

**PRESSBOOK**

**KAWS**

***LOEWS***

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**Loews  
Barabara Pollock  
Winter - Spring 2013**

"WHEN I'M MAKING WORK, I'M THINKING ABOUT MAKING IT GOOD OR BAD, NOT MAKING ONE THING FOR ONE REALM OR ANOTHER."

an encore installation at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Donnelly is a master of multi-tasking in making his work, switching from bright in-your-face paintings to three-dimensional works, sited both inside and outside the exhibition halls, all while continuing to oversee his various commercial ventures. "When I was doing graffiti, I always thought of it as painting," says the artist, who perennially wears a baseball cap and is modest about his accomplishments. "It's amazing the opportunities that have opened up for me. I can't say I could have predicted this," he says speaking from his Brooklyn, N.Y., studio in Williamsburg, the nerve center of the KAWS empire.

Now, KAWS is getting ready for his biggest opportunity of all, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. One of his favorite characters, named Companion, will be turned into a 40-foot balloon, hovering over the crowds along with Elmo, Snoopy, and Garfield. It is an honor that Macy's has extended to artists since 2005 with Jeff Koons and Tom Otterness selected previously.

"I'm curious to see the audience response," says KAWS, who acknowledges that Companion is not a cheerful character. Companion is a demented version of Mickey Mouse, his body a pale grey, with his white-gloved hands covering his face, as if in shame. "Most of the balloons in the



parade are sort of heroic characters and Companion is more introverted, a little shy," he adds. In another version, titled *Companion (Passing Through)*, created in 2010, the character is sitting, head in his hands, a pose that calls to mind Rodin's *The Thinker*. KAWS' sculpture was first shown outside a Hong Kong museum, then it moved to the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Conn., then to a sidewalk in New York City's meat packing district, finally winding its way to The Modern in Fort Worth. Even though Companion looks suicidally depressed, it has been a hit with children as well as critics.

Unlike Companion, KAWS seems entirely unconflicted, finding no problem in conflating art and commerce. The tag "KAWS" was first spotted emblazoned across billboards in his hometown of Jersey City in the early 1990s, even before he attended the School of Visual Arts. The letters do not stand for anything; they were just letters that he liked when he first started graffiti. By the late-1990s, while engaged in