

# KAWS AND EFFECT

Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin opens the art season with a solo show by a buzzed-about Pop artist.

BY THOMAS HOLLINGWORTH

Until recently the notion that an artist could become successful without a gallery seemed ridiculous. Brian Donnelly, the 33-year-old Brooklyn-based artist better known as KAWS, is proving that artists, with the aid of the Internet and fertile, underground, scene-fed tributaries, are beginning to take matters into their own hands. As the industry continues to embrace the contemporary art merchandise movement, a new breed of makers are stepping up and riding the latest wave of brand-related super-collectible kitsch. And Donnelly is primed to lead the charge.

"He is the next great painter and sculptor working in the Pop tradition," said Sandra Gering, owner and director of New York-based Gering & López Gallery, which represents Donnelly. "Just as Warhol used iconography from his time, KAWS is doing the same for his generation."

Collected by a number of museums and set to open the art season here in Miami with a highly anticipated solo show at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, it would appear that Donnelly's unusual approach to art-making and his unconventional role as a cultural colander is working for him.

Donnelly, who was born and raised in New Jersey, studied at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. It was there he began his artistic career by orchestrating guerrilla operations of sly graphic vandalism—like stealing phone booth posters, slightly altering them and then putting them back in place. "Making work was just a basic need, something that felt comfortable to me at an early



age," he said. "But I don't find it important to label what I do."

These days, along with launching a variety of products including toys, apparel and even his own store, Original Fake, in Tokyo, Donnelly is focusing his attention on the galleries. Much like FriendsWithYou—the Miami duo who created a fantasy-world cast of characters that are both sold in stores that cater to children and exhibited in museums—Donnelly successfully exhausted almost every other avenue of commercial interest before finally breaking the seal of fine art. "The most satisfying aspect of my practice is the opportunities I get to communicate with many people around the world," he remarks.

Defined or not, Donnelly finds himself at the epicenter of a renaissance in street art. Having sold paintings to rapper-producer Pharrell Williams, Japanese DJ and fashion designer Nigo and international art star Takashi Murakami, Donnelly has firmly asserted himself within the zeitgeist. With a wealth of experience behind him and an art form all his own, presently unrestricted by medium or genre, the world's art markets lay before this cultural cowboy.

*Saturated* opens at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin on September 20 and runs through November 15. 194 NW 30th St., Wynwood. [galerieperrotin.com](http://galerieperrotin.com)

Above: *KAWSBOB 1*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, Below: *Kimpsons #3*, 2004, acrylic on canvas



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