In a manner of painting

BY JUDITH MARTIN

Appointment to The Washington Post

I t was not my idea to have my portrait painted. I already knew what I looked like. And if I forget, there is a mirror in the bathroom. But every once in a while, Rob- ert Martin, my husband for more than a century now, decides to make a gift of a picture. Last fall, as my 70th birthday approached, he commissioned his favor- ite living opponent, Demian Argeti, to set some of my writing to music, the result of which is a song cycle, “Miss Marianne on Music.” And for my 70th birthday, he commissioned my portrait from Victor Edelstein, who has painted a dozen pictures of me and my family. The portrait artist did of his own wife, the painter Annamaria Succi, with a devilish portrait the artist did of his own wife, the painter Annamaria Succi, with a devilish look in her eye.

My portrait is now at the National Portrait Gallery, to “Capital Portraits: Treasures From Washington Portraits Col- lections” which opens Friday. Commissioned portraits will be in town for the portrait show opening — five songs from the cycle will be sung that night by Kato Lindley at the Barns at Wolf Trap. Several gentlemen we know have thanked my husband for ruining their marriages. As one snarled: “Now what am I supposed to do for my wife’s birthday?” When her hair was done on Mount Rush- more?” Much clandestine activity, which I was too thick to notice, preceded these over- the-top presents. Our friend Phyllis Pau- cinda, the opera singer who first performed the song cycle at a surprise party at the Birchmere show cooing at the audience.

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