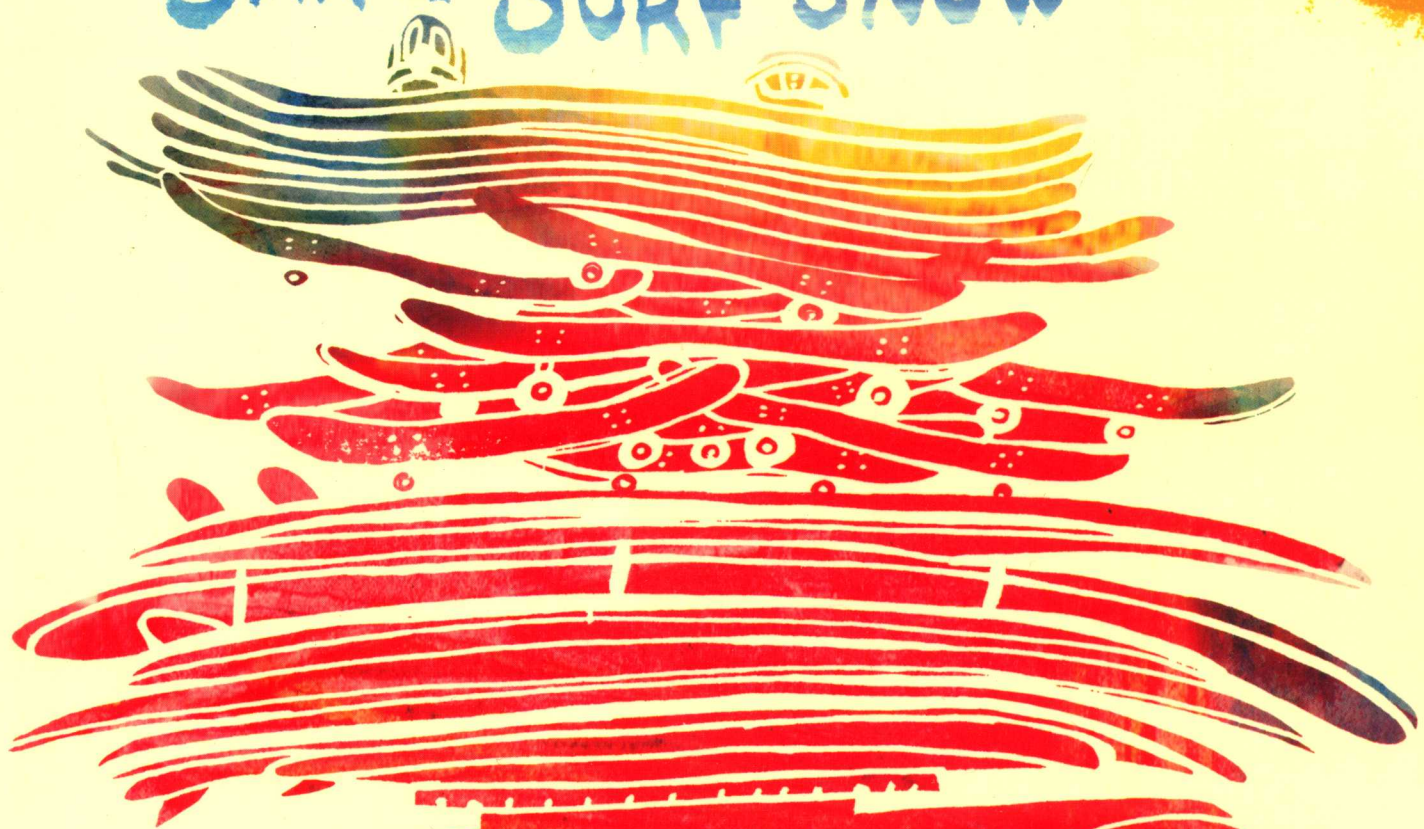
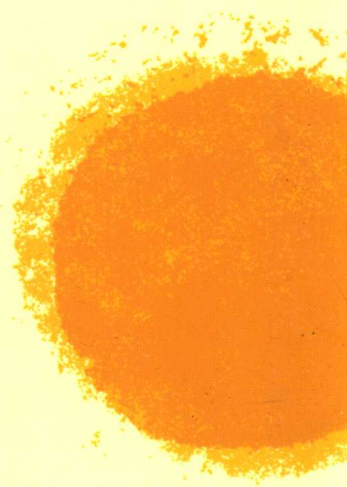


INSIDE THE WORLD OF

BOARD GRAPHICS

SKATE SURF SNOW



ROCKPORT



Inside the World of
Board Graphics

SKATE, SURF, SNOW

Robynne Raye
Michael Strassburger

WITH

Marty Jourard
Damion Hayes
Shogo Ota
Charlotte West

INTRODUCTIONS BY

Marc Hostetter
Murray vvaidding
Matt Barr

ROCKPORT
PUBLISHERS

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LEFT: Skateboard deck painted with acrylics and spray paint, inspired by the artwork of Paul McNeil. Client: Christopher Simmons, SFMOMA, 2010. Design/illustration: Robynne Raye.

Introduction

Inside the World of Board Graphics began as a rather unlikely proposition—a counterproposal to another book idea. When our acquisitions editor, Emily Potts, first called she asked us to write a book called *1,000 Board Graphics*. Although the 1,000 series has been quite successful for Rockport, we felt it was the wrong kind of book for us. We wanted to create something with more depth; something that told the backstories of the work. And so the idea for this book was born, allowing us to share the designs of the hundreds of artists whose work you are about to explore.

I already had some involvement with the world of board graphics through Modern Dog, the graphic arts firm I cofounded in 1987. In 1989, the art director of K2 Snowboards gave us a job because he thought we were someone else. That was the beginning of a more than decade-long relationship with K2's new snowboard division, during which we helped K2 break away from its parent company's strong image as a ski company. Back then, modern snowboarding was still in its infancy, viewed by many as a fringe or underground sport and banned at most U.S. ski resorts. No one yet had fully realized snowboarding's economic potential, and no one imagined it would eventually become an Olympic sport.

During the making of this book, Art Chantry said something profound to me: "When a sport is brand new, it's easy to be outrageous." Our own

work for K2 was seen as outrageous by some, but more importantly for us, the work was always fun. Modern Dog helped K2 Snowboards develop an ever-evolving identity that separated K2 from the world of skiing—not only visually, but through its branding strategy as well. It was the first client that allowed us to write the copy and art direct the photo shoots. By 1995, our no-holds-barred approach helped K2 Snowboards become one of the largest snowboard companies in the world. This approach also helped my studio gain recognition within the industry as designers who were not afraid to take risks.

Our involvement with K2 came to an abrupt end when it acquired and bought out its competition in early 2000. Within a few months, K2 moved its production overseas and everyone we had previously worked with had moved on. Twenty years later, I am still proud of the work we did for K2 and am thankful we had that opportunity.

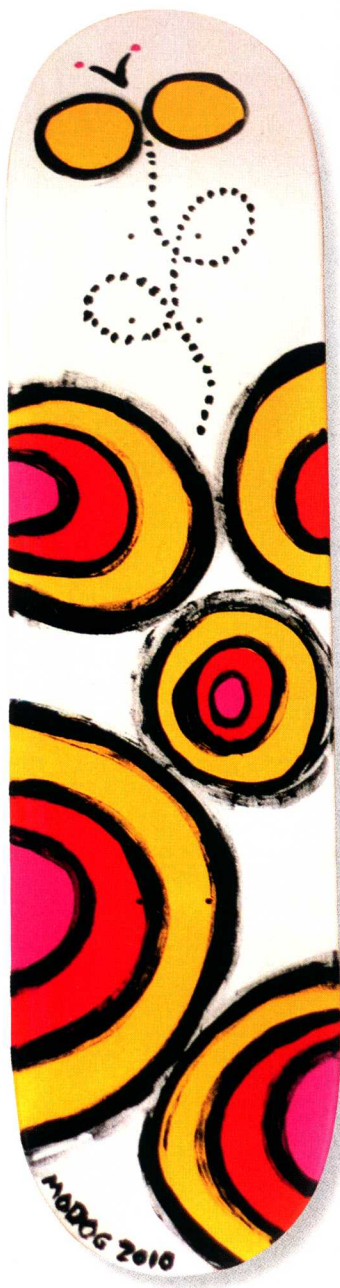
As I researched and organized the artist interviews and profiles for this book, something unexpected happened: The project changed how I worked. I became inspired to try new approaches in a way that would not have happened if I had just collected a group of photos for a book. I was humbled by the amazing art sent from all over the world and equally inspired by the people I met. In particular, Paul McNeil's bevy of surfboard art inspired me to paint directly onto a skate deck. By the time this book is published,

I will have taught a skateboard stenciling and painting class for high school students through Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle.

Honolulu-based Jeannie Chesser was another artist whose personal story touched me. An avid surfer since 1964, she has endured incredible personal loss, yet through it all has continued to airbrush boards for some of the most respected shapers and pro riders in the world. "Every day I don't surf is like a day off my life" is her mantra.

I was profoundly affected by the discovery of Skateistan (see page 47). Based in Afghanistan, Skateistan is the world's first coeducational skateboarding school, providing art instruction, education, and personal empowerment for young men and women. In the war-ravaged streets of Kabul, this organization has provided a cathartic release for hundreds of Afghani youth who face unimaginable daily struggles.

Then there is Rich Harbour. Rich has the great distinction of a prolific career that began in 1959, and he has produced thousands of boards. He is profiled in the book alongside Australian artist Josh Brown, who was twenty-two years old when we interviewed him. Rich's career is more than twice as long as Josh is old. Through my book research on surfing (I bought dozens of books before I began this project), I have never seen this type of juxtaposition: showing the work of a shaper with fifty-one years of





FAR LEFT: Squid snowboard for K2 Snowboards, 1995. Design/illustration: George Estrada.

MIDDLE: El Limbo snowboard for K2 Snowboards, 1995. Design/illustration: Vittorio Costarella.

RIGHT: Eldorado snowboard for K2 Snowboards, 1994. Design: Vittorio Costarella, Michael Strassburger.

experience along with that of a surfboard artist whose career has just begun. This diverse talent range is what I find so appealing.

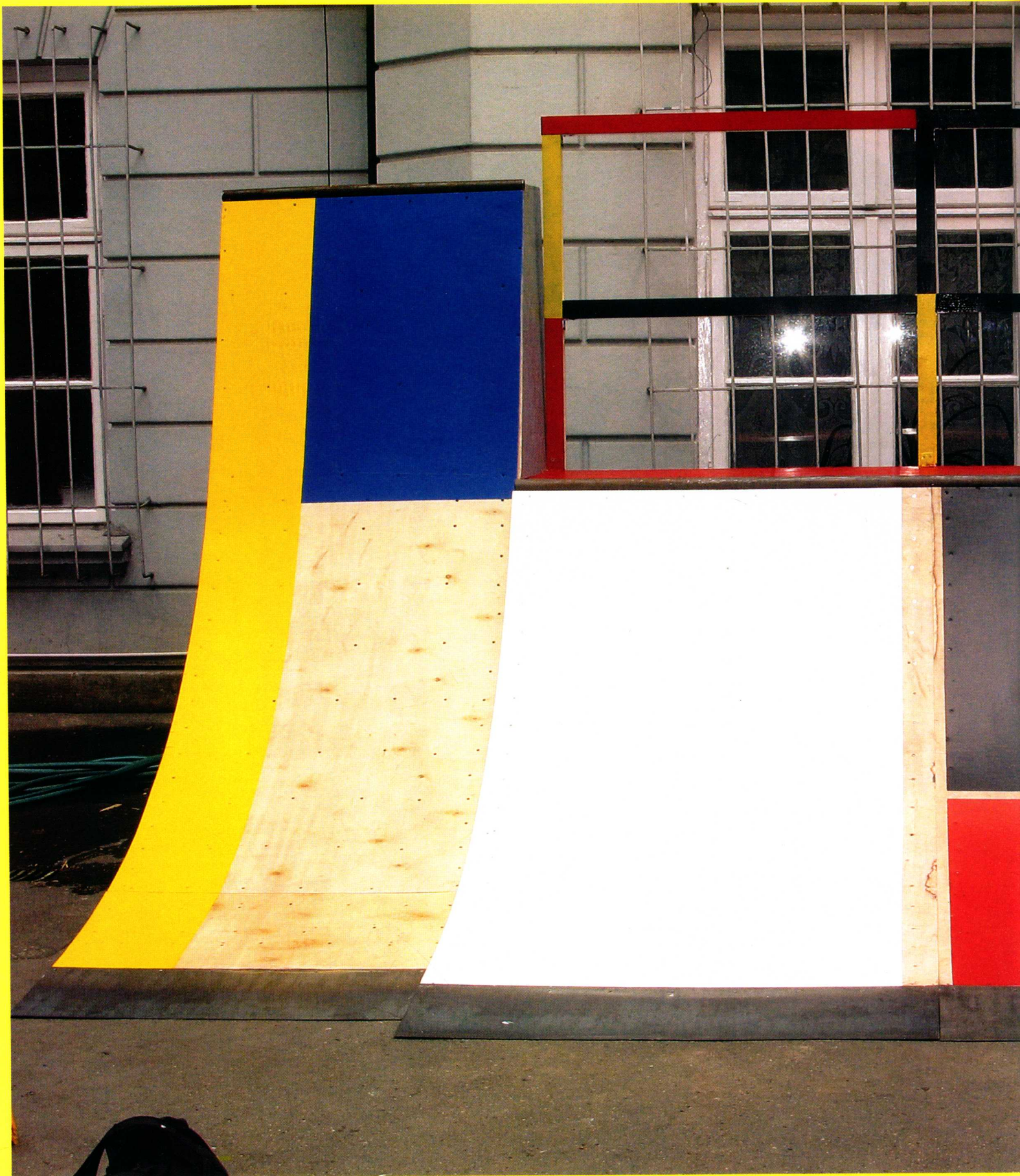
Being outside the industry actually gave us an advantage in asking the right questions—which initially I thought were extremely naive—regarding aspects of graphic design that designers, shapers, and artists might take for granted.

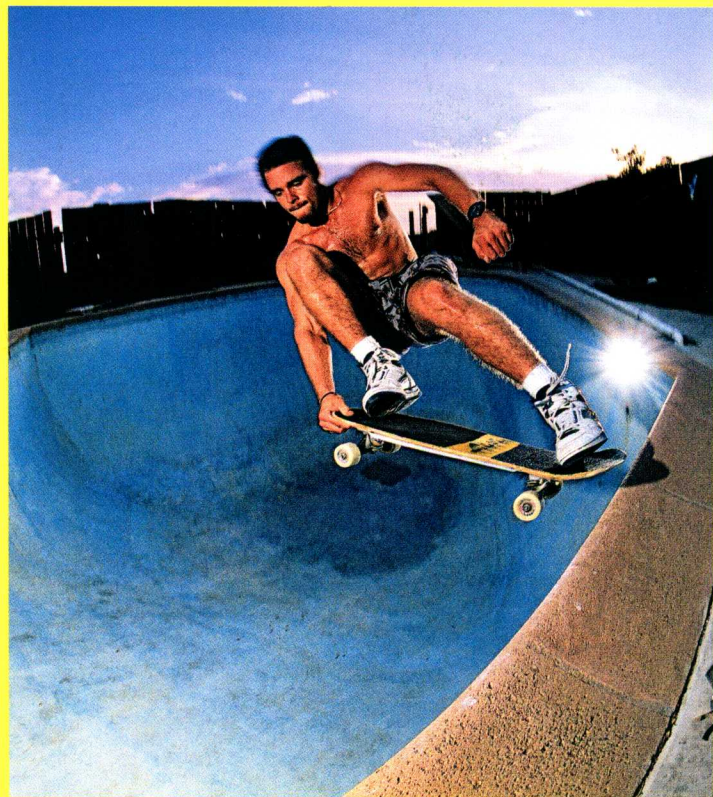
Coordinating six writers, dozens of artist profiles and interviews, and hundreds of other contributors from twenty-three countries along with more than 850 images was a logistical challenge. I could not have done it without our fine support staff. I thank them for helping me with the complexity of this project.

The goal of this book is to provide you with a snapshot of what was going on at one point in time in the constantly evolving world of board graphics. The images between these two covers do not exist in the rarefied world of art galleries but are part of the everyday world of snowboarders, surfers, and skateboarders, and for that reason are inseparable from popular culture.

This book is not just for designers, or artists, or even board enthusiasts, but for everyone who finds inspiration in the work of artists doing what they love. My involvement with this project proved to me that some of the most exciting graphics work created today is on surfboards, skateboards, and snowboards. Today's modern art gallery is wherever boards are sold.

Robynne Raye
Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.





Skate

With more than 18 million skateboarders from sixty countries and hundreds of companies producing hard goods for them, the demand for seasonally updated board graphics is staggering. The pioneering nature of skate culture is global in origin, and so are the artists associated with it.

— An outsider might imagine that a small talent pool based in Southern California produces all the graphics (consisting of blood and skulls) that comprise the market, but the sophistication of skateboard art transcends all stereotypes and geographic borders. The amount of creativity embedded in this culture is so abundant that it seems poised for the demands of a worldwide movement.

The single most potent outlet for skate art is the deck—a fast-moving, tapping and flipping canvas that becomes an extension of the rider's identity. The body of art itself has many different expressions, reflecting a variety of different types of artists, skateboarders, and for that matter, people. Countless styles and attitudes worthy of an art gallery adorn the laminated and molded wood shapes, expressing good, evil, sarcasm, parody, political views, ethics, ideals, irreverence,

grossness, and even tastefulness. In fact, I've likened average skate shops with their massive displays of decks to art galleries. They're that impressive.

Equally impressive are the artists on the following pages, whose works exemplify the depth and creativity that are so authentic to the culture of skateboarding. There's a distinction in these works of art for all to appreciate but only for skaters to fully understand.

Marc Hostetter
Creative Director, Transworld Media
San Diego, California, U.S.A.

ABOVE: Marc Hostetter, circa 1989.
Photo: J. Grant Brittain.

LEFT: Skateboard ramp outside the Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland, 2007.
Photo: Hakobo.



Martin Ander {INTERVIEW}

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

In 1985, Swedish designer Martin Ander received his first skateboard, a gift from his grandmother. In the early 1990s, soon after breaking into the Swedish graffiti scene, Ander began working with a variety of Scandinavian skateboard companies as well as streetwear brands such as WeSC in Sweden. Ander is also art director of *UP*, a Swedish graffiti magazine, and he runs his own skateboard company, Polygon.

You have a background as a graffiti artist, and you also work as art director for UP. Is there a strong graffiti scene in Sweden, and what is its relationship to design?

Graffiti began appearing here around 1984, when movies like *Style Wars* and *Beat Street* spread the culture around the world. I started getting interested in graffiti in 1987 after seeing the book *Subway Art* at the Stockholm Art Fair, but I didn't start writing until 1991, when I met some other writers who showed me the tricks of the trade. Back then, Stockholm had one of the best scenes

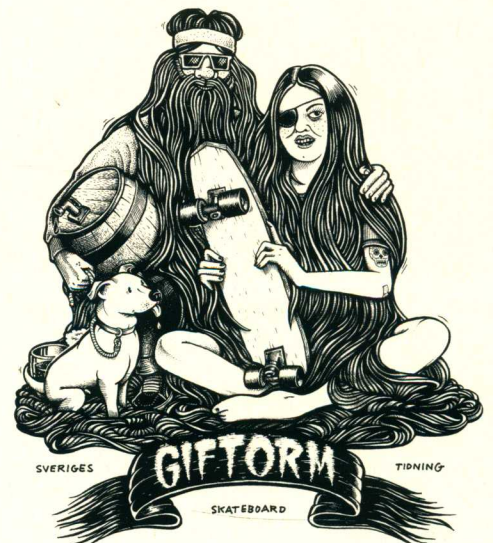
in Europe—the transit and city streets were bombed and you saw train pieces almost every day. In 1992, some older writer friends of mine started *UP* (then called *Underground Productions*), which was amazing—there were only a handful of graffiti magazines back then. Over the years, the *UP* crew has transitioned to a book publisher and distribution company for subculture and art media (Dokument Press). They do great books and DVDs and stuff. A few years ago, they asked me to take over the production side of *UP*, and I did.

It seems that the connection between graffiti and skateboarding is important for you. What is the relationship between your background as a graffiti artist and the skateboard graphics you do now?

I grew up with art and graphic design—my dad is an illustrator and art director, and he collects books on illustrators and graphic designers. When I was a kid, we often went to art fairs, museums, and galleries. I liked looking at the pictures and was fascinated with the motifs and techniques, but I didn't get the deeper meaning—to me it was just pictures.

TOP: Martin Ander.
Photo: Jens Andersson.

BOTTOM: T-shirt graphic.
Giftorm magazine, 2007.

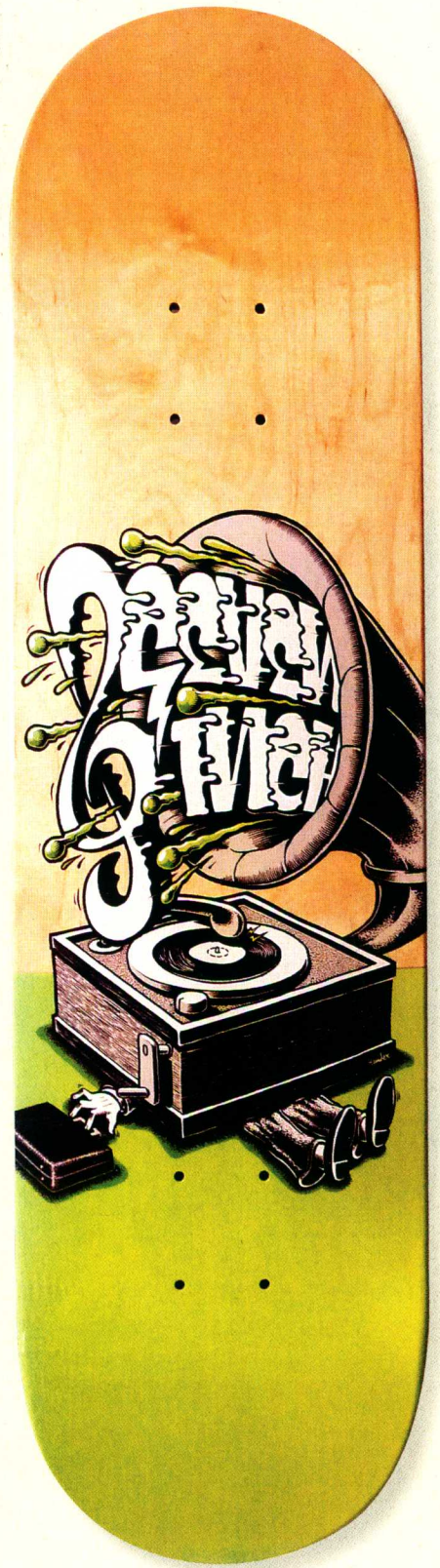




LEFT: "Keep Your Scene Clean," skateboard graphic. Sweet Skateboards, 2009.

MIDDLE: New Age model. Polygon Skateboards, 2010.

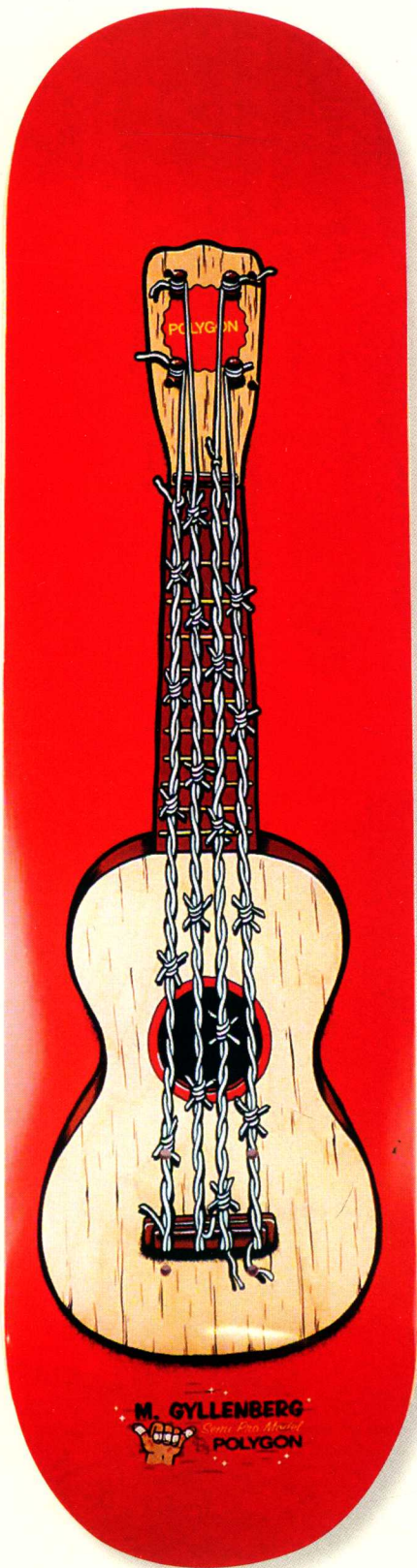
RIGHT: Skateboard graphic. Seven Inch Skateboards (Finland), 2010.





TOP: Sweet Fighter series. Left to right: Erik Pettersson vs. Anton Myhrvold model; Koffe Hallgren vs. Daniel Spångs model; Björn Holmenäs vs. Martin Pennlowe model; Jonas Skróder vs. Josef Skott Jatta model. Sweet Skateboards, 2009.

LEFT: Skateboard Wheel Graphics (Polygon EGGs). Polygon Skateboards, 2010.



TOP: Magnus Gyllenberg Pro Model. Polygon Skateboards, 2010.

RIGHT: "Transylvanian Transition," T-shirt graphic. *Transition* magazine (Sweden), 2010.

FAR RIGHT: T-shirt graphic. Seven Inch Skateboards (Finland), 2010.

Then I saw the book *Subway Art* and was totally blown away. It spoke directly to me—not just the art, but also that the art was painted by kids, and wherever they wanted. Also, the combination of lettering, cartoon characters, pop-culture motifs, and more serious matters was everything I liked, all melded together.

The same year, I discovered skateboard art, and it was the same feeling. It felt like just by liking these images you were part of something, and they were easy to understand—there were no hidden messages. They spoke to me like the best comic book, but condensed into just one frame and then printed on the coolest thing I could imagine. In the early nineties, when skateboarding went underground, graffiti influences began appearing in skateboard graphics and ads. This was around the same time I made my graffiti debut. For me, skateboarding and graffiti had some kind of connection for some years.

Even though I try not to use graffiti elements in my skate graphics, and I don't see a clear connection between graffiti and skateboarding nowadays, I must say that if I hadn't experienced those years in the early to mid-nineties, the designs I do would look very different.

How did you start doing skateboard graphics? When was your first commission?

I got my first board from my grandma in 1985, after nagging my parents for as long as I can remember. It was a small plastic board that I rode for two years. It had "Skateboard" written on the top in an '80s semigrafitti style. I thought it was the coolest thing ever, until I set foot in a real skate shop, Rip City in Santa Monica, on a holiday trip to Los Angeles in 1987. I could have stayed there all day just looking at the graphics. As soon as I came back to the hotel, I started sketching skate graphics. I also bought my first "real" skateboard there, a Santa Cruz Rob Roskopp deck. I didn't get to make a proper skate graphic until 2007, when my buddies started Bellows Skateboards and asked me to do some graphics for them.



What kinds of techniques drive your design? And what is the relationship between hand drawing and technology in your work?

I use both hand-drawn ink lines and computer graphics in my work. It depends on what I want to do, but I always begin by sketching with pen and paper, then I use whatever is necessary to turn the sketch into a graphic. The process usually includes ink, paper, camera, printer, scanner, Photoshop, and Illustrator.

Do you have any particular themes that you like to explore in your work?

I would like to think that I don't, but my work usually contains some elements of dark humor and irony. I also like to include some personal references in everything I do.

What attracts you to skateboard graphics as opposed to some other form of graphic design?

I think it is because skateboard graphics are more than just images made to sell skateboards. A skateboard graphic printed on something other than a skateboard is just an image, but printed on a skateboard, it becomes part of a more than thirty-year-old design tradition. You put more into it than just the lines and color. It's the profile of the company, the attitude of the rider, and the whole feeling of being a part of a subculture—kind of like when you look at a great album cover or a gig poster and you connect the image with the music and attitude of the artist it promotes.

Another attraction is that most of the skate companies are skater owned and for that reason, less corporate. It doesn't feel like doing commercial work, it feels like being a part of the culture.

What are you currently working on? What companies do you work with?

I'm currently working on a new series of decks for my own company, Polygon. I just finished some T-shirt designs for Spitfire Wheels and a T-shirt graphic for Servant Footwear.

