

*Practitioner's Statement*

*2 Connected works (oil on canvas)*

# ***FRANK*** *and* ***IT SUITS***

Word count: 1,000

*Frank and It Suits* explores society's twisted value system: we value flawless facades which cover insecurities, perverse ideologies, corruption and abuse. We trust the untrustworthy like an Iago or Abigail in *Othello* or *The Crucible*. But we run from the frank and blunt truths. I have used the suit as a symbol of society's many facades. This is ironic for me who has grown up appreciating suits, as my Grandfather is a Tailor. Western society pines for fame, success and wealth. However, in the pursuit of these goals crime, abuse and deceit thrives. This millennium has given birth to a new-found obsession with perfection: we choose to hide behind façades. Whether it be big little lies or simply curating a perfect life on social media. The suit represents this, a glossy façade hiding a deteriorating and corrupt truth. In 2013 Julia Gillard said that the government was dominated by "men in blue ties." Society values men in suits with ties, but it is clear with the Nixon's presidency or Weinstein scandal that the suit is indeed a façade.

Balzac once wrote that politicians are "monsters of self-possession." We trust our leaders, however some politicians, for example deny global warming and continue to make decisions which bring detriment to the Earth. Today with rumours of another cold war, the suited man inescapably alludes to Trump, who arguably is uprooting the conservative and backward America with spikes in racial tension, thus dragging America back into its pages of a dark history. Trump proves to be a selfish and lying wealthy man with backward beliefs who tries to fill the image of the suit.

*Frank* represents honesty. Frank is defined as: *open, honest and direct*, and *Frank* is that; honest, direct, kind, blunt, warm, humorous, mischievous. Frank's look is stereotypical of someone to possibly distrust and the suited man's look is stereotypical of someone to possibly trust. Although Frank does not usually wear singlets, like the one I posed him in, I felt it was a crucial feature to accentuate his tattoos, masculinity and intimidating feel; to then juxtapose that with his kind nature, hopeful expression and the colourist style. Frank's tattoos are both a frank expression of his frank self, but a misleading appearance which reflects an incorrect stereotype. Tattoos can display an intimidating bravado, but they are a true part of Frank, who is both blunt, direct and frank, but kind, humorous and caring. Arguably Frank wears a tattoo sleeve as well as his heart on his sleeve. This encapsulates his paradoxical nature. The colourist palette and the painterly style juxtaposes Frank's overt masculinity but is an outward manifestation of his softness. The delicate colours and paint application reveal Frank's sincere, gentle and caring nature. The dirtiness of the colours conveys Frank's raw realness as a human being, verses something 'perfect', 'mechanic' or 'superior'; all elements we currently value in society.

I have been heavily inspired by the artists: Julian Meagher, Shawn Barber, Carla Fletcher and Kehinde Wiley for *Frank*, and Rene Magritte, Samuel Rush Condon, Christopher Orchard and Peter Ravn for *It Suits*. Meagher, Barber, Fletcher and Wiley all portray masculinity in a colourist, raw, grungy or feminine way. This has inspired me to paint *Frank* in soft luscious oils with a rich colourist style and a pastel palette. These Artists all portray a masculine man who is also soft, evident in Barber's '*Jason and Lula Kundell*' which depicts a bald and tattooed man embracing a child with tenderness. This is the

juxtaposition I wanted to capture in *Frank*, who too is bald and tattooed. Meagher and Fletcher's simple, candid and honest compositions of their masculine subjects were inspirations for my composition of Frank; who stands grounded, stripped back facing you, the viewer. Like Barber, Meagher shows a softness to '*Daniel Johns*' where he looks upward with hope – similarly, and unintentionally Frank posed similarly. Afterward I found inspiration from Meagher and chose the image of Frank looking upward as it struck me to be both strong, raw, frank, soft, and hopeful. Magritte, Ravn and Christopher's unconventional composition of the suited man inspired me to paint the suited man running away from the viewer, responsibility and the truth. Society almost always sees suited men in an orchestrated and formal way. Like Ravn depicts the suited men "out of control" in intimate ways, I wanted to showcase the subject of *It Suits* in an unrehearsed and vulnerable moment, which the subject would not want others to see. Because this would reveal the façade of the suit. Inspired by Condon, I chose yellow as the background for *It Suits*, because it is a bright, garish, harsh and uncomfortable colour for portraits. The yellow juxtaposes the honest, grungy and muted colours in the background of *Frank*: Inspired by Barber's grunginess evident in '*Portrait of the Artist, Christ Conn*' and Ravn's mixture of colours, evident in '*The Smaller Party*'. The yellow frenzy surrounding the suited man in *It Suits*, represents his cowardice when he so desperately flees from the truth. Additionally, yellow assaults the viewer's eyes like I assault the viewer with the truth about society's twisted values. Orchard's aggressive sketchy style has inspired me to create this frantic aesthetic, through a painterly style with oil paint to accentuate the frenzy of the suited man. Ravn has inspired me to blur the line between subject and background to convey the difficulty to decipher truth and lies from each other in this murky world. The restricted colour palette - indicative of Magritte, Orchard, Condon and Ravn, inspired me to use only black, white, yellow, red and some blue in *It Suits*. This echoes advertisements which are designed to grab the attention of viewers. This replicates the nature of facades: how they are used in an ostentatious way, which so far removed from the truth. This restricted colour palette juxtaposes the rich variety of colour in Frank. The loudness of *It Suits*, juxtaposes the simplicity in *Frank* which is very honest and open in nature. This speaks volumes louder than *It Suits*.



*Daniel Johns*, Julian Meagher.



*The Smaller Party*, Peter Ravn.



*Portrait of the Artist, Christ Conn*, Shawn Barber.



*Jason and Lula Kundell*, Shawn Barber.