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doux amer

The skate of the 70s, the colorful vision of Hugh Holland

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Initially invented to replace surfing when waves were scarce, skateboarding would first develop in the 1960s in California and Hawaii. But the real golden age of skateboarding came in the 1970s with the advent of urethane wheels, making the gliding feel easier and more comfortable. The development of skateboarding during this period is therefore contagious. The exploits of young pioneers Tony Alva, Stacy Peralta and Jay Adams, members of the Z-Boys, a group of skaters revolving around the Zephyr Surfshop in Venice become unmissable. The legend of the district of Dogtown and its skaters was born.

In addition, the photos taken by Craig Stecyk III and Glen E. Friedman of the time will travel around the world, and will become an incredible lever for the development of skate culture. These photographs of the young people of Dogtown will make their celebrity and will mark a whole generation of skaters.

However, during this same period, these two photographers were not the only ones to immortalize the exploits of the young skaters of California. In the 70s, Hugh Holland will also participate in the work of transmission and memory of this golden age of skateboarding. With an intimate and colorful vision, Holland will stand out with his one-of-a-kind works.

Following a major drought in 1976, skaters began to ride empty pools in Los Angeles neighborhoods, creating a new kind of skateboarding. This more vertical practice was to be the foundation of skateboarding in the 80s and 90s. Skate oriented with lots of curves, such as the halfpipe and bowls.

Tony Hawk will be its great global representative. In 1978, when skateboarding took on too big a commercial dimension, Hugh Holland stopped being interested in this movement.

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Hugh Holland's vision of '70s skateboarding



Hugh Holland discovered skateboarding in the 1970s. This photographer, born in 1942 in Oklahoma, learned about photography in the mid-1960s, while working in a photo lab at university. Self-taught, he began his photographic career as an antique restorer in Los Angeles. And it is by discovering young skaters practicing their art that he understands that this is undoubtedly a subject for a photographic project.

For 3 years, he will then follow the daily life of these urban surfers, armed with his device, in order to immortalize the atmosphere and the spirit of these young pioneers. His photographs will stand out from the common shots of the time. Although he sometimes features skaters in a wide angle as others have done; Hugh Holland focused mostly on the details, to best describe the atmosphere of this new kind of cultural movement.

Much more than sports photos, Holland considers his style to be street photography in its own right. "Just capturing the atmosphere, capturing the moment on the street" (Holland, Interview for Transworld

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Skateboarding). Indeed, skateboarding between 1975 to 1978 evolved very quickly. Young people having fun in the streets or in empty swimming pools, we ended up with a real sport. It is for this reason that Hugh Holland stopped taking pictures of skaters in 1978. With all the merchandising around skateboarding (shoes, protections, omnipresence of brands), skateboarding had become too commercial for him. The very essence of skateboarding, a counter-cultural movement, disappeared as the logos appeared on the t-shirts of its practitioners.



Locals Only, or the celebration of the youth of the 70s.

Having his own darkroom, Hugh Holland will favor black and white first. In addition, his 160-page photographic book "Silver. Skateboarding. 70's." published in November 2019 is a summary of these most beautiful B&W photos. But little by little, he will use color, best transcribing the beauty of Californian afternoons and sunsets. The colors, let's talk about it. Warm, they give a unique character to the photos of Hugh Holland. They take us directly back to the 1970s when skateboarding is more than just a fashion: it is a real culture. With his shots of young Californians with golden complexions, blond hair and cool looks, Holland shows the intricacies of movement. Between fashion through his dress codes, the practice of skateboarding and the daily life of its members, the photographer immerses us in the excitement and craze of this golden period of skateboarding.

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An anthology of these best color shots is compiled in *Locals Only*, a small nugget of more than 120 photographs. Published in 2012, this book is a true time machine and sums up the brilliant work of Hugh Holland. An interview with the author is also available in the book, which helps to better understand his intention.

In an age when few people own a camera or camera, Holland is easily accepted in the skateboarding world, despite not practicing himself (considering himself too old to begin with). He will notably rub shoulders with the Z-boys of Dogtown, as well as the photographers Friedman and Stecyk, but will not focus on these young people. Perhaps he was not aware at the beginning of the influence this group of young people will have.

Skateboard photography evokes nostalgia.

From a personal point of view, these photos evoke a lot of nostalgia to me. First of all, a simulated nostalgia because I did not live in this period, nor in this place. But when I contemplate the photos, I can't

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help but imagine myself in them. Be part of this movement that challenged the codes of the time. Enjoy the freedom and carefree life of the 70s. Skateboarding under the Californian sun. Be at the height of cool.

However, I also feel a longing for my own experience. Granted, I haven't been through all of these things, but looking at these photos, I easily draw a parallel with my youthful years. The days when recklessness reigned supreme. Where the established order has been shaken up, in our own way.

Hugh Holland's photographs are more than just pictures of cool skaters. They represent the good old days, the happy memories of a sunny summer that we all have in us. In just three years, the practice of skateboarding has drastically evolved. These photos symbolize the time which passes, and which passes quickly. Bringing the unfortunate feeling that all of this is behind us, that we will not be able to relive our moments.

Enough to leave us with a bittersweet feeling.

