

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**MAJOR EXHIBITION BY KAWS TO OPEN AT HIGH MUSEUM OF ART IN FEBRUARY 2012**

*KAWS Creating Site-specific Mural for the High;
Will Be Largest Exhibition of New Work by Brooklyn-based Artist;
“Companion” Sculpture to be Installed on Piazza in November*

KAWS: Down Time
February 18–May 27, 2012

ATLANTA, September 12, 2011 – The High Museum of Art will premiere a major multi-site exhibition of work by Brooklyn-based artist Brian Donnelly, a.k.a. KAWS. “KAWS: Down Time” will open on February 18, 2012, with a 22-foot-high, site-specific mural painted in the Margaretta Taylor Lobby of the High’s Wieland Pavilion, along with a 24-foot-long triptych hung in of the Museum’s Robinson Atrium. In addition, a gallery installation of paintings, drawings and sculpture will feature a grid of 27 tondo paintings, each 40 inches in diameter. Visitors will be able to watch KAWS over the course of a week in early February as he creates the mural exclusively for the High. The exhibition will also include KAWS’s monumental sculpture “Companion” (2010), which will be installed on the Museum’s piazza on November 18, 2011. “KAWS: Down Time” has been organized exclusively for the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and will be on view from February 18, 2012, through May 27, 2012.



“From their saturated palettes and seductive surfaces to their complex spatial geometries, KAWS’s paintings have a formal elasticity that is humorous and playful as well as complex, sophisticated and discursive,” said Michael Rooks, the High’s Wieland Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. “KAWS has created a new order of American Pop—one that suggests the protean universe of New York abstraction re-imagined within the frame of Cartoon Network. His work is uncannily familiar but foreign at the same time, like in a dream, and it unites the often distant worlds of fine art and youth culture.”

An influential member of a new generation of street artists who have successfully united commercial enterprises with their artistic practices, KAWS employs his skill and delight as a designer of toys and other objects in his practice as a painter and sculptor. The objects he produces for commercial consumption are in direct dialogue with his art; in fact, he thinks of his t-shirt designs as “drawings.” His new paintings in this exhibition allude to pop culture sources such as Sponge Bob Square Pants, as well as the more obscure work of artist H. C. Westermann, who also drew upon popular cartoon imagery in his work. “Companion,” which will be installed on the Museum’s Sifly Piazza, represents one of several hybrid figures created by KAWS who are part of a growing cast of characters. Enlarged to a monumental scale, “Companion” fuses a Mickey Mouse-inspired body with an inflated skull-and-crossbones head, an image that has become emblematic of KAWS. The sculpture’s contemplative pose recalls Rodin’s famed

“The Thinker,” provoking us to wonder what is on the character’s mind and inviting us to empathize with its tragicomic posture.

Brian Donnelly, a.k.a. KAWS

Brian Donnelly, a.k.a. KAWS, emerged as a street artist in the early 1990s, painting his moniker on walls and billboards in and around Jersey City and New York City. In the mid-1990s he began modifying advertisements in bus shelters and on phone booths with paintings of his emblematic skull-and-crossbones motif. He continued to develop this image for the next few years, conducting guerilla interventions on advertisements in bus shelters and phone booths not only in New York City, but also Paris, London, Berlin and Tokyo. This work led to direct collaborations with the commercial photographers and designers who produced the original ads and has been featured in numerous publications. It was exhibited most recently at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, as part of the groundbreaking exhibition “Art in the Streets.” KAWS studied at The School of Visual Arts in New York City and currently lives in Brooklyn. His work has been exhibited internationally in Japan, France, Spain and The Netherlands. KAWS is represented by Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles, and Galerie Perrotin, Paris.

Organization and Support

“KAWS: Down Time” has been organized exclusively for the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, by the High’s Wieland Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Michael Rooks. The exhibition will be on view from February 18 through May 27, 2012. “KAWS: Down Time” will be accompanied by a fully illustrated exhibition catalogue and will coincide with a public program featuring KAWS and Michael Rooks in conversation at the Alliance Theatre. The program starts at 7 p.m. on Thursday, February 16, as part of the High’s Conversations with Contemporary Artists lecture series.

High Museum of Art

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High’s media arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005 the High opened three new buildings by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum’s size, creating a vibrant “village for the arts” at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta. For more information about the High, please visit www.high.org.

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit www.woodruffcenter.org.

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