



# The Healing Arts at

# Peaceful Mountain

*by Jenna Realmuto*

*The hypnotic, outsized  
landscapes of the American  
Southwest offer both inspired  
exploration and serenity.*  
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nside Amangiri, isolation is transformed into unique luxury. Nestled in the curve of a cliff in southern Utah’s desert mountains, this 600-acre, ultra-modern resort’s concrete structure is subtly painted in earth tones to appear mirage-like—emerging from the rock face itself. Here, one finds a rare harmonious balance between nature and extravagance, introspection and exploration.

A full 45-minute drive from the nearest town, Amangiri lies in the



heart of the Grand Circle, a Mecca of national parks and monuments spread out across some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country. The resort is part of Aman Resorts International, a hotel group featuring luxury accommodations in exotic locations around the world, from Cambodia to India to Greece.

And Utah.

Utah is home to some of America’s most stunning landscapes and significant geological and cultural sites—all of which come in to focus at Amangiri, brought to life in 2009 by developer Christoph Henkel and a team of internationally acclaimed architects. Together, they have integrated Navajo culture and history into an unforgettable experience emphasizing both adventure and rejuvenation.

The “things to do” list at Amangiri is truly one-of-a-kind. Guests enjoy massage, yoga and other wellness amenities as well as top-notch Southwest cuisine paired with memorable desert views. Outside the resort, visitors take

early-morning balloon rides or challenging climbing expeditions of awe-inspiring rock formations. Nearby, Lake Powell is a great spot for kayaking and offers beautiful views of the surrounding landscape. Guided tours present a look into the culture and history of the Navajo.

Another unique sight-seeing opportunity: watching an internationally acclaimed and self-proclaimed “earth artist” at work. From August to October, German artist Ulrike Arnold resides at the resort and creates unique paintings with the natural materials the surrounding terrain has to offer.

Developer Henkel knew Arnold’s work and, as she put it, “imagined my artwork” as he was developing the concept of Amangiri. She began working in the area several months before the resort opened. She spends much of her time at Broken Arrow Cave, which she describes as a “truly

*Spacious, with clean lines and natural materials, the suites reflect the luminous qualities of the surrounding Utah desert. Accommodation design features include white stone floors, concrete walls, natural timbers and fittings in blackened steel. Each suite has an outdoor lounge and fireplace with expansive desert views, while some feature a private pool or roof terrace.*

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF AMAN



*Spanning 600 acres in Canyon Point, Utah, Amangiri is situated in the heart of the Grand Circle, the highest concentration of national parks and monuments in the country.*  
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AMAN





magical place.” Amangiri guests visit the site as she works, though “most of the time I create in peace.”

Arnold is a traditional artist in the sense that she uses paint brushes and canvases—but that’s about all that makes her work normal. She uses only transparent glue and natural materials, creating works that seem to breathe with the energy of the earth itself. Dirt, mud, wind, rain, rocks—all of these things add to her arsenal of tools.

“Just watching the red earth mixed in my hands has an element of surprise for those who come and watch,” Arnold says, “and it raises the understanding that color comes from our *earth* and

that the cavemen and cavewomen used it for their first creations.”

Amangiri was a perfect spot to create, said Arnold, who described Utah as “one of my favorite places on earth.”

Arnold has bounced from place to place, all over the globe, visiting each continent and countless countries to create masterpieces with the unique materials of each region. The path that led her to this life, as she describes

it, is a series of coincidences.

From the moment that a 21-year-old Arnold stepped into prehistoric caves in France and Spain in the early 1970s, she was hooked on the idea of all-natural artwork. Viewing the extraordinary cave paintings from 20,000 years ago had a major impact on her. “It was something of a revelation or better: I

felt a true impact that forced me to collect these Earth samples and to use them in my studio,” she says.

She soon realized that painting on-site, *en plein air*, outside in the elements, was a much more impactful, spiritual experience. She often camps alone in remote locations, taking only her supplies. Of one solo trip into the Australian desert, Arnold says, “I was totally alone there: no car, no phone, just dry food, water for two weeks, a tent, canvases, paint brushes and bowls to mix the paint, a hammer and a strong will to overcome fear and create. At night, I would make a fire, dancing around and singing for hours. It was the most profound, empowering experience. I felt like a tiny element in our universe.”



Earth art by Ulrike Arnold adorns the hotel dining room, where the cuisine is inspired by the American Southwest and made primarily from locally sourced ingredients, with dishes served on traditional hot stones. The dining room features an open kitchen and tables that look out through floor-to-ceiling windows over the ever-changing colors of the Utah desert.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF AMANGIRI





*Amangiri blends into countless untouched square miles of red rock country. In the last remnant of the truly wild West, this 'mountain of peace' is cradled within a staggering landscape of canyons, mesas, mountains, gorges, rapids and desert, with traces of human life dating back more than 10,000 years.*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AMAN







# In

the decades since, Arnold's travels have taken her seemingly everywhere, from Easter Island, where she watched indigenous ritual dances and painted on special tree bark called Mahute, to Senegal where the West African coastline of Popenguine inspired her work. In Yucatan, Mexico, she painted near the largest meteorite site in the world, created 65 million years ago and theorized to have possibly caused

the extinction of dinosaurs. Using earth colors from each side of the holy mountain Arunachalla in India, she created a round painting. When asked where the wind will take her next, she says, "Maybe China could be my next destination; it's a plan that still needs to mature."

How Arnold landed in Utah and came upon Broken Arrow Cave is also one of her life's great "coincidences."

She was approached by an investor and the owner of Aman Resorts, who were familiar with her work and had a vision of displaying her art at their newest venture: Amangiri. She arrived in 2009, five months before the resort opened. Then she found Broken Arrow Cave.

She says, "I looked around for a place to paint, and I found this huge cave. I saw it from the distance and decided to do my painting there. Later, I discovered that inside this cave, there are amazing petroglyphs. This is another one of those coincidences where I have been working in close proximity to ancient rock art."

Amangiri guests are encouraged to travel to Broken Arrow Cave, to explore the ancient petroglyphs, observe Arnold's artwork and even witness the artist herself at work. Returning to the hotel, guests can enjoy the spa, the pool or the beautifully framed desert views from their suite. For the adventurous, they offer hiking, rockclimbing and hot air balloon rides. ■



*Outside Broken Arrow Cave near ancient petroglyphs, Ulrike Arnold gathers natural earth materials to paint with. Each palette is unique to its location. Above: An earthpainting from the artist's Broken Arrow Cave series. Opposite: Ulrike Arnold at White Pocket, a hard-to-reach area of sandstone inside Vermilion Cliffs National Monument near the Arizona/Utah border.*

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*A bird's-eye view of one of  
Ulrike Arnold's plein air studios.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR VAN KEUREN*