respecting the existing spatial context and emphasizing the natural values of the island
3.	Using the potential of the existing natural and architectural context	Creating a space with a coherent, distinctive character
4.	Knowledge of design principles, arrangement possibilities and the use of natural conditions in design	Creation of individual, functional architectural assumptions
5.	Affirmation of the relationship between pure art and design	The passion for art in relation to spatial articulations intended for human use is visible in the author's works
6.	Consistency in implementing assumptions aimed at moving away from mass tourism	Defining the distinctiveness of the tourism industry, which had a positive impact on the popularization of the island area and maintaining tourist interest
7.	Vision, imagination, creative consistency	Determining and indicating the direction of further spatial development, taking into account urban and architectural interference on the island

A tabular summary of the interrelationships between the natural environment and man, in the context of the specificity of César Manrique's architectural realisations, based on observation as well as analysis and emotional perception resulting from direct contact with the selected spaces, indicates the interdependence of values and elements relevant to the designer's creative activities undertaken and their translation into a visible mode and direction of design. It also draws attention to the connections of the fields of fine arts and design in the context of respect for the existing natural environment, resulting in the specific character of artistic and architectural realisations.

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