

WHERE SKATE MEETS ART AUCTION BENEFITS LOCAL SKATEPARK GROUP

By Marina Monsivais

Skateboarding and art were officially married when the original guys from Dogtown, Calif., first added graphics to skateboards in 1976. That was also the year when the first skate park in the United States was built.

On Thursday, the El Paso Skatepark Association is hoping to turn the natural relationship between skate and art into funds for some much-needed repairs to El Paso's skate parks.

The group will have a silent auction of one-of-a-kind skateboard decks – beautified by artists and pro skaters alike – at the oLo Gallery Downtown. Those not able to attend can bid online and donate at www.elpasoskatepark.org.

“This is our first major fundraiser that isn't a skateboard contest, and the art community is a natural choice because skateboarding and art are both creative endeavors that express individuality,” said Paul Zimmerman, a skater, parent and founding member of the association.

Pro skaters Jason Adams and Chet Childress are among 30 participating artists. Local artist Lizzie Ochoa also will be auctioning off a piece, “Flaming Snake.”

“Though I don't skate personally, I believe art and skating go hand in hand,” Ochoa said. “They both require skill, creativity and pas-

sion. Artists and skaters have a common goal: we are always looking for new challenges to improve our skills and express our creativity.”

From streets to parks

Local skate legend Jaime Favela was one of a few “founding fathers” that spearheaded the local skate movement back in its heyday.

“Back in the '70s there were only a handful of us, and we all knew each other and skated together at every opportunity,” Favela said. “Myself and a close group of friends built our own pool in the Northeast, which we did out of love for pool skating and because we needed a reliable and secure skate spot – contributors and inner circle of bros only!”

Between then and now, skating bottomed out, came back in the '80s with vert skating, crashed in the early '90s and bounced back in the late '90s to where we are today – skating as a mainstream sport.

Through the ups and downs, El Pasoans kept doing it themselves: backyard half pipes that would eventually suffer rain damage; skating at the Downtown Wells Fargo building; shopping at OG skate store Skate City, which rode the ups and downs of skate culture; skating “sweet spots” that resulted in getting chased down by cops, cholos or anyone wanting some action. Skaters even had an indoor pay-to-skate park called Blade N' Sk8 for a while.

LOCAL



Photo by Paul Zimmerman

A selection of hand-painted skate decks.

All this came to a halt when the City of El Paso came through with its first “modular skate park” at Dick Shinaut Park in 2002.

But the big breakthrough came with the City's Carolina Skatepark, a concrete skate mecca complete with 10-foot bowl.

According to Jose Ortiz, Parks Lead Engineer Tech for the City of El Paso, there are more parks to come: Currently in discussions are skate parks for the High Ridge Community Center, the North East Regional

Park as well as the upcoming Westside Sports Complex near Canutillo High School. The El Paso area currently boasts 16 skate parks.

Now, those bros who blazed trails in the '70s are dads taking matters into their own hands. This time, they're working with the city to provide “skater input” on the development of municipal skate parks.

The El Paso Skatepark Association's mission is to promote the development and stewardship of safe, freely accessible public skateparks.

“We older skaters saw maintenance needs popping up at skate parks that needed to be addressed properly and wanted to help the City (owner of our public skate parks) take care of it. We also saw the need for more skater input on how public monies were being spent on skate parks and wanted to help bridge the gap between community leaders (non-skaters) who provide recreational facilities and skate park experts,” Zimmerman said.

So support your local skaters; buy a deck.

what's up HOT TICKET

SKATEDECKART SHOW

Silent auction benefitting the El Paso Skatepark Association
with music by DJ Chris and Buckeye
oLo Gallery, 504 San Francisco
(Union Plaza)

Thursday, Feb. 28 – 5-9 p.m.

\$5 donation at the door

For info visit www.elpasoskatepark.org