

Winner. Master's Thesis

Manos Cerámicas (Ceramic Hands)

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REPORT: MANOS CERÁMICAS (CERAMIC HANDS)

Centre for artisanal crafts

Manos Cerámicas is a centre for artisanal crafts located in Los Loros (La Gomera), aimed at revitalising the island's traditional way of life and recovering trades historically linked to the territory, in particular *alfarería gomera* – La Gomera's traditional pottery and one of the most outstanding examples of the Canary Islands' rich heritage. The aim is to promote arts and crafts as drivers of sustainable development, generating employment and helping to curb rural depopulation.

The intervention is integrated in the village ruins, offering a continuous flow of movement between interior and exterior, where the workshops are dotted, occupy voids and engage in dialogue with the topography and the memory of this site. The architecture is inspired by the traditional shelters dotted around La Gomera, with a sturdy base, timber framework and a light, permeable envelope.

Ceramics as a conceptual, material and cultural core

Ceramics lie at the heart of this project. As well as a building material, it is the concept that gives rise to the architecture and pays homage to the female potters of El Cercado – the *loceras* – who work the clay without a wheel, following the techniques passed down from mothers to daughters.

The façade is composed of ceramic modules crafted from local clay using ancestral techniques. Each module combines sub-models featuring a variety of patterns and perforations, creating opaque or permeable surfaces, lattices that regulate light, ventilation and privacy, and shifting shadows that evoke the volcanic landscape.

Earthy tones such as ochre and red are a direct allusion to the territory and clay of La Gomera, blending the building into its setting sustainably and symbolically.

Ceramics in the interior: flooring and spatial differentiation

The workshops feature stoneware tiles as a solution for the slopes and drainage that are a necessary part of the artisanal processes, while also facilitating cleaning and withstanding intensive use.

The choice for the main areas was ceramic tiles that emulate the warmth of wood, creating a sense of coherence between the wooden structure and the outer ceramic skin. Ceramic tiles in more neutral tones were used in the service and circulation zones in order to differentiate between the various functions.

Ceramics – a lesson in territory

The architecture recreates the cycle of clay – extraction, kneading, shaping and firing – providing visitors with an insight into the process through the materials featured in the building.

As a result, ceramics become an educational and emotional language, combining tradition and contemporary style.

Architecture born from the land

In addition to their material value, ceramics allow the use of local resources in construction, revitalising crafts at risk of disappearing and creating a connection between the building and its setting, providing climatic solutions thanks to the use of lattices, cross-ventilation and solar control.

The project is complemented by bioclimatic strategies such as a green roof, water capture from the “sea of clouds” and cisterns integrated into terraced fields.

Manos Cerámicas is architecture forged from clay and territory. Ceramics – local, handmade, ancestral – not only form the skin but also the essence: a material that protects, teaches, connects and transmits culture. Each model embodies the essence of La Gomera’s traditional pottery, turning the building into a living tribute to a tradition that here finds continuity and renewal.