

Contemporary Art is artwork that is produced today. Contemporary art is a tool that helps artists to spread social messages and question the world around them. Charles Ray, a Los Angeles-based American sculptor, is known for creating art that is globally influential, culturally diverse, and technologically advanced. They use their art to sway-their observers' perspectives or allow them to ask distinctive questions. "Charley Ray spent the first twenty-five years of his professional life taking sculpture apart, and now he's trying to put it back together,"¹ Charles Ray spent valuable time to study the art in depth and questioned what he had learned to build his own method.

Charles Ray has designed various sculptures that were made with diverse materials, such as bronze, aluminum, marble, wood, clay, among other materials. Charles Ray's sculptural process is very complex with the opposition of the elements to it. For example, *The Sleeping Mime*, a sculpture of a reclining male figure, is carved from solid blocks of aluminum. Ray only used one material, Aluminum, which was very difficult to work with and he had to create the sculpture in his own way to make the aluminum seem bare and detailed. Originally, Charles Ray worked with another employee, elaborately detailing the sculptures' features. However, Ray was not satisfied with how the sculpture captured the sleep-like or miming-sleep nature in the body? In the face?² Ray ended up creating a second foam printout and having to completely start from scratch in order to have more control over the specific parts of the body and to leave a soft touch, and parts that appeared blurry or out of focus. The first time I saw the sculpture, I instantly saw the mime's restfulness that's captured in his face and his restful expression.

¹Calvin Tomkins, The Man Making Sculpture Modern, The New Yorker, May 4, 2015.

² Brook Turner, "a guide to Charles Ray Sleeping Mime" (New York: Paperleaf Press, 2017), 13.

Charles Ray decided to develop a new foam printout and use clay. He used heated clay for its softened consistency. Ray needed this consistency because it was more flexible to work with and easier to spread onto the foam with tools and his hands. Ray wanted to focus on the small details in the figure and fade some details out to create a fuzzy appearance. This fuzziness would give a push and pull effect to tie the image of the sculpture together.³ He focused on the left hand on the leg, the arch of each finger, the tension on the figures' suspenders, the structure of each shoe, and smaller details like the fingernails, the buttons, and shoelaces. I can see this push and pull effect most clearly in the simplistic way the fingers are bent and details such as ~~on~~ the creases that a real hand would have.

The construction of the garments was a challenge for Ray to render because of the position of the body. Ray had to sculpt the body underneath the fabric to get the natural folds, but he wanted to interfere with the fabrics' natural movement. Later, Ray had to create detailed casts for the male figure's face. He created casts for *The Sleeping Mime's* hands, chest, ears, feet, shirt, pants, shoes, and even his hand placed on his leg. Ray had to create multiple body casts of different movements and perspectives to use as reference material. Once Ray had a cast? Foam print out? of the sculpture, he began to repair some areas with small pieces of fabric and clay to re-smooth it. Charles Ray wanted to use two contrasting materials such as cloth and metal to show realism to make the figure appear alive. This is vividly shown in the mime's shirt which look like they are made of real fabric.

Due to the complicated process, Charles Ray was required to use modern technology. Ray had to create a digital scan of *The Sleeping Mime's* arm by using a scanner at a studio. Charles

³ Brook Turner, "a guide to Charles Ray Sleeping Mime" (New York: Paperleaf Press, 2017), 15.

Ray stated, “We help with scanning and we help in vetting the qualities and usability of the data, but then we turn that data over to the studio, and we get a model as a result of the activity back from the studio.”⁴ As a contemporary artist Ray is interested in incorporating technology in his pieces because it is easier to work with and presents the piece to society in a modernized way.

The Sleeping Mime is predominantly made out of aluminum, however, one of the constraints of using aluminum in sculptures is the difficulty of leaving the aluminum bare and completely eliminate the visibility of welded metal. Ray preferred the sculpture to look like bare aluminum. “With bare stainless steel, I would say that the invisibility of the weld metal is very, very high; its not truly invisible, but its very close. And we can’t offer the same in aluminum and in other materials,”⁵

Overall, people who get a chance to observe *The Sleeping Mime* often have very different perspectives depending on where they are standing or viewing the sculpture. The lighting and the environment strongly? Drastically? change one's view of the sculpture. When I first encountered *The Sleeping Mime*, I was surrounded by my peers who had several varying opinions on the sculpture which were very different from my own outlook. Many thought the male figure was uncomfortable or in pain because of the position he was laying in on a gurney. I believed the mime looked like he was sleeping and dreaming about a life he dreamed of having. Ray asks, “Does my mime sleep, or does he mime sleep?” and his question is justified: sculpture can only ever mime the real. *Sleeping Mime* does not sleep or dream”⁶

⁴ Brook Turner, “a guide to Charles Ray Sleeping Mime” (New York: Paperleaf Press, 2017), 28.

⁵ Brook Turner, “a guide to Charles Ray Sleeping Mime” (New York: Paperleaf Press, 2017), 32.

⁶ Amanda Gluibizzi, “Three Christs, Sleeping Mime, and the Last Supper; Pagan Paradise” (The Brooklyn Rail)