

The Art of Roller Skating is an exhibition by artist and documentary photographer Debby Besford, celebrating the artistic roller skating heritage of Great Yarmouth, which is hosted by originalprojects at PRIMEYARC. Debby grew up in Great Yarmouth, where she trained as an artistic roller-skater as a teenager, and also went on to become a national skating judge, travelling all over the country to skating competitions.

There have been various roller-skating rinks around Great Yarmouth over the years, including the Gorleston Rollerdrome (at the Super Holiday Camp), the Winter Gardens, the outdoor rink next to Wellington Pier, and the recently closed Retroskate (now relocated to Cobholm as the Retro Skating Academy, training a new generation of artistic roller skaters). This has resulted in a great enthusiasm for the sport in the town, with a large number of national champions hailing from Great Yarmouth.

For the past 5 years Debby has been documenting the journeys of seven young local female artistic roller-skaters as they train and develop their skills, a project which was naturally inspired by her own love for the sport. Debby's objective is to showcase this often forgotten sport with an original eye. Thanks to the popularity of shows like *Dancing on Ice*, artistic roller skating is often overshadowed by ice skating. The sport has many facets to it, from artistic figure and free skating to disco and street skating.

Debby wanted to demonstrate a visual contrast by removing the skaters from the 'show' of the rink and instead using the background of a domestic, intimate situation, reminiscent of her own experience as a teen skater, where her proud parents took photos of her poised in her skates with trophies clasped in hand. These documented moments marked a truly important chapter in her teenage life and one that she felt could be an interesting approach to celebrate the girls in the project.

The images have a slightly surreal quality, showing the girls in their performance clothes out of context, with the dissonance between the domestic setting, highlighting the balance between growing up as a teenager and the dedication and commitment required to become a professional sportsperson.

Debby has also documented the objects that accompany the life of an artistic roller skater such as roller skates, costumes and trophies and galas, and has produced a series of slow motion videos showing the detail and intricacy of the movements, the skill, athleticism and emotion it takes to jump in mid-air. These movements are repeated to move towards the perfect jump.

Members of the roller-skating community are invited to contribute their own photographs or memorabilia which will form part of the exhibition, and Debby and originalprojects; would also like to capture any stories anyone may have which may form part of a podcast. Anyone who has anything they'd like to share please contact info@originalprojects.space

The exhibition is supported by a Project Grant from Arts Council England and produced in collaboration with originalprojects; and will be on display at PRIMEYARC (in the former Debenhams in Market Gates Shopping Centre)

Open times:

5th March - 1st May

Wednesdays - Saturdays 12-5

Sundays 12-4.

Notes for editors

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