GLADSTONE GALLERY


Inside, Outside, All Around the Thing

The Anish Kapoor exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum consists of just one work, but it’s a doozy. Viewable only from three partial perspectives, “Memory” is an enormous egg-shaped volume of Cor-Ten steel, wedged into a boxy side gallery like a dirigible that drifted off course and got stuck. When you approach it from the gallery’s main entryway, all you see is a curved, heavily ribbed section, its rusty, flanged parts held together by heavy bolts. It evidently fills the gallery from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. But you cannot enter this way, so you go around through rooms holding the permanent collection and enter a dimly lighted space with a square hole in the wall. From the side you can see steel plates sloping away from the edges of this aperture, but from straight on only an ambiguous blackness is visible. It could be paint on a wall or a window onto endless night. But you understand that you are looking into the pitch-black interior of the sculpture, and since you can’t see more than a few feet of the inner surface, the space seems limitless, as in the light and space of James Turrell, only dark.

When you finally enter the gallery from another direction, you find one rounded end of the sculpture looming ominously and absurdly over the space. It resembles the end of a Jules Verne submarine and, with a round plate capping off its bulbous tip like a nippleless areola, a giant breast.

Mr. Kapoor, who is 55 and lives in London, is known for often-spectacular works that generate tension between the sensational qualities of material, surface texture and color and the intangible, illusory expanses of dark inner space. “Memory” is typical, but it is the first piece he’s done in Cor-Ten, which is formulated to...