Mingei International Museum

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For Immediate Release

Design Exhibition Traces Skateboarding's Evolution from DIY Craft to Global Culture

- *Skate Craft Is One of the Largest Institutional Shows to Spotlight Skaters as Designers, Makers, and Innovators*
- *Mingei International Museum Presents More Than 200 Objects to Reveal Skateboarding's Hidden History of Design Innovation*

June 24, 2026, SAN DIEGO, CA — From November 21, 2026 – May 9, 2027, Mingei International Museum will present ***Skate Craft: Do-It-Yourself Design in Skateboarding***, a special exhibition celebrating skateboarding's do-it-yourself ethos. Tracing skateboarding's evolution from homemade ramps built from found lumber to the handcrafted works of today, *Skate Craft* showcases the progression of skateboard design, gear, and apparel, alongside contemporary works created from repurposed boards. **One of the largest museum shows featuring skaters as designers and innovative creators, Mingei celebrates their impact on Southern California craft and design.**

***Skate Craft* is co-curated by Mayo Mendoza and Guusje Sanders.** In 2023, Mendoza, the **facilities director at Mingei International Museum and a lifelong skater**, proposed an exhibition exploring the connection between skate culture's ingenuity and *mingei*, the Japanese folk art movement that inspired the museum's founding. *Mingei*, meaning "the art of the people," celebrates the beauty of craftsmanship and everyday objects. The museum's curatorial team embraced the idea, recognizing connections between the hub of skateboarding in Southern California, traditional craft practices, and the skate community's do-it-yourself approach to building and repurposing objects. Mendoza was subsequently named co-curator and partnered with Mingei curator Guusje Sanders to develop the exhibition.

"Co-curating *Skate Craft* has been an opportunity to share the stories of makers," **Mendoza said.** "My first fish-tailed, coffin-shaped skateboard, built in my bathtub in 1985, was made without blueprints and with very limited adult supervision. This exhibition explores skateboarding's DIY spirit—the intention and determination to turn an idea into reality through repeated failure. That is skateboarding, from the activity itself to the objects it creates. Think a thought and make the thought, without guardrails. Balboa Park is world-famous for its skate spots, and Mingei celebrates the creativity of ordinary makers. Skateboarding is mingei: ordinary people making extraordinary things in skateboarding."

Showing how skateboarding nurtures creativity, self-expression, and joy through artisanal craftsmanship, *Skate Craft* will be presented in five sections: boards, gear, obstacles, tools, and repurposed boards. **More than 200 objects will be on display to tell the craft story of the sport.**

Some vintage items on display will include:

- Early homemade skateboards and folk art expressions of skateboarding constructed from fence posts, dresser drawers, scrap lumber, repurposed roller skates, and other found objects, highlighting the resourcefulness of the sport's unknown makers

- Original ramp-building magazine articles and blueprints, including examples connected to skateboarding pioneer Tom Stewart of Rampage, whose plans helped popularize backyard skateboarding
- Vintage skate apparel and protective gear, including Mad Rats shorts and Pro-Designed, Inc. knee pads, illustrating the evolution of skate style and equipment.
- Skateboard zines documenting the voices, artwork, photography, and DIY publishing culture that shaped skateboarding communities.
- Photographs and archival materials by Grant Brittain, Haley Crittenden, Jacey Gillette Crow, Jamie Mosberg, and others

The following groups and artists will also be included:

- Nick Pourfard (Prisma Guitars), transforming recycled skateboards into handcrafted musical instruments
- Christian and Benny Zenga, a.k.a. The Zenga Bros, creators of skateable furniture that blurs the line between sculpture, design, and play
- Ben Paik of Woby Design, whose handcrafted objects give discarded skateboards a second life through inventive design
- Tara Locklear, a multidisciplinary artist whose jewelry explores skateboarding, identity, and creative self-expression
- Lia Holloran, an artist and skateboarder whose work reflects the intersection of contemporary art, movement, and skate culture
- Eli Ashe, whose handmade boards and innovative silkscreen tools demonstrate the DIY spirit of contemporary skate culture
- Jerome Calleja, a skateboard maker and designer known for his handcrafted board shapes and graphics
- Takuya Tsutsumi, a Japanese urushi lacquer artist who merges traditional Japanese craft techniques with skateboard design
- Villa Villa Cola, an inclusive skate collective creating boards, zines, films, and community-centered creative projects.
- Imilla Skate, Indigenous Bolivian women using skateboarding in traditional pollera skirts to challenge gender norms and empower the next generation of girls,
- SDSU’s Center for Skateboarding, Action Sports and Social Change

The exhibition is supported by a network of advisors, lenders, artists, and skateboarding historians, including Todd Huber from the Skateboard Hall of Fame; skateboard designer and educator Paul Schmitt; Look Back Library founder Kevin Marks; photographer Grant Brittain; skateboard historian and author Natalie Porter; and numerous makers, collectors, and community leaders who have helped document and preserve skateboarding's creative history.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES

“At Mingei International Museum, we showcase and engage with design that reflects the joy in making useful objects— *Skate Craft* is the quintessential representation of this ethos,” said **Jessica Hanson York, Executive Director and CEO.** “10 years ago, we explored design in surf culture with our widely acclaimed show *Surf Craft*, and now, we are turning to the Southern California-born lifestyle and art form of skateboarding. With some of the most iconic names in the sport being San Diego natives and nearly 40 formal skate parks in the County, we’re excited to lead our region in an investigation and celebration of its own culture. This is a show made of objects created by skateboarders for skateboarders”

“Mayo brought something we couldn't have gotten any other way: lived experience,” said **Emily Hanna, PhD, Director of Exhibitions and Chief Curator at Mingei International Museum**. “He knew instinctively that skateboarding belonged at Mingei because he had spent a lifetime immersed in its culture. What began as an idea from our facilities director became a compelling case for skateboarding as folk art, craft, and design.”

“My favorite part has been meeting all these really cool people who started with a simple ‘What if?’ and learning how they explored that question using whatever was available to them,” said **Guusje Sanders, Curator at Mingei International Museum**. “These innovative, sometimes humorous and wonderfully absurd, objects exist for the joy of skateboarding and pushing what is possible. At its core, *Skate Craft c*elebrates the creativity of the skate community and both known and unknown craftspeople, whose ingenuity and experimentation have shaped skate culture over the years.”

“As a lifelong maker, I’m excited to see the DIY Skateboarding Culture I grew up in represented in the Mingei International Museum,” said **Paul Schmitt, skateboard designer, educator, and founder of Make A Skate**, an organization that teaches people how to make their own board. **“**Some of my life’s work will be on display, and I’m excited to collaborate and be involved with some exciting programming for the local community to get involved with— keep your eyes open!”

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Additional programming will accompany the exhibition, including a Skate Craft Community Celebration in Spring 2027 and monthly drop-in, zine-making workshops held during Mingei's Free Tuesday evenings. These programs will highlight the independent publishing, creative experimentation, and community-building traditions that have long been central to skate culture.

ABOUT CO-CURATOR MAYO MENDOZA

Mayo Mendoza grew up in the suburbs of Long Island, New York, 54 miles from New York City. A first-generation Filipino American, he was raised in a culture of making, building slingshots, forts, and soapbox karts with his brother, sister, and neighborhood friends.

He learned to skateboard in his driveway on the plastic banana boards of the 1970s and discovered street skating after seeing the movie “Back to the Future” in 1985. From there, he progressed to DIY ramps across Long Island, the banks at Stony Brook University, Heeley's Ramp in the Poconos, and the streets of New York City, including the Brooklyn Banks and the Courthouse.

As a freshman in college, his Sculpture I final project was a skatable sculpture, reflecting the connection between pop art, design, and skateboarding that continues to shape his work today.

After moving to San Diego in 1998, Mendoza immersed himself in Southern California skate culture, building ramps for video shoots, repairing ramps at the Clairemont YMCA Skatepark, and continuing to skate

alongside people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities. Today, he enjoys skating with friends ranging from 7 to 70 years old.

Mendoza currently serves as Facilities Director at Mingei International Museum, overseeing the care, maintenance, security, and daily operations of the museum and campus in Balboa Park.

As co-curator of ***Skate Craft: Do It Yourself Design in Skateboarding***, Mendoza originated the exhibition concept and brought a skateboarder's perspective to its development. Working alongside Mingei Curator Guusje Sanders, he helped identify the artists, objects, stories, and themes that illustrate skateboarding's culture of ingenuity, experimentation, and making.

ABOUT CO-CURATOR GUUSJE SANDERS
Guusje Sanders, originally from the Netherlands and residing in the United States since 2006, joined Mingei International Museum's curatorial team as Curator in August 2023. Most recently, she curated *Boundless: Reflections of Southern California Landscapes in Midcentury Studio Ceramics* and co-curated *Blue Gold: The Art and Science of Indigo*, with Mingei Chief Curator, Emily Hanna, presented as part of Getty's PST ART: *Art and Science Collide*.

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ABOUT MINGEI INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM
Mingei International Museum, located in San Diego's Balboa Park Cultural District, celebrates human creativity through multicultural works of folk art, craft, and design. Inspired by the Japanese mingei (art of the people) movement, Mingei cares deeply about design functionality, handmade craft, and bringing out the creativity that lives in all of us. In addition to rotating gallery exhibitions and event programming, Mingei's gift shop, theater, education center, restaurant, and café are backdrops for finding inspiration and connecting with the community. As the presenter of San Diego Design Week and a partner to over 50 local artists and art and cultural organizations, Mingei puts celebrating creativity at the core of its mission through workshops, film festivals, lectures, and more. Mingei is a nonprofit institution funded by admissions, individuals, and institutional support.

ABOUT THE BALBOA PARK CULTURAL DISTRICT
Located in the heart of San Diego, the Balboa Park Cultural District is home to a variety of arts and culture offerings. The 1,200-acre public park has been a hub for art, science, history, and culture since the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. The Cultural District includes Balboa Park's central mesa, particularly 17 museums, performing arts centers, gardens, and of course, the world-famous San Diego Zoo. Thanks to organizations like the City of San Diego, Forever Balboa Park, the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership, and staff members of various institutions, the Balboa Park Cultural District is a major tourist destination.

Learn More and download media images: https://mingei.org/exhibitions/skate-craft

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