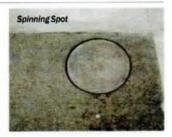
Reviews

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



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