

# THE JAMEOS DEL AGUA. STAGED LANDSCAPES

## FROM SUBTERRANEAN GARDEN TO AN ARCHITECTURE OF LANDSCAPE

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The "Jameo Grande" pool, 1983 / The "Jameo Grande" pool, 2019

### Abstract

The *Jameos del Agua* complex is part of the island of Lanzarote's network of Art, Culture and Tourism Centres (*Centros de Arte, Cultura y Turismo*), CACT. It is an architectural intervention designed and built in several phases over more than twenty years by the multidisciplinary artist César Manrique.

The name of his environmental interventions on Lanzarote shows that César Manrique foresaw, as early as the 1960s, the important link between art and tourism. Indeed, his work with the CACT can be seen as a forerunner to the theoretical developments that would establish this link.

The present article explains the conceptual basis for an intervention at Manrique's *Jameos del Agua*, projected by GPY Arquitectos for the committee entrusted with monitoring the state of the CACT network, with the support of the Lanzarote Island Council.

*Jameos del Agua* is a major work of environmental art, a Gesamtkunstwerk with a subterranean garden of volcanic tubes and *jameos* (roofless grottoes), a territorial "readymade" artwork that foreshadows the "land art" movement and anticipates the concept of "public art".

Nevertheless, it is an unfinished project, as the part of the building complex originally intended to be used as a hotel was left unused and concealed from the visitor, waiting to be put to new use.

GPY Arquitectos' project now proposes a re-interpretation and integration of these latent spaces into the complex and narrative of the centre, as an added layer of the existing discourse.

To achieve this, the visitors' route will be extended beyond the point where it currently ends, the illuminated end of the auditorium. From there, the new proposal takes visitors up through the "Jameo de la Cazuela" and continues through the landscaped gallery of the current "Casa de los Volcanes", from where one ascends to the last level, containing the centre's unfinished spaces, which are now to be incorporated into the complex as a new, linear exhibition space.

The complex is thus converted into a stratified landscape composed of three superimposed, interconnected tubes of different types: first, the lowermost "artificialised" natural tube (the original lava tube); above that, a second, "naturalised" artificial tube (which corresponds to the ground floor of the current building); and at the top, a third, white tube consisting of a linear sequence of shadow and light, an abstraction of the complex's characteristic sequence of closed tubes and open *jameos*.

The new intervention incorporates all of the spaces into a single, global discourse that presents the entire complex as a total landscape project, a form of *ARCHITECTURE AS LANDSCAPE* that overcomes the current dichotomy of subterranean garden versus "Casa de los Volcanes", of landscape versus architecture.

The *Jameos del Agua* will be reconstituted as stratified complex, extending over three levels, with a continuous linear route weaving through it in the form of a sequence of tubes and "*jameos*", shadow and light, creating a staged landscape of the island.

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