

# B I L L I O N A I R E



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Travel has the power to widen our perspective of the world and, for some, it can be a life-changing experience. In the case of German artist Ulrike Arnold, a visit to the caves in Lascaux in the Dordogne and the ochre pits in Provence at the age of 21 was a turning point. Coming face to face with Palaeolithic rock drawings was a eureka moment that ignited a passion for creating art using only pigments from rocks, minerals and soil. Since 1991, she has created 15 rock paintings *in situ* in Arizona, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, India and Tenerife.

# Mother Earth

Ulrike Arnold's paintings, conceived in some of the world's most remote locations, pay direct homage to Mother Earth.

by Rowena Marella-Daw





ABOVE: VIEW FROM UTAH'S BROKEN ARROW CAVE OF ULRIKE ARNOLD PAINTING AT THE CAVE'S BASE, WITH AMANGIRI RESORT BLENDING INTO THE LANDSCAPE ON THE RIGHT. © ROWENA MARELLA-DAW BELOW: COLLECTING EARTH COLOURS AT A CAVE RECENTLY DISCOVERED BY A MAYAN FRIEND NEAR MUNA IN MEXICO'S YUCATAN PENINSULA  
© VICTOR VAN KEUREN

*Ulrike has been given a rare opportunity to paint with meteorite dust obtained from five sites across four continents. With bare hands, she scoops out the dark-grey metallic particles shimmering under the sun. The resulting 'Earth paintings' pay homage to Mother Earth in a very direct and specific way.*

Arnold has continued painting in some of the world's most remote locations, gravitating towards imposing landscapes, colourful terrain, and places with spiritual, historical and cultural significance. Inspiration comes from myriad geological wonders: salt and sand deserts; volcanoes; prehistoric caves; rock cliffs; and river beds. Intensive research goes into finding the ideal location, although some she has discovered by sheer serendipity.

I first met Arnold while staying at Amangiri, a luxury resort set deep within Utah's Canyon Point, close to where dinosaurs once roamed. As the resort's resident artist, she spends the autumn months working outdoors, surrounded by the otherworldly expanse of magnificent canyons, mesas and buttes. At the base of Broken Arrow Cave, I watched her paint in her open-air studio. On the ground were rows of white sacks containing a spectrum of pigments collected from sand, shale, clay, coal and volcanic ash. Broken Arrow Cave was formed from petrified sand dunes 160 million years ago, and was home to indigenous tribes for some 8,300 years. Artefacts, petroglyphs

and pictographs found here make it one of southwest Utah's most important archaeological sites.

If travelling in space were possible today, I believe Arnold would be the first artist to paint on Mars. But thanks to an opportune meeting with meteorite collector Marvin Killgore of Southwest Meteorite Laboratory in Arizona, she has been given a rare opportunity to paint with meteorite dust obtained from five sites across four continents. With bare hands, she scooped out the dark-grey metallic particles shimmering under the sun. "In the last 14 years I have added meteorite dust to my canvasses, and the resulting 'Earth paintings' pay homage to Mother Earth in a very direct and specific way," explains Arnold.

Mother Earth has indeed been very kind to the artist, who is blessed with a deep connection to nature. What sets Arnold's work apart is her interpretation of the landscape. Instead of replicating the scenery, she lets emotional response be her guide, channelling the Earth's energy through her hands as



*Arnold lets wildlife take part in her endeavour, be it a lizard scuttling across and leaving footprints, or a curious roadrunner perusing her work. One of Arnold's paintings even incorporates the skin shed by a passing snake.*

THIS ROUND PIECE WAS  
CREATED USING SALT  
AND EARTH AFTER  
ULRIKE EXPERIENCED  
AN EARTHQUAKE IN  
THE CORDILLERA DE LA  
SAL (SALT MOUNTAINS),  
FORMED MILLION OF  
YEARS AGO IN THE  
CHILEAN ATACAMA  
DESERT © ANGELIKA  
NIEDERL



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ULRIKE COLLECTING EARTH PIGMENTS FROM THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS IN MOROCCO © VICTOR VAN KEUREN. A ROADRUNNER CHECKING OUT ULRIKE'S WORK IN UTAH'S DESERT © ULRIKE ARNOLD. ULRIKE PAINTING WITH EARTH AND METEORITE DUST GATHERED FROM NEARBY CHICXULUB CRATER IN MEXICO'S YUCATÁN PENINSULA. © VICTOR VAN KEUR



*“It was my first time alone. At night, I sang and danced around a fire to overcome my fear. Watching the stars and listening to animal sounds, I felt like a tiny speck in the universe.” — Ulrike Arnold*

she applies sweeping brush strokes and scatters organic particles with instinctive spontaneity.

Arnold doesn't let the elements interfere with her work. “I paint outside, allowing nature — wind, rain and sun — to be my accomplices,” she says. Arnold even lets wildlife take part in her endeavour, be it a lizard scuttling across and leaving footprints, or a curious roadrunner perusing her work. One of Arnold's paintings even incorporates the skin shed by a passing snake. While working in Chile's Atacama Desert, she witnessed an earthquake, her most challenging experience so far. “I didn't feel troubled. I was so taken by the forces of nature and the Earth's movement, I decided to transform my work into a series of big round paintings.”

The artist often works in isolation. “Being alone is not feeling lonesome. It's a dialogue with the Earth and the surrounding environment. When I'm working alone, I feel even more the power of nature, strongly inspired, not distracted by people.” Arnold once travelled five hours to work in a canyon east of Alice Springs in Australia. For two weeks, she had no car or phone, slept in a small tent and survived on water and dry food. “It was my first time alone. At night, I sang and danced around a fire to overcome my fear. Watching the stars and listening to animal sounds, I felt like a tiny speck in the universe. Later, I realised the enormous risk I took, but I wanted to experience being fully at one with nature and transform those moments into art.”

The end result of her endeavours over nearly four decades are abstract masterpieces full of movement and drama, evocative as the volatile forces that formed this planet. In a strangely mystical sense, Arnold's paintings have become extensions of the landscapes themselves and, when viewed from above, they resemble the beautiful randomness of Earth's varied textures and colours. Owning one of her paintings is like owning a piece of the Earth.

#### **OneWorld**

Ulrike's next project is to use earth she has collected from all continents for the past 38 years. Called 'OneWorld', it will combine two enormous canvases: a rectangle (7m x 190cm) and a circle (190 cm diameter), which when displayed together will form an 'exclamation mark.' “The artwork will represent a visual expression of the diversity of the continents, their countries, their histories and their peoples. It's a statement of peace and community, an articulation of unity and equality,” explained Ulrike. OneWorld will be exhibited at the United Nations Headquarters in New York during International Day of Earth on 22nd April 2019. ◇

*www.ulrikearnold.com*

