

**John Mortimer**

Audio Guide transcript

Not every confrontation between artist and sitter is an unqualified success, but despite his initial nervousness, Tai-Shan Schierenberg who'd had just won first prize in the Gallery's Portrait Award achieved remarkable success with his genial sitter, John Mortimer. In conversation together the distinguished barrister and author one of whose most famous creations is the legal character, Rumpole of the Bailey, remembers the discomforts of being painted.

'It was absolute agony having this picture painted – I was in a freezing studio in an absolutely decrepit drafty great mausoleum of a block somewhere round Regents Park, with a rusty, sort of circular staircase, and this painter wouldn't allow me to either read or talk to him, perched on a sort of pile of furniture with an inadequate electric fire. And the only happy result of it was that we were able to use that place as a location for a very unpleasant murder in a Rumpole story. I, and I find it very difficult to talk about it because I avoid looking at myself in mirrors and I shave in the bath without a mirror and I only know that I've cut myself when the bath water goes pink. So I have very little idea of what I look like. I imagine I look about nineteen and very thin and handsome, and so the picture came as a bit of a shock to me. But in fact I think it's...a wonderful painting which is just in itself is great.'