



Our Portland Story sought submissions of stories from Portlanders of all walks of life and paired those stories with local designers to create artful snapshots of the city and its people at this place in time. Browse the stories below in Design or Story View. Have your own story to tell? We encourage you to [submit](#) your story to future editions.

DESIGN VIEW STORY VIEW

Portland's BIG fish in a small sea

Story by Ariel Frager
Design by Ryan Schroeder

It was the late 1980s and Portland still had that gritty feeling, before they scrubbed the artist lofts and drug users clean from Downtown and called it the Pearl District. I used to feel like I needed a shower after extended trips to the city center, the air of Podunk regionalism clinging to my clothes. But not this night. It was a clear cold winter evening, the wet streets glistening reflected light from the surrounding buildings. My friend Seth and I had left a late night showing of some art film at the Guild Theatre and as we crossed the near-empty parking lot, we noticed a man standing outside in the crisp night with a movie camera pointed at the stunning Jackson Building Clock Tower.

"What are you doing," I naively asked.

"Shooting pick up shots for Gus VanSant's new movie, *My Own Private Idaho*."

Starstruck, Seth and I said in unison, "Wow! Gus VanSant, we are big fans." And indeed we were, the previous year having waited for hours at one of Portland's art film venues, the Koin Center Theatre, to see his previous movie, *Dragstore Cowboy*.

Fumbling, Seth asked the cinematographer if we could someday meet Gus VanSant, since we were such big fans.

"Sure," he said and knocked on the window of the dark car next to him. "Gus is right here."

Never leaving his place in the back seat, we chatted with Gus VanSant for several minutes. "We would love it if you came up to Lewis and Clark, where we go to college, to talk to the film production program we started."

"Yeah, no problem," Gus said. "I'd be happy to. Give me a call, I'm in the book."

We raced back to school, flipped open the first phonebook we could find and sure enough, Gus VanSant had a listed number.

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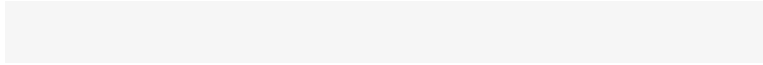
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29 of 76

Story Note: While Portland celebrity Gus Van Sant, director of, among other films, *My Own Private Idaho*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Milk* is no longer listed in the phonebook, he is still an active and respected Portland community member. In 2007 he released a movie made in Portland titled, *Paranoid Park* that features Portland's infamous Burnside Skatepark. Van Sant's next movie is *Restless*, set to debut late 2010 or early 2011.

Ariel describes Portland's Guild Theatre. Originally known as Taylor Street Theatre, it operated from 1948 until its recent closure. Located at 829 SW 9th Avenue, it is awaiting a buyer to revive this historic space.

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