

Elizabeth Dee

545 WEST 20TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10011

T 212 924 7545

F 212 924 7671

WWW.ELIZABETHDEEGALLERY.COM

Virgil Marti

Virgil Marti

January 9 - February 20, 2010

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 9, 6-8 pm

Elizabeth Dee is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Virgil Marti. In his installations, Marti engages the history of interiors, often combining pop-cultural and art-historical references to create hybrid objects and environments. This exhibition features new wallpaper designs, richly upholstered seating and a series of chromed mirrors that extend Marti's investigation of the decorative grotesque and address the centuries-old themes of vanitas and memento mori.

Over the course of nearly two decades, Virgil Marti has developed a singular practice by creating sculptural objects with a functional purpose that are recontextualized through their surroundings, often with the use of wall treatments. In the front gallery of this exhibition, his *Memorial Garden* wallpaper, which employs once-fashionable textured flocking, presents a visual motif derived from an image of the colorful floral wreaths left at a pop star's grave. By contrast, in the main gallery the color is drained from the wallpaper *Austrian Swag* (produced in collaboration with the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia), a trompe-l'œil drapery design of silky white fabric that exemplifies Marti's adept treatment of materiality in much of his work.

Situated inside the drapery room are two new pouffes, circular settees upholstered with varying colors, patterns and textures that refer back to the paintings of Marti's early work. The pouffes also serve as abstracted portraits of his parents through their evocation of Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black*. Marti previously made reference to Whistler in his *Grow Room* installation for the 2004 Whitney Biennial, an arrangement of works derived from the configuration of Whistler's *Peacock Room*. In the 2004 installation, Mylar sheets overprinted with images of flowers both invited and frustrated viewers' attempts to examine their own reflections. In the present exhibition Marti includes a series of chromed mirrors to similar effect. Cast from uneven floorboards and composed in solid pastel colors with profiles derived from 18th-century Chippendale mirrors, these reflective but dysfunctional "looking glasses" might be more accurately described as monochromatic paintings that have affinities with Allan McCollum's surrogate paintings and Jasper Johns' paintings of flags, all being simultaneously pictures of an object and the object itself.

In the back gallery are additional large looking glasses and a grouping of three fur-covered ottomans of varying sizes. The largest ottoman holds a chromed candelabra in the form of a branch in which candles of 14 different colors burn in rotation, creating a pattern of wax drips that echo the pinstripes of a Paul Smith fabric from which the colors derive.

This is Virgil Marti's third solo exhibition at Elizabeth Dee. Born in St. Louis in 1962, Marti has exhibited widely since the early 1990s. In addition to the 2007 *Biennale de Montréal* and the 2004 *Whitney Biennial*, Marti has been the focus of numerous solo exhibitions, including the Fabric Workshop Museum, Philadelphia; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. (in collaboration with Pae White); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and Participant, Inc., New York. He lives and works in Philadelphia.

Please contact the gallery for more information, +1 212 924 7545.