



FUNGAL ART

A close-up photograph of a marble sculpture. The surface is dark and textured, with intricate, fibrous, and organic-looking growths in shades of brown and gold. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and creating deep shadows.

VANITAS: A PORTRAYAL OF HUMAN DEGENERATION

Artist: Reza Sedghi.

Dimensions: 63 x 40 x 30 cm

Materials: Herat marble, Afghanistan red onyx, Iranian pink onyx, Iranian green onyx, black marble, resin, various fungi (*Aspergillus flavus*, *Acremonium*, *Penicillium digitatum*, *Gliocladium*), cotton, threads

Marble has been used for millennia by sculptors. Iranian-based sculptor, Reza Sedghi, recently created a marble sculpture that may be the first of its kind, ever. The piece utilizes marble with various fungi grown over it, for an ethereal and other-worldly effect.

“Vanitas” is based on the famous Apollo sculpture, to represent mankind and humanity, as we have captured many aspects that once were assigned to gods. But as modern human beings, we mostly fell into creating a luxurious shell for ourselves, disconnected from any forms of ethics and morality and living on the surface of an empty materialistic life.

Reza started this artwork as a digital concept and used CNC milling to bring it to life. Next came the hand sculpting and final details, then Reza created the parts separately and attached them all together. For the fungus parts the artist faced many errors and failures, wrong colors, problems of fixing the fungus, etc. But the thing that kept Reza going was in seeing life (the fungi) growing on a stone. Reza wishes to thank to Ms. Rokni, a mycologist, who helped with developing and fixing the fungus. “It was a really challenging yet amazing experiment for me, and the sculpture that you’re seeing is, I believe, the first ever stone sculpture with fungus grown over it,” Reza told FUNGI Magazine. Reza also credits Sara Tehraninia, who worked on the epoxy structure, and Mohsen Zare, who worked as CNC operator.

About the process and you likely are wondering if the fungi used could be dangerous to viewers in any way. The molds were dried and killed with gas so as far as the artist knows, they are not dangerous to anyone. Furthermore, for showcasing, the sculpture will be kept inside a glass box. The structure over the stone was created with resin, threads, and cotton and then nutrients were added onto the sculpture, mostly on the cotton areas to induce fungal growth. The slower growing fungi were added first, with more aggressive cultures added later; ultimately the different cultures and colors mixed together to achieve the look that the artist intended.

Want to see more? Check out this link to a video of the project:
<https://youtu.be/BZgs6KH5Txk>. 📺