Howard Morgan

Studio conditions are positively Edwardian: masses of props, damask curtains, gigantic easels and brushes. Two assistants dispense tea on a dumb waiter and sandwiches for lunch. 'I'm not here to entertain,' he says huffily, although he gives lavish dinners at which guests are greeted by a man on stilts. Eight sittings for a small portrait. Will travel

Cost £2,500 - £40,000

Contact 400-401 Wandsworth Road, SW8 (tel: 071 720 1181)

Sitters include Lord Home of the Hirsel, the Marquess and Marchioness of Douro, George and Tom Melly, the Prince of Hanover, Countess von Bismarck

Maggi Hambling

Highly professional, only does about two portraits a year, and chooses her subjects carefully. She prefers about 10 continuous sittings every morning for three hours each, in her studio. Mutters while painting

Cost £7,000 - £12,000

Contact 1 Broadhinton Road, SW4

Sitters include Lord Egremont, Sir Georg Solti, Prof. Dorothy Hodgkin, Max Wall, A.J.P. Taylor

Paul Benney

Studio in old factory in Hammersmith, but prefers to travel. Never happier than when provided with a glass of red wine and an ashtray. One of the most promising painters around

Cost £9,000 - £12,000

Contact Butlers Cottage, Culham Court, Henley-on-Thames (tel: 0628 828309)

Sitters include Rupert Hambro, Lord Ashburton, Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, Sir Reresby and Lady Sitwell

Patrick Procktor

Paints in his Manchester Square studio. Smokes Sweet Aftons and addresses remarks to ceiling. Lady Camilla Dempster found sitting for him 'very relaxing. I slouched in a sofa. He served elegant cups of tea. Peter Langan commissioned it as a present for us but sent it back saying it was fucking rubbish. I rather like it'

Cost Watercolours from £4,500; oils from £12,000

Contact The Redfern Gallery (tel: 071 734 1732)

Sitters include Jill Bennett, Patrick Kinmonth, Wayne Sleep, Wayne Eagling, Glenda Jackson, Anthony Page

Emma Sergeant

Won the National Portrait Gallery Award 10 years ago. Still in demand but prefers to paint mythological scenes. She keeps a photograph of her only unsuccessful commission to 'remind myself of how awful it was. He kept telling me how to do it, and then said he couldn't pay me for another year. Now I charge upfront.'

Cost £10,000

Contact Agnews (tel: 071 629 6176)

Sitters include Victor Edelstein, Imran Khan, Lord Olivier, the Earl and Countess of Radnor

Binny Matthews

'I am not interested in names, only faces; I like painting people's auras.' Sitters are asked to bring their own music. 'We have loads of coffee, and sandwiches are called in from St Quentin'

Cost From £4,000

Contact Portrait Commissions (tel: 071 321 0233)

Sitters include Sophie Cottman Rogers, Deborah Agnew, the Dillworth sisters

Mrs Charles Hayward is painted by Geoffrey Humphries, who has threatened to take years to complete the portrait

Alexandra Mermikides, 1989, by Haidee Becker, who paints deep ghostly portraits

Ishbel Myerscough's vivid portrait of cricketer Graham Gooch, 1992

Lady Marsha Fitzalan Howard, 1992, by 'flexible' Patricia Napier

MIXED TRAITS

Geoffrey Humphries

Lives and paints on the Giudecca in Venice and throws weekend parties for artists and art critics in his vast studios. When he was a young, penurious artist he painted guests at the Cipriani; now he lunches there with young curators from the Guggenheim and the Venetian artistic fraternity. Will travel for his commissions

Cost £3,000 - £10,000

Contact Al Shaval Designs Ltd, 7 Halkin Arcade, SW1 (tel: 071 235 1601)

Sitters include Some of the Chelsea Arts Club, Lady Trehearne, Ania Forbes Adam

Ishbel Myerscough

Vividly figurative painter who is most selective about whom she paints. Her dealer Anthony Mould says that she is 'quite demanding to sit for but she did a drawing of me in hours. She prefers to travel to her sitters as she doesn't have a very grand studio'

Cost £2,500 - £10,000

Contact Anthony Mould (tel: 071 491 4627)

Sitters include Jane Mulvagh

Haidee Becker

Does deep, ghostly portraits capturing the soul of her subjects. Sitting conditions are excellent in a large beautiful Chelsea studio, augmented by tea and biscuits. Ted Hughes wrote that her pictures 'are an ideal of portraiture as they convey the immediacy of the person'