

# Elizabeth Dee

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**Virgil Marti** Elizabeth Dee is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Virgil Marti in the gallery at 545 West 20th Street. There will be a reception for the artist on Thursday, October 21, from six to eight pm.

Informed by a wide range of art-historical and pop-cultural references, Virgil Marti creates hybrid objects and environments that merge the Baroque and Rococo with chinoiserie and japonisme, Symbolism, 1960s psychedelia, and science fiction. Marti is best known for his 2004 Whitney Biennial installation, *Grow Room*, arranged according to the configuration of Whistler's Peacock Room, that featured cast resin chandeliers in the form of blooming antlers, and mirrored Mylar panels, silkscreened with macramé representations of webs spun by drugged spiders.

For his new exhibition, a group of oversized wall sconces ring the Main Gallery. Comprised of the enlarged shells of Russian tortoises, they are mirrored on the inside. Within each, silver-plated cacti with clear and brightly colored resin flowers holding half-mirrored bulbs are reflected onto the facets of the mirrored shells in a kaleidoscope of light and color. In the center of the room, a large striped candle embedded with coral gives off the scent of leather.

In Gallery 2, fluorescent flocked wallpaper with a panoramic landscape lit by black lights was inspired by the 1976 Nicolas Roeg film of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* yet modeled on the designs of Frank Furness, the late-nineteenth-century architect who designed the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Marti's florid imagery at once evokes Hudson River School painting and the Garden of Eden depicted in head shop posters of the 1960s and '70s.

Inspired by J.-K. Huysmans's classic of Symbolist literature, *À rebours* (Against Nature), Marti's practice combines high culture and aesthetic excess with allusions to his first loves from a suburban 1970s childhood. As Lia Gangitano has written, Marti's work

is conceived in the style of "celebrated interiors" from a range of historical periods. The junction of temporal styles is reminiscent of film sets, particularly from space and time travel movie of the late 60s and the 70s. Like many artists of his generation, Marti found that movies from this period played a major role in his imagination. . . . (His art) can be viewed as an eccentric memorial to contested aesthetic values. Virgil Marti lives and works in Philadelphia. Exhibitions of his work have been held at Participant, Inc., New York, in 2002, and at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, and the Santa Monica Museum of Art in 2003.