

Tai-Shan Schierenberg

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 artist describes how he set about painting the portrait.

'Well it was my first sort of major commission - I knew it was going to hang in the National Portrait Gallery, um, and the problem was, sort of my painterly concerns sort of take a back seat to the....I mean portrait commissions have to look like or as far as it's pointless, so we were struggling getting both those things working, that it looked like John, that it was an interesting painting to look at. Um, that took forever. I think the head took about two months, I had to endlessly scrape it down and start again which was really, I felt terrible. But, um, once the head was in place, um, I sort of blocked in everything else, and with hands, I have got a terrible habit of making people's hands vast. Um, if you make them the right size it looks ...a very pyramidal structure, and these hands do hold him in place as it were...it does look like he's twisting round.'