

KAWS

COMPANIONSHIP IN THE AGE OF LONELINESS

ARTWORK LABELS

© COPYRIGHT

This document remains the property of the National Gallery of Victoria and must be returned upon request.
Reproduction in part or in whole is prohibited without written authorisation.

KAWS: Companionship in the Age of Loneliness

Brian Donnelly, aka KAWS, was born in 1974 in New Jersey and started out as a graffiti and street artist. Now living and working in Brooklyn, New York, KAWS engages with the complexities of modern life and the contemporary built environment, and contrasts them with the aesthetics of pop and street culture.

Admired for his larger-than-life sculptures and colour-filled paintings, KAWS employs a cast of hybrid cartoon and human characters drawn from pop-culture animation across generations to form a distinctive artistic vocabulary.

KAWS's prolific body of work bridges the worlds of art and design to include paintings, murals, large-scale sculptures, street and public art, and graphic and product design. His work is infused with humour, humanity and an acute sense of the precariousness of our times. The work of KAWS reminds us that we need one another, and that in the face of fear and hatred we should aim to live as compassionately as possible to combat this 'age of loneliness'.

KAWS grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey, as part of the post-*Wild Style* and *Style Wars* generation. Jersey City was sleepy in comparison to the urban giant of Manhattan, directly across the Hudson River. The first graffiti artists that he became familiar with were those working locally, and his initial steps towards becoming an artist came through writing, or tagging, in his teens, with his tag 'KAWS' soon becoming prevalent in his Jersey City neighbourhood.

By the late 1980s, skateboarding regularly took KAWS to New York City, a cheap and short journey on the PATH train. Here, he met a larger group of kids interested in skateboarding and graffiti, and by 1992 KAWS was undertaking more ambitious graffiti pieces.

With KAWS working across Jersey City and Manhattan, these large-scale pieces increased his visibility within the graffiti community. He was to complete detailed pieces on walls and billboards, and on the sides of freight trains that moved across the country.

Preparatory drawings, sketchbooks and graffiti documentation

1991–6

graphite, coloured pencil, ink, marker, paint marker,
gouache, photographs, sketchbooks

Private Collection

THE CAPTAIN

1995

paint marker on existing magazine advertisement

Private Collection

KAWS's first work on a billboard was created in 1993, on an advertisement for Captain Morgan's Spiced Rum. When the company referenced graffiti in its campaign in 1995, incorporating a 'The Captain Was Here' tag, KAWS again painted over a billboard, in addition to more intimately scaled magazine advertisements. These works, along with a Marlboro billboard intervention, represent the first times the artist identified a cultural icon and inserted himself within its frame, an approach that would underpin much of his subsequent work. The most prescient of these may have been his work on a 1995 MetLife billboard, which featured the characters Snoopy and Woodstock from Charles M. Schulz's comic strip *Peanuts*.

UNTITLED

1999

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

UNTITLED

1999

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

UNTITLED

1999

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

UNTITLED

1999

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

In 1996, KAWS began to work with the smaller-scale medium of advertising posters. Having been gifted a master key by a friend, he was able to unlock the advertising cabinets on the sides of bus shelters and telephone booths. KAWS would remove the posters and work on them in the studio, then return them to the public sphere once finished. Instead of creating hurried graffiti performed urgently in public with the fear of being caught, the artist could now spend hours labouring over each brushstroke and perfecting the work in his own time.

This new medium and method of painting afforded a more blurred line between original and intervention, which in turn created new tensions between the form and the content of the works; between cohabitation, celebration and critique. His introduced creatures and skulls began to have a fluid meaning when read with the original advertisement's message.

UNTITLED (SNAPPLE)

1997

acrylic paint on existing advertising poster

Private Collection

UNTITLED (MAIDENFORM)

2000

UNTITLED (NICOLE MILLER)

1997

UNTITLED (WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP)

1998

UNTITLED (GUESS)

1999

UNTITLED (DKNY)

1997

UNTITLED (CALVIN KLEIN)

1997

UNTITLED (CALVIN KLEIN)

1997

UNTITLED (NICOLE MILLER)

c. 1997

UNTITLED (DKNY)

1997

UNTITLED (DKNY)

1999

UNTITLED (DKNY)

1999

acrylic paint on existing advertising posters

For kids

The American artist KAWS made these artworks by painting over advertisements, like the ones you often see at bus shelters and tram stops. He managed to get hold of the special key that opens the displays so he could take the posters to his studio and carefully paint on his characters. Then he put the painted poster back behind the glass for everyone to see! This KAWS character, twisting around the fashion model, is called BENDY. You will see BENDY appear again in the exhibition; see if you can spot it!

Do you enjoy drawing on pages in magazines to make them more interesting and funny?

UNTITLED (DIESEL)

1998

acrylic paint on existing advertising poster mounted on wood panel

Collection of Larry Warsh

KAWS

Born 1974, Jersey City, New Jersey, United States

David Sims

Born 1966, Yorkshire, England

UNTITLED

2001

acrylic paint on 14 photographs

Private Collection

KAWS collaborated with acclaimed fashion photographer David Sims on this series of works in the vein of his earlier, unauthorised fashion advertising interventions. While Sims's photographs had featured in a number of the advertisements KAWS had painted over, this was their first collaborative project. Sims provided KAWS with original prints of his photographs, including a number of iconic shots featuring fashion model Kate Moss, a portrait of Iggy Pop for his *Naughty Little Doggie* (1996) album cover and a photograph of actor Gary Oldman from the cover of *The Face* magazine in 1992. Since 1997 KAWS has been invited by numerous magazines and brands to create, and sometimes intervene in, artwork for magazine covers and editorials.

UNTITLED (HARING)

1997

acrylic paint on existing advertising poster

Private Collection

In 1997, in a gesture of homage, KAWS painted on a poster of New York artist Keith Haring. In this work, KAWS depicts his figure BENDY wrapped around Haring as he is drawing one of the 5000 chalk drawings he is estimated to have completed in the public sphere. The popularity of Haring's work exploded during the early 1980s, to the point where people were removing his subway works almost immediately after they were completed, mirroring KAWS's experience with his advertising-poster interventions. Haring's work in the public sphere – outside the museum and gallery context – and his efforts to democratise art left a strong impression on KAWS.

UNTITLED

2002

pastel on paper

Private Collection

In 2000 KAWS created a series of acrylic paintings on canvas featuring a design he had previously been working with in the bus shelter and telephone advertising interventions, inserting a black substrate with the figure, called CHUM, articulated in white. Taking this approach further, KAWS produced a suite of white-pastel-on-black scenes featuring characters from a number of different original sources engaged in a battle of supremacy. It is a style that resembles the approximately 5000 chalk-on-black-substrate drawings that Keith Haring made in New York City subways between 1980 and 1985, which inspired KAWS.

UNTITLED

2002

pastel on paper

Private Collection

UNTITLED

2002

pastel on paper

Private Collection

UNTITLED

2002

pastel on paper

Private Collection

UNTITLED

1997

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

UNTITLED (ORANGE FENCE)

2002

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Private Collection of TK

UNTITLED (HOLDING HOMER)

2003

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Private Collection of TK

IN THE WOODS

2002

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Collection of Jay Chou

After completing a degree in illustration at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan (the same school Keith Haring attended) in 1996, KAWS worked for three years at the animation studio Jumbo Pictures, painting for series such as Disney's *101 Dalmatians* and *Doug*, and cult MTV show *Daria*. Working on animation cels introduced KAWS to materials and methodologies he still uses in his practice today. This work approximates a scene from the 1937 Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, but KAWS has teased out a sinister side to the story that perhaps relates more closely to the original Brothers Grimm fairytale than the Disney adaptation.

The skull-and-crossbones motif first appears in KAWS's work in 1996 and, along with using Xs for eyes, was a strategy he continued when he began to use characters from comic strips and animated TV series as source material. In these works, KAWS adopts an artistic strategy of appropriation, as he did in his advertising interventions. This time, however, the paintings require creation from the ground up and the cartoon characters become the found object, in the vein of Marcel Duchamp's readymades.

KAWS's now-trademark materials and working method are apparent: the acrylic paint and the cel animator's technique of painting by numbers from a defined palette to ensure consistency. As with the earlier bodies of work, there is an underlying desire, born out of writing, graffiti and street art, to find ways to make a mark, to see ourselves reflected within our cultural landscape.

The insertion of his signature motifs into an otherwise unaltered Simpsons universe, for instance, acts in many ways like a tag in the urban landscape. Whether it is writing 'KAWS' on a Jersey City wall in 1992 or rendering a well-known character sightless by painting in Xs for eyes, the marking gesture, and impulse behind it, remains the same.

KURFS (PAPA)

2007

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Pharrell Williams

In the 2000s KAWS created a number of paintings referencing the American-Belgian animated television series *The Smurfs*, which aired on US television from 1981 to 1989. Owing to KAWS's exacting painting technique, the image is almost indistinguishable from the original animation save for KAWS's signature skull-and-crossbones treatment. While there are numerous individual Smurf characters in the original cartoon, KAWS negates their personalities and turns them into a frightened group, seemingly intimidated by a dictatorial Papa Smurf. KAWS inserts himself in these icons of popular culture not only pictorially but also through the titles, boldly making them his own.

UNTITLED (FATAL GROUP)

2004

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Andy Song

This painting features the cast of the American animated television series *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* (1972–85). It joined *Harlem Globetrotters* (1970–72) and *The Jackson 5ive* (1971–72) as the earliest cartoon series to feature majority black casts shown in a positive light on American TV. In the original show the characters are expressing boundless joy, with laughing faces and outstretched arms, but here KAWS reconfigures the group with his trademark cross-eyed skulls, muting them of any expression.

AGAIN AND AGAIN

2008

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Jay Chou

This painting is inspired by the cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants and is one of a series of close-up portraits KAWS based on the cheerful sea sponge, rendering him as a new character, KAWSBOB. Premiering in 1999 and currently in its twelfth season, *SpongeBob SquarePants* is globally popular with both children and adults. While the other pop-culture icons in this room have been muted by having their faces replaced with KAWS's skull heads, here the artist preserves SpongeBob's unmistakable, expressive features, such as his two widely spaced front teeth. KAWS captures the joyful spirit of the character, who is celebrated for his optimistic, tolerant attitude.

The Simpsons is unparalleled in the way it picks apart modern life and its absurdist, at times nihilistic, nature. While to some extent anarchic and caustic, it is nevertheless underpinned by a functional family unit that, while often in conflict, is ultimately held together through mutual love and support for one another within a largely dysfunctional world. The series may have had underlying resonance for KAWS, as he has inserted his likeness into their world as they did within his: the America of the 1990s and 2000s.

In 2005, Nigo, a Japanese DJ, entrepreneur and founder of fashion and retail chain A Bathing Ape, commissioned a suite of paintings from KAWS, including this one based on the cover art for the second album of *Simpsons* songs, *The Yellow Album* (1998). The artwork features characters from *The Simpsons* depicted in the style of the famous album cover for The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, designed by British pop artists Peter Blake and Jann Haworth in 1967. The original cover art is considered one of the first realisations of a growing movement to bridge the divide between popular culture and high art.

THE KAWS ALBUM

2005

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection, USA

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000–02

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS)

2004

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Larry Warsh

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS #2)

2004

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Larry Warsh

For kids

KAWS is well known for making famous cartoon characters his own by replacing their heads with a skull-and-crossbones face, and changing their eyes to Xs. He has made many different paintings featuring the famous American family from the popular TV show *The Simpsons*. In this room you can see a number of works showing the family in different situations.

At first glance, it looks like the family in this painting is simply having a nice time in the lounge room, watching television together. But have a closer look. Can you see anything unusual? The scene in the painting next to it might give you a clue.

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS)

2004

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Larry Warsh

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS)

2004

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Larry Warsh

UNTITLED (KIMPSONS)

2004

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Larry Warsh

KAWSBOB 3

2007

acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Pharrell Williams

For kids

The character KAWSBOB in this painting is based on SpongeBob SquarePants, the star of the American animated television series of the same name. SpongeBob is a sea sponge, a type of aquatic animal. There are more than 10,000 species of sea sponges, and they can be many different colours, sizes and shapes, but certainly none looks like a kitchen sponge with brown pants. KAWS has created a number of paintings inspired by SpongeBob over the years, as he appreciates the character's positive outlook and the TV show's vibrant colours.

Can you see the skull and crossbones on the side of KAWSBOB's head? Who is your favourite cartoon character?

**SMALL K LANDSCAPE,
SMALL B LANDSCAPE,
SMALL M LANDSCAPE,
SMALL H LANDSCAPE**

2001

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

KAWS

Born 1974, Jersey City, New Jersey, United States

Estudio Campana, São Paulo

Brazil est. 1983

KAWS: COMPANION SOFA (GREY) (PROTOTYPE)

2019

plush toys, stainless steel, Cumaru wood

Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda, New York

Estudio Campana is a design studio based in São Paulo, Brazil, led by brothers Fernando and Humberto Campana. They are famed for their furniture design and their socially engaged design activities, which includes recently working with Australian Indigenous artists at Yarrenyty Arltere art centre in Alice Springs. This collaborative project for the NGV Triennial 2017, and other examples of the studio's unique design approach, feature in the NGV Collection. These works are typified by the use of soft toys and hand embroidery and embellishment of the fabrics, making Estudio Campana like-minded collaborators for KAWS. Together they have made a series of sofas and armchairs incorporating KAWS's characters into the body of the furniture.

CHUM

2008

painted fibreglass

Collection of Pharrell Williams

BORN TO BEND

2013

aluminium, paint

Private Collection

UNTITLED (CHUM), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

KAWS's *Package Painting* series illustrates his interest in subverting the conventional boundaries between art and commercial production. He commissioned a toy factory to encase his canvas paintings in plastic packaging with custom-printed backings that could be displayed on a rack like a retail product. CHUM, the character featured in the series, is derived from the Michelin Man, the official mascot of the Michelin tyre company. First introduced in 1894, the Michelin Man is one of the world's oldest and most recognised trademarks. His jolly nature becomes ambiguous in KAWS's hands, conveying a more intimidating personality as he charges towards us.

UNTITLED (CHUM), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (CHUM), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2000

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

UNTITLED (CHUM), PACKAGE PAINTING SERIES

2002

acrylic paint on canvas in blister package with printed card

Private Collection

Snoopy is Charlie Brown's pet beagle in the newspaper comic strip *Peanuts*, written and illustrated by Charles M. Schulz. Published every day from 1950 until Schulz's death in 2000, the comic strip became a pop-culture sensation and grew to include feature-length films and multiple television series. Figurines of *Peanuts* characters were first created in 1958, leading to an explosion of merchandise that continues today.

Loyal and good-natured, Snoopy is the archetypal pet dog – man's best friend. KAWS applies his own instantly recognisable motifs to the iconic character in his *MAN'S BEST FRIEND (MBF)* series. These monochrome works range from canvases shaped in Snoopy's silhouette to abstractions of Schulz's original drawings. KAWS has interacted with Charles M. Schulz's creations since his early days as an artist, when he painted over a 1995 MetLife billboard that featured the *Peanuts* characters Snoopy and Woodstock.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

2014

acrylic paint on paper

Private Collection

For kids

KAWS titled this large work *MAN'S BEST FRIEND*, referring to the common expression used to describe pet dogs. This is one of the most famous dogs in the world, Snoopy, Charlie Brown's pet beagle in the comic strip *Peanuts*. The *Peanuts* comic was first created by cartoonist Charles M. Schulz in 1950, and for many people, including KAWS, it was a part of growing up in America. Snoopy and his friends appeared in newspapers every day until the year 2000!

Each of the fifty paintings only shows a small detail of Snoopy, and his bird friend Woodstock. What adventures do you think they might be up to together?

UNTITLED (MBFF1)

2014

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

UNTITLED

2017

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

FOLLOW (MBF)

2013

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Private Collection

UNFOLLOW (MBF)

2013

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Private Collection

KAWS

Born 1974, Jersey City, New Jersey, United States

Estudio Campana, São Paulo

Brazil est. 1983

KAWS: MAN'S BEST FRIEND SOFA

2018

plush toys, stainless steel, Cumaru wood

Private Collection

KAWS has experimented with abstraction and fragmentation in his paintings, incorporating a range of figures such as KAWSBOB, CHUM and the KIMPSONS as his subjects. Created across square and round canvases, the KAWSBOB paintings crop into the character's facial features more and more until its expressions become increasingly anxious and distorted. This is particularly evident in the multi-panel and tondo (circular) paintings KAWS produced between 2010 and 2014.

KAWS's painting practice has since further embraced abstraction. This includes the introduction of multicoloured and multilayered camouflage-like patterning, reminiscent of Andy Warhol's use of coloured camouflage in works such as *Self-portrait no. 9*, 1986 (in the NGV Collection, on display on Level 2).

Rendered at a scale comparable with that of European history painting, recent paintings by KAWS feature new elements such as abstractions of landscapes and an extended colour palette, including rich earthy tones, while remaining unified with the artist's earlier practice through his signature motifs.

THE FLOOD

2018

acrylic on canvas

Collection of Mountain Art, Kaohsiung

TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION
TENSION

2018

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

NEW FICTION

2018

acrylic on canvas

Private Collection

For kids

KAWS has been experimenting with abstraction in his paintings for the past twenty years. Abstract art usually does not represent the real world. Instead artists use colours, lines and shapes to express their emotions and ideas. This can make it difficult for other people to recognise what the artworks portray.

Think about the different shapes KAWS uses in this painting and other nearby paintings. Can you spot elements of landscapes, facial features and KAWS's signature Xs?

UNTITLED

2013

acrylic paint on canvas

Private Collection

The first of KAWS's larger sculptures was produced in 2006 to greet visitors to a shop dedicated to his own fashion and design label, OriginalFake. *COMPANION (ORIGINAL FAKE)*, 2011, with one half of its body dissected to reveal its internal anatomy, references both an anatomical toy and Damien Hirst's monumental sculpture *Hymn*, 1999–2000, itself an appropriation of the same toy.

In recent years, KAWS's sculptures have become overtly emotional or empathic, starting with the work *COMPANION (PASSING THROUGH)*, 2011, situated at the NGV Waterwall. This *COMPANION* sits apparently inconsolable, covering its face with its hands, obscuring its eyes and perhaps the tears welling in them. A number of variations of the forlorn have been explored by KAWS in this later body of work, which often features singular figures slumped at the shoulders. *TOGETHER*, 2017, *CLEAN SLATE*, 2015, and *WAITING*, 2017, are examples where the artist introduces the antidote to these overwhelming feelings, with a second *COMPANION* placing its arm over the other's shoulders reassuringly. The second *COMPANION* provides companionship, making good its name, as earlier figures *CHUM* and *ACCOMPLICE* do too, in different ways.

TOGETHER

2017

painted bronze

Private Collection

CHUM (KCA6)

2012

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Private Collection

WAITING

2017

painted bronze

Private Collection

COMPANION (RESTING PLACE)

2013

painted aluminium

Private Collection

KAWS first introduced COMPANION twenty years ago as a toy figure and has since created numerous iterations of the character in different colourways and scales ranging from human size to monumental sculptures. While COMPANION shares some elements with pre-existing cartoon characters – the gloves, shorts and shoes – KAWS gave it his trademark skull-and-crossbones head and crossed-out eyes. *COMPANION (RESTING PLACE)* shows the reclining character with its body dissected in half to reveal its internal anatomy, colour-coded by organ. The sculpture references depictions of flaying in historical and contemporary art as well as educational anatomical toys.

GOOD INTENTIONS

2015

painted bronze

Private Collection

CHUM (KCC3)

2014

acrylic paint on canvas over panel

Private Collection

CLEAN SLATE

2015

painted bronze

Private Collection

SEEING

2018

painted bronze

Private Collection

For kids

This character is called BFF, which stands for Best Friends Forever. KAWS created BFF in 2016 to join his family of figures, including COMPANION, ACCOMPLICE and CHUM. Can you spot all these characters in the gallery around you? BFF's face has a lovely feature that really stands out! Can you imagine what the title of the sculpture, *SEEING*, might refer to?

In *KAWS: PLAYTIME* next door you can create your own friend for BFF!

COMPANION (ORIGINAL FAKE)

2011

painted fibreglass

Private Collection

NEW MORNING

2012

acrylic paint on canvas over panel (in two parts)

Private Collection

ACCOMPLICE

2010

painted fibreglass

Private Collection

WATCHING

2018

painted bronze

Private Collection

KAWS has produced more than 130 toys over the past twenty years, beginning in 1999 with COMPANION. This was joined by ACCOMPLICE and CHUM in 2002, then by a stockier COMPANION in 2004. When creating these toys, KAWS employed the same light-touch intervention approach as he had with his paintings, such as those in the *KIMPSONS* and *KURFS* bodies of work, using a wide range of characters from popular culture as source material.

From 2006 to 2013, in collaboration with Medicom Toy, KAWS operated a Tokyo store called OriginalFake, dedicated to his own streetwear and design label. He continues to regularly collaborate with other artists, designers and fashion brands, including Dior and UNIQLO. In 2018, in collaboration with creative studio AllRightsReserved, KAWS debuted *KAWS:HOLIDAY*, a 28-metre-long inflatable COMPANION that floated on Seoul's Seokchon Lake. Since then, similar monumental COMPANIONS have made appearances in Taipei, Hong Kong Harbour, Virginia Beach and, most recently, at the foot of Japan's Mount Fuji.

KAWS

Product Drawings 2000–2019

ink and ink on mylar

KAWS x UNIQLO

**KAWS x Sesame Street Cookie Monster
2018**

synthetic materials

KAWS x Marc Jacobs

ANNIVERSARY MOUSE Shoe 2008

leather

KAWS x UNIQLO

KAWS x Sesame Street Elmo 2018

synthetic materials

KAWS x UNIQLO

KAWS x Sesame Street Ernie 2018

synthetic materials

KAWS x UNIQLO

KAWS x Sesame Street Bert 2018

synthetic materials

KAWS x Hajime Sorayama

NO FUTURE COMPANION 2008

metal, chrome (plating)

KAWS

**HOLIDAY (JAPAN) Mount Fuji Shaped
Plate Set 2019**

ceramic

KAWS

HOLIDAY (JAPAN) 2019

vinyl

KAWS

**HOLIDAY (JAPAN) Mount Fuji Plush
2019**

synthetic materials

KAWS

HOLIDAY (JAPAN) Fire King Cup 2019

ceramic

KAWS

GONE 2019

vinyl

KAWS x Dior

BFF in Dior suit 2018

vinyl

KAWS x Nancy Gonzalez

Gotham Clutch 2016

crocodile skin, suede

KAWS x Dior

Black Dior BFF Plush 2018

synthetic materials

KAWS x Dior

Pink Dior BFF Plush 2018

synthetic materials

KAWS

KAWS Moonman 2013

pewter, chrome (plating), aluminum

KAWS x DC

KAWS x DC Shoes 2002

synthetic materials, rubber, plastic

KAWS x Supreme

Supreme Skateboard 2001

wood, acrylic

KAWS x Supreme

Supreme Skateboard 2001

wood, acrylic

KAWS x Krooked

Krooked Skateboard 2004

wood, acrylic

KAWS x Krooked

Krooked Skateboard 2005

wood, acrylic

Brian Donnelly (born 1974), aka KAWS, is one of the most prominent and prolific artists of his generation. His body of work straddles the worlds of art, fashion and design to include paintings, murals, street and public art, large-scale sculptures, and fashion, graphic and product design.

KAWS has produced more than 130 toys over the past twenty years, beginning in 1999 with COMPANION. This was joined by ACCOMPLICE and CHUM in 2002, then by a stockier COMPANION in 2004. When creating these toys, KAWS employed the same light-touch intervention approach as he had with his paintings, such as those in the *KIMPSONS* and *KURFS* bodies of work, using a wide range of characters from popular culture as source material.

From 2006 to 2013, in collaboration with Medicom Toy, KAWS operated a Tokyo store called OriginalFake, dedicated to his own streetwear and design label. He continues to regularly collaborate with other artists, designers and fashion brands, including Dior and UNIQLO.

KAWS

Product Drawings 1999–2018

ink and ink and acrylic on mylar

KAWS

COMPANION 1999

vinyl

KAWS

CHUM 2002

plastic

KAWS

ACCOMPLICE 2002

vinyl

KAWS x Vans

KAWS x The Simpsons Vans 2007

canvas, rubber

KAWS

HOLIDAY 2019

vinyl

KAWS

(FIVE YEARS LATER) COMPANION

2004

vinyl

KAWS

COMPANION (KARIMOKU) 2011

wood

KAWS

PARTNERS 2012

vinyl and plastic

KAWS x Comme Des Garçons

**Comme Des Garçons Small Zip Pouch
2007**

polyester

KAWS x Comme Des Garçons

Comme Des Garçons Wallet 2007

polyester

KAWS x Comme Des Garçons

**Comme Des Garçons Large Zip Pouch
2007**

polyester

KAWS

CAT TEETH 2007

vinyl, paint

KAWS x Comme Des Garçons

Comme Des Garçons Wallet 2007

polyester

KAWS x Nike

KAWS Nike Air Max 90 2008

synthetic materials, rubber

KAWS

KAWS JPP 2008

vinyl

KAWS

COMPANION FLAYED (OPEN EDITION)

2016

vinyl, paint

KAWS

**Bottle artwork for G I R L by
Pharrell Williams 2014**

perfume bottle

KAWS

COMPANION (RESTING PLACE) 2013

vinyl, paint

KAWS

Boba Fett COMPANION 2013

vinyl, paint

KAWS

KAWS Darth Vader 2007

vinyl, plastic, cloth

KAWS

KAWS Stormtrooper 2008

vinyl

KAWS

COMPANION (PASSING THROUGH)

2013

vinyl, paint

KAWS x Nike

KAWS Air Jordan 4 2017

synthetic materials, rubber

KAWS

KAWS Astro Boy 2012

vinyl

KAWS

CLEAN SLATE 2018

vinyl

KAWS and Real Skateboards

Real Skateboard 2006-2007

wood, acrylic

KAWS

ALONG THE WAY 2019

vinyl

KAWS x Visvim

KAWS x Visvim Logan Lo 2008

canvas, rubber

KAWS

KAWS Pinocchio & Jiminy-Cricket 2010

vinyl

KAWS

JOE KAWS Snoopy 2011

vinyl

KAWS

**YOUR PLEASURE IS MY PAIN
(ASHTRAY) 2006**

ceramic

KAWS

**HEART AND CROSSBONES WALL
CLOCK 1999**

silkscreen, plastic

KAWS

WARM REGARDS – ORIGINALFAKE

2008

vinyl

KAWS

WARM REGARDS – ORIGINALFAKE

2008

vinyl

KAWS

WARM REGARDS – ORIGINALFAKE

2008

vinyl

KAWS

KAWS Wonderwall 2010

vinyl

KAWS

BLITZ 2004

vinyl

KAWS

BLITZ 2004

vinyl

KAWS

BLITZ 2004

vinyl

KAWS

TOGETHER 2018

vinyl, paint

KAWS

BFF 2017

vinyl, paint

KAWS

SEEING/WATCHING cups

2018

glass

KAWS

SMALL LIE 2017

vinyl, paint

KAWS

Snoopy Ceramic (KAWS version) 2012

ceramic

KAWS

HOLIDAY (bath toy) 2019

vinyl

KAWS x Undercover

Undercover Kids Shoes 1999

canvas, rubber

KAWS

Born 1974, Jersey City, New Jersey, United States

GONE

2019

patinated and painted bronze

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria

Brian Donnelly, aka KAWS, was born in 1974 in New Jersey and started out as a graffiti and street artist. Now living and working in Brooklyn, New York, KAWS draws on the complexities of modern life and the contemporary built environment, and contrasts this with the aesthetics of pop and street culture.

KAWS began making small-scale sculptural works in the late 1990s following visits to Japan, where he discovered a thriving collectables community. Drawing on elements from iconic cartoon and pop-culture characters, KAWS's sculptures have universal appeal. They often embody pathos, fragility, humility and vulnerability, and are among the artist's most emotional works. The sculptures resonate and engage with contemporary issues such as loneliness, the lack of human contact in today's society, and helplessness in the face of dark times and an increasingly fractured world. This new sculpture, *GONE*, 2019, is among the most powerful of these statements, and the largest bronze sculpture by the artist to date. The work is an emotional depiction of loss, with the pose reminiscent of that in the famous Renaissance sculpture by Michelangelo, *Pietà*, 1498–99, which depicts the lifeless Christ cradled in his mother Mary's arms, after the crucifixion.

KAWS

Born 1974, Jersey City, New Jersey, United States

COMPANION (PASSING THROUGH)

2011

painted bronze

Private Collection

For kids

COMPANION was created by KAWS twenty years ago and is one of the key characters in his universe. You might recognise some elements on COMPANION's body – the gloves, shorts and shoes – from cartoon characters, but KAWS gave COMPANION the skull-and-crossbones head with X eyes that make his creations unmistakable.

Why do you think this COMPANION is covering up its eyes? Could it be that he is sad, or maybe feeling a little bit shy?

KAWS

Born 1974, Jersey City, New Jersey, United States

WHAT PARTY

2019

patinated bronze

Private Collection

CHUM, the character featured in this work, is based on the Michelin Man, the official mascot of the Michelin tyre company. First introduced in 1894, the Michelin Man is one of the world's oldest and most recognised trademarks. KAWS launched a toy figure of CHUM in 2002 and by 2008 the character had grown larger than human scale, towering over audiences. Whereas the original CHUM had an assertive attitude – hands on hips and head raised – in *WHAT PARTY* the character appears downcast and isolated, suggesting a disillusionment with our times.