RC₂ GALLERY

KAWS

KAWS (American, b.1974) was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, as Brian Donnelly. He first became interested in graffiti in elementary school where he spent a good deal of time copying graffiti images onto paper. His first influences were neighborhood children who painted graffiti images on walls within his community. As he grew older, his influences came from traditional artists such as Gerhard Richter, Claes Oldenburg and Chuck Close.

KAWS' career began as a graffiti artist in New York in the early 1990s. His images were seen on billboards, at bus stops and in phone booths.

He obtained his B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts in New York.

Immediately after graduation in 1996, KAWS began working as a freelance artist for Disney, creating animated backgrounds. Some of his most popular works include contributions to *101 Dalmations*, *Daria*, and *Doug*.

Once KAWS began to gain popularity, his graffiti advertisements became highly sought after. He traveled extensively to work in Paris, London, Germany and Japan.

In 1998, he received the Pernod Liquid Art Award, which offers a grant to new artists.

In the late 1990s, KAWS began to design and produce limited-edition toys. These gained international popularity, especially in Japan. He also began to collaborate on several different toys, including collaborations with Nigo for *A Bathing Ape*.

Some of KAWS' other popular collaborative works include his redesign of *Mickey Mouse*, *The Michelin Man* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

KAWS' work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut; the Harris Museum in Preston, England; the Parco Gallery in Tokyo, Japan; and the City Gallery at Chastain in Atlanta, Georgia. KAWS' traveling exhibition, *Beautiful Losers*, toured throughout Europe and the United States at venues including the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia.