

ARTIST STATEMENT

Brandon Mitts – The De Facto Jesus Project

Short Statement:

“I am from a place where Jesus is white and where he is the key piece in the how-to-get-to-heaven formula. I choose to paint him as the non-white key to everything else.”

-Brandon Mitts

Extended Statement:

The teachings of the historical Jesus are relevant and radical. He is a promoter of justice and social revolution. His words point to humility and peace. Unfortunately, the primary Christian message that permeates the Bible Belt is rooted in control and fear.

The De Facto Jesus Project uses humor and satire to rattle the viewers' preconceived ideas. For example, the simple notion that Jesus has brown skin is controversial to many Christians. Not only is a tan Jesus an odd concept, to some it is offensive.

Besides skin color, context is also key in this work. In some paintings, De Facto Jesus steps into pop culture so that a distinct connection is made with the viewer. Jesus moves from the pages of the Bible and stands next to figures such as Kanye or Mr. Miyagi. “What is he doing there?” “Why is he relating with them?” This shift in surroundings is meant to cause a shift in perception, similar to a child seeing their first grade teacher in the supermarket.

De Facto Jesus talks about the things we are not supposed to mention in polite company; politics, religion, sex, racism, and otherness. The intent is for viewers to pause and think more deeply. Eventually, these thoughts could give birth to conversation, and conversation is a great step toward relationship and restoration.