Max Martin, *Portrait of Archbishop Mannix*, 1953, water-based paint on board in a wooden frame shaped as a Gothic church window. Pictures Collection, H2007.72/1

Joseph Patrick ('Max') Martin, *Portrait of Archbishop Mannix*

An enigmatic, stylised figure set against a twilight of domestic, suburban and industrial buildings dominates this well-known painting by 'Max' Martin. The figure is flanked on the one side by the spires of Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral and on the other by the chimneys of the inner-city suburb of Fitzroy. Much has been written about the role of Archbishop Daniel Mannix during the conscription campaign of World War I, his connections with those involved in the 1916 uprising in Ireland, and certainly his later impact on BA Santamaria and the Labor Party. A towering if somewhat reclusive person – by the time this painting was undertaken Mannix would have been in his late 80s – the archbishop is depicted as a powerful figure, eyes focused on some distant point, whose presence dominates all.

Irish subject matter was not unknown to the artist, and it is understandable that he should want to paint Melbourne's best-known Irish figure. Born in Gore Street, Fitzroy, in 1889, Joseph Patrick Martin grew up in the suburb and attended St Patrick's Jesuit School in East Melbourne. While there, he probably came into contact with the painter and photographer John Hennessy, who was the art teacher at St Patrick's and also a private tutor to aspiring painters.

Martin's life is itself enigmatic and short on detail, particularly the years 1930–50. By 1913 he was in London, hoping to make his way as an artist while working as a sign painter for a brewery. He exhibited in London, Paris, Dublin and Boston, first coming to notice in England with his 1922 London Royal Academy painting, *Portrait Group*. His Irish painting *Witchcraft* (1924) was well received by the public both in Ireland, where he was living at the time, and later in Melbourne, where Martin gifted it to an admiring Daniel Mannix.

By the late 1920s Martin was living permanently in Ireland, with a studio at Castlepark, Kinsale, County Cork. He painted locally and in Galway and held one major exhibition of nearly 40 of his Irish works[1], many of which were destined for the American market, lamenting that none were acquired by Australian galleries.

Martin returned to Australia in 1948, holding an exhibition in Adelaide the following year.[2] It is presumed that he first met Mannix formally when the archbishop attended Martin's Victorian Artists Society Exhibition in 1950. His *Portrait of Archbishop Mannix* was completed in 1953 and acquired for the Library with the assistance of the Library Foundation.

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