

disposable:

a history of skateboard art (the making of) by sean cliver

In my late teens and early twenties, my attitude was all piss and vinegar, and the only time worth living or acknowledging was the present—the classic attributes of any skateboarder, I guess. Then, without even realizing it, 15 years passed and I found myself going, “Whoa, how the hell did that happen?!” With this spatial wedge of time driven between my insolent years of youthful abandon and present state of being (which now includes a wife, son, and slightly more long-term perspective on life), I fell into a pronounced period of reflection—mostly just wondering how I made it out alive. Leafing through my catalog of memories—an increasingly difficult thing to do living in California, where seasons are nonexistent and the endless sunshine bleaches all recollections to an indiscernible haze of months and years—I established the one constant in all my prominent life experiences: skateboard graphics.

To make a long story short—at least for now, that is—I was just an average kid from Wisconsin who first staked his claim in life on art and then years later skateboarding. The combination of these two elements ignited an unbelievable journey that would first and foremost involve winning an “art contest” advertised by Powell Peralta in 1988, whereupon I moved straight from the sticks of the Midwest to the spasmodic heart of the skateboard industry in California. There I somehow managed to live, thrive, and survive as an artist throughout one of the most amazing and tumultuous eras in the history of skateboarding, when graphics transformed into formidable marketing tools and pushed all possible boundaries from sex, drugs, violence, race, religion, politics, and copyright laws.

This is, of course, an extremely abridged version of events. What’s missing are all the individual stories that comprised this ridiculous time-frame in my life, when I unwittingly became a firsthand witness to the

simultaneous rise and fall of two of the most influential companies ever: Powell Peralta and World Industries, both of which are renowned for their legendary contributions to the art of skateboarding.

Over the years, people have repeatedly questioned me on this time period, so I’ve kept a fairly decent handle on all the assorted memories. But in talking to others who have lived and breathed distinct chapters of skateboard history, I’m seeing the memories start to falter and disappear through the cracks altogether. So after years and years of hearing elders preach on the importance of giving back to skateboarding, I guess these words finally took root, as I conceptualized a book that would preserve a number of artists’ histories in skateboarding, and showcase a broad selection of graphics produced in the last three decades.

By no means is this an original idea. A few other published works with similar subject matter do exist, but I can honestly say that as both an artist and skateboarder I felt they never hit the mark. Some attempted the route of pop culture art theory and lumped the skateboards in with surfboards and snowboards; others entirely omitted the pioneers and talents responsible for establishing the whole medium in the first place. Then there is the unbelievable case of one book that contains so many inaccuracies and typographical errors—none so baffling as the mislabeling of a Powell Peralta Steve Caballero pro model as a “Steve Catalaro”—that it must have fallen off the short bus and bounced a few times before skidding to a stop in bookstores. Hence, my fervent desire to assemble a comprehensive and credible book dedicated to the haphazard history of skateboard art from a hardcore skater’s point of view.

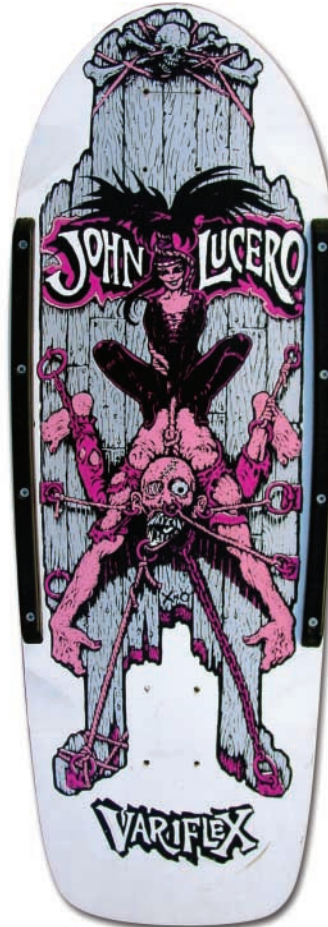
Without a doubt this is the most self-indulgent project I’ve ever taken to task, and it has become my obsession for two full years now.



Powell Peralta / Ray "Bonus" Rodriguez / Artwork by V. Courillard Johnson



Down / prototype / Artwork by Craig Stopp



Variflex / John Lucero / Artwork by YMO



Variflex / Tim Gmohski prototype / Artwork by Bernie Pedersen



Sims / Steve Rocco / Artwork by Steve Rocco



SMA / Natas Knapas prototype / Artwork by Justin Forbes



Lucero Ltd. / Jeff Grosso prototype / Artwork by John Lucero



Blind / Rudy Johnson / Artwork by Mark Gonzalez

