

Art in Review

Charles Ray

'Ink Line, Moving Wire,
Spinning Spot'

*Matthew Marks Gallery
523 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through June 27*

More than 20 years ago, Charles Ray created a piece of kinetic sculpture that became famous even though hardly anyone saw it: "Ink Line" (1987), a fine stream of black ink flowing from a little hole in the ceiling to another in the floor.

Now it is publicly exhibited for the first time. "Ink Line" is a one-liner — a joke about Minimalism — but it is remarkable nevertheless. It looks like a length of shiny black rubber, but on closer examination, you can see that it is moving. Invisibly, below the floor, the ink is collected and pumped back up behind a wall and across the ceiling to the hole from which it re-emerges.

Two other pieces from the '80s are on display. In "Moving Wire" (1988), the ends of a length of wire snake in and out of fine holes drilled into the wall. As one extends, the other retracts. "Spinning Spot" (1987) is a 24-inch circle cut out from the floor and spinning at $33\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m.

Perhaps it is the split between the illusion and the presumed reality underlying it that makes these deceptively simple sleights of mechanical engineering so compelling. One part of the mind experiences them as magical; another knows that hidden machinery is running them.

This is not an uncommon experience. Think of flying in an airplane or communicating by e-mail. We live in a world of supernatural effects, and we take it on faith that someone knowledgeable is in control.

KEN JOHNSON