

# SCORIA GARDENS PROJECT STATEMENT

Volcanoes present an overwhelming potential for destructiveness yet they produce fertile grounds that enable life and have created 80% of the earth's surface. It is this precarious balance of the natural world that this proposal seeks to underscore. Often these paradoxical natural monuments are hidden from sight as we shelter from the vast scale of the world. Instead this proposal aims to overlap our artificial and natural environments whilst drawing attention to the immediate qualities of a common igneous product: Scoria.

The Scoria Gardens is a monumental geological sanctuary in the heart of San Jose but also a horizontal landmark that bridges and connects the two embankments of Area Green. This volcanic grotto is one that forms an architectural cloister framing nature and riparian corridor rather than being the object within it. The low profile of the structure is maintained at a constant height with the apex around 21ft above street level. A cropped horizon is captured by a low horizontal opening that cuts through the darkness of the volcanic interior to reveal the gardens whilst hiding the wider context. The inner eaves of the structure remain at a constant height while the topography of the land is allowed to move underneath. At points the two appear to kiss, at others there may only be enough height for a child to pass through. Similarly, the entrances have to be discovered in the depression in the land amongst the trees by the rivers. The journey within the cloister recalls Aristotle's walks with the Peripatetic school as the route continually draws the visitor around the corner.

The work reinterprets the attitude of Lanzarote's Cesar Manrique aiming to think not only as an architect but with the sensibility of an ecologist, geologist and gardener. This is in the hope of offering a new kind of relationship to nature; one that is ambiguous in its formation and embraces the entropic dialogue with nature.

Instead of the violent formation of a cinder cone the cloister will be formed through the actions of burying, mounding and excavating, recreating the layering process by forming concrete over a compacted earth mound. The minerals that volcanic materials like scoria contain will enhance and protect the vegetation within the site. Visually the characteristic red colour of the material will distinguish Area Green in the city as well bringing whole the site together as a one by using a single material.