

project roundness and depth beyond their silhouettes, for we have experienced bodies in space before and know that any one view provides only part of the information. Other figures appear terribly distorted before we even begin to examine them from other angles. They can be stretched along a powerful diagonal, as in *Self, variation #1*, or pulled vertically, as in *Male Stretch, variation #3*—a nod at unorthodox modes of manipulating form in Modernist as well as Renaissance practice (Holbein's *Ambassadors* and Parmigianino's *Self-portrait*).

Back of Danny, variation #4 was turned with its back to the room, the front of the head placed close to the wall. Its most important feature, namely the face, is almost entirely missing—in fact, it is sliced off—a particularly perverse take on the traditional bust. However, the remaining parts are modeled in a mesmerizing way—Penny does not take casts of his models—and the hues, textures, and blemishes of the skin are brilliantly seized—Penny paints into the thin superimposed layers of silicone that he pours into his mold. The final touch involves punching in the hair and, here, the stubble of the beard, which, once more, achieve breathtaking life-likeness. Penny displays extraordinary powers of mimesis and then reminds you, again and again, that his work, like so much else, is nothing more than a construct. In *Panagiota: Conversation #1, variation #2*, he translates a continuous photographic take of a speaking woman into sculptural terms. Here, the idea trumps the result, as Penny pays homage to the Futurist ambition of showing a sequence of movements across a span of time, intimating at the horrors that may lie in store for us as we continue to toy with the building blocks of life.

—Michael Amy

NEW YORK

Charles Ray Matthew Marks

Charles Ray's wizardry with boundary-breaking was conspicuous in this low-tech but high-interest exhibition. Three works from a little more than 20 years ago defied ceiling, floor, and wall, showing the viewer how simple interventions can result in sculptures of startling intelligence and rough beauty. In each piece, Ray conceals a motor or pump that causes the sculpture to do what it does, but his instruments, while concealed, feel rudimentary. Ray is a thoroughly classical postmodern sculptor, if such a characterization makes sense. He creates one-off pieces that range widely without necessarily relating closely to each other—for example, there are the pictures of him wrapped around a branch in a tree, which contrast with the Minimalist *Ink Box* (1986), a black steel cube filled to the brim with black ink (the latter is a cousin of *Ink Line* [1987], one of the three works in the show).

Much of the pleasure of this exhibition derived from speculation about how the sculptures were devised. Press materials confirm that machinery of a basic sort is involved, but still, we don't know *how* each sculpture was built, and so a mystery attaches itself to the works. *Ink Line* is a marvelous trick of the eye, consisting of a thin column of ink running from ceiling to wall. Using an electric motor and pump, Ray has created a compelling illusion whose subtle changes document movement—from a few feet away, the line feels solid and static, but up close one notices small aberrations on the surface, which demonstrate that the ink is, in fact, moving. Just as the viewer must focus sharply on the ink surface of *Ink Box* in order to know that the top of the cube is liquid and not solid, so he or she must closely investigate the line of ink to determine that it is not



Top: Charles Ray, *Ink Line*, 1987. Ink, electric motor, pump, and plastic, dimensions variable. Above: Charles Ray, *Spinning Spot*, 1987. Aluminum, electric motor, and electric components, 24 in. diameter.

a solid line but one that flows and maintains fluid properties.

Spinning Spot (1987) and *Moving Wire* (1988), while not so dramatic, are also prepossessing. In *Spinning Spot*, a section of the floor, a circle 24 inches in diameter, rotates at 33 rpm. Bemused at first, viewers wonder about its reference as well as its construction: Does the spinning spot refer to music LPs, which were ubiquitous at the time? Whatever

its meaning, *Spinning Spot* exists as a compelling visual conundrum in which a piece of the floor rotates at a consistent speed. The gee-whic factor, present in all three sculptures, is particularly strong here. *Moving Wire* (1988) also has a seemingly simple appearance: it is composed of a single strand of wire 8.5 feet in length. Both ends come out of the wall some 14 inches apart from each other. Gradually the wire

moves in and out of the wall — as one end lengthens and pulls out toward the viewer, the other end diminishes and moves back into the wall. *Moving Wire*, like its two companions, may seem conceptually simple; however, all three pieces develop a singular sleight of hand and prove compelling as art.

—Jonathan Goodman