

# The Artist's View: Frank Oriti Discusses Four Paintings from his Working Class Creatives Series

July 14, 2018

by Pat Rogers

Frank Oriti is a contemporary realism painter based in Cleveland, Ohio. Inspired by the people around him, Oriti's portraits open an imaginative window into the lives of his subjects, gleaned from subtle clues arising from facial expressions, outward expressions of individuality and postures that reveal more than they conceal. Rift with personal details, Oriti's portraits begin even before he picks up a paintbrush: all of his subjects chose what they wear, enhancing the personal side of people portrayed in quiet moments.

[Frank Oriti's](#) art has been exhibited both nationally and internationally. His work has been featured in The New York Times and he was the 2015 recipient of the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery in London. His art is represented by [RJD Gallery](#) in The Hamptons, located in Bridgehampton, NY.

His newest paintings, made over the last nine months, will be unveiled at RJD Gallery in the two-person show "[On the Edge of...](#)" Oriti's portraits are curated to converse with imaginative paintings of arresting and deserted places by [Rick Garland](#). Both artists are expected to attend the Opening Reception on Saturday, July 21, 2018 at the Hamptons gallery.

In an email exchange about his the new series of work, [Frank Oriti](#) gave an inside view on his art and four of his new paintings that will be unveiled at "On the Edge of..." at RJD Gallery.

## Frank Oriti

"A few years ago, I began to describe the portraits I was painting as people belonging to a "new working class," Frank Oriti wrote. "These people were artists, musicians, tattoo artists, tattoo collectors, bakers, bartenders and barbers, to name a few. Some of who were working two jobs just to support their creative path. I was used to this sort of grind and befriending others who were on the same path was extremely inspiring.

In this grouping also emerged an unofficial uniform that I continued to see again and again when a model would show up for their portrait photo shoot. Denim, tattoos, leather jackets and facial hair appeared more frequently in paintings. These were some of the things I grew to love painting because they were challenging and I was teaching myself new and interesting ways to paint them.

While the majority of the paintings in this upcoming show at RJD Gallery are portraits, there are a few (very recently finished pieces) focused more on tattoos specifically. I find these new works important to reference because all of the paintings focusing on “materials” have been influenced by my previous figure paintings and these figure paintings continue to be influenced by these material paintings.”

## ***With or Without II* by Frank Oriti, 2018**

“This piece continues my exploration in portraying friends in the blue collar work force I am surrounded by and also find my inspiration from,” Oriti wrote. “While I have painted these brothers many times over the years, this piece is a bit of an update from a portrait I painted in 2011 - the original *With or Without*. While posed very similarly as in the last painting, here we are able to see a physical and emotional evolution of two hardworking and resilient brothers.”



“*With or Without II*” by Frank Oriti, 2018. Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches.  
Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

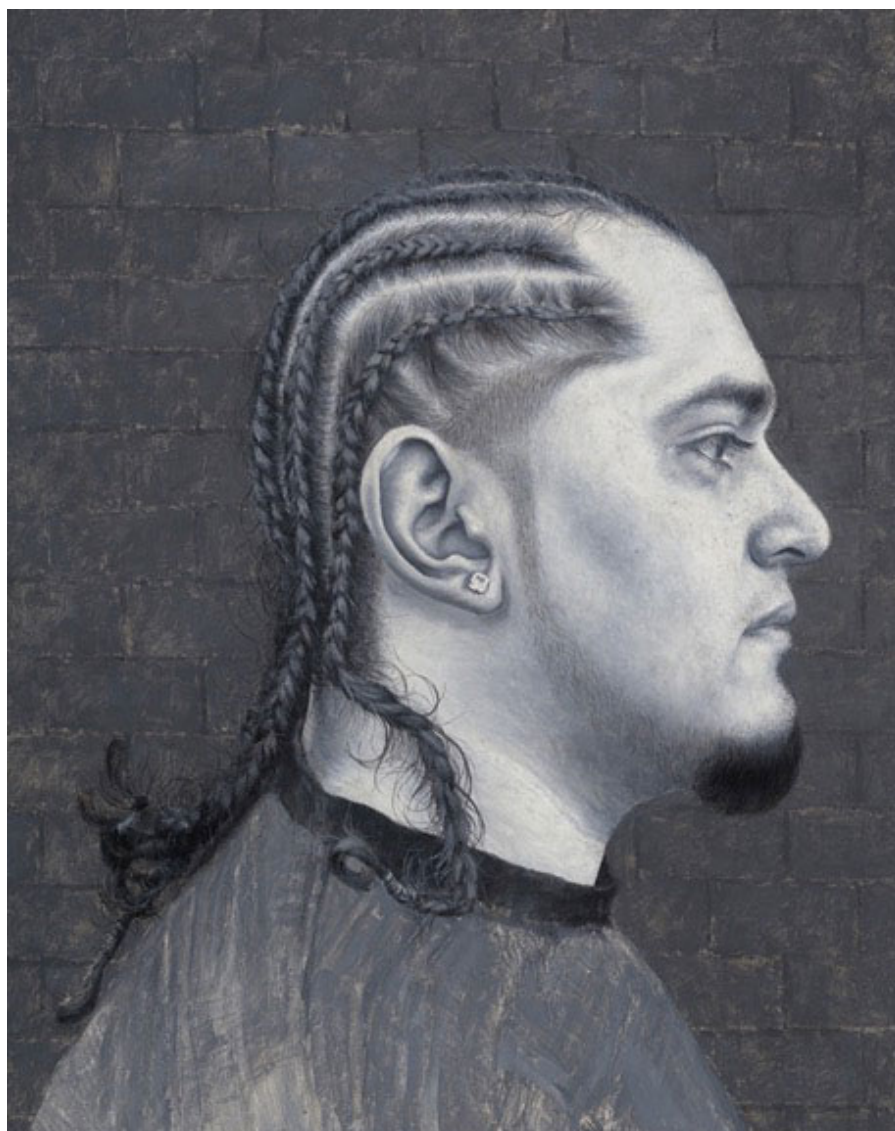
## ***King Neto* by Frank Oriti, 2017**

“Fifteen years ago, I spent my days in art school creating a series of black and white portraits of

friends in their own personal space,” Oriti stated. “Void of color, the paintings focused on light and shadow.

Fast forward to November of 2017. Personal and financial hardship forced me to move back to my childhood home – again, moving back in to my old bedroom and surrounded by old black and white portraits, the same portraits where I began honing my skills as a painter. While I considered this move home to be a step backwards in many ways, seeing these old paintings inspired me to paint a new portrait in this old and now unfamiliar style. This was my way of acknowledging how far I have come as a painter – with much more experience as a skilled technician with paint.

This is a portrait of Ernesto, or ‘Neto’ for short. He is a co-worker of mine at an assembly shop we work at. He is also a Cleveland rapper. One day he came to work with his hair braided in to corn rows. Being that I had never seen his hair braided before I couldn’t take my eyes off of the simple design. In the following days, his hair remained uniform in some areas and in other areas started to loosen. Being a painter who gets lost in details, I considered how this information translates in to paint.”



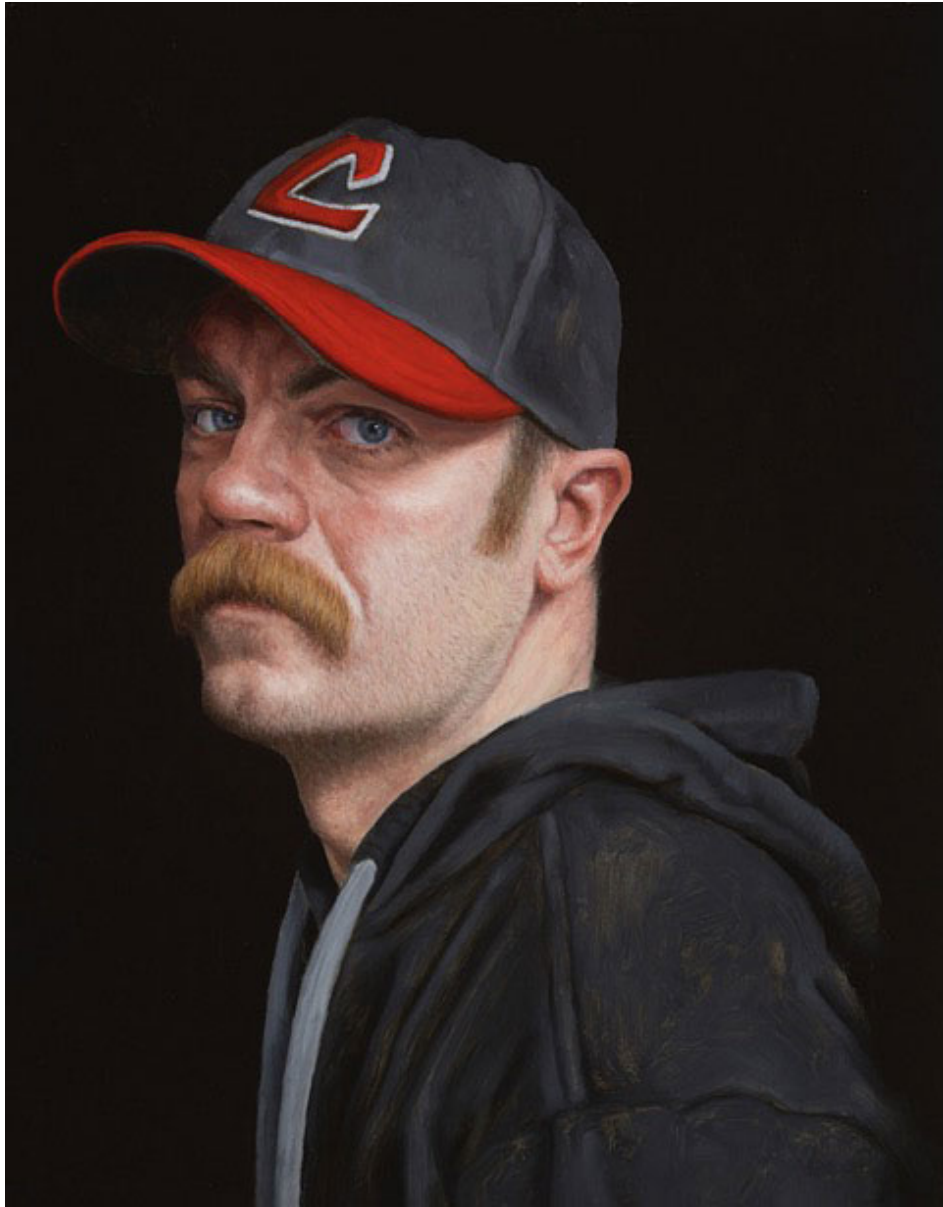
“King Neto” by Frank Oriti, 2017. Oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches.  
Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

## ***Man with a Golden Mustache* by Frank Oriti, 2018.**

“Kevin, one of the subjects from *With or Without II*, is someone I’ve painted many times over the years,” Oriti explained. “I have known him my entire life and having grown up across the street from me, he and his four brothers have been like brothers to me and my two brothers.

We share a special bond in that we have both moved home many times over the years; especially in November of 2017 when we both moved back to the old block once again at the same exact time.

Originally, I had only planned to take photos of both of the brothers together for *With or Without II* but upon taking some singular images for detail shots, this image kept coming back to me. I later laughed and told Kevin I realized this was his “Girl with a Pearl Earring” pose. This image stuck with me so much that I decided it would make for a great painting – more specifically the way his features emerge from the shadow under his baseball hat.”

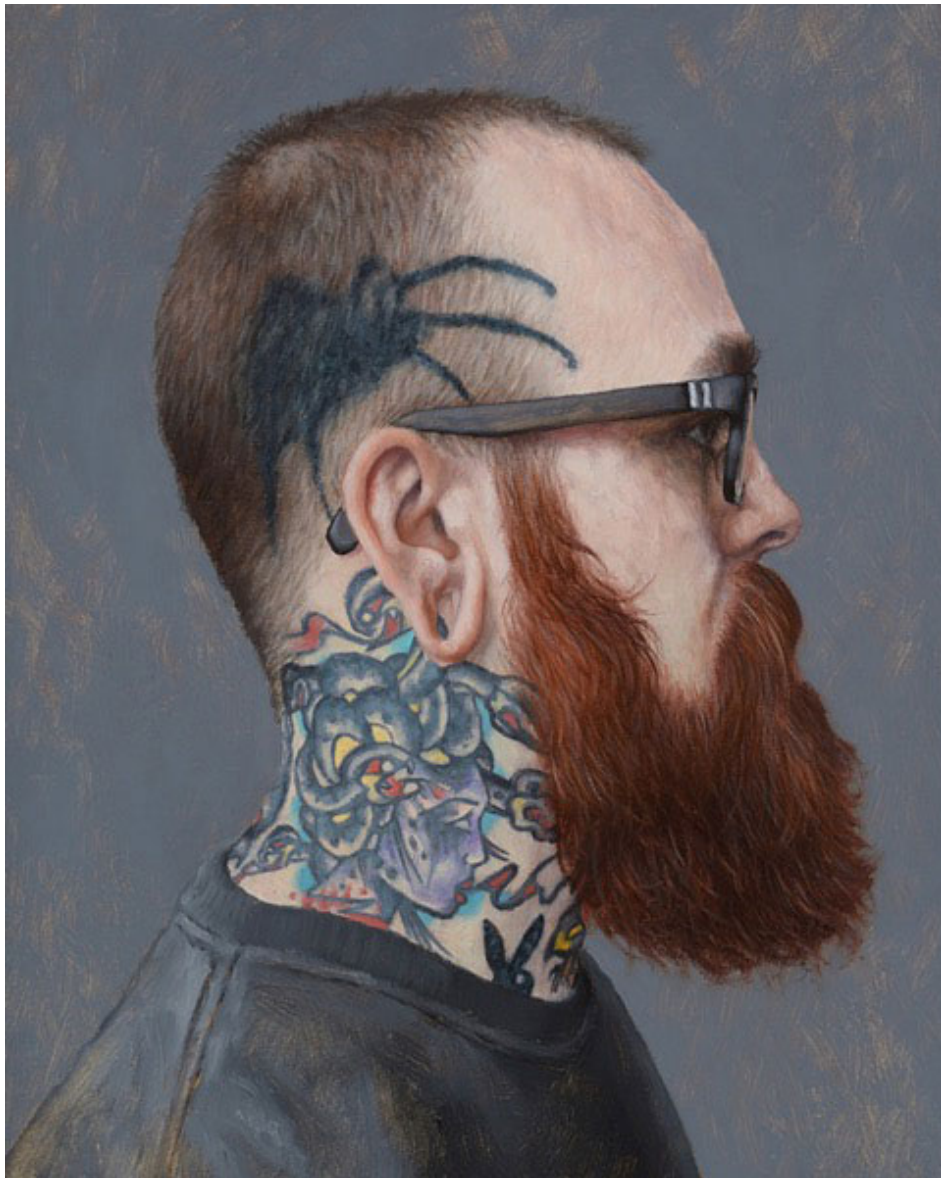


“Man with a Golden Mustache” by Frank Oriti, 2018. Oil on panel, 14 x 11 inches. Courtesy of the artist. and RJD Gallery.

## **Red by Frank Oriti, 2018.**

“The majority of the paintings in this upcoming show at RJD Gallery are portraits, there are a few (very recently finished pieces) focused more on tattoos specifically,” wrote Oriti. “The paintings focusing on “materials” have been influenced by my previous figure paintings and these figure paintings continue to be influenced by these material paintings.

In *Red*, I have created a portrait of Dustin Arnett, a Cleveland tattoo artist. I was drawn to his numerous colorful tattoos and the full red beard he continues to sport. This intermingling of the two textures (tattooed flesh and coarse red facial hair) is the type of “crossover” between my figurative work and paintings of singled out materials I find so rewarding in my studio practice.”



“Red” by Frank Oriti, 2018. Oil on panel, 10 x 8 inches. Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

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**BASIC FACTS:** Paintings by Frank Oriti are exhibited from July 21 to August 12, 2018 at RJD Gallery, 2385 Main Street, Bridgehampton, NY 11932. Oriti is expected to attend the Opening Reception on Saturday, July 21, 2018 from 6 to 8 p.m. [www.rjdgallery.com](http://www.rjdgallery.com).

Frank Oriti is based in Cleveland, Ohio. More art and information can be found at [www.frankoritijr.com](http://www.frankoritijr.com) or at his [artist page at RJD Gallery](#).