

# TURNING TRICKS... with Handbag Designer Beck Hickey

By Jessica Ridenour

Beck Hickey can do some awesome tricks with a skateboard, and I'm not talking about hand plants or ollies. Her tricks are more like that of a magician turning a handkerchief into a dove, or in Beck's case, turning a used skateboard into a handbag.



Image: Courtesy of Becky Files

A skate ramp and satin handbag-inspired epiphany struck in 2003 and, poof, Beck(y) Sk8bags were born. Using the decks of orphaned skateboards, Beck saws and sews her raw materials into luxuriously imaginative designs, including totes, clutches, and belt buckles. Not only does she create one-of-a-kind functional works of art, but she also donates a portion of her earnings to charities such as the Tony Hawk Foundation and her own brainchild, Boards 4 Bowls, which donates funds toward the construction of public skate parks across the country. *Foam* had a chance to chat with the unique designer...

**JR: How did you come up with the idea to create handbags from skateboards?**

**BH:** When I had the idea for Sk8bags, I had been making handbags for my friends, sister, and myself. One day I went to see a movie and I left feeling creative and inspired. I walked into the Prada store on Broadway, where they had these great little satin handbags...and when I entered the store, there was this huge, curved hardwood thing that went up two stories. I thought, "It looks like a skate ramp." It was that, and the combination of the little satin bags. It just came to me, and I literally ran home and drew out the design. I hooked up with Steve from 5boro, a skateboard company out of New York, and he gave me his old deck. Again, I was just making them for myself, and then a distributor from Lake Tahoe called me up wanting to sell the bags, and I ended up with a new career.

**JR: Did you know you would end up doing something creative with your life?**

**BH:** Yeah, I went to school for graphic design, specifically advertising. By the time I was sixteen, I knew I wanted to be in advertising. That was my career. I was like: "I'm going to be an art director forever." The whole shift happened because I got laid off after 9/11 and I needed to make Christmas presents instead of buying them. That was sort of a kick start. I still do freelance graphic design for small clients, as well as advertising agencies...I like it, so I want to keep doing it.

**JR: You use a lot of recycled materials for your art. Does this make you an environmentalist?**

**BH:** I don't think I'm an environmentalist necessarily, but using skateboards has made me think about it more. People give me new skateboards, but I almost like the used ones better. Skateboard companies love it when I take their warranty decks—because of the glue and

solvents in it, it's a big problem for dumping, and they have to pay a lot of money to do it. To give them to me is a huge load off their minds, and I end up with very little waste from the skateboards. I use almost every piece because I can cut them down to little belt buckles.

**JR: Where do you see yourself going next, creatively speaking?**

**BH:** For summer, I have some leather bags that are more straight fashion. The new bags will be very different from the Sk8bags. I think my stuff appeals to women who are creative and want something different...they've got a sense of humor, and they're not taking fashion too seriously. I want to use really nice material—stuff that feels good and looks good. I just want to do it the way that I want to do it and hope that people like it.

**JR: Why did you establish the Boards 4 Bowls program?**

**BH:** In the beginning, I was kind of worried that the skate community would react badly, like they'd think I was bastardizing their culture for fashion. Now I get e-mails from skaters—they've totally embraced me. People just started sending decks to me, so it was a way to give back and also encourage more decks to come in. There are some people who think I'm giving away too much, but I think it's made it a little more worth it, rather than just creating bags and selling them.

To order Beck(y) Sk8bags online, go to [www.beckycity.com](http://www.beckycity.com).