

Illustrator: 'I consider myself exceedingly lucky'

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how to shoot it — while giving producers an idea of how much the film will cost and how long it'll take to produce.

"The amazing thing is how many directors don't have, really, a visual idea of this picture they're going to direct," he said.

But many do, and Johnson has drawn for filmmakers who are renowned visual artists in their own right, including Tim Burton.

"He's probably the best I have ever worked with," Johnson said. "He loves artists, because he was one himself."

On "Edward Scissorhands," a film about a young man built by an inventor who dies before completing him, Johnson drew the stages of Edward's development. He was also involved in designing the famous topiaries that the character sculpts with his scissor-hands.

And on Burton's later film "Big Fish," Johnson stepped up as art director, designing and overseeing the creation of Spectre, a small town the protagonist stumbles upon.

With dozens of titles to his credit, Johnson has worked on films that became critical and commercial successes, like "The Color Purple," "Pleasantville" and "The Perfect Storm." Other films, like "Toys," "Congo" and "The



Jack Johnson, who worked as an illustrator on "The Goonies," arranges prints of his sketches from the film production — along with the original artwork itself — for prospective buyers at the KOA Campground.

Shadow" didn't fare so well.

But both good and bad films require world-class artists, like Johnson, to crank out pages of detailed, well-researched, imaginative illustrations, many of which stand on their own as stunning specimens of art and design.

"Jurassic Park III," for example, may not be a masterpiece, but the ginormous pterodactyl cage — for which Johnson doodled some concept art — is inarguably awe-

some. And despite the negative reviews "Toys" received, Johnson called the film "probably the best movie I worked on as far as imagination and really having fun."

'Exceedingly lucky'

Johnson retired in 2003. By then, the technology in his department had shifted decisively away from hand-drawings. "I was getting out just in time, relatively, because everything was being done on

a computer," he said.

Though he could sketch his designs by hand faster than someone using a computer, "the problem was when the director came along and he wanted to see it from a different angle," he said. "The guy on the computer just turned a wheel, and there it was. I had to start over."

"So, unless I was going to decide to join the crowd and sit at a computer all day, it was time for me to go," he added.

Outside of his film work,



A photo of Jack Johnson's sketches for the skull cavern in "The Goonies."

Johnson's paintings have won awards in regional and national shows, including the National Watercolor Society and the American Watercolor Society. He organizes a yearly art competition for sixth through 12th graders in the Paso Robles area, near his ranch on the central California coast.

Using his presentation as a rough outline, Johnson hopes to write a book on his career in film — though he may have trouble acquiring the rights to reproduce the artwork owned by movie studios.

Johnson doesn't glorify the film industry; it is often rife with disappointment. Films may get changed, cut down or

called off altogether, wasting the energy that the illustrator poured into his projects.

In fact, Johnson estimates that roughly 20 percent of the films he worked on got canceled after he and his co-illustrators finished the initial sketches and paintings, and made it abundantly clear that the budget would not cover the costs.

"One out of five times, I'd get all worked up, get some good ideas and then have to go on to something else," he said.

He doesn't miss Hollywood. But "it can be a wonderful place that, in my case, paid me very well to do what I enjoy doing," he said. "I consider myself exceedingly lucky."

Warr: Retired U.S. Coast Guard captain will run for Warr's seat

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Under the previous administration, Warr said, "the City Council, working as a team, was able to really accomplish some wonderful things."

He pointed to the partnership between the city, Recology, the Astoria School District and Columbia Memorial Hospital on CMH Field at the former landfill, the development of the Garden of Surging Waves at Heritage Square

and the sister-city relationship with Walldorf, Germany.

"I think the new council, hopefully, can find a way to get together as a team and realize that you can do really wonderful things if you're not concerned about who gets the credit for it," he said.

Warr, as the councilor with the longest tenure, often brings historical perspective to debates. He is a longtime supporter of a highway bypass and other regional

transportation improvements. He has scolded the city for failing to live up to the promise of perpetual care at Ocean View Cemetery in Warrenton.

The Uppertown resident is also an advocate — and occasional target — for neighbors who complained to the city about the legion of movie fans who flock to the house made famous in "The Goonies."

Warr has not shied away from taking contrary posi-

tions. He was the only vote last year against a resolution opposing the Oregon LNG project and the only dissenter on a ban against smoking in city parks.

Warr's acidic verbal duels with City Councilor Drew Herzig, a progressive, have become a routine feature at City Hall.

Warr had said previously he would not run for another term but was reluctant earlier this year to make a

definitive public statement.

At Monday night's City Council meeting, Herzig announced that Bruce Jones, a retired U.S. Coast Guard captain, would run for Warr's seat.

"Astoria has been the most welcoming community among the dozen I've lived in around the United States as a working adult," Jones said in an email. "We're blessed to have so many residents who roll up their sleeves and work

to make Astoria a better place. I am excited about the opportunity to serve the community in a new capacity in a time of so many challenges and changes."

Warr said he signed Jones' candidate petition. "I think the city is very, very lucky that a person of his quality and his experience and his intelligence is willing to step in and replace me," he said. "I think the city is getting the best deal it can get."

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