

Jim Hibbard (1936–2022)

By Christy Wyckoff

Jim Hibbard was a principal founder of Blackfish Gallery, the first cooperative art gallery in Portland that was entirely owned and operated by artists. He also was a founding member of the Northwest Print Council, now Print Arts Northwest. An artist known for his engravings, lithographs, and monotypes, Hibbard helped guide the printmaking program at Portland State University for nearly twenty years.

James Stacy Hibbard was born in Tacoma, Washington, on December 23, 1936. His was a working-class family, and his father worked at various times in a shipyard and a lumber mill. His high school art teacher recognized Jim's talent and urged him to develop it, and he moved to Portland after graduation to live with his older brother and to attend the Museum Art School (now the Pacific Northwest College of Art). He enrolled in 1954, and it was there that he met Jenny King. The couple married in 1957; they would have three children.

Hibbard received a certificate of fine arts in 1958, and he and Jenny moved to New York, where he found work at the Guggenheim Museum of Art, first as a janitor and then as a preparator trainee. They returned to Portland in 1960, and Jim Hibbard enrolled at Portland State University, where he graduated with degrees in literature and history in 1964. He then entered the prestigious printmaking program at the University of Iowa, where he studied with Mauricio Lasansky. The program, founded by Lasansky, was the first Masters of Fine Arts program in Printmaking in the United States. Hibbard received an MFA in printmaking in 1966 and accepted a one-year teaching position at Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio.

The Hibbards moved back to Portland in 1967, and Jim took a teaching position at Portland State University as head of the printmaking area. That year, his work was purchased by the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Henry Gallery in Seattle. He received a competitive grant the next year from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, which allowed him to buy an etching press. In 1974, he and his colleague Lou Ocepek produced *Fourteen Prints*, a portfolio commissioned by the Oregon Arts Association, a group of Portland art lovers who for several years commissioned an artist or artists to produce works that would be distributed to those who contributed to the organization. An example of that portfolio is in the permanent collection of the Portland Art Museum.

In the late 1970s, a small group of artists gathered weekly in the Hibbards' home to talk about opening an artists' cooperative. Those meetings resulted in Blackfish Gallery, which opened in 1979. It was not only one of few galleries in Portland at the time, but also the only commercial gallery in the city entirely owned and operated by artists. In 2023, the Blackfish Gallery membership honored Hibbard by naming an exhibition space after him.

Hibbard took early retirement from Portland State in 1991 and moved to Guanajuato, Mexico, where, in collaboration with his student Hugo Anaya, he and Jenny established Piramidal Gráfica, a print studio. He worked in the studio until 2020, when he and Jenny returned to Portland because of their health.

Hibbard's art—his abstract etchings, engravings, lithographs, monotypes, and drawings—were inspired by his interest in machine and body parts, old anatomy manuals, machine catalogues, and visual dictionaries. He showed his work at Blackfish Gallery and in juried and invitational group and solo exhibitions throughout the Northwest and in Mexico, including his solo exhibition in 2007 at the Museo del Pueblo, Guanajuato, Mexico. Two of his drawings were included in the 1974 Smithsonian exhibition, *Art of the Pacific Northwest: From the 1930s to the Present*. The Hallie Ford Museum of Art organized a focused retrospective, *Jim Hibbard, Back in View*, in summer 2023.

Hibbard's prints and drawings are in many private collections and in the collections of the Portland Art Museum, the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Chicago Art Institute, the Henry Gallery at the University of Washington, and the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon.

Jim Hibbard died in Portland on May 3, 2022. Jenny Hibbard died thirteen months later, on June 15, 2023.

Sources

Hick, Bob. "Lively ghosts and an artist rediscovered. At Hallie For Museum, the Tom Prochaska retrospective 'Music for Ghosts' and a revival of works by the late Jim Hibbard traverse the thin line between traditional and contemporary." *Oregon Artswatch*, July 7, 2023.

Jim Hibbard: Back in View. Exhibition. Hallie Ford Museum of Art, May 6-August 12, 2023.

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<https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hibbard-jim/>