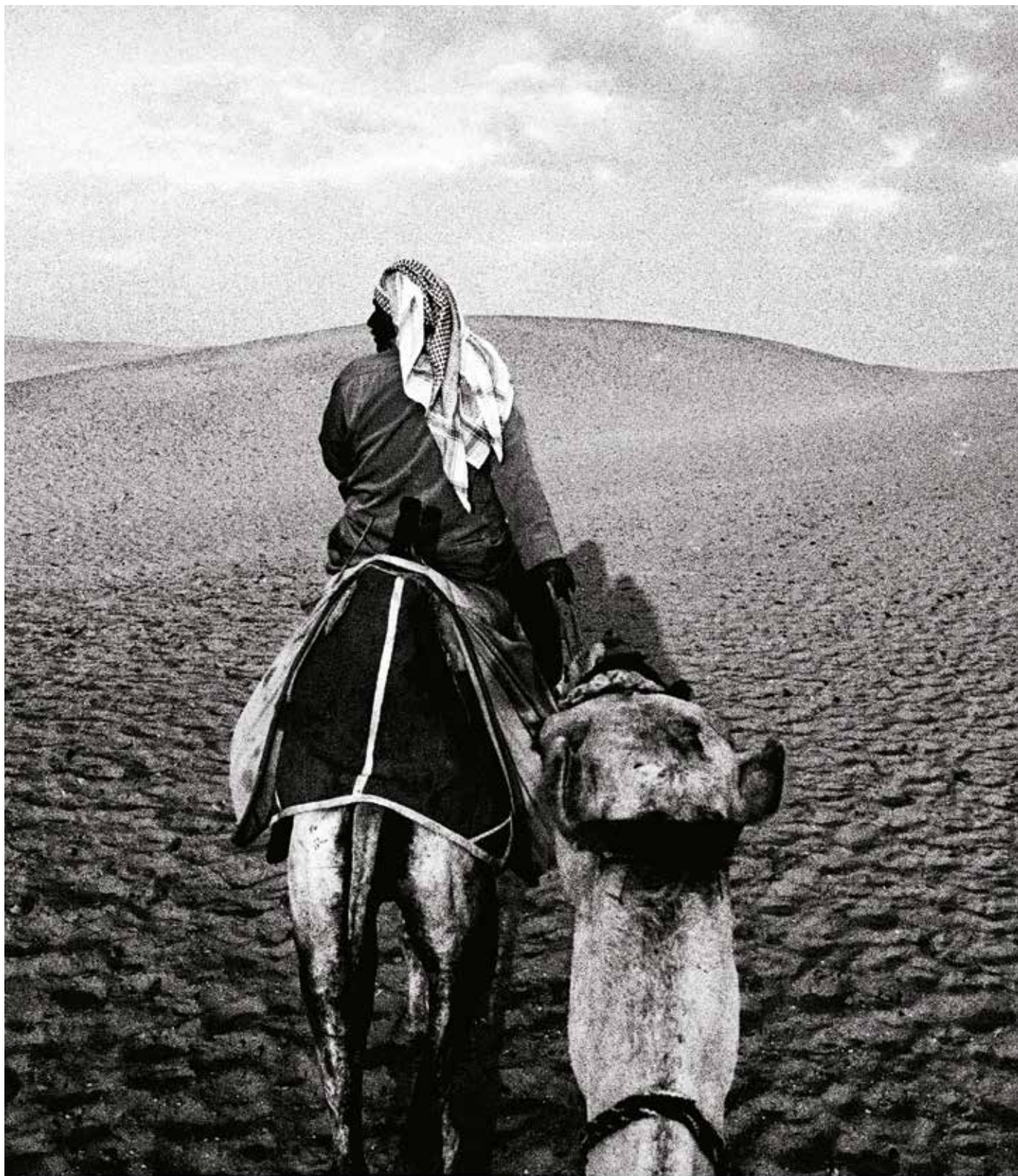


Chronicle

- EXPLORATIONS IN MODERN TIMES -



VOL. 1 ISSUE 2
2014

SKATEBOARDING BY

Glen E. Friedman

DEFINING AN ERA

Interview by Andrew Rice

Photographs by Glen E. Friedman

At the age of 10, Glen E. Friedman moved from the East Coast to sunny Los Angeles, California in the early 70s. Soon after the move he was given a red clay-wheeled "Makaha Super Surfer" as a gift. This gift eventually led him to the introduction of a defiant group of friends whom he photographed and helped define a generation.

Friedman and his friends' skateboarding style was inspired by a radical new era of surfing. When the surf was flat, they began skating, biking and taking buses around L.A. to find and conquer empty backyard pools. They pushed each other to progress beyond comprehension. In the process, vert skating was born.

Friedman and friends epitomized the notion of "hard core" while revolutionizing skateboarding and some years later music in California. He lived it and had the vision and skill to document this legendary era.

Back when Friedman got that first Makaha skateboard, he and his schoolmates were just any group of kids looking for something fun to do. He rode the sidewalks outside his school while he waited for his single mom to pick him up. It took a technological advancement in skateboard wheels to launch their skating to the next level.

It probably wasn't for another two or three years that urethane wheels came out. All of a sudden skateboarding was more popular than ever. Now that we had urethane wheels we weren't riding on the sidewalk outside of the school, we were riding on the walls on the inside of the school. Once I was a little bit older I wasn't afraid of hopping the fence when school was closed, and ride the banks at Paul Revere, my Junior High. This is where everyone was really trying to mimic surfing. When the waves were flat people would skate the banks to pass the time.

Friedman's friends included groundbreaking skaters like Tony Alva, Jay Adams and Stacey Peralta, founding members of the original Zephyr Skate Team, also known as the Z-Boys. With other friends on the

Westside of L.A. they would become some of the first skaters to ride pools left dry by the drought gripping California at that time. Friedman, who describes himself as a decent skater, at that point in time, but "not an athlete," took a bad fall the day after his first visit to a skate park and broke his arm. While sidelined by the injury, he began to take photography more seriously.

I actually broke my arm after my first visit to a skate park, it was the first time I ever went to Carlsbad which was the first skate park ever built in California. I was so pumped and had so much energy from that day, I was skating at Kenter [Elementary School] and was passing everyone on the banks, just ripping. I was going too fast and just ate shit on a bottom turn. I crashed and broke my shoulder, which kind of put a big damper on things. That was the time I started taking pictures more. There was a great photograph that resurfaced a couple of years ago that Hugh Holland took of me with a camera around my neck and my arm in a sling. That was a pivotal moment in my skateboarding life. I had more time to take pictures and started using a real 35mm camera. I was starting to get a lot of attention for what I was doing, and was doing it better than anyone else around me was doing it.

It was also around this time that Friedman encountered Craig Stecyk, a Santa Monica-Venice area writer and photographer covering the skating scene and who would come to be a formative influence on him.

The interesting thing about Stecyk and Jeff Ho was that these guys were like enigmas. Stecyk really cultivated anonymity like no one else. Until the 80s no one ever saw him unless he was shooting you. And if you saw him you didn't even know it was him. He was really like this guy that lived in hiding, it was a really peculiar thing. I didn't even know him back then personally until a couple years later. I knew of him, spoke to him on the phone, but he was this guy that lived in the shadows. It was pretty weird. Once I started taking pictures for a while, maybe being published five or six times over the period of that first year, he saw that I was coming up and felt I was

doing a fine job. He was shooting stuff at the time, but wasn't really doing it that often. All of the sudden Craig was writing about me, and the magazines were using my photos of DogTown.

If I had to call anyone a mentor it would have to be him. He really did inspire me a lot, although he never taught me anything hand to hand. Just looking at his pictures, and getting a few subtle hints from him over those early years helped me out.

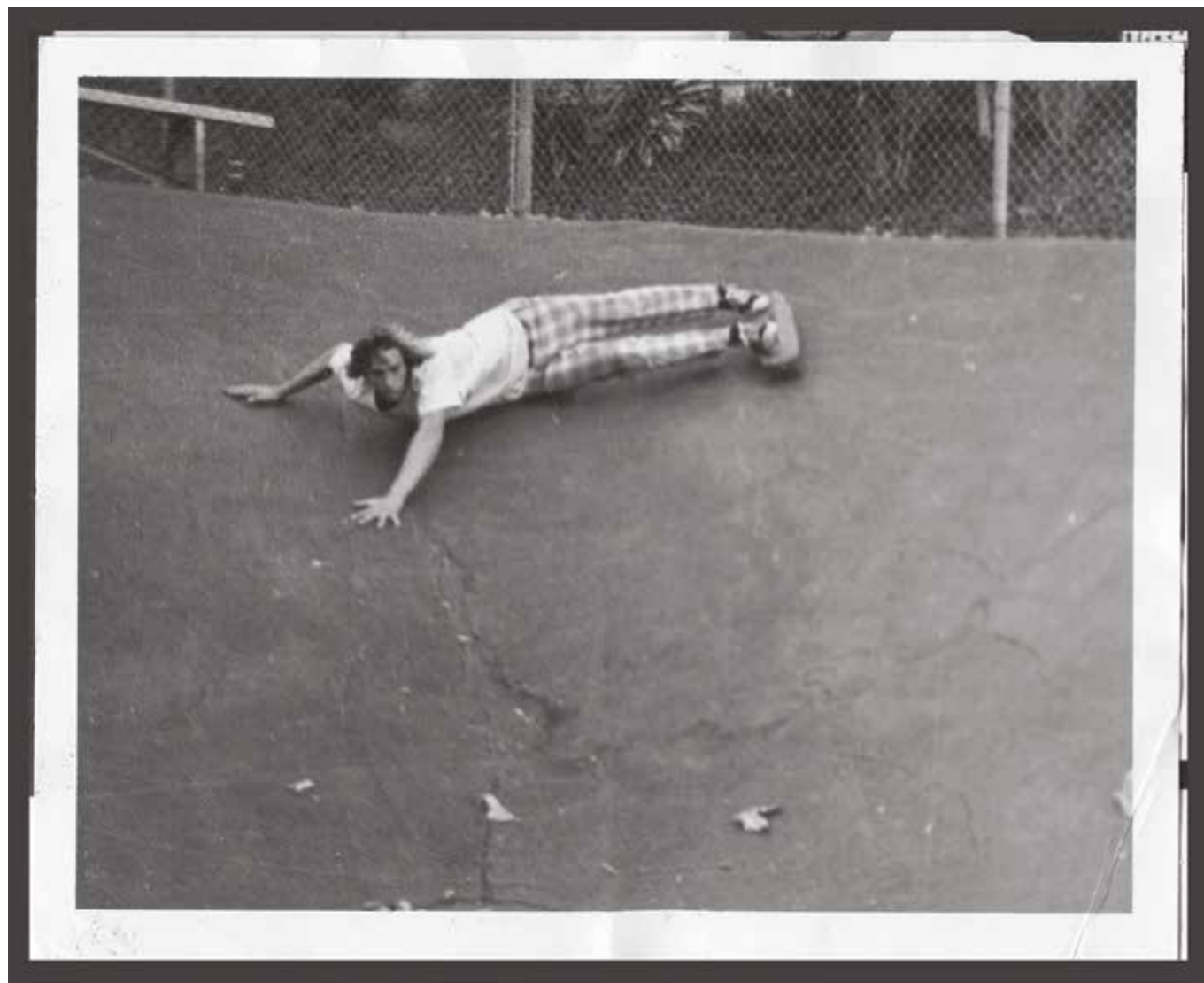
One main thing about photography I learned from Stecyk was that if I was going to take color photos, that I should make them worthwhile and really have a reason to use color. I realized that the only color photos Stecyk was getting published were people throwing paint; Stacey (Peralta) doing the 360s with the blotches of paint on the ground or Tony Alva throwing the bucket of paint at the wall up in the Canyon. Other than that Stecyk's photos were always black and white, and maybe he took that from Helmut Newton when he said, "Everything looks good in black and white." That was just the way that he worked.

Whatever Stecyk's influence, Friedman soon was blazing his own trail. Developing an eye that was more unique than any other skateboard photographer at the time. Friedman's shots convey the improvisation and outlaw feel of skating in the late 1970s.

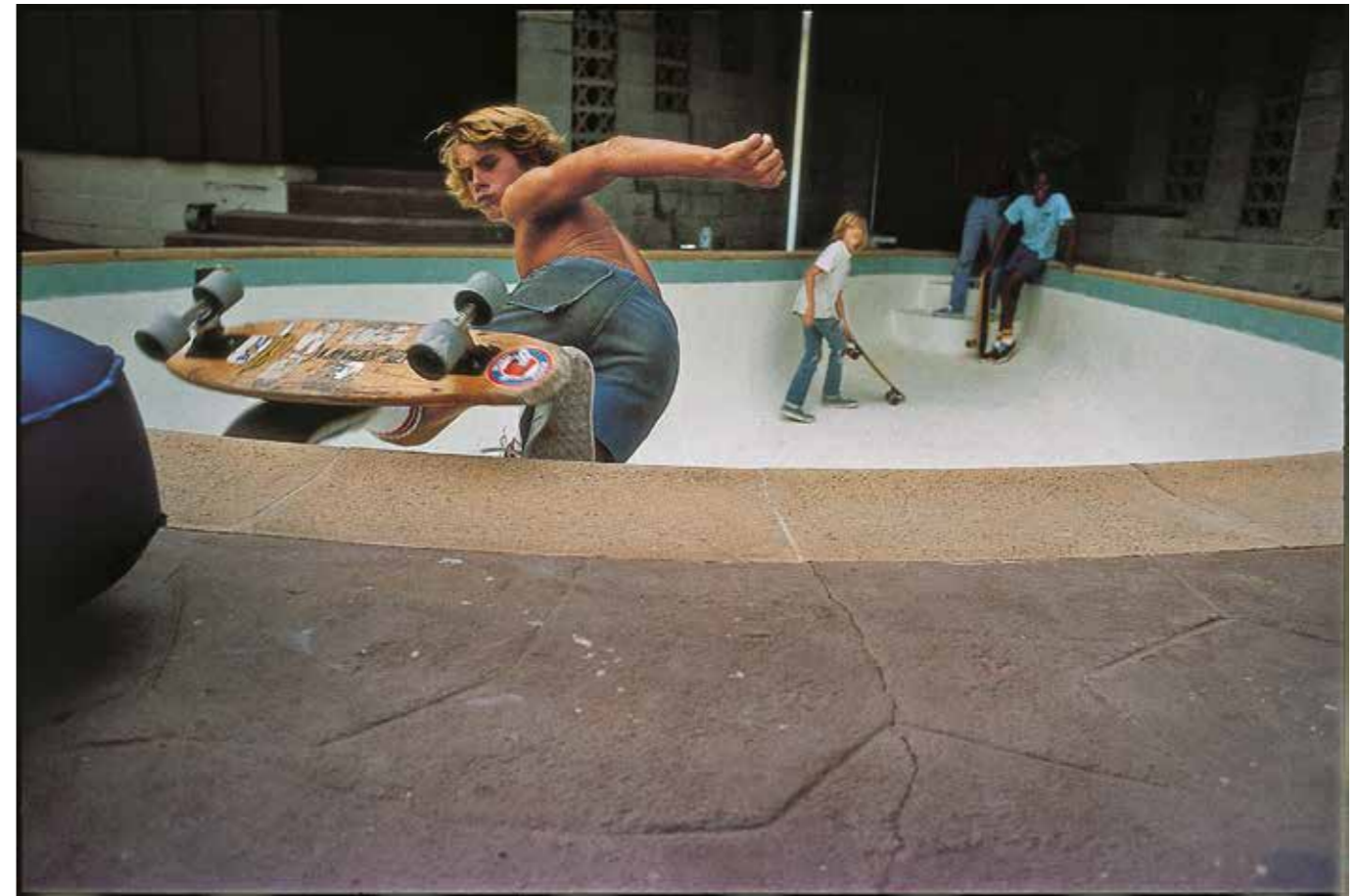
Because he was just a junior high then high school kid, Friedman knew that his work had to stand out if it was going to be picked for publication.

If my stuff was the same or not as good as other peoples' pictures there would be no reason to publish it. I had to make it undeniable. I was a teenager and there were these men in their twenties and thirties trying to make a living. I wasn't trying to make a living. I was in fucking tenth grade. I was fifteen-sixteen years old, and had no other choice to make my work undeniable. I don't like competition, I'm not a competitive guy at all, so what I did was excel in my timing and my composition and the character.





H.B. Kenter Canyon schoolyard circa 1974, shot with a Kodak "Pocket Instamatic"



Jay Adams at the Teardrop, a backyard pool in West Los Angeles. This is the uncropped color original of GEF's first published photo, that appeared in SkateBoarder magazine as a full page subscription ad in B&W.

Friedman remembers with fondness the early days of skating before big money and fame became factors.

Skateboarding was a very soulful exercise (and still is for me and most true skaters), even in the days of clay wheels. Even though people were sponsored it was still soulful. Everyone knew the contests were lame, some people did it, some people were competitive, but they were all just skating with each other. If someone was at a contest and they heard of a good pool, they would say fuck the contest I'm going to skate the pool. Same thing at skate parks, if you found out about a good pool you would leave the skate park. It was more soulful than waiting in line, and being told you had to wear safety equipment and shit like that.

While pool skating shattered a lot of previous barriers it also came with new hazards. Nobody was demanding that you wear a helmet and pads, but being chased by the cops was just part of the deal. Pool skating birthed a new era of creativity and radicalism.

I was hanging out with some pretty radical kids, but I think I was probably even more radical than some of them because I was taking more risks, being the guy with the camera equipment who wasn't able to get away as quickly. I mean, we did a lot of illegal things, breaking into peoples' houses in fancy neighborhoods and bad neighborhoods to find a good pool. We had an attitude of "we're just doing this, we don't give a fuck about what

anyone else has to say." We lived in our own little world and it didn't matter what other people were thinking. That was just some crazy teenage risk-taking shit.

Nobody, at that time, imagined that skateboarding would become a multi-billion dollar industry. Friedman has mixed feelings about the growth of the sport in the last couple decades.

There's a lot of good and there's a lot of bad you know. There's more good now than there was, so I'm all for it. I'm happy that skateboarding is big. The stupidest things I've seen such as in the 90s when people started not wanting to move fast, but just sit still and do these kick-flip tricks and stuff. They went from these big beautiful highly resilient wheels back to these retro "back to the stone age" wheels so they could do their flip tricks. They were harder than ever, and smaller than ever. That was a real detriment to the style and flow of skateboarding for that period. Another really major thing that I think really did a lot of damage was the advent of the skateboard boutique; shops making themselves out to be boutiques and handling skateboarding as a fashion. It's harmed the sport, because it takes away the soul, it dilutes the soul of what skateboarding really is. I would hope that one day these kids are all woken up and can see that it's all bullshit. They should go to the shops that aren't a fucking boutique, but are made for skaters by skaters, where you read the latest mags, fix up your board or get new equipment, not worry about fucking fashion and the

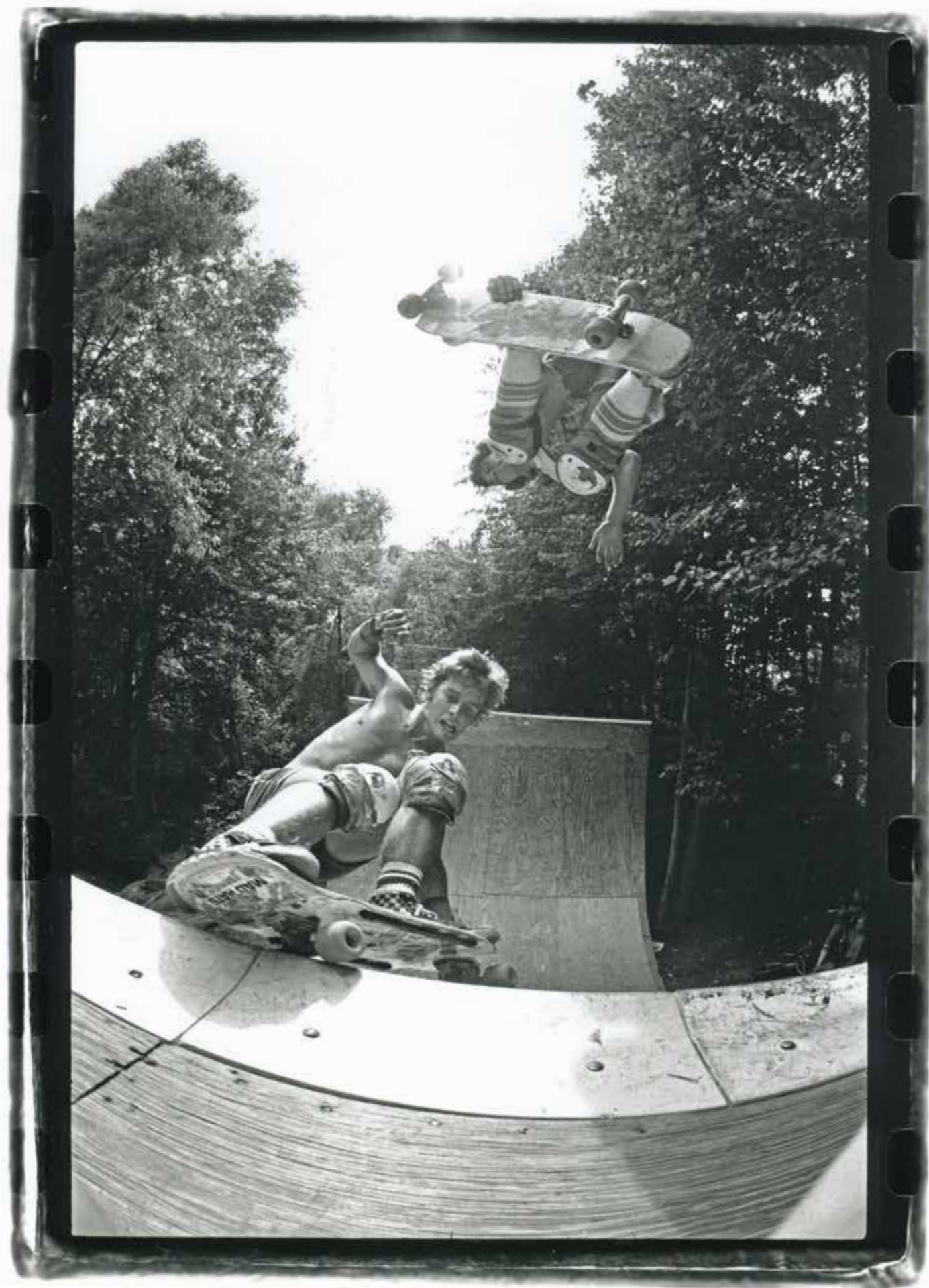
newest limited edition t-shirt, that's fucking LAME, kids who do that are not skaters, they're kooks!

The skateboard scene on the Westside of Los Angeles always overlapped quite a bit with surfing and eventually punk rock when that came along, so it was almost pre-ordained that Friedman would get drawn into the excitement of L.A.'s thriving punk scene. He began carrying his camera to shows on occasion, getting photos of punk bands like Black Flag, Minor Threat, and Dead Kennedys. Eventually his punk rock photography captivated a broader audience, and years later Friedman was invited inspired to photograph some of the earliest hip-hop acts, giving him a ringside seat at the beginnings of rap music as we know it. While many of his photographs from each of those eras are cited as the "iconic" shots of the subject, for Friedman, shooting was always about being in the moment, not trying to capture something others would consider legendary, but perhaps about making the moment legendary.

I didn't think any of this stuff would get published after the fact and become legendary and iconic. You didn't think that way back then, you're just living in the moment. Something can't be iconic until it is respected. I knew that what I was shooting was important, be it Tony Alva doing a frontside air at the DogBowl, or Black Flag playing at a club in LA in 1981.







Pat Clark and "Puker" doubles at the Annandale ramp in Virginia, 1983

Opposite spread: Duane Peters, skating to 2nd place in the Gold Cup Series contest at Big "O" skatepark, 1980

Glen E. Friedman



Steve Olson, backyard raging in Orange County, 1983

I was capturing something that would tell the story of the evening in 1/60 of a second, I was capturing those moments to share with other people, to inspire other people, so they could be as excited as I was. Both punk rock and skateboarding shared an intensity that Friedman found compelling.

Both punk rock and skateboarding shared an intensity that Friedman found compelling.

Punk rock was very much an extension of skateboarding, an outlet for your radical behavior, outlaw attitude and wanting to release energy. Slam dancing, jumping around going crazy listening to fast music also inspired skateboarding.

When we were going to a show back then, we were fucking excited. You were having fun, jumping around with your friends, getting off energy, which eventually turned into slam dancing when the music got so fast that you couldn't be up and down within the beats per minute that was being provided by the band. The music got so fast that you had to just run all over the place just to get off the angst that the band was helping you release.

It wasn't only an adrenaline outlet, though. The lyrics

of bands like the Dead Kennedys and Black Flag were overtly political and protested the current status quo.

I was in high school at the time punk rock was starting to come out, where you start studying about government and politics, and policy and stuff. In American schools you don't learn much about politics. We learned about how our own government is run, but we don't learn about politics of the world and other systems. Punk rock taught you that there were other ways of looking at things, and ways of living. Punk rock was very, very inspiring to me and that's why I wanted to spread the punk rock message.

An enthusiastic Friedman tried to get the mainstream media interested in both his photographs of the L.A. scene as well as writing about the cultural happenings there. But he wasn't successful at drawing their interest.

That was really my idea, to expose these things to the general public, because I felt that needed to be seen. I remember trying to reach out to Time Magazine and Newsweek when the cops were beating the shit out of people at Black Flag shows, and to Rolling Stone to let them know that this music was way more aggressive,

progressive, and radical than anything else that was going on up to that time. This was the hardcore shit, and to no avail, no one gave a shit.

It turned out just fine, though. Friedman's photos of early L.A. punk shows are some of the best visual records of the era. Even though he had been shooting skateboarding photographs for years, Friedman initially didn't even take pictures of the punk scene.

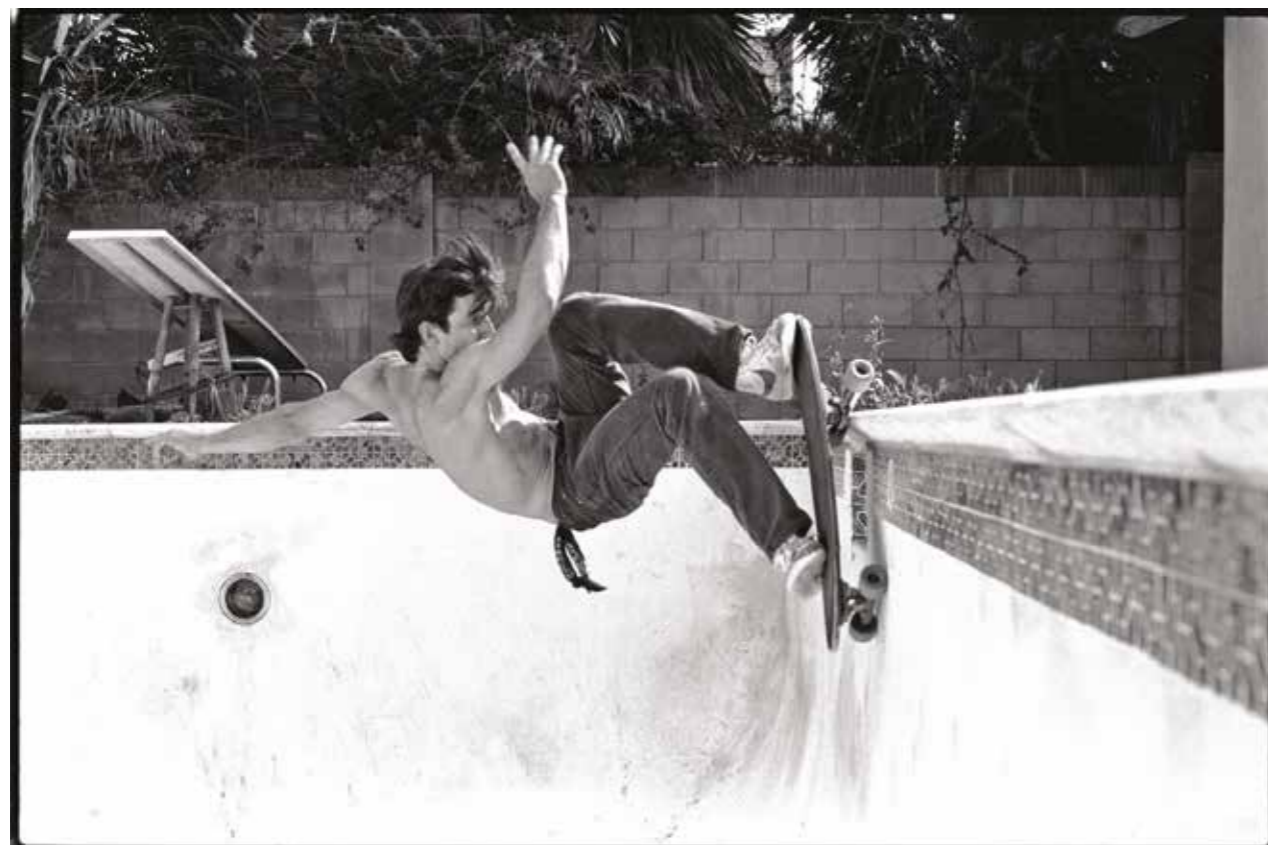
I probably took my camera to 1 out of 10 shows. Who wants to take their camera with them to some fucked up neighborhood, late at night to take pictures? But it was radical, and it was exciting, so every once in a while I would take my camera. I almost felt like it was my personal responsibility.

Eventually, he wasn't just shooting live shows but also getting asked to design and shoot album cover art for bands in the scene. This took some creativity beyond just framing a good shot or getting good exposures. He also had to balance the requirements of punk's ethos against the interest of creating the most interesting cover.

Glen E. Friedman



Lance Mountain, abandoned down town LA pool 1984



David Hackett, all time classic thrasher slash, circa 1983



Mark "Gator" Rogowski, Eagle Rock Ramp 1984

Next spread: Alan "Ollie" Gelfand in his room with Quiver, Hollywood Florida 1979







Tom Groholski at home on his ramp, New Brunswick New Jersey circa 1984

Previous spread: Beastie Boys in the back of a limo on their way to the airport for their first European tour, showing off the prototype "Beastie" board w/GEF's photo. 1987

Glen E. Friedman

In the punk rock days no one was so egomaniacal that they wanted their own picture on the covers. If you looked at most punk rock covers, no one ever had them self on the cover. It just wasn't done, or it was done very rarely, or in a really abstract way. People were more about the art and the music itself. To put your self on a cover was against the punk rock grain. That was stuff rock stars did, and that wasn't what punk rock was about. Being that I was a photographer, though, and I was managing the band, I wanted to do something different. I figured out a way to put the band on the cover that's going to be rebellious and still anti what all the rock stars do. So I had Suicidal Tendencies hang themselves upside down. Tie ropes to their legs and hang from this contraption down in Venice one evening. So here I am and I'm going to put them on the cover in a way that no one else has ever put someone on a cover before. It was the antithesis of rock n' roll, not to make them look pretty, but it looked like they were fucking dead meat.

The uniqueness of Friedman's work caught the eye of early hip-hop producers Rick Rubin and Russell Simmons. Soon, Friedman was a go-to photographer for early rap and hip-hop acts like Beastie Boys, LL Cool J, and Public Enemy.

I had shot some photos of the Beastie Boys, and they got exposed to Rick and Russell. They loved them. They freaked out because they had never seen a photo session like that before, where there were so many great photos. So then it would come time to do a record cover and we would talk about it. No one in my life has ever art directed me at a photo session, it was always my idea or the band's idea, or our ideas together on how we were going to approach this album. At least 80-90% of the bands I shot I was a fan of, I really liked what was on the records, or I was friends with the group, and even if I didn't like what was on the record, I would help them out.

When I first heard Public Enemy, the Chucky D demos, I knew I gotta do this, I'm gonna be doing this, I'm down

with this. I knew Public Enemy before they were even called Public Enemy, I got along with Chuck the first time I met him, we met at the Run DMC Raising Hell tour at the "Garden" or something like that, and we got along like peas in a pod, like old friends the first night, him and Hank Shocklee and those guys. I knew it, and they knew it too, they knew my stuff, those guys were smart, they had seen all my punk rock stuff, and knew I was working with Run DMC and Beastie Boys, they had seen all that.

Friedman lives and works mostly in New York City, where he owns and operates his own publishing company Burning Flags Press. He also shows work from his archives at exhibition spaces and museums around the world.

Asked if he has any particular advice for young photographers hoping to follow in his footsteps, Friedman circles back to punk's DIY ethos.

Go out and fucking photograph your own stuff. You do your own thing. It's your turn now. Do it with heart or don't do it at all. Take real pictures with a camera and put down the fucking phone, i wanna see the show, not your screen!

In the last twenty years, Friedman has published a number of important books such as "Fuck You Heroes", "Fuck You Too", "The Idealist", and "Dogtown - The Legend of the Z-Boys." At the moment, he's working on a new photo book to be published by Rizolli in the fall, titled "My Rules" after the fanzine he created in 1982.

Because "Fuck You Heroes" is out of print, and "Fuck You Too" has been out of print, the new book is going to encompass the best of both of those books, as well as 30% of stuff no one has ever seen before! That's what I've been working on for the last year. I'm really loving this new book and fucking so proud of it, I hope that everyone gets to see it, I don't care how people get it, they could steal it as far as I'm concerned, just get it, it's dope! ©



Mohawked Punker reading Thrasher at Upland Skatepark 1982



Neil Blender circa 1982

Next spread: Minor Threat, Dischord House, Arlington VA 1983

Glen E. Friedman



refreshment center

2706



PSI

