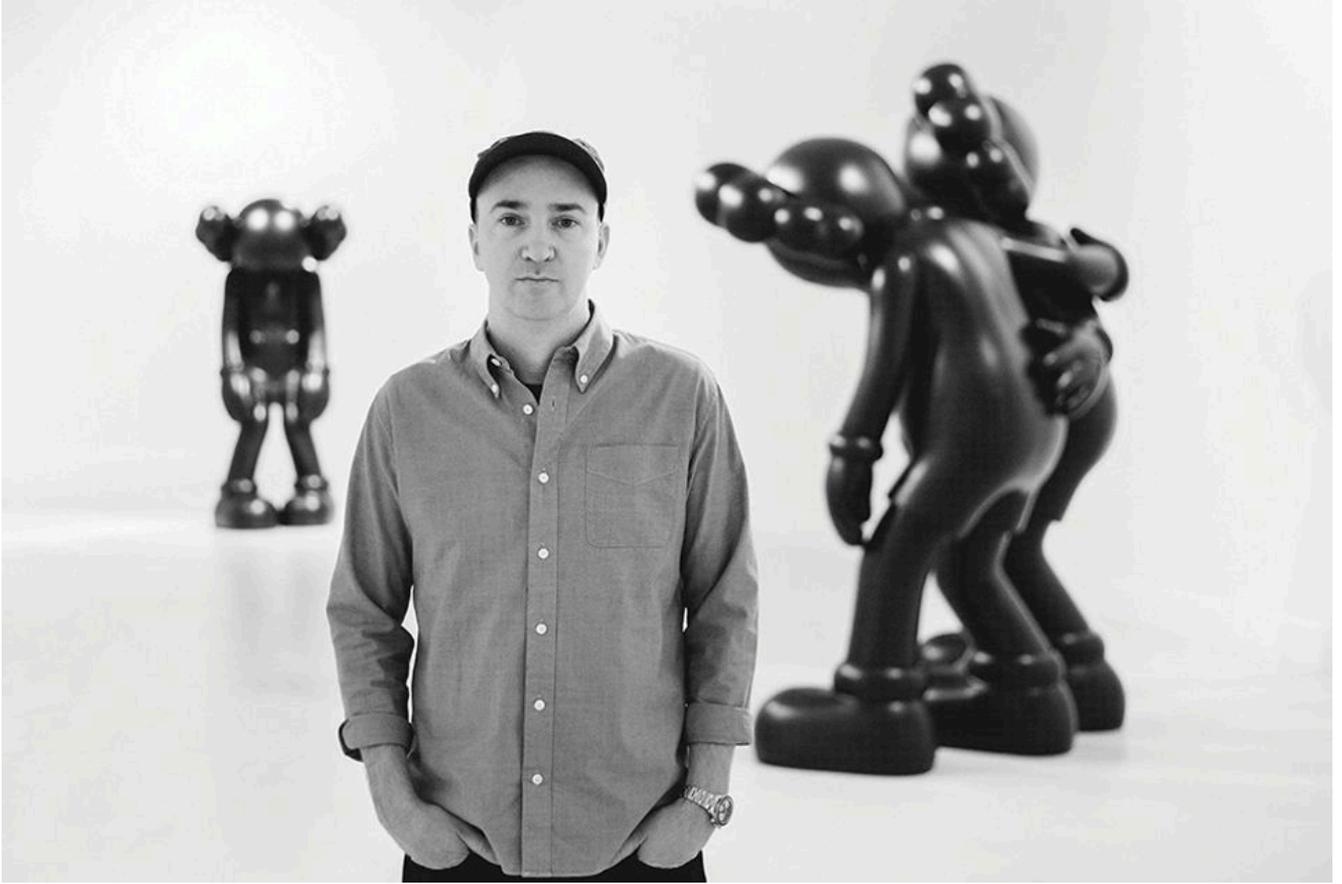


KAWS picks his favourite works at Frieze Masters

The US artist and designer has had a life-long love affair with collecting

[Alison Cole](#) 4th October 2019 12:15 BST

Brian Donnelly, aka KAWS, has long been an avid art collector, beginning as a young graffiti artist trading sketch books with friends. For the past 20 years, the US artist and designer has nosed around galleries buying works by his favourite artists, including Raymond Pettibon and Robert Crumb, from dealers such as David Zwirner. Although he did not grow up with art at home (“unless you count paintings of the woods”) he says “collecting was ever present, if not conscious”. His preference: *Star Wars* editions from the 1970s. KAWS studied at New York’s School of Visual Arts, “looking at Bouguereau [during the day] and then doing freight trains [at night]”. So when we asked KAWS, who is in town for his new show, *Blackout*, at Skarstedt gallery, to tour Frieze Masters with us, a similarly eclectic mix of works caught his eye.



Courtesy of Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation

Having spent the first year of his career animating for Disney, KAWS took inspiration from Mickey Mouse when creating his "Companions"



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Roy Lichtenstein, Flower in Vase and Flowers (both 1982), Castelli Gallery, New York: "These are so nice. I have a Lichtenstein painting of a De Kooning Woman; that's what these feel like. They

satisfy my appreciation of the graphic line. They would look as beautiful on a stamp as they would on the side of a ten-storey building block. He has that quality that can just expand or contract."



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H.C. Westermann, *Confined Murderer* (1955), walnut, bronze, *Venus Over Manhattan*, New York: "I

got into Westermann through his watercolours; his drawings sucked me in when I saw Eye Infection at the Stedelijk in Amsterdam. I started to collect his drawings, then I got into his sculptures. This piece is super early. There are a few artists I have tunnel vision with—like Westermann and Peter Saul. The character in the sculpture is so alone. But I also love the woodwork, the rivets: it's so tactile. If you turn it upside down, you'll find the subject written on the base or on the back. The thing about Westermann is they're just so nice to handle. That's not really reflective of my work because the last thing I want somebody to do is touch one of my things as they have such delicate surfaces..."



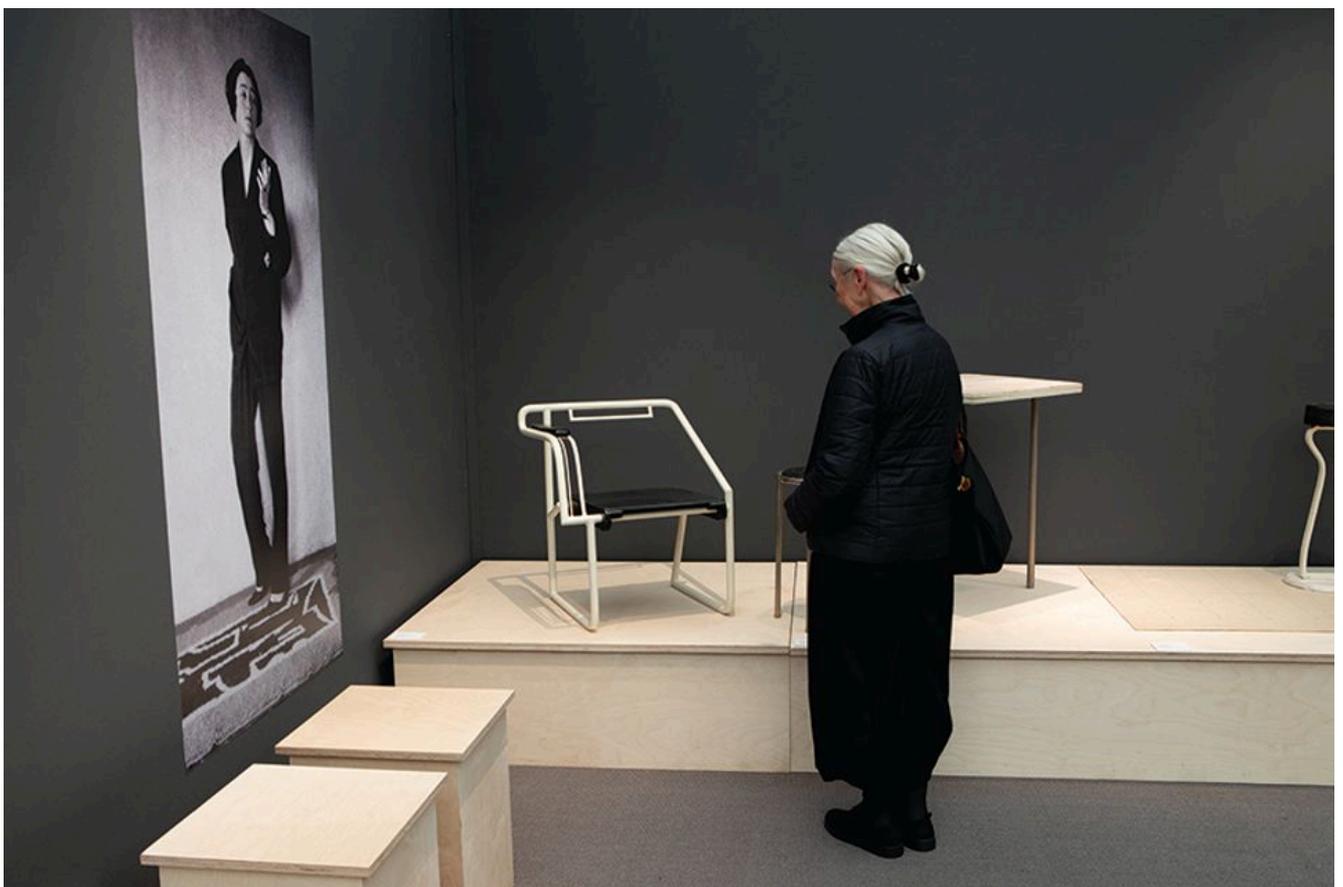
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Keith Haring, Vase (1981), Skarstedt: "This work is a great rare example of his three-dimensional work that seems to have no beginning and end." Another artist that caught KAWS's eye is Armando Testa at Galleria Continua: "I was really impressed by his graphic paintings, especially Elefante Pirelli (1954)."



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Wenzel Jamnitzer, *Perspectiva*. Nuremberg (1568), first edition, from a special collection of artists' manuals on perspective and human proportion, Jörn Günther Rare Books, Stalden, Switzerland: "I love books. I don't know if it's from having blackbooks or because I've been lucky enough to have some artists' sketchbooks; it's just that real intimacy you experience. These are amazing. I'm currently completely immersed in thinking about working in virtual reality, augmented reality, and then I see something extraordinary that is dated so early. The shapes are gorgeous. I love the way the outer borders just wrap around and go into each other, creating a sort of infinity."



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Eileen Gray, Non-conformist Armchair (1925-28), Gilles Peyroulet & Cie, Paris: "I would have this chair in my dream flat. It's funny, because I love this, but normally when I am looking at design, I like organic furniture styles, like Wendell Castle, who's actually similar to Westermann with his woodworking. But this, although it was made in 1925, looks like it's from a spaceship. It's the same as looking at those earlier Renaissance books. When I was growing up as a skateboarder, I was thinking 'my god, the skate graphics of the 1980s were so ahead of their time'. Then you learn about Robert Crumb and that was so ahead of its time, and then you step back further to someone such as Basil Wolverton in the 1950s, and you realise how much you don't know. This is super graphic. I would have never encountered something like these works in the normal run of things. This is the benefit of walking the fair."



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Hilma af Klint, Untitled (1934), The Gallery of Everything, London: "The Klint is great. You're not going to see another one of these at the fair. I love The Gallery of Everything: where do you see work like this available in private hands? I have things I tend to lean towards, and I go down that rabbit hole. I have been bothering the gallery's director, James Brett, about this drawing by Kotzian, but he just doesn't want to sell it. The Klint is not typical of what I collect, but I like the airiness of it. I always find ways to justify the things I buy."