

MARIA SOUZA

LOCATION: THE MET

SLOW LOOKING EXERCISE

ART: BODY AS A SHELL , 2011-15

- Name of the artist: Alwar Balasubramaniam – Indian born in 1971
- Material: Sandstone
- Purchase, Dipti Mathur, Asha Jadja, Sunil and Blanca Herani gifts, 2022 (2022. 164)
- “Appearing as a pile of shed or flayed human skin, this sculpture belies its material. To produce the work, the artist cast a plaster form of his own body using fiberglass and molded rubber. Subsequent castings and manipulations resulted in this machine-carved and hand-finished version. The figure's curled self-embrace is reminiscent of the funerary practice of burying the dead in a fetal position. Body as Shell straddles the threshold between presence and absence, materiality and immateriality, and the physical and spiritual, suggesting the precarity of life.”
- Passage of time: I believe that with the passage of time the work is very good, I believe that because it is recent, it is apparently whole and does not contain any cracks or fissures, at first I thought that its color would have changed because it has a yellowish appearance, but I imagined that the reason for this yellowing is its material, sandstones contain this color, His feet seemed to be a little dusty, but perhaps that also had a motive, and probably, it's the play of light and shadow that the museum made when it positioned the sculpture to be exposed.
- Different Angles: At first I was looking from left to right, and it appeared to be a "melted" person sleeping, then after thirty minutes, I reversed, and began to appreciate

from right to left, and then it seemed to me that it was a person (still melted obviously), trying to get up, and then, I moved away, being able to see not only the sculpture, but the structure of its showcase as a whole, I could see that I don't know if it was on purpose, it seemed to me a tomb, a tomb, a grave or even a chest between open, with a treasure, in this case this shell of someone inside, the architecture surrounded by art made a lot of sense to me, unfortunately, I don't know if it was on purpose, but it adorned the context of art.

- Impressions: I stayed there for some time enjoying the sculptor and making my notes, so I could perceive and notice some first impressions from its viewers during the moment I was there, adding, most of these impressions I noticed before the viewer read the title of the work. First impressions: confusion, disgust and fear (frightened by the appearance of the "person"); I also heard a comment: "it's a blanket made of a person", and I also had a girl who stared at some men and shook her head, laughing and agreeing with the title/name of the work, and ending with a lady who read the sign of a work different from the one and said to her companions "it's just a dancer".

- Started: 2:08 PM

(Including the 30min appreciating)

- Finished: 3PM

Elements

- Color: It had color of Sandstone, simple.
- Textura: It had smooth stone, except for the part of the hair, where it had purposeful textures in line shapes engraved in the stone
- Shapes: undulating and sinuous to represent the idea of soft and empty

Reflections

Going to museums is not something new for me, I always liked and frequented as a child with my parents, I would go, glance at the works, take pictures, and leave. Over time, my interest and love for art in its various forms of expression grew with me, and I learned to understand precisely what to appreciate in the works, I have an uncle who helped me a lot in this, who always says "Only take a picture if it is something you want to keep very willingly, try to appreciate the present moment, to create a special memory", something like only being able to see "That" if I visit the museum again, and so I do it to this day, so I practice slow looking frequently. A couple of weeks ago or so, I had come to the Met for the fourth time, to bring a cousin who was visiting the city, we went to the most famous pavements, so for this job, I didn't want to go to the Met, but the museum I had chosen, Solomon R. Guggenheim, had its half and its ramps closed for works. There was also the fact that even with the student ID I would still have to pay two dollars, for these reasons, I decided to go to the MET, I thought and to my, until then, favorite sculpture, which is Hercules holding Medusa's head, and do my work there, after arriving at the MET, when I was and redirecting the sculpture that I like so much, I saw an entrance that I had never noticed before, it was the exhibition where the work I chose "Body as a Shell" was located, I was never so grateful to have returned to the MET, I did the slow looking like the 30-minute subject, which I already do normally, but the difference was the notes, I honestly didn't think I would have that much to write down of a sculpture, and I did! I loved the experience very much, especially the part about noticing the first impression of other visitors, I will do so now next time. I believe that the purpose of slowlooking and that of the perception of others is to sharpen our patience and to make as, like me, I noticed an entrance that I had never noticed after the fourth visit, we can notice things in the arts that we would not notice if we spent only a few seconds enjoying it, or if we had only taken a picture.

