

**PRESSBOOK**

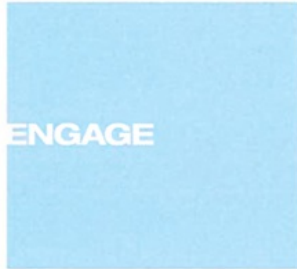
**KAWS**

***LOEWS***

*December 2013*



Loews  
Barabara Pollock  
Winter - Spring 2013



## BRIAN DONNELLY, A.K.A. KAWS

HOW A GRAFFITI ARTIST  
FROM JERSEY CITY  
BECAME A DARLING OF  
MAINSTREAM MEDIA.  
BY BARBARA POLLOCK

b

rian Donnelly, better known by his alias, KAWS, has made an art of subverting categories, seamlessly moving from graffiti artist to cult product designer to internationally recognized art star, over the course of his

20-year career. KAWS, which also functions as a brand name and a logo, is best known for his line of skewed versions of cartoon characters and Pop icons, including Mickey Mouse, the Michelin Man, the Smurfs, Darth Vader, the Simpsons, and Sponge Bob Square Pants. All are outfitted with blank Xs instead of eyes. Sneakers, T-shirts, shoes, snowboards, and collectibles have all born the face of KAWS characters. Now, museums are clamoring for his work and drawing critical acclaim for their exhibits of KAWS' boldly colored canvases of his designs and larger-than-life sculptures.

Just this year, the artist has had two shows with Galerie Perrotin, one in Hong Kong and one in Paris, as well as a retrospective at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and



LOEWS



THE NAME EFFECT | PERFECT SQUARE | GO WEST

Loews  
Barabara Pollock  
Winter - Spring 2013





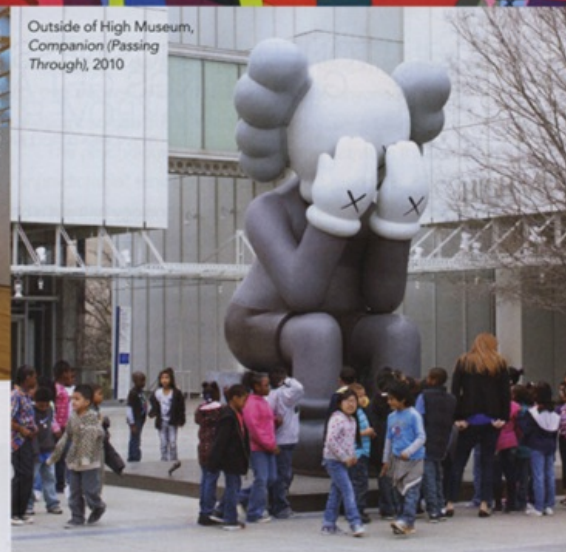
**Loews  
Barabara Pollock  
Winter - Spring 2013**



Silent City, 2011, acrylic  
canvas, three panels



Gone and Beyond, 2011-2012, Courtesy  
of Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles



Outside of High Museum,  
Companion (Passing  
Through), 2010

brief stints as a freelance designer for Disney, he was known for adding his X-eyed cartoon characters to advertisements in bus shelters in Soho. Turned on by Tokyo's underground toy-trading scene, he opened his own boutique, OriginalFake, in the Aoyama district, selling his own line of clothing and collectibles. But, he didn't stop there. KAWS has been spotted on Vans and Nike sneakers, Burton snowboards, and Commes de Garçons clothing. The artist's on-going collaboration with Tomoaki Nagao, a.k.a. Nigo, the brains behind the Japan-based streetwear brand, A Bathing Ape, is a favorite with hip hop icons such as Kanye West and Pharrell Williams.

"I think it all comes from the same place," says KAWS commenting on his ability to handle multiple directions all at the same time. Because of his commercial ventures, he has often been compared to Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, who designed a line of upscale handbags for Louis Vuitton.

Murakami underwent much scrutiny from the art world when both his paintings and products were exhibited together in his museum show. Perhaps because KAWS is more at ease with the fluidity of his projects, he has managed to get away with his style and only charm art world insiders.

It is true that whether we look at his paintings or his collectibles, this artist has created some of the most memorable images in recent contemporary art. Says KAWS, "I guess the different projects operate in different ways but when I'm making work, I'm thinking about making it good or bad, not making one thing for one realm or another."