

THE FRANK BIOGRAPHY

Frank was born in 1990 in Coventry, blind, into a living room that faced a wall.

He grew up on a sofa that nobody had designed for him. It faced a television his parents watched in the silence of people who are together and elsewhere at the same time. He couldn't see the screen. He couldn't follow what they were watching or why it mattered or what it gave them that the room itself didn't. What he could feel was the sofa, the way it was built to point, the way its whole geometry assumed that the most important thing in the room was the thing on the wall, and that the people on it were secondary to whatever that thing was showing them. He sat on it for years. He didn't like it. He didn't say much about it. He got on with things.

What he got on with, mostly, was wood.

He began working with timber in his early teens, first through a local cabinetmaking apprenticeship that his school arranged with some uncertainty about whether it was appropriate, and then with a seriousness that made the question irrelevant. He had a sense of touch that the people around him struggled to describe without reaching for words that embarrassed them slightly, words like extraordinary, like inhuman, like he could hear the grain. What he could do, precisely, was feel the character of a piece of wood with a specificity that most trained makers couldn't match with their eyes. The density of it, the history held in its rings, the way it wanted to be worked rather than forced. He didn't experience this as remarkable. It was simply what paying attention felt like when you had nothing else to do it with.

He studied spatial philosophy at the Edinburgh School of Applied Living in his mid-twenties, one of the few institutions at the time running a programme that took seriously the question of how people inhabit rooms rather than simply what they put in them. His tutors found him difficult to place. He was not academic in any

conventional sense and was not interested in becoming so. What he brought to seminars was a physical intelligence, an understanding of how bodies move through space and what furniture asks of the people using it, that came from somewhere his tutors recognised as important without being entirely able to teach.

His early work was competent and then excellent and then, by his early thirties, quietly exceptional. He made tables and shelving and, occasionally, seating, always with the same underlying quality that reviewers reached for metaphor to describe. One wrote that his pieces felt like they had been made by someone who understood weight from the inside. He kept that one. He didn't keep many.

By 2020 he had been thinking about the sofa for a long time.

Not obsessively, not with any urgency, but the way you think about something that has always been slightly wrong and that you have been building the capability to address. He had the skills now. He had spent years developing a sensitivity to how objects hold people, how they direct attention, how they make certain kinds of interaction easy and others almost impossible. He understood, with the precision of someone who had never been able to rely on looking, that the conventional sofa was not a neutral object. It was an argument. It said that the most important relationship in the room was between the people on it and the thing in front of them, and that the relationship between the people themselves was incidental.

He thought this was wrong. He had thought it was wrong since he was a child sitting on his parents' sofa with nowhere to look and nothing to look at and no way to reach the people sitting next to him because they were all facing away. He didn't think it was a complicated insight. He thought it was something anyone could have noticed

at any point in the last several decades and found it faintly puzzling that nobody had done much about it.

In 2020 he made the first FRANK. Four corners, four people, every seat turned inward, no hierarchy of position and no implied direction of attention. The joinery was precise in the way his work always was, the wood chosen for a warmth he could feel under his hands before anyone could see it. He made it in his workshop over several weeks, adjusting the angles by touch, sitting in each position himself, feeling whether the geometry did what he wanted it to do. When it felt right, he stopped. He didn't iterate beyond that. He considered it finished.

He showed it to a small number of people. A few of them understood immediately what it was. Most of them thought it was interesting without quite knowing why. He founded FRANK in 2020 with the piece as its only product, operating out of a single workshop with the belief that the sofa was always a social object that forgot what it was for. He didn't expect much from it. He had made it because he had finally reached the point where he could, and because the problem had always seemed obvious to him and someone needed to do something about it.

What happened next was not something he planned for.

Nigel Garage had always known he wanted to be a dictator. This was not something he advertised but neither was it something he particularly concealed, it was simply a fact about him, like his opinions on correct queuing behaviour or his friendship with President Frump, which he described in interviews as a meeting of minds and which most people described as something they tried not to think about too hard. He had watched what Frump did and taken careful notes. He understood that you didn't need to dismantle a democracy all at once.

You just needed to find the right people to be angry at, say the word proper as often as possible, and wait.

He found the working class first, or rather he found their exhaustion and their sense that something had been taken from them and gave that feeling a name and a flag and a very simple explanation that was wrong in ways that took longer to explain than the explanation itself. Proper Britain, he said, at rallies and in pubs and on the side of a bus that became briefly famous. Proper Britain, he said, when asked about immigration, about jobs, about AI companions and balcony vegetables and book groups, about anything at all. It was a remarkably versatile phrase. It meant everything and nothing and it was enough.

The Proper Party won the election in the second half of 2029. What happened next is a matter of some historical dispute, not because the facts are unclear but because several of the people who could have disputed them decided quite quickly that it was not worth the trouble. Something occurred. Garage used it. By 2031 he was something considerably more than a prime minister, with a title that ran to eleven words and which nobody used because everyone had agreed, without quite discussing it, to simply do what he said.

The Domestic Devices Act passed in 2032. Screens were removed. The streets filled with people who had nowhere to be except outside, surrounded by Proper Party hoardings and the low continuous murmur of a government that had decided public space was its space. People who had been pushed out of their homes and into each other's company started talking, cautiously at first and then with increasing conviction, about what they were looking at and who had put it there.

They needed somewhere to sit while they did it.

The FRANK had existed for twelve years by the time the Act passed. It had sold modestly and been reviewed well and accumulated a small faithful following of people who understood what it was doing.

After 2032 it became something else. Community centres ordered it. Converted spaces that had become the new infrastructure of post-Act social life filled with it. It appeared in the backgrounds of photographs that documented the cultural moment, in the rooms where the music was made and the writing happened that the government found so persistently inconvenient. People sat on the FRANK and made things, arguments and plans and occasionally art, in the way that people make things when they are finally facing each other with nowhere else to look.

Frank watched none of this and understood all of it. He gave few interviews. He declined to be positioned as a symbol of resistance or a prophet of the post-screen age or any of the other things that people wanted to make him. He found the designation hero of socialisation particularly irritating, not out of false modesty but because he thought the problem the FRANK addressed was something humanity should have noticed long before it required a political catastrophe to bring it to anyone's attention. He had noticed it at age seven on a sofa in Coventry. He didn't consider this exceptional. He considered it paying attention.

I made somewhere to sit, he said, in the last interview he gave before he stopped giving them entirely. What people do when they sit down is their business. I just wanted them to be able to look at each other while they did it.

He said this without irony. Nobody pointed out the irony to him. It felt unkind.

Frank died in 2043 at the age of fifty-three. His collaborators have not added much to the official record.

What is known about him is mostly what he made and occasionally what he said and very little else. He seems to have preferred it that way. The FRANK remains in production. It has not been updated.

Many tried to rip off the design, but they'll never be able to do it like frank.

He considered it finished.