



KAWS

Media release



6 February–12 June 2016

Longside Gallery and open air

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) presents the first UK museum exhibition by KAWS, the renowned American artist, whose practice includes painting, sculpture, printmaking and design. The exhibition, in the expansive Longside Gallery and open air, features over 20 works: commanding sculptures in bronze, fibreglass, aluminium and wood alongside large, bright canvases immaculately rendered in acrylic paint – some created especially for the exhibition.

The Park's historically designed landscape becomes home to a series of monumental and imposing sculptures, including a new six-metre-tall work, which take KAWS's idiosyncratic form of almost-recognisable characters in the process of growing up.

Brooklyn-based KAWS is considered one of the most relevant artists of his generation. His influential work engages people across the generations with contemporary art and especially opens popular culture to young and diverse audiences. A dynamic cultural force across art, music and fashion, KAWS's work possesses a wry humour with a singular vernacular marked by bold gestures and fastidious production.

In the 1990s, KAWS conceived the soft skull with crossbones and crossed-out eyes which would become his signature iconography, subverting and abstracting cartoon figures. He stands within an art historical trajectory that includes artists such as Claes Oldenburg and Jeff Koons, developing a practice that merges fine art and merchandising with a desire to communicate within

the public realm. Initially through collaborations with global brands, and then in his own right, KAWS has moved beyond the sphere of the art market to occupy a unique position of international appeal.

KAWS absorbs popular imagery to produce works that are semi-familiar, with layers of contradictions and subtleties. Outdoors, with their outsize and monumental proportions, KAWS's sculptures bring to mind dystopian cartoon characters; recognisable personalities from childhood who appear to have lost their innocence. Against the Park's tree line, the group of six works in natural and black-stained wood, measuring between six and 10 metres in height, are simultaneously spectacular and plaintive. Once bright, iconic characters are rendered in disheartened, world-weary poses; imposing yet full of pathos, they point to an array of psychological narratives, suggesting compassion, surprise and despair.

In Longside Gallery, KAWS's oeuvre is further extended by works including *ACCOMPLICE* (2010), a baby pink monstrous rabbit figure, a neon pink *CHUM* (2009), a bulbous figure, and the spermatozoa-like *BORN TO BEND* (2013), while *COMPANION (RESTING PLACE)* (2013), and the three-metre-high *COMPANION (ORIGINALFAKE)* (2006) from the artist's Tokyo store, with its skin peeled back to reveal highly coloured internal organs, is profoundly exposed. *HE EATS ALONE* (2014), fabricated in Corian and aluminium is a hybrid sculpture/painting, while *UPS AND DOWNS* (2012), the artist's series of 10 acrylic canvases, point towards SpongeBob.

The artist has made a series of five paintings especially for the exhibition. Each measuring 112 x 92 inches, they will span the largest wall of the spacious gallery, creating a swathe of brilliant colour and complex energy. Constructed with painstaking attention to detail, the abstracted forms overlay and interweave, forming shadows and deepening space to reveal a slinking, enigmatic figure.

The exhibition continues YSP's commitment to sharing the best of international practice with a diverse audience. It is accompanied by an extensive publication including texts by YSP Director of Programme, Clare Lilley, and Flavia Frigeri, Tate Curator of International Art, together with events including an in-conversation between the artist and Clare Lilley, on 6 February 2016, and exclusive merchandise, designed especially for YSP by KAWS.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT KAWS

KAWS was born in Jersey City, New Jersey and received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York. He lives and works in Brooklyn. Solo exhibitions include Brooklyn Museum, New York; CAC Malaga, Spain; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; The Modern Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Connecticut; Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles; Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong, New York, and Paris; and Mary Boone Gallery, New York. A survey exhibition of his work opens at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas in the autumn of 2016. His work has been shown in the public realm, including ARTZUID outside the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Frieze Sculpture Park, London; and Hong Kong's Harbour City. He has collaborated with international brands including Comme des Garçons, Nike, Lucas Films, and MTV, for whom he created a huge inflatable version of the iconic *Moonman* for the 2013 Video Music Awards. He has made cover artwork for the October 2015 W Magazine Art Issue (with Drake) and for Kanye West's

2008 album, *808's and Heartbreak*. In addition to clothing and other items, he has made limited edition vinyl toys since the late 1990s, including with Japanese company Medicom Toy and his own company OriginalFake.

ABOUT CLARE LILLEY

Clare Lilley has had lead responsibility for YSP's exhibitions and projects, the collection and public engagement since 2010. Recent projects and published material include Bill Viola, Fiona Banner, Ai Weiwei, Amar Kanwar, Yinka Shonibare MBE, James Lee Byars, Shirin Neshat, Jaume Plensa, James Turrell and Maria Roosen. She co-curated William Turnbull at Chatsworth House (2013), curated Frieze London Sculpture Park (2012–15) and Jaume Plensa at San Giorgio Maggiore for the Venice Biennale (2015). She has nominated and judged awards for RIBA White Rose Awards, the Arts Foundation Sculpture Prize, the Paul Hamlyn Awards for Artists, and the inaugural Nasher Sculpture Prize. She is a Trustee of Site Gallery, Sheffield and the Public Catalogue Foundation, London, sits as an independent member on the Advisory Committee for the Government Art Collection, and is an invited member of the Women Leaders in Museums Network and the Perrier Jouët Arts Salon.

YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is the leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. It is an independent charitable trust and registered museum (number 1067908) situated in the 500-acre, 18th-century Bretton Hall estate in West Yorkshire. Founded in 1977 by Executive Director Peter Murray, YSP was the first sculpture park in the UK, and is the largest of its kind in Europe, providing the only place in Europe to see Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* in its entirety alongside a significant collection of sculpture, including bronzes by Henry Moore, and site-specific works by Andy Goldsworthy, David Nash and James Turrell.

YSP also mounts a world-class, year-round temporary exhibitions programme including some of the world's leading artists across five indoor galleries and the open air. Recent highlights include exhibitions by Bill Viola, Anthony Caro, Fiona Banner, Ai Weiwei, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Amar Kanwar, Yinka Shonibare MBE, Joan Miró and Jaume Plensa. More than 80 works on display across the estate include major sculptures by Ai Weiwei, Roger Hiorns, Sol LeWitt, Joan Miró, Dennis Oppenheim and Magdalena Abakanowicz.

YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation and Sakurako and William Fisher through the Sakana Foundation. YSP was named Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014.

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Images, left to right: *SMALL LIE* (2013) courtesy the artist. Afromosia, H1000cm x W464cm x D427.2cm; *ACCOMPLICE* (2010) courtesy the artist. Fibreglass and rubberised paint, 305cm x 121cm x 91cm; *UPS AND DOWNS* (detail) (2012) courtesy the artist, photo by Farzad Owrang. Acrylic on canvas, H88.9cm x W58.4cm.