

# MODERN PAINTERS



NEW YORK

## Alwar Balasubramaniam

Talwar Gallery // May 5–August 31

ALTHOUGH IMPRINTS OF Balasubramaniam's actual body are present everywhere in this self-titled exhibition, the Bangalore-based artist would argue that he is present only metaphysically. Consisting in large part of casts of his body made from fiberglass and acrylic, along with smaller pieces like *Untitled*, 2009, a silkscreen marked by traces of fire, the show aims to make visible what is usually imperceptible—shadow, light, air, and, a little heavy-handedly, the immaterial presence of the spirit.

In *Kaayam*, 2008, four positive molds of Balasubramaniam's body, drained of their volume and folded in on themselves like empty skins, hang side by side on a wall, like marbled tree frogs or twisted fire hoses. The face on each is devoid of emotion, seemingly waiting to be re-inhabited. In *Hold Nothing*, 2012, and *Unfold*, 2012—which resemble, respectively, a double-sided horn and the inside of an ear—the artist's presence is imprinted negatively, the sculptures embodying the physical features

**Alwar Balasubramaniam**  
*Kaayam*, 2008.  
Fiberglass, wood,  
and acrylic.

of the air that surrounded him and the empty spaces where he did not exist at the time of the casting. They are shown alongside *Lines in Fold*, 2012, a sculpture in two pieces made of granite and sandstone. Representing the shape of Balasubramaniam's clasped hands, they seem almost prehistoric, like primitive hand tools that have been smoothed by their passage through time. The dramatic mood lighting to heighten shadows and the New Age overtones of energy and connectedness in the wall text detract from the raw, organic beauty of the solitary forms, lending embellishment where it is not needed.

*Link*, 2009, composed of a tiny fishing hook tied to an almost invisible black thread, is easily overlooked because of the slightness of its appearance. Free of the heavy imprint of Balasubramaniam's body, it is the only work in the exhibition that truly has the power to move. Seemingly suspended between two walls in a corner of the gallery but actually held in place by an invisible magnet, the piece, a study in disbelief, is a tiny miracle.

—Brienne Walsh