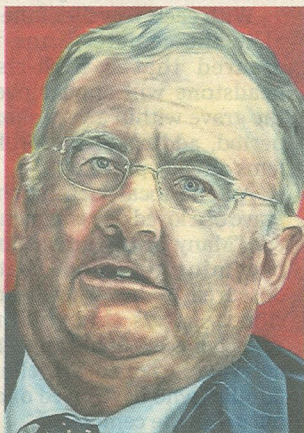


Rabbitte left gobsmacked by 'warts and all' portrait



ARTISTIC MERIT: Dermot Seymour's new portrait of Pat Rabbitte

JOHN DRENNAN

OVER a long and voluble career, few individuals have managed to silence Pat Rabbitte. However, the artist Dermot Seymour managed to leave the great sultan of soundbites speechless after Rabbitte was shown a portrait of himself.

Seymour shot to prominence with a series of fascinating portraits of Brian Cowen, Mary Harney and Ian Paisley.

In his new exhibition of portraits at the Kevin Kavanagh gallery, the two most high-profile subjects are Pat Rabbitte and Roy Keane.

The claim that Seymour's portraits attempt to create a 'new form of virtual reality' certainly applies to Pat Rabbitte. When the normally dapper former Labour leader was asked to comment about Seymour's 'warts and all' portrait, after a long silence, Rabbitte said "I'm gobsmacked. I look as if I've been cleaning the chimney, very like an er... bull dog."

After a further pregnant pause, Rabbitte hesitantly noted "it is a bit scary, but it certainly has artistic merit, it is, eh, unique".

Sadly, though Rabbitte wished "the artist well, he

has great talent", the former Labour chief did confirm it would "not be my preferred choice for a Christmas present. I don't know how I'd respond if I came home after a few pints and saw it hanging in the bathroom."

The good news for those figures in Labour who are pining for Pat is that if they want a reminder of all those cherished memories, Seymour's works of art tend to sell for between €4,000 and €12,000.

His 'Eyed' exhibition opens in the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery in Dublin on September 14 and runs until October 20.

