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- **Art**

The Skateroom: Empowering children one skateboard at a time

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Tags: Andy Warhol, Araki, Basquiat, Charity, Decks, Hangers, Skateboard, Skateboarding, Skateistan, The Skateroom

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It's not uncommon for skaters to be leading the way in new cultural trends. Those roll-up Dickies, the Vans slip-ons; all thanks to skating. Now an artistic trend is emerging: decks. Normally, skaters wear them down, scratch them, kick them, snap them, scream at them. They're built to be destroyed. A skateboard is a skater's paint brush. But as culture's view shifts, it's also becoming a canvas.

It's like a glitch in the matrix for skateboarders. "Hangers": the decks that were never meant to be skated. Artists working with boards are giving their work that extra edge with the medium.

We spotted the work of the late Jean Michel Basquiat—one of the 20th Century's most recognised street artists—on a deck triptych at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Just hanging there in the gift shop, like a "dare you" to any skater who might be passing.

Suspended post-creation, pre-destruction, on a canvas that wasn't designed to be there, by an artist who passed away before it was made. So how did they get there?

Those boards, and many like them, are all down to the work of The Skateroom. A social enterprise that is "helping young people, one skateboard at a time." The Skateroom render famous pop and street art pieces onto decks, officially working with the artists and their estates to bring famous works to that seven-ply, maple canvas. Warhol, Araki, Paul McCarthy, are just three of the varnished-concave converts.

"Skateistan started in a dried up fountain in Kabul under the reign of the Taliban!"

"My parents collected art and I was therefore keen to do the same with something I knew: skateboards", says The Skateroom founder, former gallerist and long-time deck collector Charles-Antoine Bodson. He eventually ended up selling all his decks four years ago, quit his job as a gallerist, and started The Skateroom.

But there is one piece that Charles-Antoine would never skate or sell: "A used Mark Gonzalez deck with hand drawings by Keith Haring, it's the only deck in my collection that I won't sell—I will give it to my daughter when she's old enough to appreciate it."

Passing the torch, so to speak.

"Up till then, I had an art gallery for four years, and during that period I discovered NGO Skateistan", he says. "I went to their facility in Cambodia a few months later, where I discovered their work on the ground and was instantly blown away. I then decided to stop my gallery and dedicate myself entirely to The Skateroom to help finance the NGO."

Skateistan is currently active in Afghanistan, Cambodia and South Africa to offer children education, arts and sports opportunities where they would not otherwise get them.

Skateistan new crowdfunding campaign, Give Her Five, started last week and specifically celebrates the effect they've had on young women, and will tell the story of a girl in Afghanistan and her journey into skateboarding. "Skateistan started in the dried up Mekroyan fountain in Kabul under the reign of the Taliban!" explains Charles-Antoine.

"It now has helped skateboarding become the number 1 sport for girls in the country. I don't know if skateboarding can help solve world problems, but

it has a unique advantage of being a 'universal language'. It tends to promote healthy values of sharing, encouraging, and bonding—something that seems most needed today."
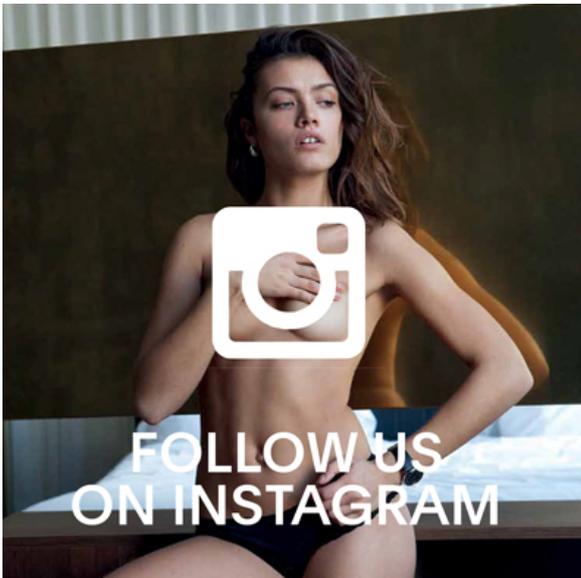
Skateistan Give Her Five: "Her Story"
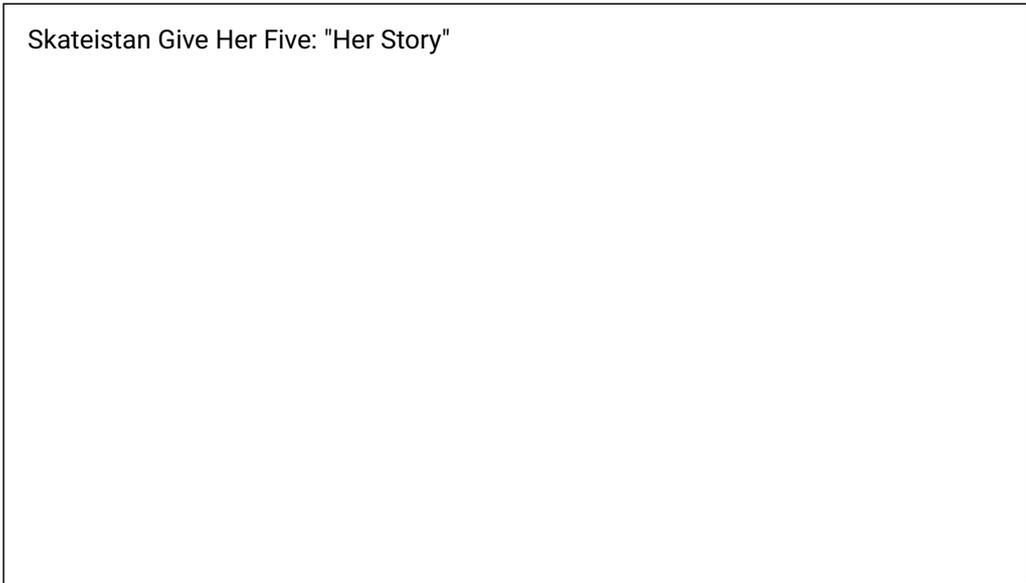
You can check out The Skateroom's full collection **here**.

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