

PAINTING  
**SAVING FACES**

Glasgow School Of Art, Glasgow,  
until Fri 25 Jan ●●●●●

---

Mazeeda was born with a tumour on the right side of her face. The pre-operation portrait of this little girl reveals a huge swelling on her cheek, which in turn, pulls the right eyelid down. It is a harrowing image and, like the rest of the works in the exhibition, it's an image that stays with you.

Until recently, there was no charity devoted to research into facial diseases. But last year, Iain Hutchison, a consultant in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at St Bartholomew's and Royal London Hospital set up the Saving Faces Project, the first national charity to carry out research into the prevention and treatment of oral and facial diseases and injuries. Together with this touring exhibition of paintings by Glasgow portrait painter Mark

Gilbert, who was resident in the unit for over a year, the project raises much needed awareness of these issues.

From victims of cancer of the mouth to victims of assault, Mark Gilbert visually recorded the patients before, during and after facial reconstruction. Every detail is registered in paint, however gruesome. The image of the shiny surgical instruments peeling back the skin from the face is brutally realistic. Pre and post-op portraits of a victim attacked by youths using baseball bats juxtaposes a severely bruised and fractured face – mouth bandaged and eyes closed – with a face returned to 'normality'.

If we were looking at photographs, the impact would have been far less. Gilbert clearly communicates with his sitters, portraying not only the physical attributes but their emotional response as they adjust to their new appearance. He shows that there is a



**Mazeeda (pre-op) 1999**

human face behind the disfigurement. And while the images in this exhibition may disturb, upset or even nauseate, Gilbert's ability to capture the courage and strength of the human spirit is both moving and incredibly powerful. (Heleen Monaghan)