


CARVING CONCRETE

The Sculpture of Skateparks at
Orange Coast College Exhibition

If asked to list the most significant built places and aesthetic spaces in Orange County, no local skateparks would have made the list. But that was before seeing the photography of Southern California artist Amir Zaki, whose work is on display at Orange Coast College's Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion from Sept. 19 until Dec. 5.

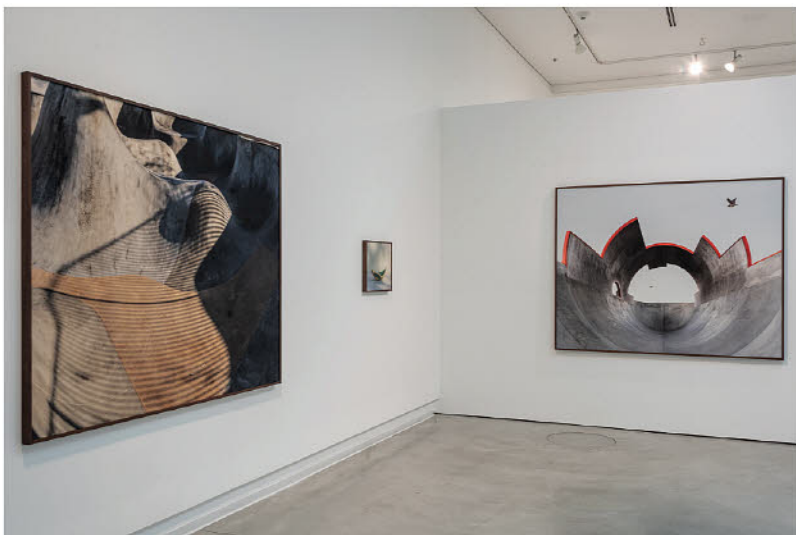
Concrete Vessel 58, 2018, by Amir Zaki, archival pigment photograph, courtesy of the artist.



Skateboarders and their Southern California-centered subculture have often been the subject of street photographers. But Zaki's images are perhaps the first to appreciate the sculptural and architectural aesthetics of the skatepark itself, without the presence of skateboarders.

"The detail of Zaki's images is mystifying because the surfaces never seem to go out of focus, no matter how closely one approaches the surface of the print," writes Tyler Stallings, the director of The Doyle who also curated the exhibition, *Empty Vessel-Amir Zaki*. "The poured concrete surface becomes almost sumptuous as a result."





Clockwise from opposite left:
Concrete Vessel 75, 2018, by Amir Zaki;
Concrete Vessel 72, 2018, by Amir Zaki;
Concrete Vessel 116, 2018, by Amir Zaki;


Above: Views of the Empty Vessel exhibition at OCC's Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion.
 Photographs courtesy of the artist.

For each photograph of a skatepark in the exhibition, Zaki would shoot 30 to 75 individual images using a GigaPan mechanism connected to his camera, and then later stitch them together digitally to create a single, highly detailed image.

Photographed early in the morning with no skateboarders present, Zaki digitally deletes decals, logos, stickers, graffiti and background distractions from the photographs.

“The effect of removing outside references transforms the concrete bowls, hills, and angular shapes into utopian-like, Brutalist architectonic monuments, with the suggestion that these bizarre, architectural structures are dotted throughout California,” says Stallings.





Stallings, who has been one of Southern California's most creative and insightful curators for decades, says Zaki's work is an extension of the New Topographic photographers from the 1970s, who focused on manmade environments.

The second body of work in *Empty Vessel* depicts shards from broken, ceramic containers like bowls, cups and vases. Zaki dropped the pieces onto his concrete patio. He then selected a shard based on an intrinsically interesting shape, but that also evokes aspects of the skateparks in miniature form.

California Concrete: A Landscape of Skateparks, a book featuring Zaki's photographs, essays by the artist, famed skateboarder Tony Hawk, and Los Angeles-based architect Peter Zellner, also debuted in September.

Photographs of Orange County skateparks are included in the exhibition and book, including Rancho Margarita Skatepark, Etnies Skatepark in Lake Forest and Volcom Skatepark in Costa Mesa.

"Southern California is the quintessential birthplace of skateboard culture, and this is where these parks continue to flourish as architects, engineers, designers, and skateboarders collaborate to refine their designs, evolving fluidly together as the sport also evolves," says Zaki.

Empty Vessel—Amir Zaki
Sept. 19-Dec. 5
Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion
Orange Coast College
Costa Mesa
orangecoastcollege.edu/DoyleArts
714.432.5072

Concrete Vessel 116, 2018, by Amir Zaki (Etnies Skatepark, Lake Forest). Photograph courtesy of the artist.