

Doctoring Rocks At APPEA

John Jackson's 'Road Cutting at Charlwood'.

The 'Rock Doctor'—a.k.a John Jackson—will be gracing the 2010 APPEA Conference and Exhibition with his unique art. Jackson is a geologist-turned-artist who captures the mysteries of the underground world and reflects them in his paintings. He blends the worlds of art and science into one to produce visually stimulating work that educates through storytelling. This year, Jackson will have a booth at the conference where visitors can view and also purchase his art. He will be running geological tours before and after the conference and his work has even inspired this year's APPEA logo.

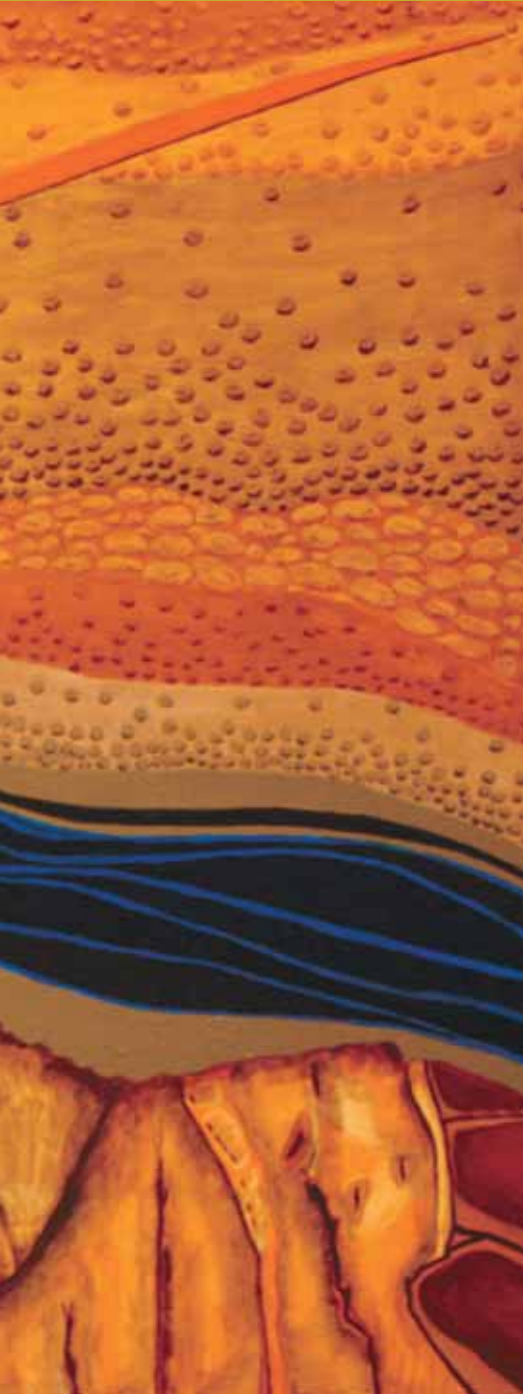
Jackson's passion for geology has existed for as long as he can remember, he cannot recall a time when he was not interested in rocks or pebbles. He grew up on a farm in NSW and spent all his time as a youngster collecting pebbles down at the local river. At the age of 10, Jackson was enrolled by his father in a geological tour which furthered his interest in fossils, soils, sediments, tectonic plates and crystals.

Along his geological journey, Jackson worked for Shell and Bond Corporation, he was a WA State Chairman for APEA and explored the geological wonders of the world. While he was

working as a geologist his passion for art never died and he found himself visiting art museums and exhibitions whenever he got a spare moment.

"My interest was always in painting and other people's paintings", he said.

His introduction to geological paintings began in 1999 when he was in South Africa working on an offshore gas development project. He noted the majority of people involved in the project were of different nationalities and mixed languages, so he drew a big text figure and threw it on the ground to explain the



were intending to do for the day and then for the week.”

The ladies who cooked for the workers used to come out every morning after breakfast and have a look at the canvas, they even wanted to cut it up and turn it into dresses.

“That got me thinking, ‘gosh if they like what I’m doing here, what if I just stop making text figures and turned it into art?’” he said.

Since then, he spends up to six months reading and researching a project or subject he plans to paint.

“I attempt to pull in all the pertinent aspects of a project or a well, a geological tour or whatever it is I’m painting, so that when you lay it out on the ground people who have never done geology before will see some colours or shapes that attract them and they will ask what it is. That gets everybody involved in the project or the painting and it’s like a subconscious communication tool”, Jackson explained.

“It’s pretty exciting for me, doing this stuff. These days I can’t wait to get up in the morning and go and paint another one.”

Jackson claims he has found a niche that no one else has been working in. He wants to

different things they would be working on daily.

“The more I did it, the more I found different walks of life came to my presentations. In 2002 I was in Uganda managing a drilling campaign and we had four languages and goodness knows how many nationalities on site, so I painted the well proposal on a 6 m-long calico canvas and I used to roll it out every morning before we started drilling”, explained Jackson. “It had all the casings, cement jobs, hole sizes, primary and secondary prospects painted on it and everything, so that I could point to what we



‘First Steps’ by John Jackson.



John Jackson's 'Gas Hunting', which has been used as the 2010 APPEA Conference and Exhibition logo.

establish a new communication tool to get potential company shareholders from the oil and gas industry involved.

"I'm attempting to say: here is something that talks to them that is not a handout, an

annual report or a powerpoint presentation, here is something that could expand Earth science education. Here is something that if you hang it as a picture on a wall, you could talk to somebody about it, and in fact you're talking about your project and they can take

more interest in it because it is art, rather than some sort of mechanical presentation", he said. "It's also easier for people without a technical background to understand and they don't feel like an idiot for asking a question and then you get the chance to talk about it without feeling like you're pushing stuff down somebody's throat."

Jackson uses his art to tell stories; his paintings can sometimes reflect up to five layers of a story from numerous places.

"You would never find a geological map or a geological cross-section that I've painted because I take my images of things from all over the place, it might be taken from over 1,000 km and all pulled together into one painting."

"It puts me in a different world. I'm still in geology but as I'm painting it and mixing the colours together, I've thrown out all the old standard legends and colours that I learnt at Shell and the industry and said 'what if I had freedom in doing this and I could just paint whatever colours are coming to me about the sort of story the rock is attempting to tell?'"



John Jackson with his piece 'Floating Rivers'.

While his art has received a warm reception from people all over the world, Jackson only started entering competitions in the last few years.

"So far every competition I've gone in, I've either got a highly recommended, a second or an overall art prize which has astounded me more than anyone because I've never been trained!" he said.

Over the years, Jackson's award-winning art has gained public acclaim, with works now on display in Australia and the United States. Jackson was concerned about going to the US and finding artists painting in a similar style to his own, but he was surprised by what he found.

"There was nothing that was anything like my style there and it was just a bit of a thrill to have something different there. It gets people talking if the art is unique", he said.

Of all the awards he has won, Jackson claims the one award he's most 'chuffed' about is APPEA selecting his work as part of its logo.

"That was a huge thrill because I've been a councillor for some years for APPEA and also a state president."

Jackson's painting 'Gas Hunting' has been used as the APPEA logo, additionally he wanted to give it a link to his involvement with gas and what he has learnt about it.

"I started sketching this painting and putting out all the ideas that I've been involved in, for example horizontal drilling projects and how we've gone into that", Jackson explained. "If you look at that painting, one of the keys to it is the horizontal drill pipe or casing pipe going into the gas reservoir.

"If you look at the painting closely, you will see the shapes of the sand grains go from yellow to red once you are inside the casing pipe. Also, the little tiny ones at the top right are smaller but they are taking on the shape of the silt grains."

While geological art is his true passion, Jackson also runs various geological tours sharing his knowledge. His tours are different from other geological tours as he takes 'geotoys' with him to teach participants how parts of the earth are formed and developed.

"I describe the history of the landscape they are looking at from above us, rather than just taking them to a road cut and showing them rocks, which is the standard old geology tour", he explained. "I think that it needs a whole new look at it, so you're not promoting the same old stuff."

Jackson is passionate about using his tours to educate people, as he is concerned that Earth science skills are being lost in the younger generation of today.

"The education aspect is something I really

want to try and push through, and not do it the way we've normally done it, by changing the curriculum and revising it and whatever else. We need to get it down to the subterranean, rather than just leaving it up in the atmosphere", he commented.

The Rock Doctor will be displaying his latest work, titled 'Risk', in his booth at the APPEA Conference, along with several other pieces. Be sure to visit him and have a look at his latest work, which will also be for sale at the conference. ■



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