

Reviews: Charles Ray, Anne Wehr

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Fans of Charles Ray must feel like the artist produces work about as often as Horton hatches a Who. Still, this exhibition, Ray's first New York solo show since his 1998 mid-career retrospective at the Whitney, proves that the results are worth the wait.

In *Chicken* (2007), Ray depicts a life-size egg with a perfect circle cut away to reveal a baby bird within. Made of painted stainless steel and porcelain, it's an almost unbearably delicate and intimate object, with the chick's tiny beak and slicked-down fuzz rendered in painstaking detail.

On the opposite end of the scale, there's *Father Figure* (2007), an 18.5-ton machined steel sculpture of a green toy tractor with driver, rendered in real-life dimensions—a sequel, perhaps, to Ray's famous *Firetruck* (1993), which relied on a similar supersizing strategy. Seamlessly crafted, the new piece looks for all the world like it's made of the sort of hard, thin plastic that breaks into jagged cracks when left out in the sandbox too long. *The New Beetle* (2006), meanwhile, depicts a boy engrossed in playing with a toy car; it's as classically beautiful as it is eloquently self-contained.

If this trio of sculptures seems a bit too immaculate, that's part of the point. Ray's dogged investigation of form has always been expressed in idealized terms, whether the subject is guilelessly appealing (his miniature self-portrait in a bottle) or sensational (his orgy tableaux featuring multiple versions of himself). For Ray, the profound and pleasurable act of looking provides its own quiet reward.

—Anne Wehr