

BACKSIDE

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Ryan Wood

With a contribution from
Jacob Gallagher

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FOREWORD

Backside is a collection of skateboard companies and skateboard graphics, and is meant to showcase the designs that these companies have chosen to place on the bottom of their decks. Anyone who skates, young or old, can enjoy this catalog as there are graphics from the early 1980s all the way up to 2022.

This book is a great way to showcase the amazing art from the hobby you may enjoy. Or not, you don't need to be a skater to appreciate the graphics on these boards. I would like for the readers of this book to feel nostalgia at older designs, surprise at some of the choices brands make, and appreciative towards the many designers and skaters that influenced and labored over these graphics.

CAN A SKATEBOARD BE A WORK OF ART?

Jacob Gallagher

Kevin Achico owns two kinds of skateboards: those he actually rides and those he hangs on his wall. He currently gets around on a board by Anti Hero, while eleven rarer decks by skate brands Supreme and Fucking Awesome adorn his Dallas home, sans wheels. To the uninitiated, these curved planks of wood might seem interchangeable, but according to the 27-year-old IT worker, the boards he puts on the wall—including ones with imagery by Italian designer and architect Alessandro Mendini or American photographer Andres Serrano—are “basically art pieces.” Though he paid a mere \$49 to \$88 for them, he speaks of them the way a collector might describe a prized Jeff Koons. The fact that they were produced in limited quantities, he said, “makes them more rare and more valuable.”

Mr. Achico’s beloved boards represent a curious gray area in the art market. Decks with pedigree that could hypothetically be transportation are treated as art objects, carefully displayed in homes around the world as though they were delicate canvases. Though Supreme’s boards retail for less than \$100, they often sell for multiple times that amount on Paddle8, the art-auction website. The Skateroom, a Belgian company specializes in collectible skateboards (starting at \$200) with “editions” by artists like French photographer JR and organizations such as the Keith Haring Foundation. At the Whitney Museum in Manhattan, you can ponder Andy Warhol’s

Campbell’s Soup canvases upstairs, then stop by the gift shop to buy a skateboard by the Skateroom printed with the same imagery.

But do these boards truly qualify as art? “We don’t think of them as works of art,” said Whitney Maxwell, the managing director of Artspace, an online art marketplace that sells decks from the Skateroom. It lists the boards in its “design store” where, along with “artist-designed objects” including candles, pillows and tea sets, they’re sold as a sort of aesthetic gateway drug: “We market [skateboards] as an affordable entry point to understanding and living with contemporary art,” said Mr. Maxwell.

Nathan Schwartz, a 21-year-old student, has a triptych of Dior skateboards, including one which features the work of artist Francois Bard, on the wall of his Torquay, Australia apartment. Mr. Schwartz recalled that, when he bought the logo-laden boards at the Dior boutique in Australia, the sales associate cautioned him that they might “not hold up” if actually ridden. Not that there was any risk of that. The three boards (which cost Mr. Schwartz the equivalent of around \$1,000) made their way, in pristine condition, onto his walls.

Skate companies have long made boards that could double as art (see: the ‘90s deck designs by Marc McKee, Sean Cliver and Evan Hecox) and skateboarders like Ed Templeton and Mark

Gonzales have moonlighted as artists. But the fact that, today, fashion companies like Ralph Lauren, Dior and Louis Vuitton (in collaboration with Supreme) make skateboards, too, speaks to just how mainstreamed this once-rebellious sport has become. A recent arrival in multiplexes, Jonah Hill’s directorial debut, “Midgots,” is a cinematic ode to skateboarding. Last year, Vogue.com devoted a “Skate Week” to skate-focused stories, while the magazine GQ Style devoted a multi-page feature to GX1000, a niche San Francisco skate brand. In 2020, skateboarding will be a competitive sport in the Olympics for the first time.

“Everyone’s trying to get their cash in and get their piece of the pie,” said Mr. Achico, who’s skateboarded for a decade, of the sport’s current trendiness. Within the skateboard community, a debate is simmering over just how pretentious it is to display a board, rather than use it, especially if the “art lover” hasn’t even mastered the basics of the sport. “It’s just very strange when someone has a skate deck or someone is dropping a set amount of money on an artist’s deck and [would fall off] if they were to ride that same board down the street,” said Ibrahim Mimou, 23, a clothing designer in Los Angeles and longtime skateboarder.

Others consider the act of buying a skateboard and hanging it on a wall an acceptable way to buy into the attitude of skateboarding without ever touching grip tape. Charles-Antoine

Bodson, 43, founder of the Skateroom, said that his clientele includes “old collectors who would put [a deck] in their swimming pool area in their mansion.” Though Mr. Bodson donates 20% of his sales to organizations like Skateistan, which promotes the sport around the world, his company is muddying the line between art and sport further, releasing a \$6,000 copper skateboard from the Los Angeles artist Walead Beshty and a soon-to-be-released \$8,000 triptych of marble decks by conceptual artist Jenny Holzer. Are these decks art? Well, they’re certainly not skateable.

Yet, these conceptual “boards” remain outliers. Most of the boards collected and resold are still basic planks of wood. Joshua Beatty, a 25-year-old IT manager who installed a four-deck shrine to the sport of his youth in his Virginia Beach, Va. apartment, prefers wood boards, which he hopes to one day put back to use. “Maybe one of my friends has a kid or a little cousin who can’t afford a new board or something,” he said. “I would love to just pull one off the wall and hand it to him as a gift.”

Venice Beach, US



BAKER

Est. 2000
Andrew Reynolds
Jay Strickland



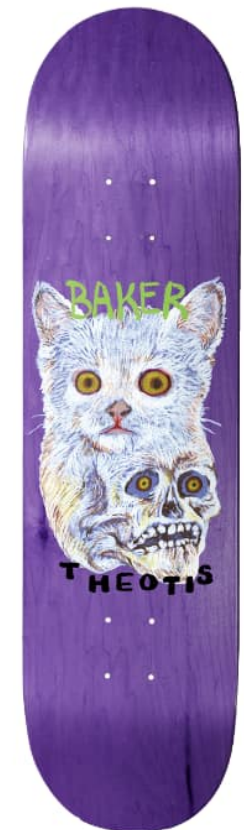
J. Strickland
2000



Kevin Long
2022

Mike Gigliotti
2022

Blayzie
2022



Stoke Plaza, UK



ANTIHERO

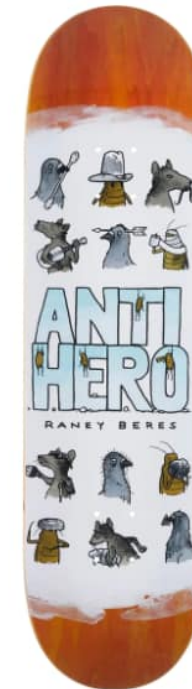
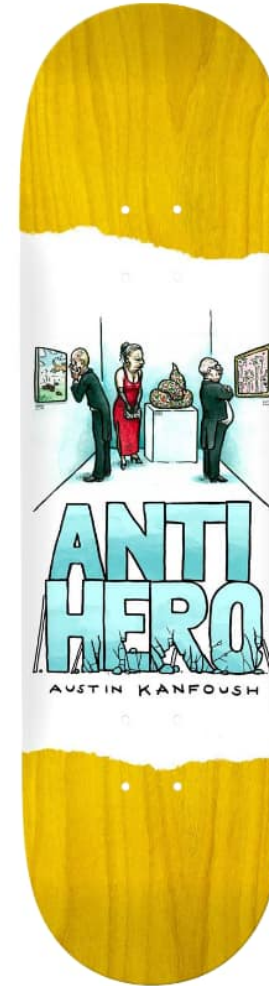
Est. 1995
Julien Stranger



Todd Francis
1998



Todd Francis
2020
2018
2022



Guangzhou, CN

POWELL- PERALTA

Est 1978
George Powell
Stacy Peralta



V.C. Johnson
1979





Steve Caballero
1986

George Powell
1985



Backside

New York City, US



SANTA CRUZ

Est 1973
Richard Novak
Doug Haut
Jay Shuirman



Jim Phillips
1985



Keith Meek
2022

Natas Kaupas
2022

Rob Roskopp
2022



New York City, US

KROOKED

Est 2002
Mark Gonzales



Mark Gonzales
2002

Mark Gonzales
2020
2003
2022

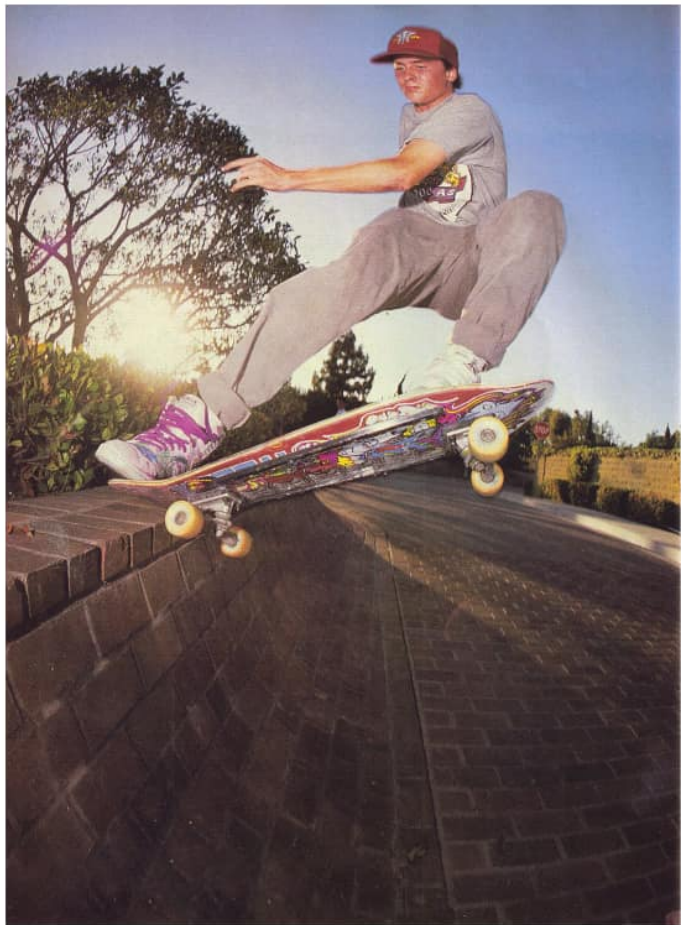


Austin, US



TOY MACHINE

Est 1993
Ed Templeton

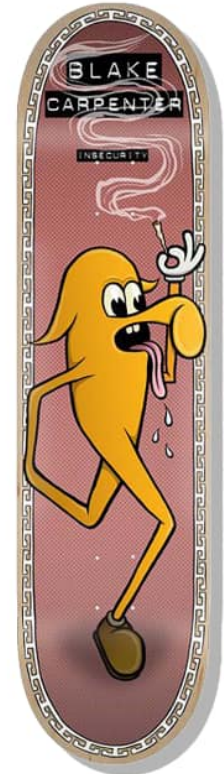


Ed Templeton
1994

Blake Carpenter
2022

Ed Tempelton
2019

Ed Tempelton
2017



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