

# ARTFORUM

critics' picks

## ALWAR BALASUBRAMANIAM

TALWAR GALLERY | NEW YORK

108 East 16 Street

May 5 – August 31

Alwar Balasubramaniam's *Link*, 2009, a simple black string stretched taut across a corner of this gallery, is easy to miss. The string is anchored to a wall on one side, with its other end attached to a sharp metal fishhook that hovers an inch or so from the opposite wall. Held in place by a hidden magnet, the hook digs deliciously into nothingness, emphasizing what is

usually invisible and immaterial—air, energy, force, spirit. Straddling the threshold between presence and absence, materiality and immateriality, the physical and the spiritual, object and space, Balasubramaniam's deeply philosophical sculptural practice insists that the second term of each of these dyads be understood not as mere lack or negation, but rather an independent, empirical state, observable under appropriate conditions.



Alwar Balasubramaniam, *Lines in Fold*, 2012, granite and sandstone, dimensions variable.



Alwar Balasubramaniam, *Kaayam*, 2008, cast from artist's body, fiberglass and acrylic, dimensions variable.

*Link* is a counterpoint to the other sculptures in the show, which reverse its operational logic. Though the phrase *cast from artist's body* appears prominently on the checklist, the works' abstracted forms—made from pristine white fiberglass that approximates marble—often confound this professed indexical corporality by reducing the said body to almost indiscernible traces. For instance, in *Kaayam*, 2008, the body remains visible but is deflated into a wall-mounted quartet of crumpled sheaths. Casts of the space inside the artist's grasping hands are buried inside two limp cones connected by a looping coil in the cochlear *Hold Nothing*, 2012, while in

*Unfold*, 2012, detailed casts of the furrowed little-finger ends of clenched fists are magnified and embedded into the two sides of a form that resembles a mollusk shell turned inside out. Similarly, *Lines in Fold*, 2012, a yin-yang of forms carved alternately out of granite and sandstone, transforms the hidden ridges and crevasses formed by clasped hands into smooth rocks shaped over millennia by the unrelenting forces of nature.