

Exhibition: CÉSAR MANRIQUE
10 FEBRUARY – 24 APRIL 2005

Organized by: IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curator: Fernando Gómez Aguilera

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This exhibition of César Manrique is the first retrospective to be organized since the artist's death, and it focuses on his more personal painting, the painting which makes him stand out as an artist in the context of his generation, work based on matter, texture, chromaticism and references to the geology of his island. Informalist landscape painting, which became part of his artistic vocabulary in the late 1950s (the first works are dated 1959) and accompanied him throughout his life. This activity achieved its richest and most essential distillation in the sixties, when he was living in Madrid and in New York. The exhibition shows the central period of his output as a painter, placing emphasis on the works of the 1960s and 1970s. There is a noteworthy presence of Informalist paintings never previously shown in Spain, obtained from private collections in the United States, Switzerland, France, Germany and Costa Rica, together with less well-known works from Spanish collections. The catalogue of the exhibition includes illustrations of the works exhibited and contains studies on the work of César Manrique by Jaime Brihuega, Nilo Palenzuela and the curator of the exhibition, Fernando Gómez Aguilera, together with a chronology and bibliography of the artist.

César Manrique (1919–1992) was born in Arrecife, the capital of Lanzarote, an island that had a decisive presence in his life and work. Much of his pictorial imagery came from the landscape of his childhood experiences, which was of great significance for his subsequent perception of the world and for his painting.

After finishing his studies at the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid –where he lived from 1945 to 1964 – he presented numerous exhibitions of his paintings in Spain and elsewhere. He had turned to non-figurative art after spending some months in Paris in the early 1950s. At the end of that decade, influenced by Fautrier and Dubuffet, his work – and that of other Spanish artists, such as Antoni Tàpies, Lucio Muñoz and Manuel Millares – became associated with Informalism. His pictures abandoned all references to reality and he pursued abstraction, exploring the qualities of matter with explicit allusions to the textures and colour of volcanic lava, which became essential elements in his compositions. Throughout his career he remained faithful to this language, consolidating it in the 1960s and early 1970s, the period of his greatest splendour as a painter.

After journeys to various parts of the world, in 1964 César Manrique went to live in New York. His ties of friendship with personalities of the American world of culture enabled him to become closely acquainted with the Abstract Expressionism of Rothko and Pollock, the Pop Art of Warhol and Rauschenberg and Kinetic Art.

In 1966 Manrique returned to Lanzarote and made it his permanent home. At that time the island was beginning its development as a tourist destination and Manrique promoted a model for intervention in the landscape based on factors of sustainability, seeking to safeguard the island's natural and cultural heritage.

The chromaticism in his painting, which came from matter, expanded in the 1970s to embrace carmines, blues reminiscent of the sea, rusty greens, dark reds and sandy yellows. With the passing of time the bulky presence of matter became more slender, and its initially rough or savage appearance became more delicate. During this period Manrique worked in large natural spaces, integrating architecture, landscape, gardening, painting, sound, design, sculpture and equipment, with an attitude of evident respect for nature.

César Manrique cultivated a variety of creative languages, including painting, sculpture, town planning and public art, but in all his work he showed a desire for integration with his natural surroundings. An all-embracing, syncretic aim – *total art*, as he called it – which became explicit in his designs for public spaces.