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### **Design Research Paper: KAWS**

Brian Donnelly, better known as KAWS, is an American artist and designer, famous for his collection of work involving his 'Companion' characters. KAWS collection of work is highly sought after and individually collected by many prominent figures, such as Pharell Williams, Drake, PewDiePie, and so on. His work is exhibited in many different galleries and museums, as well as held in the permanent collections of public institutions. Donnelly was born in Jersey City, New Jersey on November 4th, 1974 where he attended St. Anthony High School. Donnelly created the tag KAWS for himself, which has no actual meaning and is based purely on how it looks, and would paint it on rooftops and buildings. You can find his tag plastered on a building across from his high school, conveniently placed so he was able to view it from his classroom back in the 1990s. Donnelly went on to attend SVA (School of Visual Arts) in New York City, where he would receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration in 1996.



**BRIAN DONNELLY (KAWS)**

KAWS learned his craft through illegal graffiti after moving to New York City in the 1990s. Around the time KAWS moved to the Lower East Side of NYC, Christy Turlington's underwear modeling campaign for Calvin Klein would take up the whole side of buildings with billboards and covered up years worth of graffiti in the process. KAWS then felt the need to restore things and painted a skull and bones into a huge Kate Moss ad. This was subvertising, the practice of making spoofs or parodies of corporate and political advertisements, and was something he would frequently take part in. KAWS would continue to do this with billboards, bus shelters, phone booths, and so on, even outside of NYC and in places such as Paris, Berlin, and Tokyo.



**NYC, 1997**  
**KAWS POSING WITH A PHONE**  
**BOOTH AD HE SUBVERTISED**



**PARIS, 1999**  
**KAWS PLACING A SUBVERTISED**  
**AD IN BUS SHELTER**

KAWS paintings and sculptures tend to repeat his different character creations and motifs, with some dating back to the beginning of his career in the 1990s; Companion, Chum, and Bendy to name a few. KAWS would also repeatedly 'X-out' the eyes of his own, or others characters in the art he creates. His work has an emphasis of color and line, very distinct graphics, and again the repeated use of these characters and motifs. Furthermore, similar to his subvert ads, he re-appropriates different pop

culture icons in his work such as Mickey Mouse, in which Companion is based off of, the 'Michelin Man' in which Chum is based off of, Snoopy from 'Peanuts', and much more. His characters are often depicted in vulnerable manners, seemingly shy and powerless with their hands covering their faces.

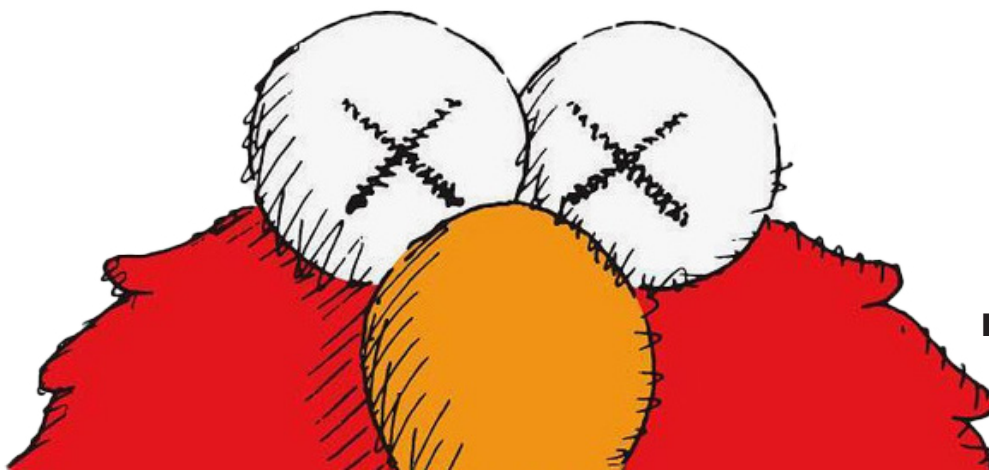


**KAWS, CHUM**



**KAWS, COMPANION**

KAWS to this day has done many collaborations with other artists and companies, as well as featuring his artwork in exhibits around the world. Some notable examples are his work on Kanye West's '808s and Heartbreak' album, his ongoing relationship with Uniqlo in producing multiple lines of T-shirts, based on characters from children's shows such as 'Sesame Street' and 'Peanuts', and also his recent exhibit installation, 'KAWS: WHAT PARTY' in New York's Brooklyn Museum.



**KAWS X UNIQLO  
ELMO**

## Sources

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