Sawee Ray
CONTTEMPORARY ARTS
MOST OBSESSIVE PERFECTIONIST HAS A NEW SHOW
AT MATTHEW MARKS
A trio of sculptures, years in the making
By Andrew Russeth

A few years ago, Los Angeles-based artist Charles Ray had heart trouble that required surgery. After he recovered, one of his doctors told him that he should start walking as much as possible. "So I was taking these really long walks," he told The Observer last week at the Matthew Marks Gallery in Chelsea, where an exhibition of his work has just gone on view. Every day, he said, he would find himself by the same bench at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Seventh Street, in Central LA, and usually a homeless guy was on it, and I would talk to him and give him some money and stuff like that.

In Matthew Marks, Mr. Ray was standing next to a life-size, realistic metal sculpture he has made of that bench with a woman lying on top of it. She leans over on her side, sleeping peacefully on a blanket like a contemporary Ariadne. Her jacket is pulled up, exposing her back, and her hair is based on a homeless woman he saw while he was walking by one day. He went on to spend years in the sculpture-three of them on her shoes alone.

Asked why he invested so much time in what would appear to be a banal scenario—a woman on a bench—he began his answer by retracing from his sculpture. "I came up from this direction," he said quietly, approaching it from behind. The shape her body made on the bench was, he recalled, "so big and transcendental in a way, you know? I saw the under- wear and the lace. I just immediately knew I wanted to machine it. I knew I wanted to make a sculpture out of it. What would happen with the machine tool? I was trying to push her, to bring her to, or her soul, up through her physicality and out across her clothes, that was sort of the attempt." As far as he knows, the woman is unaware that she has been shown in art galleries twice, a few months ago at Matthew Marks's new Los Angeles branch, and now in New York.

It's an old cliché that you can get a pretty good idea of what an artist is like by the way they make. Though it's not universal- ly true, big, bold paintings tend

Continued on page 80

SLEEPING WOMAN (2012) BY RAY.
Shoeless Ray

But hepherds taking craftsman's to talking content.

herd his deformed to talking pictures," he said, recalling the day he came across the homely, durable, and sturdy man of his own beautiful art, on a very common intersection and just unusually sort of subplot like a rascal, just avoidable.

and then I walked home, which was about 40 minutes afterward, I looked at my putter and thought, "Don't have enough patience." And I walked all the way back and she told me, "Trains were quite rare, but I'll get a cab for you, Ray." The sculptor, Sherry woman (2002), is solid stainless

We'll all equal.

material called Fortis to make cushions that never "lightweight," as he said, "because I can use as many kilograms as a ton. And that's another beauti-

Allusion view of the show at Matthews Dietz.

This one is just one of two, a pair, that Ray made for his own family.

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Shoe Tie (2012) by Ray.

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