

LIFE & ART

Food & Drink | Style | Travel | Arts | Books | TV

ed ideas for
minute
mas gifts **Page 10**



Travel

A pilgrimage
through the
Holy Land **Pages 11-12**

FT WEEKEND | Saturday December 20 / Sunday December 21 2008

LIFE & ARTS 17

Collecting

Sale of the week

Distant voices, still lifes

Sale: Martin Mooney paintings

Location: The Portland Gallery, 8 Bennet Street, London SW1. Tel: +44 (0)20-7493 1888; www.portlandgallery.com

Date: Monday and Tuesday (December 22-23), 10am-6pm

Need to know: Open the catalogue for Martin Mooney's latest exhibition and you could be forgiven for thinking that you were looking at the work of three very different artists. The first 50-odd pages show still-life paintings created in the meticulous, photographic style of the Dutch Old Masters; turn to the next section and you find a range of modern cityscapes, more freely painted yet underpinned by highly accurate drawing; while the last four canvases show rural landscapes that could easily be mistaken for the loose brushwork of Sir Kyffin Williams. It can take Belfast-born Mooney up to three years to complete one of his still lifes, which he creates by building up layers of glaze in a similar technique to that seen in Dutch 17th-century painting. In contrast, his landscape paintings are quickly executed en plein air, often along the Rathlin coast and at other locations near his Donegal home.

Highlights: If realism is your thing, the still-life paintings in this selling exhibition will certainly appeal. Many of the canvases have that "how did he do that?" quality that makes it difficult to believe that one is not looking at a photograph, particularly the "Still Life With Floral Bowl". Priced at £9,000, this typifies Mooney's use of multiple layers of glaze to replicate the translucent Dutch and Chinese ceramics that he depicts with extraordinary accuracy. The most valuable work is the five-foot by three-foot "Still Life with Red and Gold" (£22,000), which is equally realistic in spite of its large scale, while four small flower studies priced from £1,950 beg to be displayed as a set. The cityscapes on offer all feature major river bridges and include views of the Thames near Tower Bridge and Battersea Bridge, as well as scenes of Ireland's River Liffey at Dublin's Halfpenny and Grattan bridges. For those who favour rural landscapes, Mooney's jewel-like depictions of Loughswilly and Rathlin, painted on pieces of board as small as five inches by seven, are on offer from £1,750 each.

Compiled by Simon de Bruton

CAWDELL DOUGLAS
PRESS INFORMATION