

BEHIND THE WAVES

PHOTOGRAPHS

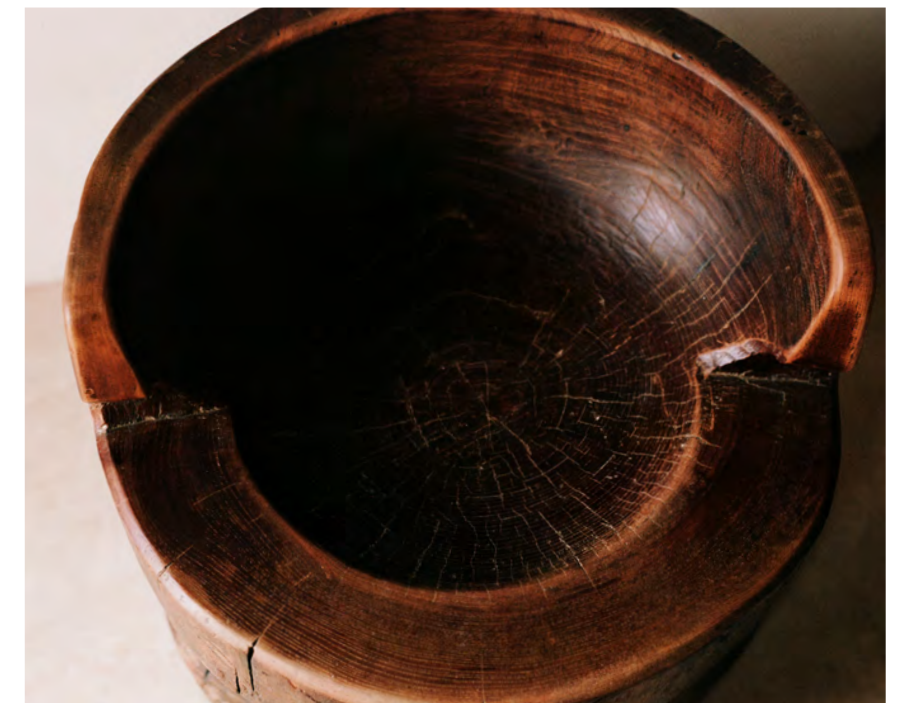
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VALÉRY GRÉGO FIRST WENT TO LANZAROTE TO SURF. THE FRENCH FINANCIER-TURNED-HOTELIER ALREADY HAD HOMES IN LONDON AND IBIZA WHEN HE STARTED COMING TO THE VOLCANIC CANARY ISLAND 15 YEARS AGO. IT WAS WHILE IN THE SEA, WAITING TO CATCH A WAVE, THAT GRÉGO SPOTTED THE HOUSE FAR IN THE DISTANCE. “I MET THE HOUSE WHEN I WAS SURFING,” HE SAYS. “I WAS AT THE LINEUP LOOKING AT THE MOUNTAINS. HALFWAY UP ONE OF THEM WAS THIS LITTLE WHITE DOT.” HE FANTASIZED ABOUT THE HOUSE FOR THE REST OF THAT MORNING’S SURF SESSION. LATER THAT EVENING, HE RELUCTANTLY ATTENDED A DINNER HE DIDN’T REALLY WANT TO GO TO. THANK GOODNESS HE DID: THE HOST HAPPENED TO KNOW THAT WHITE DOT’S OWNER, AND WITHIN 24 HOURS GRÉGO HAD BOUGHT WHAT WOULD BECOME HIS FIRST RESIDENCE ON THE ISLAND.







THIS WAS 2020. OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, GRÉGO WORKED WITH FESTEN ARCHITECTURE ON THE SLOW, SENSITIVE RENOVATION OF THE HOUSE. FESTEN AND GRÉGO HAVE WORKED COLLABORATIVELY ON ALMOST ALL OF GRÉGO'S PROJECTS, INCLUDING HIS MOST RECENT VENTURE, HÔTEL DU COUVENT IN NICE, FRANCE. GRÉGO'S SPECIALTY IS FINDING AND RESTORING HISTORIC PROPERTIES BACK TO THEIR ORIGINAL STATE (OR AS CLOSE AS ONE CAN GET). HÔTEL DU COUVENT, AS ITS NAME SUGGESTS, WAS AN ABANDONED 17TH-CENTURY CONVENT WHEN GRÉGO FOUND IT. HIS LANZAROTE HOUSE WAS BUILT TOWARD THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY FROM LIME, MORTAR AND LOCAL LAVA STONE. FESTEN RETAINED THESE MATERIALS FOR THE RESTORATION,

USING ONLY WHAT WAS WITHIN 100 METERS (ABOUT 300 FEET) OF THE HOUSE. NOT A SINGLE BUILDING MATERIAL WAS TRUCKED IN.

THERE IS A LOGIC TO THIS. THE FARMERS AND VERNACULAR ARCHITECTS WHO BUILT THIS HOME AND THOSE LIKE IT NEARLY 200 YEARS AGO KNEW WHAT THE CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY NEEDED. LANZAROTE IS HOT YEAR ROUND, WITH SUBTROPICAL WEATHER, STRONG SUN-RAYS AND WILD WINDS. THE LIME MORTAR THAT COVERS THE EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR WALLS AND FLOORS WORKS LIKE LINEN: IT KEEPS THE HOUSE COOL AT THE ISLAND'S HOTTEST. DEEP INSET WINDOWS, MOST OF WHICH WERE UPDATED WITH NEW GLASS PANES DURING THE RENOVATION, BRING IN NATURAL LIGHT WITHOUT HEATING UP





THE HOME, AND CHANNEL ROUGH WINDS THROUGH THE U-SHAPED LAYOUT SO THAT NO ALTERNATIVE AIR-CONDITIONING IS NEEDED.

“IT IS A BIOCLIMATIC HOUSE,” GRÉGO SAYS, CONTINUING TO EXPLAIN THE POWER OF SUCH SIMPLY EFFICIENT ARCHITECTURE. HE SEES THE HOUSE AS AN EXTENSION OF THE EARTH BECAUSE IT IS: “I WANTED TO CREATE A HOUSE THAT IS ALIVE,” HE SAYS, “THAT SPRANG FROM THE GROUND.” BESIDES SURFING, GRÉGO USES THE HOME TO THINK AND WORK. CHARLOTTE PERRIAND AND JEAN PROUVÉ CHAIRS AND STOOLS, SOURCED WITH THE HELP OF VIRGINIE BOULENGER, SERVE AS SEATING THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE, ALONGSIDE STOOLS GRÉGO

MADE FROM LOCAL MATERIALS. MOST OF THE HOME’S LARGER SEATING IS BUILT IN, WITH A LARGE ANTIQUE TABLE IN THE DINING AND LIVING ROOM SERVING AS GRÉGO’S PRIMARY WORKSPACE. THE BEDROOMS ARE SIMPLE—THIS IS A SURF SHACK, AFTER ALL—WITH SMALL, MEANINGFUL TOKENS FROM GRÉGO’S CREATIVE AND SINGULAR LIFE NESTED IN CORNERS AND HUNG ON WALLS. THE HOUSE IS A HUMBLE GESTURE AND RESONATES WITH A SENSE OF GRATITUDE. “THROUGH THE TRIALS AND ERRORS OF 200 YEARS, PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY FIGURED OUT THE BEST PLACES TO SLEEP IN THE HOUSE, AND 90 PERCENT OF THE TIME, THEY ARE RIGHT,” SAYS GRÉGO. “WHO AM I TO CHANGE THAT COLLECTIVE, ACCUMULATED WISDOM?” THE END



