

Reviews

Charles Ray

★★★★

Matthew Marks Gallery, through June 27 (see Chelsea)

A quivering, slender, blue-black column extending from floor to ceiling, Charles Ray's *Ink Line* (1987) is one of those rare works of art capable of provoking a double take, even in the forewarned viewer. Like Richard Wilson's *20:50*, an audience favorite from the same year, *Ink Line* seems to transform the liquid from which it's made into something completely different. Whereas Wilson exploited the reflective properties of oil to make a pool that vanishes into its surroundings, Ray leans on the opacity of his material to create a static object from a moving stream. Only a slight wobble, a gentle trickling sound and the presence of a nervous gallery attendant give the game away. It's an alchemical marvel that wrests magic from everyday stuff.

At Matthew Marks, *Ink Line* forms part of a lovely trio of early works by the L.A. artist's artist. In *Moving Wire* (1988), a loop of thin

Spinning Spot



wire revolves in a continuous circuit through two holes drilled into the wall. As one half moves out toward the viewer, the other retracts, vanishing for a second before reappearing. In *Spinning Spot* (1987), a two-foot circle of flooring becomes a turntable that rotates at 33rpm, like an architectural record-deck.

Ray's last outing at the gallery, in 2007, included such feats of conceptual craft as *Father Figure*, a weighty, scaled-up steel replica of a plastic toy tractor. The current show, another tour de force of the utterly literal, takes us—beautifully—back to basics.—*Michael Wilson*