



California Photographer of Stones and Fossils Mike Woodward

by: SUSAN ROBINSON

MikeWoodwardPhotography.com
310-545-0678 / Mike.City@GTE.net

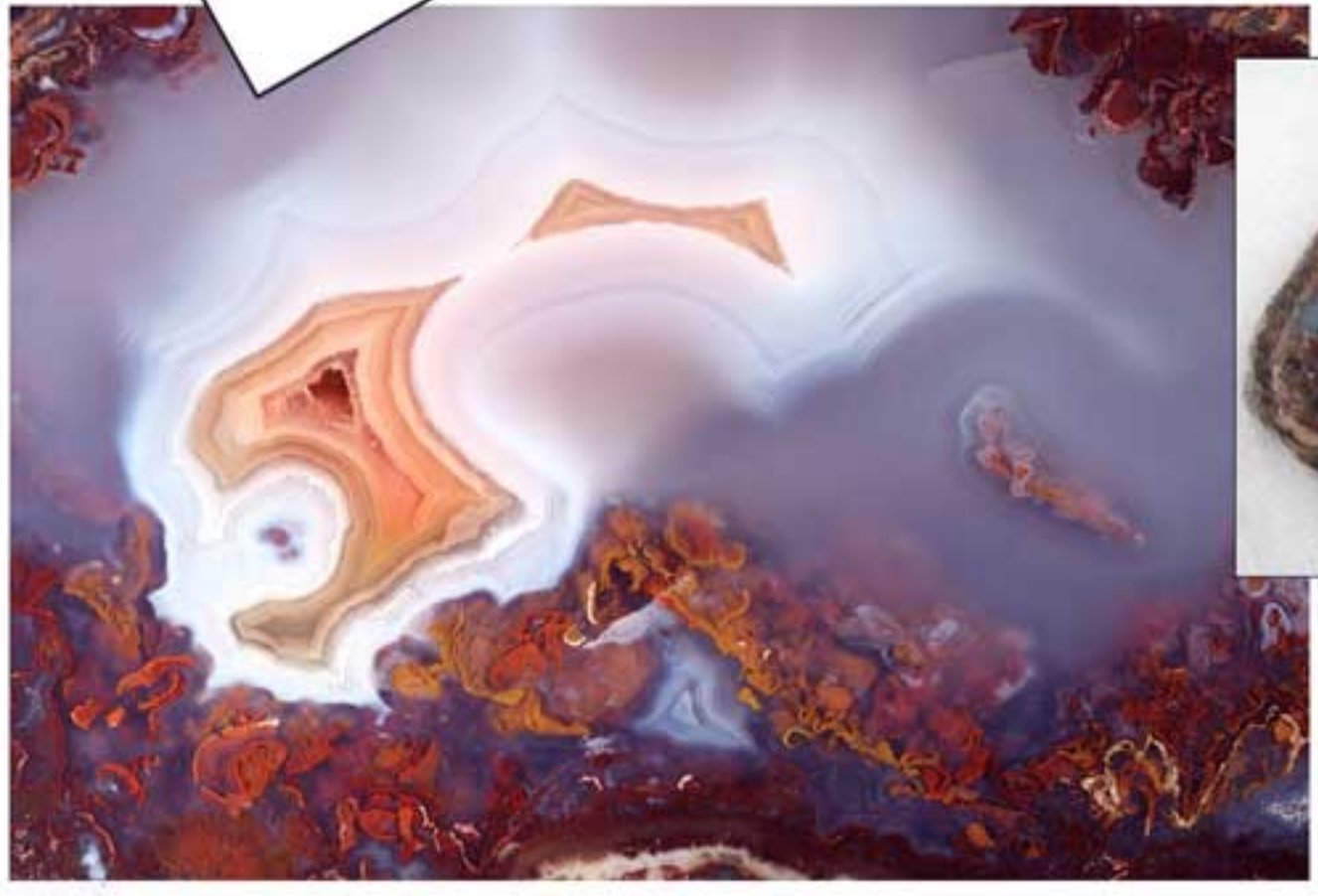


Figure 1 (far left). Weeds, plume agate, Oregon; 5 x 8-cm area of figure 2.

Figure 2 (left). Weeds, plume agate, Oregon; entire 8 x 12-cm view of figure 1.

Anyone attending the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show (the “Main Show” at the Convention Center) can see Mike Woodward’s booth from a distance: the photographs are presented as fine art paintings, hung far above the crowd in his booth. These dynamic images are done via photomacrography. Woodward states that he uses a “technical copy setup with cross-polarized Altman CDM 150 (ceramic metal halide) lighting, a 4 x 5-style camera set up vertically like an enlarger would be, with a polarized macro lens. The capture of the image is a digital scan back that does a 60-second, 103-megapixel scan, directly to the computer. After the image is captured, it is processed for traditional photographic prints, or the image can be printed on canvas, gallery wrapped, and stretched. Most viewers have the perception of the images being a painting when printed on canvas. This blurs the line between photography and painting, especially with abstract art from stones, because the image is not recognized as a photo.” In fact, one of his photos of an Oregon

thunder egg was used as an abstract art painting for an episode of the television show *Weeds*. Woodward states that the “focus for this line of art has always been home and office décor, and, as such, it has not been published. As a graphic designer and professional photographer for more than thirty years, my love is creating art, both traditional and abstract . . . and creating huge pieces for large installations.” In fact, he says the largest ensemble of images completed so far is of three different Mookaite stones (a colorful jasper named for Mooka Station in Western Australia, where the outcrops of it can be found), which are each 3 feet square for a 12-foot-wide installation.

Figure 6 (below right). Untitled triptych of a Brazilian agate, combining details from both sides of the agate shown in figure 7.

Figure 7 (below). Both sides of the Brazilian agate slice pictured in figure 6; entire 18 x 14-cm view.



Figure 4 (above). Flame, agate, Brazil; entire 6 x 9-cm view of figure 3.

Figure 3 (right). Flame, agate, Brazil; 2.5 x 3.5-cm area of figure 4.

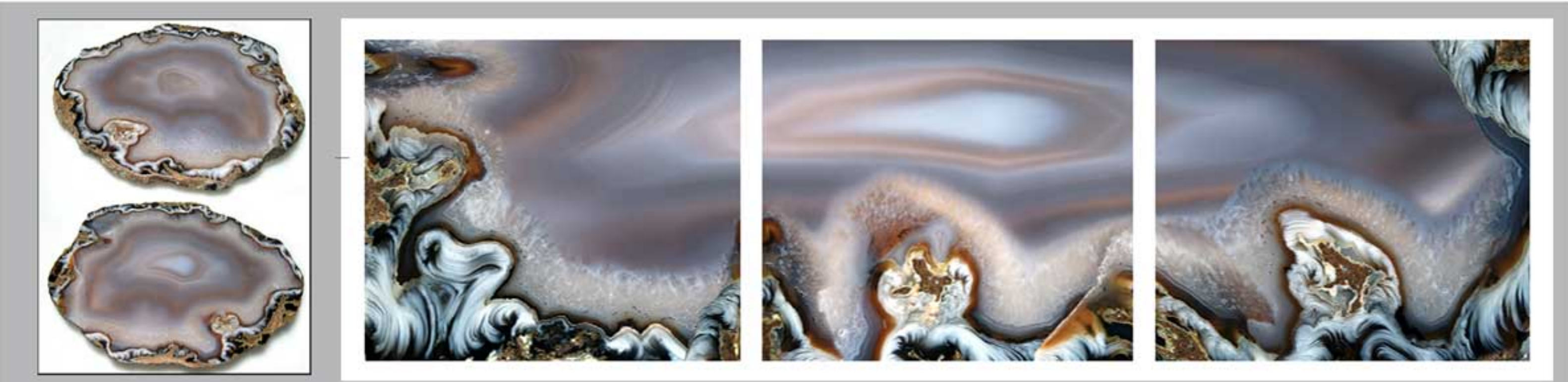




Figure 8 (left). Surf Rock, agate, Brazil (tinted blue-green); 5x10-cm area of figure 9.

Figure 9 (above). Surf Rock, agate, Brazil; entire 8x12-cm view of figure 8.

This artist/photographer lives in Southern California and attended UCLA, focusing on graphic design courses. He has exhibited at art fairs in the western United States, including the “number one art fair on the West Coast, the La Quinta Fine Art Festival,” and also at Art Expo in New York City. In addition, exhibits of his photos have been at several Southern California galleries and at mineral shows other than Tucson. Woodward states that “my collection of photographic images of stones and fossils peers deeply into their abstract patterns, revealing a part of nature normally hidden from view. I am attracted to the story inside the stone that unfolds once the image has been enlarged. These abstract images tell a different story to each viewer—a slice of nature might reveal a human form, a landscape, or a flowing river. I want people . . . to be captured by the mystery of the work and intrigued by the story revealed to them. I have collected hundreds of specimens and continue to find examples of



Figure 5 (left). Is This From the Hubble?, Australian Opal, 0.8x1.3-cm area.

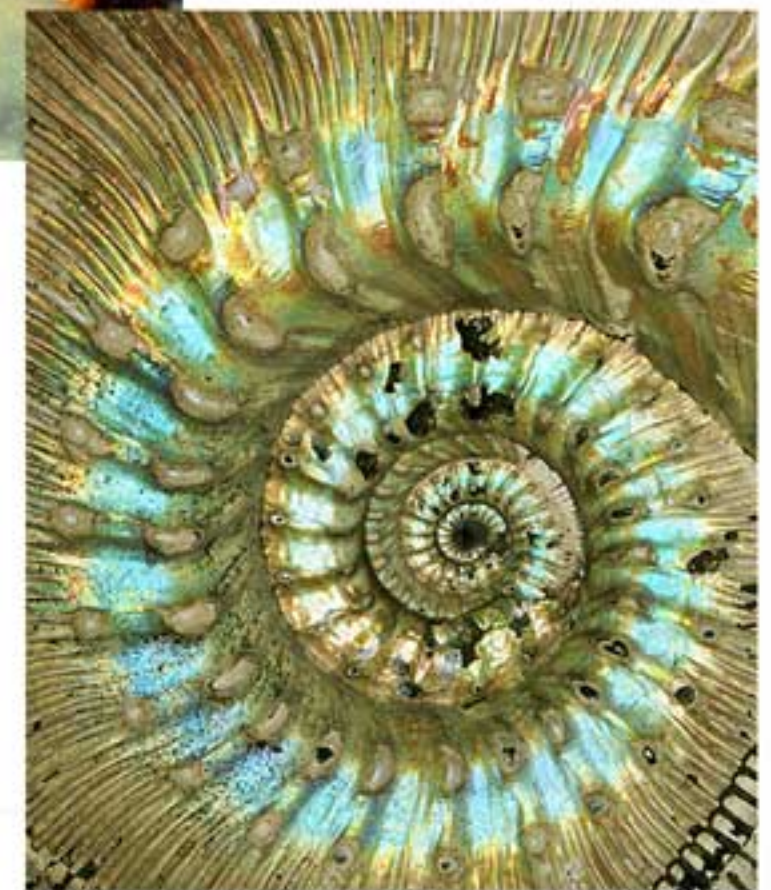


Figure 11, Pyrite Ammonite Fossil, Germany, 3 x 4-cm area.



Figure 10. Flow, pietersite, Namibia; 12 x 14-cm area.

amazing abstract art images in the stones and fossils. Stones are carefully selected with strong statements and a sense of excitement. When working with images from nature that have a history of energy buried deeply inside them, I am reminded of our small part of the overall global connection to nature and history through the ages.”

When not working in his studio or at a show, Woodward can be found playing beach volleyball, flying model airplanes, gardening, cooking, and being a connoisseur of fine wines. He can be contacted at mike.city@gte.net.

Susan Robinson is a freelance artist specializing in painting mineral and gem specimens as well as birds and wildlife.