

Jim Howland: The Engineer, Painter, and Civic Leader ...

By Don Marske, August 2026



We all know Jim, the founder and prominent engineer of CH2M HILL. Perhaps lesser known is Jim Howland whose passion and philanthropy significantly shaped Corvallis, Oregon's, arts culture.

Jim was an accomplished silk-screen printmaker; and along with his wife Ruth ("Meisy"), they co-owned Pegasus Framing and Gallery in Corvallis—establishing deep connections with local artists.

His own artworks were featured within Corvallis' The Arts Center's collection, reflecting his personal engagement in the visual arts.



Siuslaw Bridge, State 1 '90



Cascade Sunrise '75

In the early 1960s, Jim was among the first to contribute financially to the founding of the Corvallis Arts Council, which evolved into today's Corvallis Arts Center. He and Meisy established the *Jim & Ruth Howland Fund*—an endowment supporting public art initiatives and the beloved annual "Howland Community OPEN Show" art exhibition at The Arts Center. The fund continues to underwrite the show, a juried-free exhibit welcoming artists of all ages and abilities from Linn and Benton Counties.

Jim was also a key member of the Madison Avenue Task Force during the 1970s, advocating for creative "art surprises" along the corridor linking Oregon State University



and downtown Corvallis. His vision catalyzed the *Alley Art Walking Tour*, which installed sculptures, murals, and poetry along the route from 1993 to 2005. It continues today as the *Downtown Alley Art Walk*.



Jim also helped launch the Riverfront Park enhancements in the 1990s—extending Corvallis’s beautification and cultural enrichment beyond galleries into public green spaces.

Jim and Meisy were honored as the first recipients of Corvallis’s *Patron of the Arts Award*, and the city’s Civic Award for long-

term engagement still bears their name celebrating their enduring commitment to inclusive, accessible art-making.

In summary, Jim Howland’s influence on the Corvallis art scene blends creative practice, grassroots support, and a visionary approach to public art and community engagement. His combined efforts through gallery involvement, institutional philanthropy, urban beautification, and celebration of emerging artists helped sculpt Corvallis into a vibrant, inclusive arts community that continues to thrive today.

