

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Anne Frank Project, a three-part installation, transforms the way history and artifacts are conventionally considered. The installation questions the social construction of Anne Frank, the person behind the myth, as separate from the accumulated cultural history of the “Diary.” Formally, the slippage between text and body, artifact and representation, memory and its social mechanisms, form essential spaces of the Anne Frank Project.

The installation is flexible and can be shown in its entirety or in parts adaptable to the architectural space of the exhibition venue.

The following text is a description of *Partial Index*, *A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, and *Conditions for Growth*; the three sections of The Anne Frank Project.

In the Archeology of Knowledge (1972)
Michel Foucault proposes that we abandon notions of history as fixed – focused on a single meaning or unified account – and instead think in terms of rupture and discontinuity, of the interruptions and displacements that underlie assumptions of continuity and homogeneity. Thinking in this way forces us to concede that the past is never static, but shifts with every representation of it, that its meanings are to be located in its silences and absences, in its uncertainties and ambiguities, as well as in its solid homogeneous manifestations. It is this notion of history that motivates Ellen Rothenberg’s, Anne Frank Project...

Whitney Chadwick, from “Ellen Rothenberg: A Probability Bordering on Certainty,” exhibition publication, The Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College

Partial Index is an architectural structure, with a wall of doors, it functions as a filing cabinet containing enlarged ‘documents.’ Texts written by Anne Frank but omitted for publication by her father, images of an analysis of her handwriting, floor plans of the hiding place, and photos from the walls of her room. By presenting documentation of various kinds, the distinctions between truth and fiction, denial and falsehood become sharply delineated.

A Probability Bordering on Certainty is a collection of works developed while Rothenberg was living in Berlin during 1991-92. Proximity to the sites of WWII enabled her to do research at The Anne Frank Institute and Museum, and the Netherlands’s Institute for War Documentation. “A Probability...” is not a documentary portrait of a person or a time, but an investigation into the construction of identity and transforms the way history, artifacts, and documents are conventionally considered.”

Conditions for Growth is the final part of the Anne Frank Project and considers the impossibility of quantifying the experience of The Holocaust. As a departure point, the installation references notations inscribed on the walls of the Secret Annex recording the heights of Anne Frank and the other children. In “Conditions...” the exhibition wall becomes a surface of inscriptions. Masses of rulers are suspended above steel footprints and surround industrial scales weighing pillows, pencils, and bread.



The questions at the heart of this work are deeply disconcerting: how do we know what is “real,” “authentic,” “a veritable clue to history”? “Who decides? To what (social, political, gender-inflected) ends?... What if, as in the case of the Diary, we don’t know what we’ve been missing? It is around these very uncertainties – that much of history – which can only even be a “partial index” – is constructed. And that is precisely what Rothenberg wants us to see.

Marguerite Feitlowitz, from “Taking Our Measure: The Quest for meaning in Ellen Rothenberg’s Anne Frank Project, exhibition publication, Gallery 312



SELECTED EXHIBITION HISTORY

- 2004 *Holocaust as Subject*, The Tweed Museum, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota
- 2001 *The Anne Frank Project*, solo exhibition, Gallery 312, Chicago, Illinois
- 1995 *After Auschwitz*, Royal Festival Hall, London; Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester; City Gallery Sunderland; City Arts Center, Edinburgh, Scotland
- 1994 *Conditions for Growth*, solo exhibition, Aidekman Arts Center, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts
- Burnt Whole*, Washington Project for the Arts, Washington D.C. Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts
- Partial Index and A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, solo exhibition, Portland Museum of Art, Maine
- Partial Index and selections from A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, solo exhibition, Kent Gallery, NYC
- 1993 *Partial Index and A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, solo exhibition, University Art Museum, UCSB, California
- 1992 *A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, solo exhibition, The Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College, Massachusetts
- 1991 *Boston Now*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY



Books

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler, *Mediating Anne Frank*, University of Indiana Press (forthcoming)

David Bathrick, Brad Prager and M.D. Richardson, *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*, (Camden House: New York, NY, 2008)

Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust*, (Wayne State University Press: Indiana, 2003)

Matthew Baigell, *Jewish American Artists and the Holocaust*, (Rutgers University Press: New Jersey, 1997)

Exhibition Catalogues

Holocaust as Subject, (The Tweed Museum, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota, 2004)

Marguerite Feitlowitz, *The Anne Frank Project*, (Gallery 312: Chicago, 2001)

Monica Bohm-Duchen, *After Auschwitz*, (Northern Center for Contemporary Art: Sunderland, 1995)

Whitney Chadwick, Lynne Cooke, Dan Eisenberg, Cindi Katz, *Ellen Rothenberg*, (Aidekman Arts Center, Tufts University: Massachusetts, 1994)

Karen Holtzman, *Burnt Whole, Contemporary Artists reflect on the Holocaust*, (Washington Project for the Arts: Washington DC, ICA, Boston, MA)

Elizabeth Brown, *Reading The Anne Frank Project*, (University Art Museum UCSB: Santa Barbara, California, 1993)

Whitney Chadwick, *A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, (Bunting Institute: Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993)

Articles and Reviews

Linda Weintraub, "Ellen Rothenberg," *temacleste*, Spring 2001

John Brunetti, "Ellen Rothenberg," *dialogue*, May - June 2001

Achy Obejas, "Beyond Anne Frank," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/4/01

Margaret Hawkins, "Repainting the Past," *Chicago Sun Times*, 3/2/01

Paul Richard, "The Holocaust Obliquely," *The Washington Post*, 10/30/94

Miles Unger, "Spotlight: Doubtful Histories," *Art New England*, August/September 1994

Mary Haus, "Ellen Rothenberg," *Art News*, March 1994

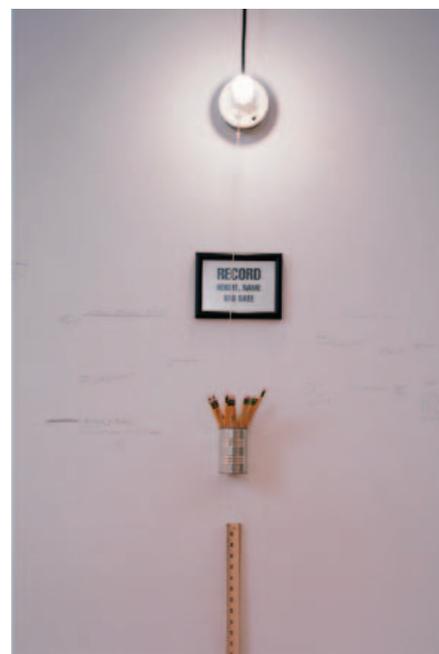
Nancy Stapen, "Dissecting the Organization of Evil," *The Boston Globe*, March 1994

Kim Levin, "Voice Choices," *The Village Voice*, 1/18/94

Michael Darling, "The Best of 1993," *Santa Barbara News Press*, 12/31/93

Christine Temin, "A Vital re-Viewing of Anne Frank's Life," *Boston Globe*, 6/23/93

Christine Temin, "Boston Now 10 unites potent works," *Boston Globe*, 5/29/91



ANNE FRANK PROJECT

DATE



PARTIAL INDEX

Books, 1991
26 books, lead bindings

Anne Frank Wallpaper, 1991- 2001
digital prints on paper

Lice Wallpaper, 1991- 2001
Ink, rubber stamp, paint

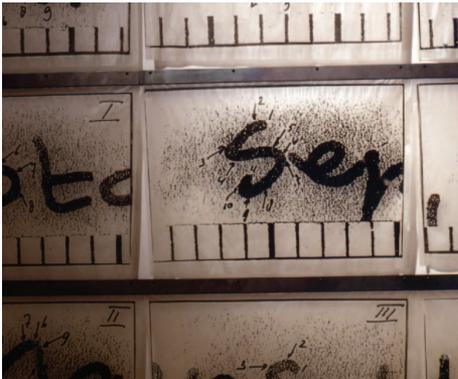
Banners, 1991
29 images and text printed on bamboo
paper with wax, steel brackets

Indexes, 1991
2 framed Ink jet prints

Additional installation elements: wood,
electrical fixtures, doors

CHECKLIST





A PROBABILITY BORDERING ON CERTAINTY

Footprints, 1991

Felt, wax, printed paper

*Collection of Charlene Engelhard

Handwriting Analysis, 1993

prints on silk tissue, steel brackets

*Collection of Charlene Engelhard

Anne Frank Business Cards, 1992

Letterpress on assorted papers

Family Portrait, 1992

4 wooden scoops, metal tags

Samples of Postwar Embroidery, 1992

6 bandages, thread, needle

The Combing Shawl, 1991-1993

Text on vellum with graphite, cast combs of aluminum, bronze, magnesium bronze, and aluminum brackets

Das Wesentliche (The Essence), 1993-2001

44 leather belts with incised text, foam rubber

Guilt Erasers, 1993

Unlimited edition of printed rubber erasers

Signage, 1993-2001

Framed photographs

Specimens, 1993

Printed paper, gelatin, pins, frames

Video Projection, 1993

Video by Dan Eisenberg





CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH

Alphabet Wall, 1994 - 2001
Decal letters, glassine sheets, wax, wood

Calendars, 1994
5 cow hides with stamped text

Meal Ticket, 1994
Rolls of tickets with text

Essays and Stories, 1994
leather gloves with stamped texts

Miscellaneous installation elements: rulers, thermometers, string, steel footprints, scales, clocks, bread, pencils, wood, etc.



RELATED WORKS

The Question of Authenticity, 1992
Handmade paper, printed glassine

Memorial to Forgetting, 1992
Steel hook, straw wreaths, printed banner

Scalp, 1994
Felt, pins, vellum, text



Sometimes all we need are the artist's eye to see such memory made palpable in everyday objects like shoes, erasers, hatchets. And sometimes we need the artist's eye to estrange these objects from their workaday habits, to force us to see them again, as if for the first time. In that moment between familiar and new, our minds make a leap between past and present, even if we never quite fix either with our gaze. In fact, it is in precisely this movement of mind that Rothenberg locates our current memory of the Holocaust.

James Young, from "After Images" exhibition catalogue, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen



In historical displays, actual relics risk becoming neutralized by the museum experience... Alternatively, they may be in danger of being subverted into the spectacular and exotic. Rothenberg astutely negotiates these different possibilities in a number of ways, not least by treating her artifacts as mnemonic devices, as signposts which chart a labyrinthine course through the installation and thereby through the mind of the viewer. ...They recall too, Gaston Bachelard's notion of the mind as a building whose secret passageways, attics and cellars are all depositories for different types of experience, which can only be re-visited by touring its circuitous corridors.

Lynne Cooke, Disjecta: observations, speculations and ruminations on Ellen Rothenberg's Anne Frank Project, exhibition publication, Tufts University Art Gallery, Aidekman Arts Center



STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Crate #1
17" x 70.5" x 2"
- Crate #2
22.5" x 22.25" x 34"
- Crate #3
17.5" x 54.25" x 41"
- Crate #4
39.75" x 63.75" x 10"
- Crate #5
26.5" x 30.75" x 38.5"
- Crate #6
19.5" x 33.25" x 51.75"
- Crate #7
42.75" x 20.75" x 35.25"

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- 1 projector and DVD player for video installation

All of the components of the exhibition pack into 7 standard-size crates. Many of the installation elements including the doors, electrical fixtures, vitrines, lumber, and scales can be sourced at the exhibition site.