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Art in Review

Virgil Marti

*Elizabeth Dee Gallery
545 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through tomorrow*

Virgil Marti continues to push the decorative to visceral extremes, usually leading back to nature in some distorted form. In his latest gallery solo in New York, he rings the space with wall sconces that resemble small glittering grottoes, their lights having been set into mirror-lined enlargements of turtle shells, and adds rhinestone-dotted, chrome-plated cacti and other plant forms.

This collision of the artificial and the organic is reiterated in two works involving wallpaper. On one wall, bright stripes emerge in Escher-like patterns across an image of the moon, while "Landscape Wallpaper With Star Border and Shrooms and Flame Dado" uses motifs from Frank Furnace's revivalist architecture and interiors to revive the psychedelic poster as a walk-in environment.

The show's centerpiece is "Ode to a Paul Smith Bag," which looks like a giant, brightly striped hippie candle whose melted-off corners have been replaced with something close to its opposite: large chunks of white coral. The size of a Judd box, and evoking both Kenneth Noland stripe paintings and Lynda Benglis poured pieces, the work adds credibly to the continuing line of departures from the Minimalist cube, which includes work by Eva Hesse, Charles Ray and Janine Antoni.

ROBERTA SMITH