

The Portland Building

By Greg Paul, Daily Journal of Commerce

When the Portland Building on Southwest Fifth and Main opened in 1982, the design by architect Michael Graves then a “relative unknown in the world of architecture” opened to high praise and frank criticism. The hammered copper statue of *Portlandia*, kneeling with her trident, was designed by artist, Raymond Kaskey. In 1985, it was installed on a third floor pedestal designed for the artwork.

The building’s base of forest green tile, rises three stories to a predominantly cream-colored main section, set with small, four-foot square windows and terracotta-colored pilasters, and whimsical garlands of green ribbons hanging from blue medallions. That touch of whimsy was one of the things that made some critics say that the building lacked the dignity befitting a government building and that the interior was unpleasant.

Graves’ colorful postmodern design competed with other designs that were more typically modern in style. The final decision to go with the Graves building was based, in part, on the idea that the controversial design would put Portland on the architectural map—which it did—and in part on price constraints, imposed by the city’s limited budget.

Kaskey used the seal of the City of Portland as a basis for the 36-foot tall *Portlandia*’s design. If she were to stand, her full height would be over 50 feet. *Portlandia* is the second largest hammered copper statue in the United States. Only the Statue of Liberty is larger.

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