

*'We don't need to copy anyone':  
César Manrique and the Creation of a Development Model for Lanzarote*

Maria Giulia Pezzi  
(Karl-Franzens-Universität, Graz, Austria)

[giulia.pezzi@gmail.com](mailto:giulia.pezzi@gmail.com)

The article looks at the influence that the work of Lanzarote-born artist César Manrique has had on the development of tourism in Lanzarote from the 1960s on, and how his aesthetic ideals have influenced the appearance of the island today. Moreover, I have posed the question whether the peculiar tourist development which occurred in Lanzarote as a consequence of the artist's engagement can be considered as a pioneering attempt at 'place-branding' and the relative marketing strategies. I have used applications of marketing and advertising theories to the anthropological discourse on tourism. Considering the factors induced by Manrique's works and by his environmental and ecological activism, it is evident how the marketing of Lanzarote as an Island with no equals has set within certain frames the general appearance of the Island, in accordance with the image that needed to be portrayed. Tourism marketing, or place-branding, has differentiated Lanzarote from other destinations in the tourist market, but by doing so a conflict between identity, authenticity and thematization has been created.

**Keywords:** place branding, tourism, authenticity, staged authenticity, anthropology of tourism

### **Introduction**

Lanzarote is one of the seven islands that form the Canary Islands Archipelago, which is one of Spain's autonomous regions and is situated in the Atlantic Ocean. Lanzarote is the northernmost island and its east coast faces Morocco, which is only approximately 150 km away.

The most important historical event that has affected the Island seems to be the series of volcanic eruptions that took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and completely changed the appearance of the Island. These eruptions left the surface of Lanzarote covered with lava and ashes, leaving little room or possibilities for farming the land. This situation led the inhabitants to experiment in new ways of farming and producing goods, such as onions, potatoes, wine and *barrilla* plants. The symbiosis between Man and Nature led to the creation of humanized landscapes with unique formations and interesting features, as for example the Vineyards of La Geria.

A series of unfavourable economic events and climatic changes caused drought and famine at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the result that most of the population left the Island, emigrating mainly to South America. It was then clear that a renewal of the economy was necessary, and from the 1950s onward Lanzarote started its transformation into a tourist destination, as had been happening on other Canary Islands – that is, Tenerife and Gran Canaria – since the 1930s.

In this article, I focus on how the work of the Lanzarote-born artist César Manrique (1919-1992) influenced the development of tourism on the Island since the 1960s, and in particular on the nature of the relationship between his artistic work and aesthetic ideals and the appearance of Lanzarote today. Moreover, I also pose the question whether the peculiar tourist development which occurred in Lanzarote can be considered as more or less authentic than what happened elsewhere.

I think of tourism in Lanzarote as the result of a branding strategy, which not only deals with economic factors, but also with the necessary (re)signification of a tourist destination to position it in the tourist market and to attract certain kinds of tourists. It is evident that Manrique's work influenced the marketing of Lanzarote as an Island with no equals. There, tourists have authentic and unmediated experience with extraordinary expressions of nature that are exalted in his work. This setting ensures not only the kind of tourists who will choose the Island as their destination, but also what can be built on the Island, in accordance with the image that by local law must be maintained.

Discussing place-branding theory in anthropology, however, requires a more general definition of the concept of what John Urry defined as the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990). Together with the homonymous work by Urry, I have also used other sources, such as works of anthropologists who are currently involved with the study of the value that the concept of place-branding has for the study of identity processes and anthropology of tourism (See Timm Knudsen, Waade 2010, de Santa Ana 2004; Silver 1993).

Due to the character of the research itself, this article is based primarily on in-depth bibliographical research and on fieldwork undertaken between September 2011 and May 2012, in an attempt to discover and describe Lanzarotes brand image.

### **César Manrique**

César Manrique was an artist, painter, sculptor, architect and ecologist. Born in Lanzarote in 1919, he soon left the Island to attend an Art Academy in Madrid, where he also started building a solid reputation as a talented artist. In 1964 he decided to move to New York City to gain new inspiration and to advertise his works overseas. He remained in the US for only a couple of years, but this trip had a great influence on his later works and outlook on life.

Firstly, coming from a small Island and from Franco's Spain, he was highly impressed by the modernity and architecture of the city, though not always in a positive way, since he experienced for the first time the negative potential of modernization in changing the original character of a place. Secondly, he became acquainted with Pop Art and the work of Andy Warhol, with whom he had a chance to work. Pop Art was a great inspiration for him, especially because it gave him the idea of making art production democratic, but also because it aimed at the elevation of trivial/everyday life objects to art objects, potentially turning everything into a work of art.

Once he moved back to Lanzarote in the mid-1960s Manrique started working on his installations, elaborating an aesthetic ideal which he called 'Art-Nature/Nature-Art' and presupposed the acquisition of environmental awareness through art. He dedicated the last phase of his life mainly to ecological activism, criticizing the progressive deterioration of Lanzarote landscape due to uncontrolled tourism development.

Seven of the main artworks by Manrique can be seen in Lanzarote. They are, Cueva de los Verdes, Jameos del Agua, Casa/Museo el Campesino, Restaurante el Diablo, Restaurante Mirador del Río, MIAC – Castillo de San José, Jardín de Cactus. These locations are managed by the organization 'Centres for Art, Culture and Tourism', created by the

Insular Government with the aim to use them as tools for the sustainable tourism development on the Island.

As it has been reported by a recent study (Centro de Datos de Lanzarote, 2012) the Centres have had an average of a little over two million visitors in the last two years, with an increase of +9.3% from year 2010 to 2011. The most visited attractions are Montañas del Fuego and Jameos del Agua, which are certainly the most peculiar ones. Third is Cueva de los Verdes, which may be less spectacular, but which probably benefits from its proximity to Jameos del Agua (the two tourist centres are within walking distance of each other). Fourth is Mirador del Rio, a restaurant which offers one of the most amazing panoramic views on the Island. The relative lower number of visitors could be explained by two factors. First, being situated in the northernmost part of the Island it is relatively far from other tourist areas and it is normally left out of bus tour routes. Second, Manrique's attempt to camouflage the building with the surroundings was so successful that from the outside it doesn't look very tempting, since it seems like 'just another pile of rocks' that can be seen in the cactus fields around, as a German tourist described it. As a matter of fact, during my last visit to the centre in May 2012, I noticed small groups of tourists of various nationalities reluctantly standing in front of the entrance and asking the people coming out if it was really worth paying the fee to go inside.

The Jardin de Cactus and Castillo de San José are also normally left out of bus tours and therefore receive fewer visitors than the other centres. There are no data concerning the Monumento al Campesino, which is probably due to the fact that entrance is free and so the visitors are not counted.

Through his artworks Manrique tried to convey a message to both Lanzarote's inhabitants and tourists that the Island's appearance was the result of geological processes that were still operating. He did not want to do that, though, through the institution of museums and other canonical forms of information. He embraced the principles of Pop Art, which challenged the common sense of 'fine art' by potentially turning every object into an artwork. In contrast to Pop Art, which somehow required a decontextualization of the object itself to be effective, Manrique made the context one of the most important elements of his works.

The Auditorium built in the Jameos del Agua, for example, acquires significance especially due to the fact that it was built inside a volcanic tunnel, making the most of the geological qualities to obtain incredibly fine acoustics. Jameos del Agua is also representative because it features a bar and a dance floor, two things that are usually not associated with an art piece, but that convey a playful character to the place. And this was exactly the aim of Manrique, who wanted to highlight the geological phenomenon that created the lava tunnel by offering a particular experience that would impress the visitor and thus be memorable.

Manrique also had an important role in the declaration of Lanzarote as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1993 and in the consequent development of sustainable tourism on the Island. The artist can be considered a pioneer for his time, since the theme of sustainability was not considered important either in worldwide public opinion, or in the official discourse until the mid-1980s, early 1990s. When this concept was theorized for the first time in the 'Charter for Sustainable Tourism', developed at the 1995 World Conference on Sustainable

Tourism in Lanzarote, sustainable tourism had been taking place on the Island for at least 25 years.

### **The *Plan Insular de Ordenación del Territorio (PIOT)***

Another aspect of the connection between Manrique's work and local tourism are the regulations that stem from his aesthetic ideals. The introduction of the Island's Development Plan (PIOT), with its many reviews, led to the selection of certain architectural and cultural elements present in Lanzarote that he believed were endangered by the increasingly faster development of tourism facilities. These elements, which had been created as an answer to the hard climatic conditions on the Island, and that were strictly linked to culture and everyday life, were extrapolated from their usual context and turned into a model for the future. It was to some extent an arbitrary choice, since Manrique in the book *Lanzarote. Arquitectura Inedita* (published in 1974) made a collection of signs that he believed to be relevant to his vision. This choice projected an homogeneous look to the Island and also 'froze' Lanzarote at a certain moment in time, that is the period between the 1950s and the 1970s. The normal and natural architectural development of the island has been regulated by the PIOT and, through it, natural evolution was impeded. The only part of the island which followed a non-regulated pattern of development was the capital Arrecife. Although it is not possible to maintain its current appearance, the capital has greater appeal for tourists than the rest of the land in that it offers a more vibrant and "real" atmosphere, which is otherwise lacking elsewhere.

The PIOT's – *Plan Insular de Ordenación del Territorio* (Development Plans) – lists the binding regulations on building in Lanzarote, what it should look like, as well as other aspects, i.e. the number of hotel accommodations to be allowed per year. More generally, they regulate the Island's architecture, as well as how town and country planners should maintain the Island's authenticity through the different phases of tourism development. The original PIOT underwent many revisions, the last of which was published in 2010, and all of them tried to comply with the aesthetic ideal created by Manrique from the 1960s on.

As Idoya Cabrera Delgado<sup>1</sup> stated, the book *Lanzarote. Arquitectura Inedita* constituted an ideal visual standard because people would see pictures of their houses in it and think 'Wow, my house is important! It's in a book!', leading to a positive effect on their self-esteem and on the awareness that preserving what was "real" and authentic would be a way to keep under some kind of control all the issues related to the environment and the impact that tourism was having on their lives.

Having been isolated for many years, the sudden development of tourism on the Island was perceived from the beginning as traumatizing and invasive, especially in the early phases where large discrepancies existed between what the tourists were expecting to find on the Island and what was actually there on offer, especially in terms of facilities, but also of water supplies, food and electricity.

It was not until the approval of the *Plan Insular de Ordenación del territorio* in 1991, however, that any concrete steps were taken. According to the PIOT, any new structure (either

---

<sup>1</sup> Of the Department of Territory and Environment, Fundación César Manrique, Lanzarote.

public or private) had to comply with specific guidelines and conditions. Constructions in rural areas would have to be built in line with the style of a traditional house. Colours (white), materials, textures and finishes need to be used both for private buildings and for hotels. The number of floors for each building was limited: four for hotels; three for institutional buildings; two for private houses. Private houses should be built for single families, exception made for the city of Arrecife. Some basic models of construction were defined for different municipalities. (Fernando Llorente Sagasetta de Ilurdoz M. S. 2001: 22).

Further guidelines were given on the matter of integrating constructions with the landscape and protecting the environment. Telephone and electricity cables must be as least visible as possible. No advertising boards are allowed in urban areas. No advertisement of any kind is allowed in the whole Rural Area. It is strictly forbidden to release waste and garbage in the volcanic calderas. The construction of roads should have the least environmental impact possible and roundabouts should be decorated with local vegetation. Only local plants and flowers should be used when gardening. Only volcanic stones should be used when building fencing walls. It is forbidden to practice motocross and other similar sports out of the dedicated areas. Camping is not allowed in any part of the Island. (Ibidem: 23).

A new PIOT was approved on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1998, with its main goal being limiting the uncontrolled estate building of the last decade, and due to its restrictive character is commonly known as the “Moratorium”. Among other things, all the recently approved building grants were revoked and resubmitted to new commissions in all municipalities. On March 25<sup>th</sup> 2010 a revision of the PIOT was presented by the local Government. Being only a revision, this new document dealt mainly with an analysis of the current status of the Island and listed actions the Government feels that need to be undertaken to maintain or improve the situation. Although the whole paper mainly stresses the importance of the creation of new alternative markets and economic models for the Island, as well as the necessity for a sustainable development model in terms of energy needs and subsistence means, the main point of interest is the last one, namely the tourism model. The revision proposes a new balancing of the territorial model, based on the fact that at the moment in Lanzarote there is a clear-cut division between tourist areas and residential areas. The latter are somewhat underdeveloped and neglected by the municipalities, which tend rather to invest in the former, i.e. those that contribute more to the tourist image of the Island. Moreover, a reform of the tourist model is desirable, in terms of: improvement of sustainability; maintaining and enhancing the original cultural, social and architectural background so as to attract tourists; giving hotel residences priority over tourist housing in order to provide more jobs; and creating new public spaces for the benefit of both tourists and residents. (Fundación César Manrique 2010: 43-44)

### **Place-Branding**

John Urry, taking his point from the work of Michel Foucault about the medical gaze, maintains that the tourist gaze might be just as socially organized and systematized and therefore its nature depends on the historical period, the social group, the society, etc. (Urry 1990: 1-2). A key feature of tourism and of the tourist gaze is that there must be certain

aspects of the places visited that make them different from what can be seen in everyday life, in other words it must be *out of the ordinary*.

The act itself of recognizing a view, an object, or a monument as extraordinary requires some preliminary preparation, that means that tourism always involves a certain amount of daydreaming and anticipation, processes which are also common in consumerism. Since the real experience can hardly provide a perfect replica of what is expected, each holiday trip □ or purchase □ leads to disillusion and to a consequent need for something new (Urry 1990: 13). Moreover ‘such daydreams are not autonomous; they involve working over advertising and other media generated sets of signs, many of which relate very clearly to complex processes of social emulation’ (Ibidem: 13).

A consequence of such a discourse is that different countries have come to *specialize* in one particular gaze, to find their own spot in the very fragmented tourist market, sometimes at the expense of authenticity. When it comes to tourism, authenticity seems actually to be easy to ‘stage’. In current times we can recount a series of places which are not authentic *per se* □ since they are copies or reproductions of something that already exists elsewhere □ and though they attempt to provide a real experience to the visitor, as for example theme parks. The *mise en scene* of such easily recognizable places is usually referred to as ‘disneyfication’ and by that it is implied that staged authentic places and experiences, and the relative sets of significances that they convey, can be commoditized, merchandized and advertised *as if* it were the real thing.

Such theoretical considerations acquire a special interest when applied to marketing and economics. In the era of globalization, where information about places and their peculiarities is potentially equally accessible by everyone, it has become vital for cities, regions and even entire countries to stress their uniqueness, and through that to find a well established place on the tourist market.

According to Anne-Bitt Gran turning places into brands has become an important trend in current marketing strategy (Timm Knudsen, Waade 2010: 26). Branding a place means creating an image of that place that can be sold and that is recognizable by the potential buyer without further information. According to P. Kotler, who first theorized the marketing of places in the early 1990s (see Kotler et al. 1993), the image of a place is ‘the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of that place. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with that place’ (Timm Knudsen, Waade 2010: 27).

Such images, which could be also thought of as stereotypes, are somehow staged, although one cannot maintain that they have been necessarily invented, since they always need to pertain to the intrinsic characteristics of the place itself in order to be valid.

Place branding has the function of adding value to already existing features, to differentiate one place from another. Branding creates a place’s visual logo, which works the same way as with any other product or goods. Gran’s point is that ‘it does not matter that people (tourists) behave as if authenticity exists; that they accept that authenticity is staged if it looks real; and that they think about places as they think about other brands’ (Timm Knudsen, Waade 2010: 28). Place branding is made for selling, not to resemble the real thing,

therefore a quest for authenticity is pointless. Building up a positive image of a place has to do with a marketing strategy called ‘reputation management’.

Arts, culture and heritage are often the easiest way to go when looking for elements that will make a certain place stand out from its competitors, for art and culture are normally local and place-specific.

Such premises raise further concerns about the problem of authenticity. How can one be sure that what is being branded – and therefore advertised – is ‘real’? How can a definition of a place made up in order to attract tourists, investors and stakeholder represent the real essence of the place itself? Ooi and Stöber (Ibidem: 68-69) offer three main reasons why a coincidence between the branded place and “real” places is hard to achieve. First, a brand cannot provide an honest representation of a place simply because it was created to sell the place. That means that positive aspects of a certain place will be highlighted, while the negative ones will be voluntarily left out or made little of (Ibidem: 69). Second, branding campaigns may lead to commoditization of a certain place or social feature, destroying the original spirit of the place itself. Once certain events, activities or places are advertised and become iconic their pristine nature risks being transformed into something different from what they once were. Third, a brand is normative, in other words the image that it wants to convey can be a change factor on the actual place it is portraying, or it can restrain a certain form of art, cultural product, etc. from evolving naturally, leading to the creation of ‘surrogates’.

It is evident how, dealing with the development of tourism in Lanzarote, place branding has played an important role in today’s image of the Island. John Urry stated, in regard to this problem, that ‘tourist gazes come to constitute a closed self-perpetuating system of illusions’ (Urry 1990: 7). According to him this is a problem that arises from the interaction between local inhabitants and tourists. On one side the tourists are thought of as pilgrims who travel on a quest for authenticity in another ‘time’ or ‘space’, on the other side this intrusion caused by fascination for what is *other* is considered to be unacceptable by the local inhabitants. This leads to the creation of so-called ‘back stages’ as a resistance strategy and to the organization of what MacCannell defined as ‘staged authenticity’ (Ibidem: 9).

### **The ‘Lanzarote-Brand’ and the ‘Manrique Trade-mark’**

It can be maintained that Manrique’s works represented an attempt at place branding *ante litteram*, since when this marketing strategy was first theorized Manrique had already been working on the Island in such terms for over thirty years.

Fernando Gómez Aguilera, Director of the Fundación César Manrique, in his preface to Manrique’s *La palabra encendida* (2005),<sup>2</sup> states that the figure of César Manrique may be considered as controversial. César Manrique took Lanzarote as his greatest artwork. Aguilera states, ‘His aesthetic programme underwent controversies, which have attracted critics from sectors that have accused him of trivializing and *thematizing* the Island, as well as domesticating and aestheticizing the landscape to the point that, following the logics of the

---

<sup>2</sup> This book is a collection of Manrique’s most important writings and speeches.

leisure market, he created a sort of artificial place-object' (Ibidem: 10-11; my translation).<sup>3</sup> The process that led to such considerations has been partly already analyzed. Nevertheless it is important to consider how his 'programme' has influenced the current appearance of Lanzarote in the present day and how it contributed to creating some sort of recognizable 'brand', making his name and his persona into a well-established 'trade-mark'.

As I have pointed out, in an attempt to generate a durable and sustainable industry on the Island, starting in the 1950s the government engaged in some, at first timid, attempts at creating tourism facilities. They were well aware that the only goods which offered great potential for further expansion of the tourist market, and were fairly abundant on Lanzarote, were its climate, the extraordinary landscape, and the beautiful beaches.

Looking back at that period, in 1978 Manrique himself stated: 'Only ten years ago, Lanzarote was nothing. It was considered the Cinderella of the Canary Islands. To many it was almost a shame to be born on this Island. Lanzarote was hardly even existing on the maps' (Manrique 2005: 40; my translation).<sup>4</sup>

Having travelled the world and seen what the consequences of an indiscriminate development of tourism could cause, Manrique was aware of the need to develop a plan for the future creation of a tourist industry on the Island. Ahead of his time he noted: 'the first slogan that we created was: "we don't need to copy anyone"; "we must bring out the intrinsic character of the Island, so that others will come and copy us". This was our main task, and once we realized it, time proved us right.' (Manrique 2005: 40; my translation).<sup>5</sup>

Three important elements should be pointed out. First and most evident, the awareness of having to do with a place with huge potential, not only in terms of expected tourist capacity, but also regarding its aesthetic qualities, which make it a one-of-a-kind place on earth: 'we don't need to copy anyone, they rather should come and copy us' is a recurrent slogan in Manrique's 'propaganda'. Second, the establishment of a plan, which among its purposes should emphasize the qualities of Lanzarote and at the same time should provide directions for preserving these qualities in the future. This plan proved to be original already in its earlier stages and was undertaken with great enthusiasm. A third, less obvious, more subtle, point was the intention of Manrique and his collaborators to show the Lanzarote people (and by extension the future tourists) 'the original personality of their own landscape'.

This last implication of Manrique's discourse is, in my opinion, the most interesting, because it raises the question of what can be considered 'original', and therefore authentic, in

---

<sup>3</sup> The original reads: 'César Manrique assume Lanzarote como su gran obra. [...] Un programa estético el suyo sometido a controversia, que ha merecido críticas en sectores que le acusan de banalización, de tematizar la isla y de domesticar y estetizar el paisaje hasta configurar una suerte de lugar-objeto artificioso, en la lógica de la industria del mercado del ocio.'

<sup>4</sup> The original reads, 'Lanzarote, hace solamente diez años, era nada. Se la consideraba Cenicienta de Canarias. Para muchos constituía casi una vergüenza el haber nacido en esta isla. Lanzarote apenas existía en el mapa'

<sup>5</sup> The original reads, 'el primer eslogan que pusimos en marcha fue: "no tememos que copiar a nadie"; "tenemos que sacar a relucir la personalidad intrínseca de la isla, para que nos vengan a copiar a nosotros". Este fue nuestro principal cometido y, una vez realizado, el tiempo nos ha dado la razón.'

Lanzarote. The artist seemed to have a clear view of what represented the authentic on the Island: its architecture, its colours and the materials used. He collected pictures of what he considered to be the most representative elements of the Island's humanized landscape in the book *Lanzarote. Arquitectura inédita*. In his own words, in this work 'a recompilation is made of what is really interesting in this aspect [the architecture] of our Island, which is now facing a period of great danger, mostly due to the economic and tourist boom. Due to this fact, some anarchical building projects are about to begin, which don't have the least aesthetic feeling and which are going to spoil the tourist future of the Island, actually they are already doing so' (Manrique 2005:25-26; my translation).<sup>6</sup>

In a later writing Manrique explained that this 'alternative way' was showed to him by the Island and its geology themselves: his simple contribution was simply making an inventory of these peculiarities that architects, builders and farmers could use in the future as orientation for any new construction (Ibidem: 52). On the other hand, as Carlos Jiménez Martínez maintains, '[the] authenticity canons imposed by Manrique in aspects such as vernacular architecture, fit, in some occasions, more with nostalgia and spectacles patterns imposed by tourism industry at a worldwide level, and less with the real contemporary needs for the inhabitants of those places. The results [...] bring serial and filed built up houses, maintaining just a surface aesthetics, an empty wrapper, so typical of Postmodernism' (Jiménez Martínez 2007: 8).

Manrique's selected some elements as original, unique and therefore authentic, thereby instantly creating a (perhaps involuntary) musealisation and crystallization of those same qualities that the artist wanted to preserve. That is, having first published a book where these vernacular features are elevated and found worthy of consideration, and inserting into the PIOT regulations as to what can be built and developed on the Island has in a way 'frozen' Lanzarote in a certain moment in time.

Architecture on the Island hasn't changed very much in the last 50 years and the feeling that the visitor gets while driving or walking through the small villages is exactly that of a staged authenticity. Everything looks maybe a bit too clean, a bit too tidy, a bit too much 'all the same' to give an impression of spontaneity. This feeling is reinforced by the striking difference of the capital Arrecife with all its surroundings. The city isn't obliged by the PIOT to follow the same regulations as other municipalities, therefore its appearance is incredibly different from that of the rest of the Island: relatively high buildings, traffic lights, groups of flats in just any colour, modern buildings with extensive use of glass, etc. It simply resembles any other coastal city, and yet while it is in the middle of the Atlantic, it has a certain Mediterranean flavour.

Although it is hard to maintain that the relatively chaotic look of Arrecife is more desirable than that of small old villages like Haría, it is also not possible to overlook the fact

---

<sup>6</sup> The original reads, 'se hace una recompilación de lo verdaderamente interesante en este aspecto de nuestra isla, que se encuentra en un momento de gran peligro, debido sobre todo a su auge económico y turístico. Por esa causa, se están comenzando una serie de construcciones anárquicas, sin el menor sentido estético, que podrían estropear, y de hecho ya lo están estropeando, el porvenir turístico de la isla'.

that the capital offers to the visitor a vibrant atmosphere which is otherwise lacking elsewhere. It is, however, worth mentioning that villages like Haría, Mancha Blanca, San Bartolomé and Yaiza perfectly portray that image of Lanzarote that has been built up through place-branding and that makes Lanzarote a desirable travel destination.

Another interesting example is that of the Marina Rubicón settlement, once a fishing community about 4 km from the bigger village of Playa Blanca, now completely renovated and turned into a marina for tourists' boats and yachts. In the surroundings of the Marina and its harbour it is possible to find mainly restaurants, bars, souvenir shops, some doctor/dentist practices, one supermarket and various designers' and duty-free shops. Hotels and resorts are also situated nearby, but what attracts attention is the almost total lack of housing facilities not dedicated to tourism. The result is a rather weird feeling: the streets are empty and quiet, many shops are for rent or just closed, just a few tourists occasionally passing by on the promenade – both by day and at night. Marina Rubicón looks just like one of those reproductions of Wild West ghost towns that can be found in theme parks. It was built following the directions given by Manrique as it displays the original and traditional architecture, and for these same reasons it is missing its target of being authentic: Marina Rubicón is not 'alive', it doesn't have inhabitants, but only workers, which come and go like cinema extras. In its aesthetic perfection it is comparable to a *non-place*.

The figure of Manrique is, then, hard to define unambiguously and he himself was against being labelled in any way: being architect, painter, sculptor, gardener, artisan and in some way a visionary, in the end he turned Lanzarote into what he called an *obra total*, a total artwork, that is the integrated product of different forms of art (Zamora Cabrera 2009: 58-59), but also to the extent that due to its particular geological conformation which influenced every aspect of the culture, each feature of the Island could virtually be perceived as a "natural work of art", thanks to its intrinsic aesthetic qualities.

Nevertheless, as Javier Durán maintains, Manrique was not the only one who had the authority to decide the fate of the rising tourist industry, but he had a more important faculty: 'the assumption of authorship and, as a consequence of that, the fusion of the progress of the Island with a name and the use of this name to promote this model. Without this overlap, nothing in Lanzarote would have been the same'( de Santa Ana 2004: 115; my translation).<sup>7</sup>

According to M. A. Perdomo, tourism expanded mainly thanks to the aesthetic image that was created for it, to the extent that Lanzarote started becoming popular for the great care that had been put into adapting the tourist infrastructures to the architectonic conditions and to its environment (Perdomo 1987: 442). The work of Manrique is particularly appreciated because he managed to substitute the lack of regulations in the question of building and soil usage with an aesthetic plan that avoided the realization of those *pastiches neocanarios*, which are so deplorable on other islands, as well as the unregulated expansion of tourist infrastructures, thus preserving the original character of Lanzarote.

---

<sup>7</sup> The original reads, ('La asunción de la autoría y, como consecuencia de ello, la fusión del progreso insular con un nombre y la utilización del nombre para promover el modelo. Sin este solapamiento nada en Lanzarote hubiese sido igual.'

Perdomo asks himself whether this ‘tourist aesthetic’ can be considered as authentic and his point of view on the matter is definitely negative. He says, ‘Much of the private sector has found a shield in the argument of plasticity in order to perform the game of speculation and town planning growth. The architectural aesthetic of tourism would then be the “tourist mask” or the “exterior façade” of the big business of tourism, which focuses on land speculation and the sale of plots’ (1987. 442-443; my translation).<sup>8</sup> It is then clear how the conflict between identity, authenticity and thematisation is central to an analysis of the tourist impact in Lanzarote.

The way in which Manrique’s aesthetic ideals are perceived both by tourists and inhabitants, is strictly linked to the considerations listed above. Nevertheless, it is important to consider three more aspects. First, the artworks of Manrique, which constitute Lanzarote’s main attractions, offer a series of tourist gazes which were selected to provide a certain image of the Island coherent with his ideal. In recent years, however, many theme parks, water parks, golf courses, etc. have been built on the Island, and they have, to some extent, changed not only its general appearance but also the kinds of tourism activities which can be undertaken. Although Manrique’s ideal has been somehow distorted, the presence of the artist, especially as an icon, is still dominant. Nevertheless, I have noticed during the interviews and especially during participant observation and my participation in bus tours around the Island, that the work of Manrique is usually not recognized as a reason why Lanzarote has been chosen as a travel destination. Actually, references to Manrique are, though present, always rather subtle and lacking in detail when it comes to travel magazines and brochures. The artist is very often mentioned, but little information about his work and his persona are provided. Lanzarote is normally chosen because of its landscapes and thanks to the promise of an out-of-the-ordinary experience, in a place that had not suffered as much indiscriminate tourist development as other places. Although reference to Manrique is always implied, the connection to his work is not always referred to.

The figure of Manrique becomes relevant once the tourist has arrived in Lanzarote and notices that almost everything that can be done or seen on the Island has somehow been designed, planned or influenced by the artist. Every house, building, park, promenade or highway provides a certain gaze because it has been built following Manrique’s directions. This aspect is well stressed by the informative material found in hotel rooms, provided by the guides, and during meetings with people from the tour operator, with the result that what has been a subsidiary reason for travelling to Lanzarote (if it existed at all), suddenly becomes one of the focal points of the whole holiday period. A young tourist from Italy I interviewed, defined Manrique as a ‘Jack of all trades’, a statement that was intended to be a joke, but that definitely well describes one of the ways in which the artist is perceived by tourists.

---

<sup>8</sup> The original reads, ‘Buena parte de la iniciativa privada se ha escudado en el argumento plástico para llevar a cabo el juego de la especulación y del crecimiento urbanístico. La estética arquitectónica sería la “mascara turística” o la “fachada exterior” del gran negocio del turismo, que se centra en las parcelas de la especulación de suelo y en su venta’.

## **Conclusion**

The study of the relationship between the artwork and aesthetic ideal of Manrique and the development of tourism in Lanzarote has proved to be complex. Thanks to his aesthetic 'programme', sustainability and environmental conservation were turned by Manrique into a 'brand', deeply interconnected with the image of Lanzarote, to the extent that it is impossible to refer to the former without implying the latter. In this sense, Manrique proved to be a pioneer in what has been later called 'place-branding'. I have taken up Urry's theorization of the tourist gaze and I have considered how this gaze becomes objectified. The tourist gaze is created through the selection of certain relevant elements and is planned prior to the tourism experience by tourism specialists. The tourist often can only conform to it because of two main factors: first, the anticipation that reading dedicated magazines, guides, brochures, etc. has created. These readings are always patchy and voluntarily full of gaps, in an attempt to hook the reader, but also to keep an aura of mystery on their subject. The tourist, therefore, must be interested in following the directions given in order to satisfy his curiosity, and must accept the validity of the information provided. The second factor, which can also be considered a consequence of the first one, is that people visiting a place for the first time cannot count on previous knowledge about the experiences that are awaiting them. Since the tourist cannot base his judgments on previous knowledge, he is more eager to adapt to the reality that tourist guides, cultural brokers and middlemen present to him.

In the case of Lanzarote, this aspect poses a further problem, that of defining whether the tourist experience can be considered as 'authentic', due to the nature of the development occurred on the Island, regulated by the ideals of Manrique and by the regulations of the Island's Council.

In an attempt to define 'authenticity' in relation to the tourist experience Reisinger and Steiner suggested that Heidegger's phenomenology would be useful because according to him 'what is cannot be other than it is.' (Reisinger, Steiner 2005:78). This affirmation accords with the fact that the tourist can often only conform to the gaze he is provided with because the travel experience cannot be replicated – including the case of recurring tourists – and a term of comparison that would help to discriminate the 'authentic' from the 'staged' doesn't exist. The tourist's experience is always authentic.

It was maintained that it is hard to achieve a coincidence between branded places and real places, since positive aspects of the place – in relation to the brand that one is trying to create – are going to be enhanced, while negative aspects will be left out. As a consequence of that, the question whether Lanzarote can be considered as more or less authentic than other places should probably be posed in different terms. If we agree that authenticity is in the eye of the beholder, and that the choice of travelling to Lanzarote is the consequence of a marketing action which is aimed to pre-select the tourists according to preferences, beliefs, etc. then worrying about what is actually authentic in Lanzarote is pointless, because the Island does nothing else than fulfill those expectations that have been promised.

Lanzarote cannot be compared to other places, such as Las Vegas, where reproductions of monuments and life styles are the norm. The difference lies in the fact that while in Las Vegas we can see copies, which could technically be compared anytime with

their original, in Lanzarote this is not possible: we can see the reiterated reproduction of an architectural model through the years, but we do not have a term of comparison with what would have been if Manrique hadn't imposed his aesthetic criteria. In Lanzarote what is cannot be other than it is.

The alienating feeling that can be perceived in some areas of the Island – as in Marina Rubicón – should probably not be reported as a case of 'staged authenticity', but rather as the result of too much success and engagement. Manrique himself often used the expression '*morir de éxito*' when talking about Lanzarote, which can be translated as 'dying from success'.<sup>9</sup> This aspect implies the consideration of the difference between what Manrique wanted to achieve and the effective consequences of having pursued this goal.

Therefore, it is easy to understand why the image of the Island is strongly linked to that of Manrique, and this bond cannot easily be loosened. There are three basic reasons: (1) Manrique provided an aesthetic definition for Lanzarote, (2) which turned into legislation that widely influences the lives of its inhabitants, but most importantly (3) Manrique constituted (and still constitutes) a media icon.

---

<sup>9</sup> Idoya Cabrera Delgado, personal communication.

## References

- Afluencia a los Centros de Arte, Cultura y Turismo de Lanzarote según centro y mes (2011) *Centros de Datos de Lanzarote - Cabildo de Lanzarote*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.datosdelanzarote.com/itemDetalles.asp?idFamilia=26&idItem=4968> [accessed 15<sup>th</sup> September 2012]
- De Santa Ana Mariano (ed.) (2004), *Paisajes del places, paisajes de la crisis*, Taro de Tahíche, Lanzarote: Fundación César Manrique
- Fernando Llorente Sagaseta de Ilurdoz, M. S. (2001). *Conocer el PIOT: misión posible*, Taro de Tahiche, Lanzarote: Fundación César Manrique
- Fundación César Manrique (2010). *Memoria 2010*, Taro de Tahíche: Lanzarote
- Jiménez Martínez, C. (2007). *Cesar Manrique's contribution to sustainable design for tourism in Lanzarote Island. Reflections in product design*, Curitiba: I International Symposium on Sustainable Design Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> 2007
- Kotler, P. and Heider D. H., Rein I. (eds) (1993). *Marketing Places*, New York: The Free Press
- Manrique, C. (2005). *La palabra encendida*, León: Universidad de León
- Perdomo, M. A. (1987). *El modelo de desarrollo turístico en la isla de Lanzarote: ¿Hacia una estética del turismo?*, In: *I Jornada de Historia de Fuerteventura y Lanzarote*, (1), Puerto del Rosario: Cabildo Insular de Fuerteventura y Cabildo Insular de Lanzarote.
- Reisinger, Y. and Steiner C. J. (2006). Reconceptualizing object Authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33 (1): 65-86
- Silver, I. (1993). Marketing Authenticity in Third World Countries. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20: 302-318.
- Timm Knudsen, B. and Waade A. M. (eds) (2010). *Re-Investing Authenticity, Tourism, Place and Emotions*, Bristol: Channel View Publications
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze. Leisure and travel in contemporary societies*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Dehli: SAGE Publications
- Zamora Cabrera, A. (2009). *La artealización de Lanzarote*, Tesina del Master de Arquitectura del Paisaje, Barcelona: Universidad Politecnica de Catalunya.