

# Cultural Centre

*The Cultural Centre is the Aṁangu (Aboriginal) way of saying 'Welcome to Aṁangu land.'*

The opening of the Uluru - Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre in 1995 celebrated ten years of working together under joint management. The building represents a blend of the needs of Aṁangu culture and the demands of over 400 000 visitors each year. The Cultural Centre is a synthesis of Aṁangu and non-Aṁangu inspiration and design.

Discussions about building a Cultural Centre to share Aṁangu culture began in 1986, less than a year after the handback of Uluru - Kata Tjuta National Park to the traditional owners. The first Plan of Management for the Park, gazetted in 1986, recommended that:

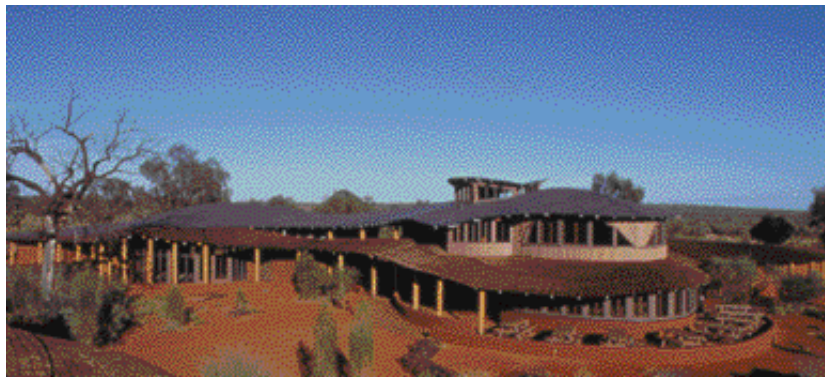
"A cultural centre may be established in the Park for the following purposes:

- Presentation of interpretive material relating to traditional culture;
- Display and sale of contemporary Aboriginal art and crafts;
- Display of historical and contact history;
- Presentation of traditional song and dance; and,
- The conduct of other appropriate Aṁangu controlled cultural and/or commercial activities".

## The design process

In September 1990 Gregory Burgess Architects Pty Ltd were commissioned to produce a design brief. The architects set up a work studio in the Muṯitjulu Community where Aṁangu and other interested parties could comment on what they felt were the requirements of the proposed building. The earliest and most fundamental design idea sprang from the flowing lines drawn in the sand by Aṁangu. Other ideas came from paintings on canvas and talking over issues for long periods of time. Aṁangu made sure that everyone involved in the process learned about Tjukurpa.

The final concept was based on the Tjukurpa ancestors Kuniya (the woma python - southern entry building) and Liru (the poisonous brown snake - northern exit building). Traditional Owners, Muṯitjulu community members and design team consultants worked together on the texts and concepts. Artists from Muṯitjulu community worked on paintings, ceramics, glass, wood, video and audio-visual displays.



The site was chosen with consideration of environmental impact, the atmosphere of the surrounds and the wishes of Anangu.

In early 1994 Sitzler Bros Pty Ltd from Alice Springs were selected as the building contractors.

### **The Cultural Centre building**

The building consists of:

- Compacted earth foundations;
- 90,000 mud bricks made of local soil with less than 2% bitumen added for strength;
- A slurry of soil and water bagged over the bricks to provide the finishing texture;
- White cypress pine poles from south-west Queensland and north-west New South Wales;
- Cypress pine and stringy bark rafters;
- Victorian yellow stringy bark cladding and panelling, radially-sawn allowing for the most efficient use of timber;
- Western red cedar door and window frames;
- Bloodwood roof shingles from New South Wales;
- Grey iron bark floorboards in the Walkatjara retail outlet area;
- Grey iron bark bearers and joists;
- Copper roof shingles, which slowly colour through the oxidation process as they age;
- External paths of compacted gravel overlain with consolidated sand.

The original internal pathways were constructed of compacted earth with an oil and wax finish. In August 1999 these pathways were upgraded using reinforced concrete with a rough finish. The concrete is normal Portland cement to which oxide was added during the batching process at the plant. The oxide is 90% desert sand and 10% terracotta for increased redness. A reddish natural aggregate containing quartzite was also added. As the paths wear over time they will reveal the quartzite, yet not fade. The Walkatjara artists prepared the decorative tiles representing features of Anangu life and culture, and arrows for directional tiles.

### **Cultural Centre Logo**

The logo for the Uluru - Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre represents four major Tjukurpa for Uluru. Kuniya, Liru, Kurpany and Mala are ancestral beings who help form the basis of traditional law and custom for Anangu today. They connect Anangu with country in all directions around Uluru. Kuniya came from the east near Erldunda and is still present at Uluru today. Liru came from the southwest and returned to that country after the battle with Kuniya's nephew. The Mala people arrived for ceremonies from Mawulyarungu to the north near Yuendumu. Kurpany was sent in from the west near Kaltukatjara (Dockers River) and chased the Mala

people through Uluru itself and then further south to Ulkiya.

See the logo in the Cultural Centre and on the Anangu Tours bus.

### **Award Winning Building**

After four years of planning and eighteen months to build, the Uluru Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre was opened on 26 October, 1995. The builders had taken particular interest and pride in constructing a building so culturally important and one which was also a challenge to their skills because of its unusual design.

A year after opening, the Uluru Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre design was recognised through the prestigious Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Northern Territory Branch) annual awards. Other awards received by Gregory Burgess Pty Ltd for the Cultural Centre were the 1996 Tracy Memorial Award for the best building in any category, the Institutional Architecture Award and the People's Choice Award.

### **The Cultural Centre Experience**

There is a set route through the Centre to provide a variety of experiences. By entering through the Tjukurpa Pitji visitors learn about the traditional and ancient culture of the area. Joint Management of the National Park is then presented in the Nintirinkupai room.

The economic aspirations of Anangu are presented in their own businesses, Maruku Arts, Anangu Tours, Walkatjara Art and Ininti Cafe and Souvenirs.

To fully appreciate the Cultural Centre visitors should allow at least two to three hours, plus time for refreshments.

Because of the deep spiritual nature of the area and to respect the personal privacy of Anangu workers visitors are asked not to film or video inside the building or precinct. This is to respect the wishes of the Traditional Owners, and protect Anangu cultural and intellectual property rights.

