

Cal Crinis: Confessions of a board hoarder

If you're a fan of skateboarding, you're probably a fan of skateboards. If you're a fan of skateboards, you're probably a fan of skateboard graphics. If you're a fan of skateboard graphics (and even if you're not), you should come to Shellharbour's Surf and Skate Festival 'Board Hoarders' art exhibit with Cal Crinis, whose epic collection spans a lifetime of eras, trends, shapes, aesthetics and messages.

We spoke to Cal about the collection, South Coast skateboarding, skateboard art-appreciation and why the Olympics doesn't mean anything for graphics.

Board Hoarders #3 kicks off on Friday 29th November at Shellharbour Civic Centre and will run for 2.5 weeks.

When did you start collecting skateboards?

Around 17 years ago I think. I was heavily into skateboarding at the time, but was more-so being drawn to 80s culture in general. It was also around the time when a lot of skate companies were re-issuing the original 80s boards, which is when I thought 'these are cool' and saw them more as wall boards than boards to ride on.

Why the 80s? Who did you like?

A lot of the skaters from that era were, and still are, total artists. They would design their own graphics which I thought was cool. People like Lance Mountain and Mark Gonzales were incredible skateboarders and real individuals in that sport and culture, then really good artists on the side too.

Did your interests change over time?

A little bit, but not really. I was into the early 2000s stuff for a while — the paddle pop stick boards and that, but my heart was always with 80s culture and style. I loved the way they not

only rode skateboards, but the art on the decks was so thoughtful and around for so much longer. Also, someone would bring a pro model out and it would exist for a while, like a year or two. Nowadays the art on decks churns through so quickly that nothing becomes that iconic.

How did the south coast skateboard scene influence you?

There were a few really important figures. A big inspiration on the skating side was Barry Strachan, who is pretty much the Godfather of skateboarding in Wollongong. He's done so much for it down here, and his whole style stemmed from the same era and culture as what I was into. I was drawn to that style through him and how he emulated it.



Deathwish

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There was a huge scene around Extreme, a now-closed surf/skate/ski shop in Wollongong. I really looked up to the crew working there when I was growing up. That's the other thing, when I started looking at these boards as pieces of art, the boys working there were feeding off that and were helping me source all these particular decks by riders I was really influenced by.

There is this photo of you in the backyard with the collection. What do you think when you look at that, like its the last 17 years of your life on a plate?

It's a bit sickening isn't it, like 'what are you doing'. But going through the years, its pretty clear how my tastes changed with what people were doing over time. I was also drawn to the rarity of boards; a lot of companies were producing only 150-300 of a board worldwide and to be able to get a deck and know there was only 100 in the world is rad.



I dunno if these companies did it on purpose, where if you're a collector you can't just have one you want the whole series so it was like 'shit I've got one now I need them all'. And it definitely becomes thrilling to source the boards and get leads off some of the other collectors.

What are the boards you're most stoked about?

The original boards are big. There are some from the 80s still in their original plastic with the original pamphlets. One you will see in the show is an original Bucky Lasik x Powell Peralta, one of the first models when he first turned pro which was super limited. So there's one of those with the original shrinkwrap and the original price.

Whats the price?

\$59.00. It's worth more now.

For this exhibition I'll have just over 10-15 original boards brand new that have been around since the 80s. That's another thing that is fascinating, that someone bought it back in the day but they never rode them and just kept them in the shrink wrap.

Why do you think skateboarding and graphic arts are so connected?

Skateboarding is its own art form. It's art in motion and a reflection of who you are. Everyone skates so differently so everyone's skating is unique. Like, you could be at the same spot with five of your mates, and each person will see it in a different way. Art is similar in that

you're putting yourself on to whatever canvas you have; you're expressing a part of you on it. There's a correlation that's pretty clear.

I guess skating is in an interesting spot. Sothebys are selling old Supreme boards for tens of thousands of dollars and it will be in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Do you pay much attention to the sport side of it?

I don't get too involved. At first I thought skating in the Olympics was so out of line with what skating is derived from. A lot of the pros were really dorky and didn't fit in with the jocks and skating was their escape, whereas now there are skaters with coaches pushing themselves to new limits. But I guess it's putting skating in the limelight and creating more opportunities for younger skateboarders to make more from it.

It also puts skateboarding in a more regimented and conservative position. Do you think that will have an impact on skate graphics?

If it does, then skating will die. Nike and Adidas let their riders have a fuck you attitude because they know that's the essence of skateboarding. Maybe there will be more censorship, I mean back in the 80s there were some gnarly graphics that really shocked the outside world. That's less prevalent these days but who knows.

Are you still collecting?

I haven't bought a board in a year now. It got to the point where I built a room dedicated to these boards which is what I always wanted. I had this dream of getting a house and having the boards hanging up so I can appreciate them on a daily basis. But I have another room where they're just stacked on racks and not being appreciated so much. I'd love for others to be able to appreciate them and to draw a more artistic crowd outside of skateboarding who can see them as pieces of art.

And I thought there are a lot of collector groups on Facebook who I have sold to, but I'd so much rather do something local to share it with friends than the local skate community. Hopefully people get on board and we can keep them in Wollongong rather than sending them to some random overseas.