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CALIFORNIA CONCRETE: THE ABSTRACT BEAUTY OF AMERICA'S SKATEPARKS

Anthony Teasdale, editor, Umbrella magazine | 13 September 2019 at 09:50 | 0 Comments



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CALIFORNIA CONCRETE

A LANDSCAPE OF SKATEPARKS

AMIR ZAKI

Essays by
TONY HAWK
PETER ZELLNER

MERRELL

California is the spiritual home of modern skateboarding. From the mid-1960s, groups of street kids would take their boards to its drained reservoirs and suburban swimming pools, and spend their days inventing and perfecting the tricks of the sport on the smooth concrete surfaces.

As skateboarding grew in popularity – and boards got lighter and smaller – specially designed skateparks were built down the US west coast to keep up with the demand from teenagers. Mimicking and exaggerating the curves of the pools pioneers like Jay Adams and Tony Alva had practised in, the parks' concrete ramps and bowls brought a sculptural quality to the landscape.

This new book, *California Concrete*, by photographer Amir Zaki, now celebrates that near-architectural legacy. A skater since childhood, Zaki travelled the skateparks of California, hooting the strange shapes and textures of the ramps, and revelling in their abstract forms.

The composite images were made using a digital camera mounted on a motorised tripod-head that enabled him to photograph parts that would otherwise be impossible to capture. Zaki also shot the pictures at daybreak, which not only gives the photos an enhanced clarity but also means they're free of skaters. Something that lets the brutalist structures speak for themselves – and which will appeal to both skaters, and those who appreciate the power and possibilities of concrete.