



Saving Faces



The National Portrait Gallery is currently showing over 30 paintings by the acclaimed Mark Gilbert.

The project, *Saving Faces*, was set up by Iain Hutchison to establish an artist-in-residence within his surgical department, which mainly repairs and rebuilds badly damaged faces.

The idea was to "show that people with a facial disability are able to enjoy happy, successful and fulfilled lives"



Mazeeda (pre-operation)

and to explore potential benefits for the sitters.

The paintings are arresting. Against the one-colour background with a

series of seemingly loose, broad brushstrokes, Gilbert conjures up a strong emotional presence. This suggests a high degree of mutual respect between artist and sitter on which the exhibition's success rests.

However, and sadly, the presentation was very medical, which I found to be old-fashioned, voyeuristic and patronising: simply inappropriate in this setting.

Adam Reynolds

Until 21 April, tel: 020 7306 0055, free. Leeds City Art Gallery, July-Aug 2002; Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Sept-Oct 2002.