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Hugh Holland photographs of the golden age of skateboarding on display in Sydney

By Jessica Clement
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Californian skate photographer Hugh Holland reflected in one of his works at Blender Gallery. Picture: John Appleyard



Team Line Up, 1970s. Picture: Hugh Holland

It was almost 40 years ago that Hugh Holland was cruising Laurel Canyon when he spotted the blonde locks and long socks of a young boy on wheels, rhythmically peaking over the lip of a stormwater drain.

Barely teenagers, they were practicing an entirely new sport. One that was born in California but would eventually “spread like wildfire” across the world.

“I saw they were on skateboards so I stopped and took some pictures,” Holland told the Wentworth Courier.

“Sure enough, I ended up going with them everywhere and they were glad to have their picture taken. There were all, ‘Hey guy, watch this one, are you ready?’

Holland possessed boxes of old film and negatives but it wasn’t until 2005 when the world was hungry for more information on these early skateboarders and their leaders, Jay Adams and Tony Alva, that they were first exhibited.

This week, Holland opens his first Australian show at Blender Gallery in Paddington.

His images, bathed in soft Californian glow, are now widely seen as iconic of the movement.

“I call it ‘the long afternoon’, because that was what it was like — the days stretched on and on. How fast it changed,” he said.

“It was like a whirlpool of enthusiasm and there was electricity in the air, and then of course the money people came.

“Brand names and logos and it all evolved into this big sport. I really didn’t think I realised how big it would become, I was just living in the moment and having fun like they were.”

See Hugh Holland’s exhibition *Locals Only* at Blender Gallery, 16 Elizabeth St, Paddington until August 1