



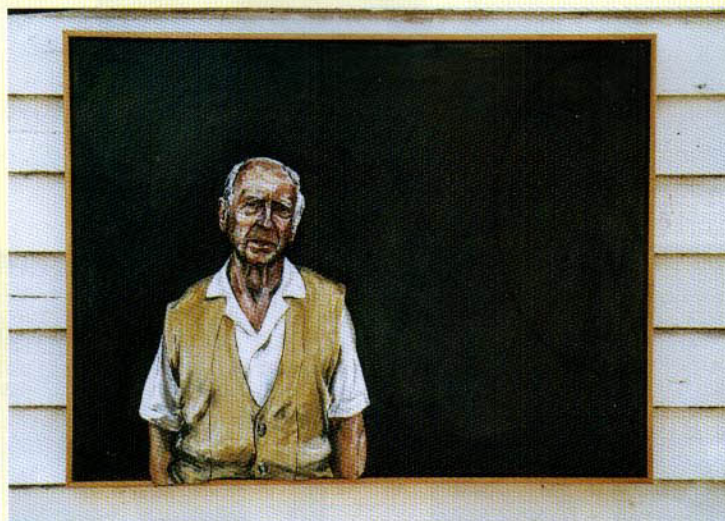
Martin Tighe pictured at his exhibition "Monogram" which was staged at Gallery 310 Smith Street, Collingwood, in May.

What does the artwork of Melbourne artist **Martin Tighe (XC 1983)** have in common with the Three Centuries of Italian Art presently on show at the Melbourne Museum?

John Armstrong, in his review of the Exhibition in the *Saturday Age* (29 June 2002) says, "The works of this exhibition derive from a cultural tradition that saw human values – love, salvation, grace and dignity – as woven in the most profound way into the fabric of reality".

Much of Martin's work, which is often presented in series, reflects these same values, allowing the viewer the opportunity to connect with the story, depicting such qualities as humility, service, loyalty, strength and obedience. For example, it was of no consequence that the story of Simpson and his donkey was unknown to many of those viewing Martin's recent exhibition at Gallery 310 in Smith Street, Collingwood. It was the iconography and symbolism of the animal, not the man, that was used by Martin to depict the deepest of human feelings.

Even as a Year 10 student Martin dared to be different – for work experience he persisted until he found an employer who would show him the skills of violin making.



Martin Tighe's entry in this year's Archibald Prize, a portrait of Ray Lawler, author of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and many other plays. Ray has two grandsons at Xavier, Andrew Cameron (Year 9) and David Cameron (Year 7 Kostka Hall).

After completing his studies at Melbourne College of Advanced Education, Martin taught at Coburg High School. During this time he was "mesmerised" by a documentary on Noel Coward and turned his skills to playwriting. He was inspired by the students whose exotic and varied lives were so vastly different from those he had known. Four of his plays *Sheep*, *Coburg Tennessee* (written partly in Arabic), *Merchant of Brunswick* and *Pigeon Pie* (which was recently studied by Grade 5 students at Burke Hall) were work-shopped by his students and then performed with great success across the northern suburbs High Schools.

Martin was beginning, in the words of the English artist David Hockney, to feel the need to express himself publicly, to produce work that was conditional on neither the approval of others nor financial gain. Some would consider this an enormous risk for a married man with three young children.

By 1995 Martin was designing and making furniture. Always looking for yet another way to express himself he turned to his paintings, this time using off-cuts from his furniture and his band saw to develop a technique known as relief painting. He now uses this technique for all his paintings.

In 1997 he won the Kevin Murray Art Prize for the best painting relating to football and now regularly exhibits in the Australian Rules Football Exhibition.

To retain Martin's work in Australia, Peter Freeman (Martin's art teacher at Xavier) bought a painting that was to have gone to England on the proviso that Martin bought the painting back for the same price two years later – and the painting now hangs in his parents' home.

Martin's great love for rugby (he coaches Xavier's Year 9 team) comes out in his most recent exhibition in Sydney – a series entitled *The Bledisloe Cup Paintings*. The paintings show how humans deal with the fact that there is no justice in sport – the better team does not always win. When viewing this series one can feel the anguish, the pain, the determination, the anger and the dejection as one shares with the artist the depth of feeling in the game.

Martin's Archibald Prize entries give the viewer an insight into his emotional response to the subject. A painting is not like a photograph – a painting is the merging of the subject with the artist and the viewer is allowed to share the emotional response.

Martin was recently commissioned to prepare a bronze sculpture of the Fitzroy footballer Haydn Bunton. Upon viewing it, one would never guess this was his first attempt at the medium but he feels very comfortable with this art form and plans to do more work in this area.

Martin is extraordinarily well disciplined – he believes to be successful one must concentrate on what you do best. There is no doubt that this is working for him.

Jan Wilson