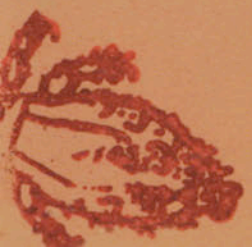
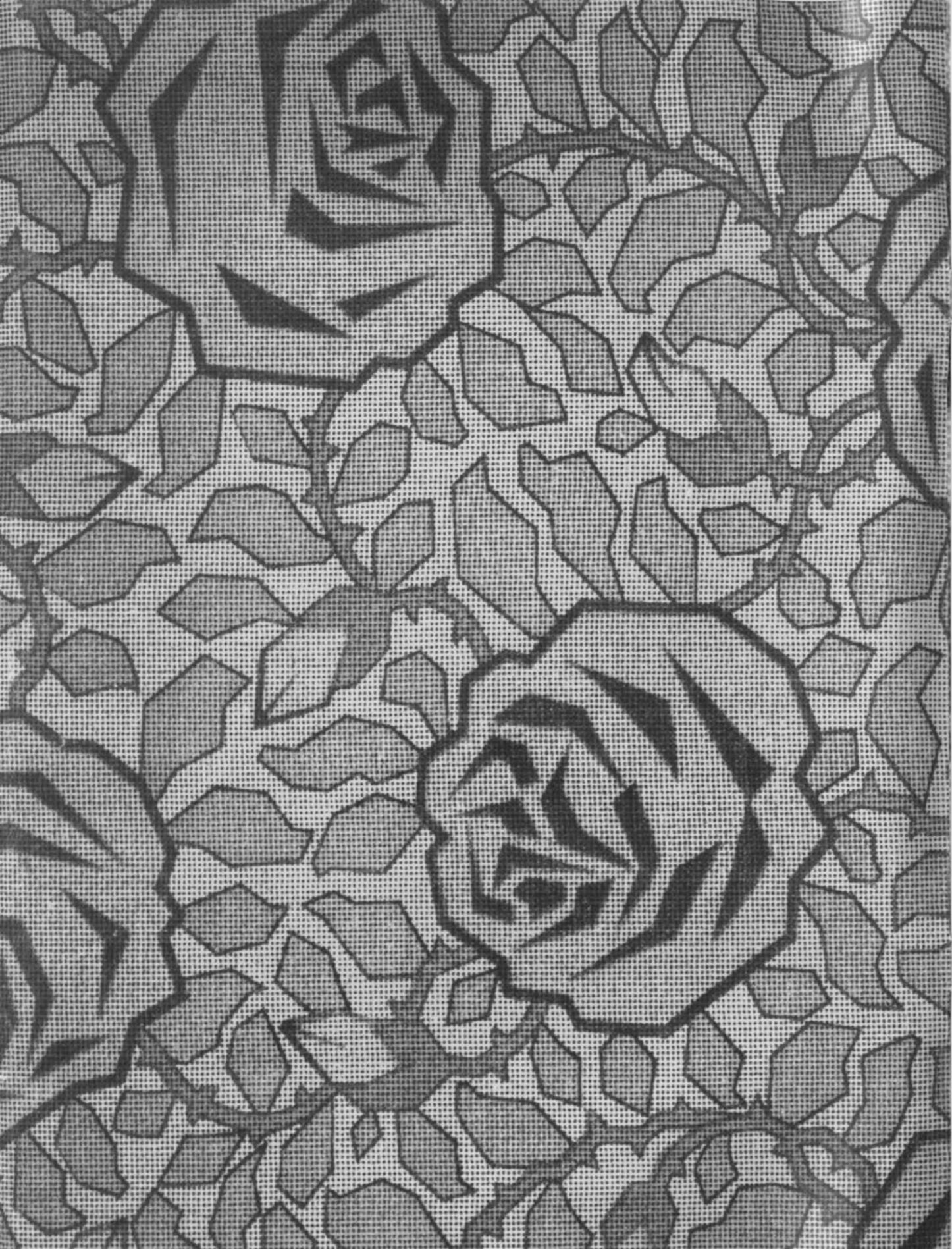


# the anne frank project

AN INSTALLATION BY ELLEN ROTHENBERG





FEBRUARY 3 – MARCH 24, 2001

# the anne frank project

AN INSTALLATION BY ELLEN ROTHENBERG

[ LEFT ]  
Specimens (detail)  
Anne Frank Institute Archives

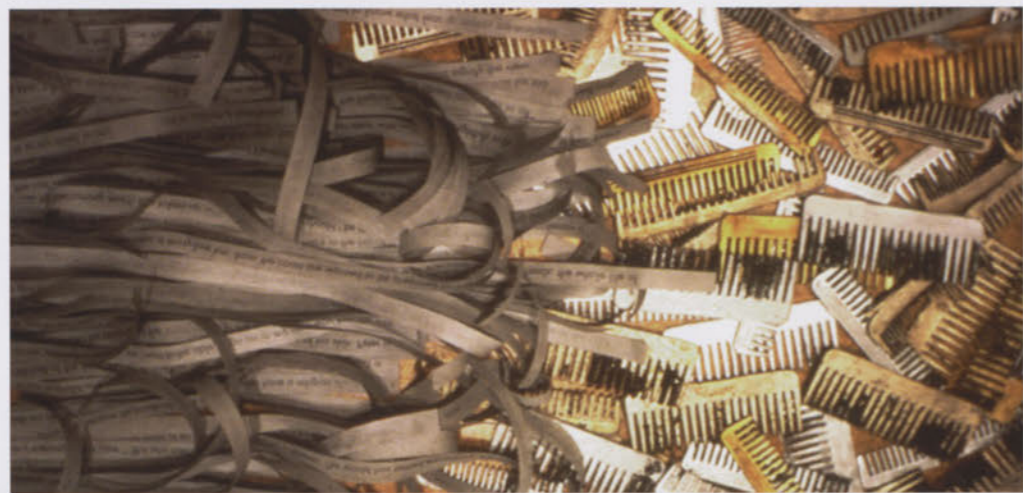
[ COVER ]  
Lice Wallpaper

GALLERY  
312

CHICAGO, IL

[ BELOW ]  
Combing Shawl  
(detail)

[ RIGHT ]  
Guilt Erasers  
(installation view)

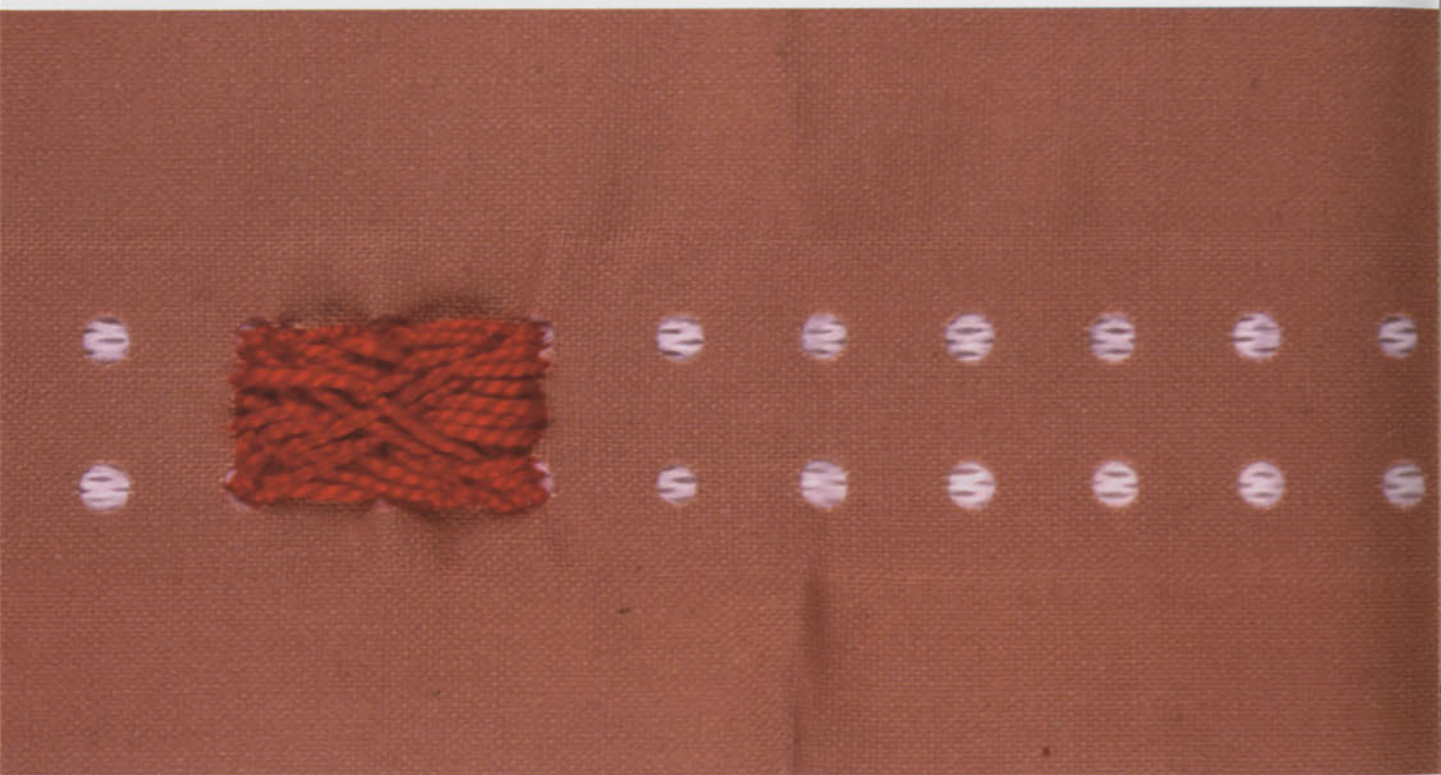




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Signage

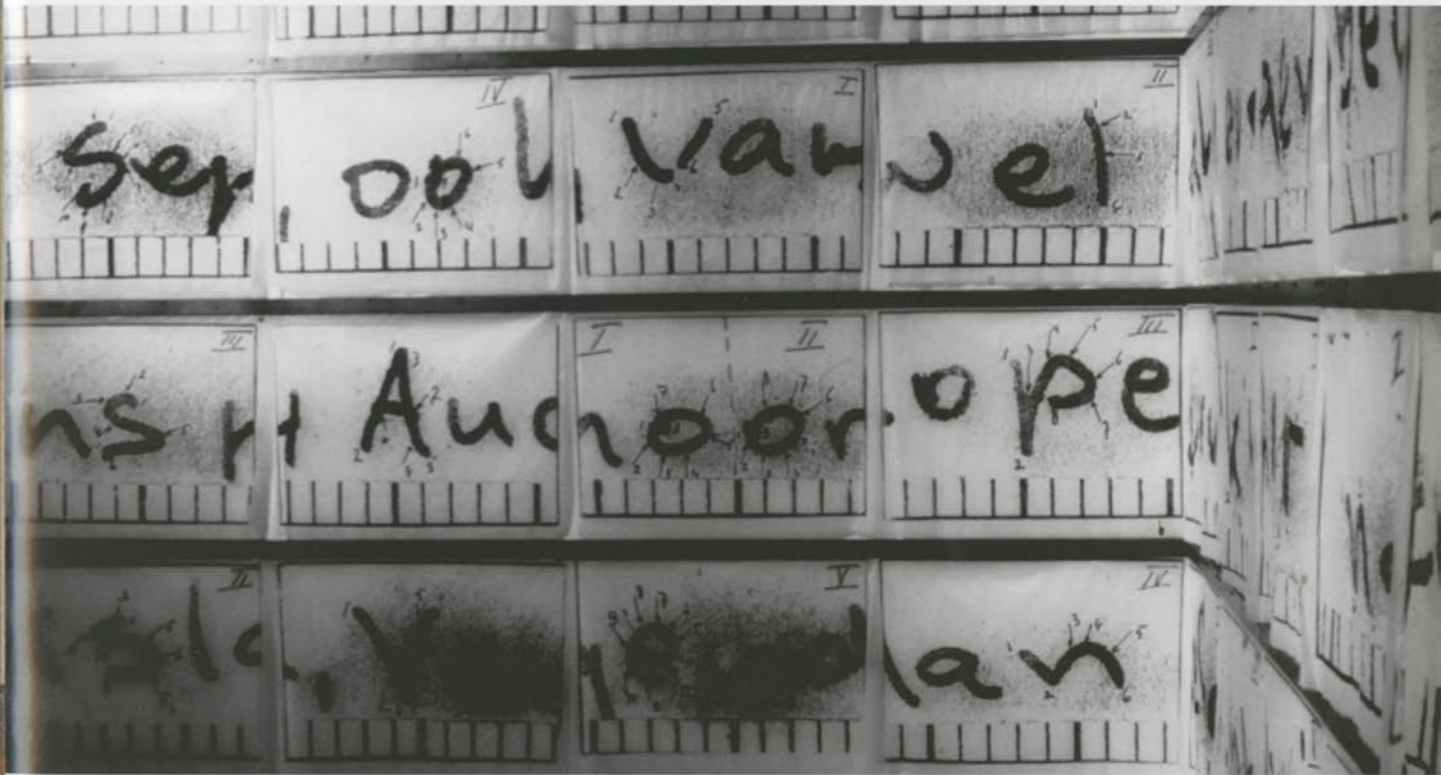
[ RIGHT ]  
Background: Handwriting Analysis  
Foreground: Das Wesentliche





[ ABOVE ]  
Samples of Postwar Embroidery  
(detail)

[ RIGHT ]  
Handwriting Analysis  
(detail)

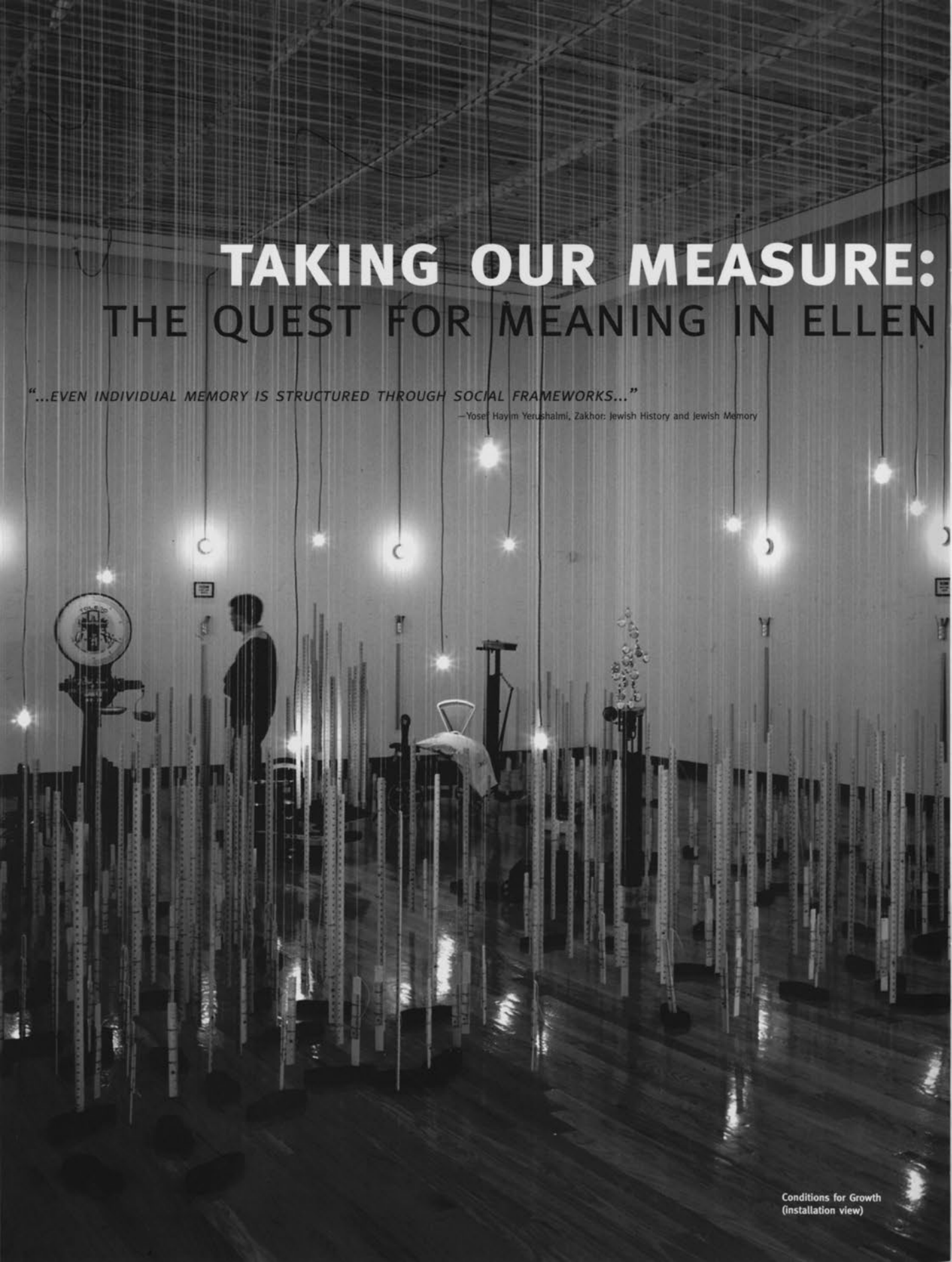




[ LEFT ]  
Partial Index  
(detail)

[ BELOW ]  
Combing Shawl  
(detail)

and holes in the seam. This kind of thing which the shops  
ing an eyelid, to get that idea right out of their minds. I am  
Eefje, a book called "good morning milkman"; Henny and  
ve never had a real friend, I thought at first that Jacque would  
nk she's all that likeable either. 5.) Henny Mets, is a nice, ch  
Miss J. always has to be right. She is very rich and has a we  
but never stops...  
nk she is very nice. She is fairly clever as well, there isn't mu  
s there is me, sitting next to G.Z. There is a lot, as well as ve  
book, but he had to anyway. And now Mrs. van Pels says he  
What I meant was he spoke German but I didn't want to write  
... packed on to Poland, 100, 11  
e couldn't walk and so the scoundrels went to fetch a car, met  
was 6, then I went up into the first form. I found myself in IB with  
enings, that is the best bit of all for sure. I listen to the radio eve  
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ing too. My reports surprised everyone, but perhaps they are n  
... left instead of putting it into a glass dish she leaves it in  
back so sweetly and peacefully. Just as she...



# TAKING OUR MEASURE:

## THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN ELLEN

"...EVEN INDIVIDUAL MEMORY IS STRUCTURED THROUGH SOCIAL FRAMEWORKS..."

—Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*

Conditions for Growth  
(Installation view)

"...THE SCALE OF THE ENDEAVOR CREATES COMMUNITY..." —Ellen Rothenberg

# ROTHENBERG'S ANNE FRANK PROJECT

BY MARGUERITE FEITLOWITZ

We enter an installation by Ellen Rothenberg and are overwhelmed: not by the heaviness of the history (we came, perhaps, with that expectation), nor by the profusion of elements (that comes on us, gradually), but by a space whose first impression is one of immaculate topography, of pristine, if disquieting, elegance. Rothenberg's signature space is largely open, punctuated by discrete displays: propaganda photos of radiant Aryan women in Nazi work camps cradling babies, baby chicks, or blond bundles of wheat; wallpaper whose rosy motif is actually multitudes of lice; casts of human fingers, fists, and hands filling the surface of a wooden table; the hugely magnified forensic samples of the diarist's script looming like hieroglyphs from a lost civilization. Each display stops us in our tracks; yet even as we stare, transfixed, we're aware of disturbance in our peripheral vision, causing a certain restlessness, a need to move on. As we make our way from one display to another, associations accumulate, images cross, and our attempts to synthesize get increasingly complicated. In a Rothenberg environment, we are impelled to wander, but there is no directed path. We must choose our progress.

One of the artist's most beautiful sites beckons with a softly glowing, gently swaying shower of delicate objects whose definition at any remove is impossible to name. Bare light bulbs hanging at different heights create constellations above our heads and silvery pools on the smooth wooden floor. We approach, only to lose ourselves in the midst of thousands of slender rulers, scores of silvery watches suspended from the ceiling by waxed string. We recall from the *Diary* that, as their time was running out, the children in the "Secret Annex"—Anne, Margot, and Peter—were periodically measured against a wall by Otto Frank. Rothenberg invites us to measure ourselves against the walls of her installation: arrayed in shiny tin cups at regular intervals are clusters of pencils with which to make our mark. Do we? It is a classic Rothenberg moment, a *dilemma*. We are forced to wonder, *What is the object of these objects? And what do they impel us to do?*

We are suddenly self-conscious, acutely aware of other people in the room. At varying heights, there are marks on the wall, some faint, some more assertive. This is no help at all. Are they part of the exhibit? Were they made by other viewers? It feels obscene to, even fictively, inject ourselves into this vignette of Anne Frank's life in hiding. No one seems quite certain how to act, and soon enough those gathered at this spot move off in different directions. Though we find ourselves in a shared physical environment, the space is atomizing. In this haunting, ethereal-looking piece, Rothenberg causes the myth of Anne Frank—manufactured to efface our self-consciousness in relation to her history—to implode.

The myth—concocted in the 1950s by editors, translators, and theatre artists, and embraced all over the world—induced collective identification with an eternally optimistic, eternally forgiving young girl: "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are good at heart." In the presence of *this* Anne Frank, there is little to make one feel awkward, guilty, or perplexed. We are not asked to recall how sickeningly late in the war the group from the Annex perished, nor given any suggestion that had the Allies mobilized earlier, had there been serious resolve to rescue the Jews... They were deported, on September 3, 1944, on the *last transport to leave Westerbork*; Peter van Pels died in Auschwitz on May 5, 1945, *three days before the camp was liberated*; Peter's father, Hermann, was gassed in Auschwitz shortly before the gas chambers were de-activated; Edith, Margot, and Anne Frank died in the winter and early spring of 1945.<sup>1</sup>



[ LEFT ]  
Meal Tickets

[ RIGHT ]  
Partial Index  
(detail)

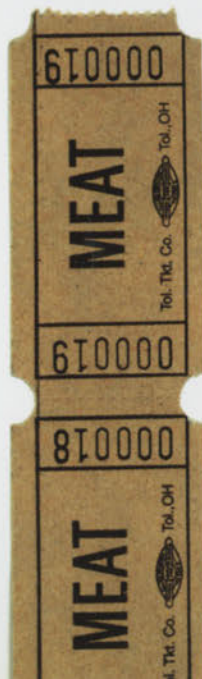
The uncomfortably *specific* parts of Anne Frank's story—that she was Jewish, that following two years of hiding her family was betrayed (for the equivalent of a couple dollars a head), that, after watching her mother die of starvation, and her sister be consumed by lice, she herself died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen—were all but effaced in the rapturous praise of her "universality," "love of life," "indomitable spirit." The Broadway version of her story, which premiered in 1955, was a hit all over the world (particularly in Germany); Anne Frank's face became an icon of uplift, pride, the success of civilization. As Cynthia Ozick detailed in a recent essay, "Anne Frank" became an all-purpose role model for girls struggling with the domestic vicissitudes of growing up in relative peace and prosperity; in Japan, "Anne Frank" became a code word among teenage girls for "menstruation" (about which the diarist had written).<sup>2</sup>

*The Diary of a Young Girl* was edited for publication, in 1947, by Otto Frank, the family's sole survivor and tireless custodian of his daughter's memory, which he tendered to the world as a redeeming gift. His editing threw into high relief the hopeful, humorous, plucky sides of the adolescent author, who was also studious, disciplined, ambitious, and sophisticated beyond her years. In her father's edit, Anne comes across as uncommonly intelligent, talented and luminous, but her "edges" have been smoothed, her complexity diluted. Otto Frank omitted passages where she railed against her mother, described her own intimate body, and expressed her burgeoning sexuality. He and numerous translators also cut or softened her cold-eyed observations of the deadly hatred that had sent her family into hiding. The unexpurgated Critical Edition of the *Diary* (which Anne had originally titled *Het Achterhuis*, or "the house behind," in reference to their hiding place) was published in 1989 by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, and comprises about thirty per cent more material, including passages like these: "We've been strongly reminded that we are Jews in chains, chained to one spot, without any rights, but with a thousand obligations."<sup>3</sup> "The world's been turned upside down. The most decent people are being sent to concentration camps, prisons and lonely cells, while the lowest of the low rule over young and old, rich and poor...Unless you're a Nazi, you don't know what's going to happen to you from one day to the next."<sup>4</sup> And, "Fine specimens of humanity, those Germans...there are no greater enemies on

## FRANK'S STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE IN HUMAN GOODNESS

earth than the Germans and the Jews...[In the Annex] only the language of civilized people may be spoken, thus no German."<sup>5</sup> Peeking out at night from an Annex window, Frank saw families beaten and taken away.<sup>6</sup> From listening to the BBC, she knew that, in the concentration camps, Jews were being gassed: "Perhaps that's the quickest way to die."<sup>7</sup> The last entry of her original diary (written soon after her fifteenth birthday) is weary, ground-down, and abashed at "turning my heart inside out, the bad part on the outside and the good part on the inside, [in an effort] to become what I'd like to be and what I could be if...if only there were no other people in the world."<sup>8</sup> When taken together with these perceptions, Frank's struggle to believe in human goodness is the opposite of a platitude: it is *lacerating*.

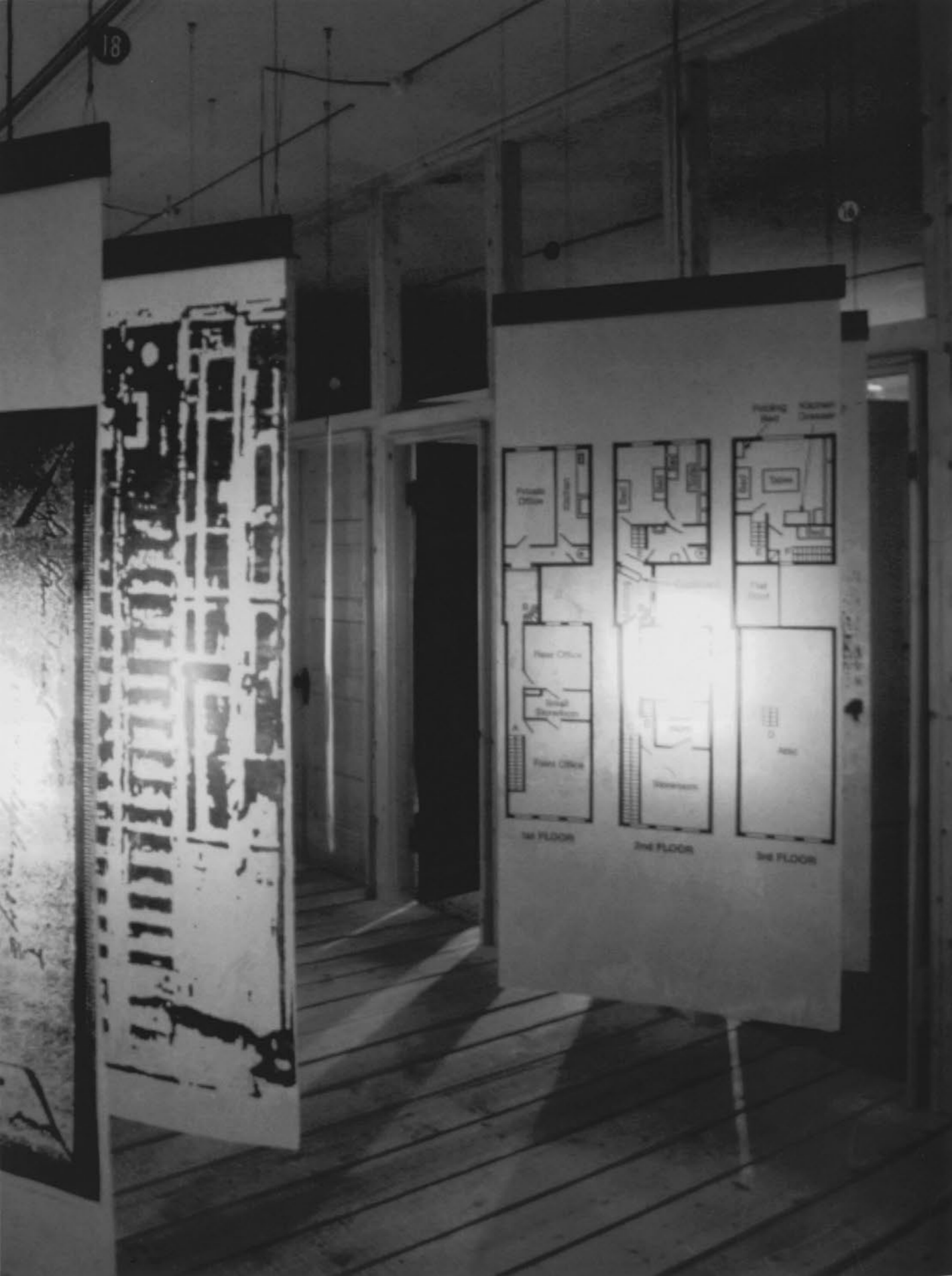
Rothenberg's *Anne Frank Project* developed over the decade of the 1990s, and began with her reading of the Critical Edition of the *Diary*, which she approached through the scrim of her own memory of reading the edition of the 1950s. "Like many women of my generation, I was 'raised' on Anne Frank," Rothenberg recounted in a recent conversation. "I read the book, saw the play, saw the movie. She was held up as a role model, which was confusing, frustrating and, of course, impossible—how was I, growing up in suburbia, going to radiate courage and brilliance in the face of terror? Anne never gets to grow up, to realize all that potential. And the reasons for that were left, at least initially, largely unexplained. You knew she'd been arrested but, after that, there was a void, a looming horror, which went unnamed."<sup>9</sup> As an adult reader, Rothenberg was poised in the space between the two editions of the *Diary*; as an artist, she was driven to explore that disjunction, give visual form to the history that was constructed to fill the void left by the diarist's absence.



## IS THE OPPOSITE OF A PLATITUDE: IT IS LACERATING







[ LEFT ]  
Partial Index  
(Interior view)

Rothenberg was initially "pulled in" to the Critical Edition by the forensic analysis of Anne Frank's handwriting, carried out under the auspices of The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation in response to Neo-Nazi claims that the work was a fake perpetrated to continue the "hoax" of the Holocaust. From the outset, the Critical Edition was charged with establishing not just the definitive text of the *Diary*, but also the authenticity of the author. Rothenberg was provoked by this climate of denial—of the work itself, of the very existence of Anne Frank, and of the history that devoured her. She was also drawn to the graphic, gestural quality of the letters—separated, magnified, made strange and, ultimately, found to be *true* within the forensic frame. To be more exact, the constraints of forensic science could only establish "a probability bordering on certainty." This too was provocative for the artist, who appropriated the phrase, and used it for the title for an exhibit in 1993. Among Rothenberg's first creations for this work were radical enlargements of Anne Frank's script, photocopied onto diaphanous sheets of silk, whose tone, texture, and subtle wrinkling make us think of human skin.<sup>10</sup> These panels are at once assertive and exquisite, defensive and fragile, and altogether chilling in their implications.

The concept of "a probability bordering on certainty" gave Rothenberg pause, impelled her to meditate on the very enterprise of documentation, on the difficulties of stabilizing evidence (even for a human life), on the problem of representation. "When we see exposed the limits of science, we can't help but be aware of the *effort to construct* history, *elaborate* systems of knowledge, *impose* narrative," says Rothenberg. "I undertook this work as an investigative project; confronting the *Diary*, and the ways it came down to us, was primary research." The original manuscript was not what Rothenberg expected. "I thought it would be a schoolgirl's notebook," she recounted. "But it was more like an artist's book, with her notes glued on to the edges of pages and folded in. You need to unfold things, peel back layers of different kinds of papers to find more writings and revisions. I was struck by the mixture of visual and textual languages from high culture to low, and how, when her supply of paper ran out, she inserted magazine pages and other scraps and wrote on those...She was clearly intending to publish, her edits are everywhere. Physically, the book is a sculptural object. And I found that very important, very inspiring."

Rothenberg's researches, which took her to Amsterdam, Berlin, and other European and American cities, unfolded in phases, yielding three distinct exhibits, seen together for the first time at Gallery 312. *Partial Index*, shown in 1991 at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, took for its point of departure the problematics of artifacts, documentation, and evidence. The room, arranged to call up an enormous filing cabinet, was the repository for hanging panels of text that had been edited out of Anne's *Diary*, images of the forensic analyses of her script, reproductions of authentic documents from the period in which Frank lived, as well as created "artifacts" with a dramatic charge: a handkerchief embroidered with Anne's initials; a girl's undershirt; a radio (a precious link to the world for those in the Secret Annex). 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? How do we gauge our own visceral reactions to certain objects: what does it mean if we quicken at the sight, or touch, of a piercingly evocative "historical" object that turns out to have been made by the artist? What if we fail to recognize "the genuine article"? 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 ever be a "partial index"—is constructed. And that, precisely, is what Rothenberg wants us to see.

*A Probability Bordering on Certainty*, first shown at Radcliffe's Bunting Institute, where Rothenberg was a Fellow in 1992–93, is concerned with issues of representation and display. With her husband, filmmaker Dan Eisenberg, Rothenberg had spent most of 1991 in Berlin, a city consumed with the physical traces, obliterations, and memorializations of its own history. During this time, she did research at the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam and the National Forensic Science Laboratory in Rijswijk. "When we visited the Anne Frank Museum, I was struck by the degree to which the Annex had been reconstructed. There was even a dollhouse model made by a family friend. I was extremely aware of the signage, directing me to "Anne's room," showing me the way "to the toilet," guiding my every step. There was plexiglass screwed over the wallpaper where Otto Frank had measured the children. The care with which the

Museum had been made presentable caused me to question what the house had been like before." Once again (as with the various versions of the *Diary*) Rothenberg found herself working *in the space between* the original thing and its representation.

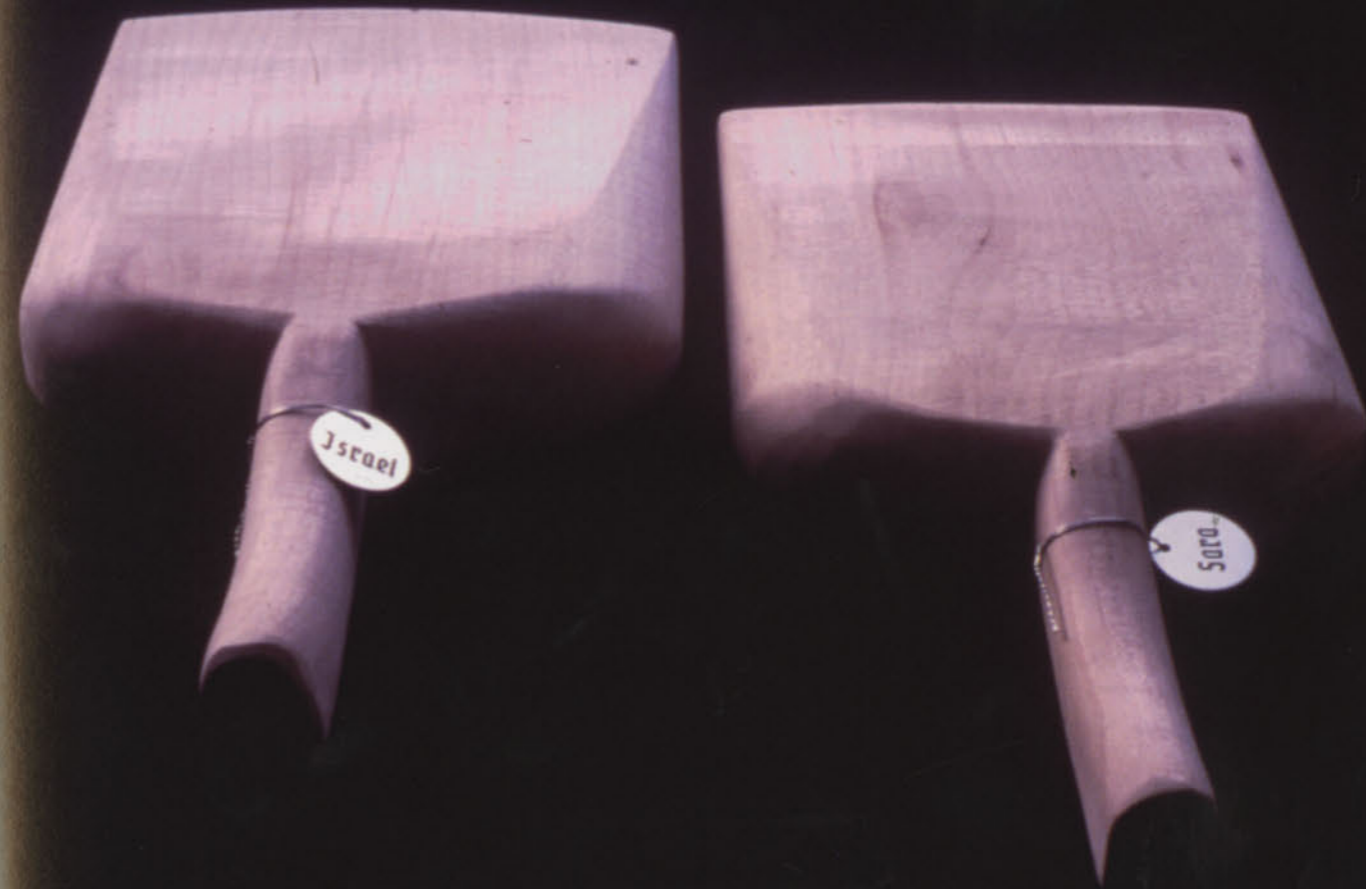
*The Conditions for Growth*, the 1994 installation shown at Tufts, complicated the earlier inquiries through its industrial scale, sharp juxtapositions, and archival style of display. There were numerous instruments for weighing and measuring, steel shelving, cabinets, and other accoutrements of classification. The size and tone of the installation at first called up (then challenged) objective, encyclopedic approaches to reckoning with the world. We could not but remember the Nazi obsession with collecting and labeling, the (failed) Nazi ambition to build the defining Museum of the Extinct Race. The lovely, unnerving piece with rulers played off of "artifacts" in imposing vitrines which, on further inspection, we saw were mounted on dollies, casting doubt on the concept of archival permanence. Particularly searing in this installation was Rothenberg's way of intercutting the domestic with the abstract. Bread was a recurring motif—large, solid, crusty loaves: staff of life, stuff of contentment, symbol of community. Also found in profusion were (re-created) ration tickets, which the Reich all but denied to the Jews. A display case held white gloves embroidered and stamped with the titles of the stories and essays Anne wrote in the Secret Annex. To the *Diary*, she had confided her ambitions of becoming a famous author, traveling the world in elegant clothes.

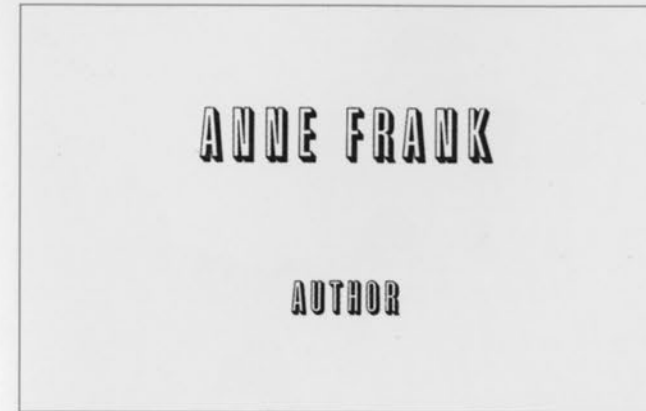
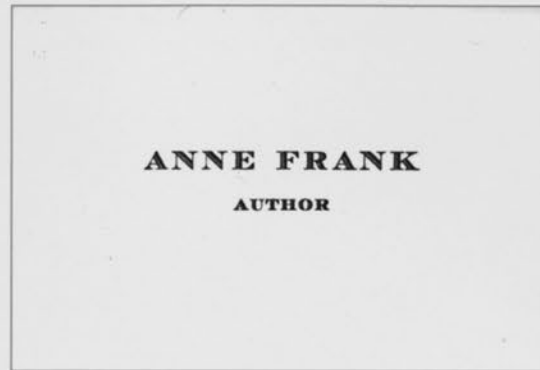
Rothenberg's excavation of the *Diary*, and of the history constructed around it, has its counterpart in our own interrogations of her environments. Though she may go to great lengths to retrieve period elements, lost crafts, and obsolete manufactures, it is not out of a drive for "authenticity" or a need to "provide documentation." Her installations are explorations not of historical events in themselves, but of the ways in which we receive, process, and construct history. And so she uses objects, not as relics but, as several critics have observed, as mnemonic devices. The artist's hand is everywhere apparent: every element, surface, and material is finely wrought. Rothenberg provides no story-line. Rather, she frames details and isolates fragments (garments and body parts; bandages, erasers, and writing tools). It is the our job to mentally assemble these pieces, to create narrative, to make meaning of their juxtapositions. The severe elegance of a Rothenberg installation is intended to achieve historical distancing, to abet the viewer's analytical task. At the same time, the objects themselves (calling up flesh and hair and injury) exert a tactile power. We cannot be merely "viewers;" what we see gets under our skin, we are part of the story we strain to see unfolding.

Through the associations they produce, the objects both embody and provoke experience. Some of the most striking elements have extraordinary histories of their own. The makers of these objects—and the often circuitous process by which Rothenberg found and worked with these individuals—comprise a potent layer of meaning. Her work with fabricators, suppliers, and manufacturers enlarges the community created by her enterprise. The emphasis on workmanship, on lives intersecting through craft, and the joining of distant geographies is extremely revealing. "I don't subscribe to the romantic notion of

## WHAT IF, AS IN THE CASE OF THE DIARY, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'VE BEEN MISSING?

the artist isolated in a garret," says Rothenberg. "My work *requires* participation. I never would have been able to touch the original *Diary* if David Barnouw, of The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, had not literally placed it in my hands. And Barnouw put me in touch with Joop Hardy, the forensic scientist who spent five years, working nights, to authenticate Anne Frank's script. When I brought Hardy the first pieces I'd made from his studies, he examined them closely, brought the sheets right up to his eyes, and then simply *gave* me all of his research to use in whatever way I wanted. Were it not for other people, this work could never have happened."





While living in Berlin, Rothenberg got the idea to make a set of business cards for Anne Frank. "There was a small, artisanal print shop in our neighborhood of Charlottenburg," she recalled. "Everything was letter press, finely executed. The printer, who was about my age, was clearly an artist himself. I studied the samples in the window about ten times before I dared go in. My German is rudimentary, and the prospect of explaining what I wanted, in any language, but particularly German, was daunting. I had no idea how he would react. This was, of course, a business transaction; I paid him as I would for any print job. But there was definitely an edge to things, a tacit acknowledgement between us, the exact nature of which I couldn't exactly define. I began with one set of cards: 'Anne Frank' and, on the line below, 'Author.' I think I chose something discreet, classic ladylike script. I hadn't intended to do more than one set, but then it seemed arbitrary. Why imagine only one future [for Anne Frank]? One style? I ended up doing ten sets of cards. The printer and I had many conversations (more visual than verbal) about paper, typeface, inks, and the choice of languages (Dutch, German, and English). While of course I take responsibility for the cards, there was collaboration between myself and the printer. His ideas about Anne Frank definitely came into play, his own history went into the process of making the cards. And I had to acknowledge my own assumptions about Germans—he had studied in India, for example, had a trajectory that went far beyond his small shop in Charlottenburg." The cards were first exhibited in *A Probability Bordering on Certainty*.

During her research in Germany, Rothenberg likened herself to "someone always looking, not speaking." She believes that "invisibility" was important for her process. At the wholesale produce market at the far edge of Berlin, she bought wooden vegetable scoops which she later labeled "Israel" and "Sarah," the Reich's official generic names for male and female Jews. For Rothenberg, they became elements in a piece she called "Family Portrait."

One of the strongest, most devastating pieces Rothenberg has ever made is "The Combing Shawl," made for *A Probability Bordering on Certainty*. In Anne Frank's time, women of the refined classes shielded their clothing when they combed their hair by donning a special shawl. After the residents of the Secret Annex were arrested and the Dutch Secret Police removed everything they considered to have value, Mies Gies, the family's protector, later recovered Anne's shawl (as well as the Diary). From a distance, Rothenberg's creation cascades down the wall and curls onto the floor, like long, luxuriant, shining tresses. As we draw near, we see that under the "curls" are piles of combs—most of them broken, missing teeth. The cascading "tresses" are strips of vellum, braced with aluminum, and imprinted with the entire text of the *Diary*. Rothenberg made this piece after visiting Sachsenhausen, which she found "deserted,

silent, in disrepair. Nothing was whole, everything was fragments." She saw "little tiny pieces of tin, garbage," which turned out to be combs the prisoners had made for themselves. "They measured no more than one or two inches, they were symbols of combs, made to preserve some last shred of dignity." Back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Rothenberg searched for a foundry, finding, by total serendipity, a father-son shop near the border with Somerville. "As soon as I walked in, I saw a collection of cast bells that the father had salvaged, a kind of museum of his craft. Somehow, I'd happened on this very special place. He used the primitive technique of sandcasting, in which molten metal is poured into greasy black sand. There is a literal passage through fire. Before they are "finished," the cast objects are very rough-looking, full of sand. That was exactly the quality I wanted for the combs. The combs were not "distressed" afterward; they looked the way they did because they had gone through fire. The first batch, the foundrymen cleaned and smoothed, making them too neutral. I wanted the roughness, the mistakes, the grains of sand, the variation in materials (aluminum, bronze, magnesium-bronze). The process took months. Not knowing the craft, I wasn't sure how to get what I wanted so, for me, it was a long learning process. We eventually ended up with 335 combs." Both father and son went to see the exhibit.

For the same show (*A Probability Bordering on Certainty*), Rothenberg went to a crafts store for leather belts on which to inscribe Anne's exacting description of her vulva, vagina, and clitoris. (Rothenberg wound these stacked belts around a support pillar in the gallery of the Bunting Institute; in order to read the text, only recently made available in the Critical Edition, one slowly circled the pillar, as the discovery of the passage, and realization of its excision, gradually sunk in.) While shopping, Rothenberg noticed some tanned cow bellies displayed on a table. "They were spread out," she recalled, "cut off the animal where the legs used to be. They were very *individuated*, very disturbing. So I bought them, not knowing what I'd ever use them for." In her next exhibit, *The Conditions for Growth*, Rothenberg displayed the five hides rolled up in a display case, their outer surfaces covered with library stamps. The largest hide was stamped with every date on which Anne Frank made a diary entry. "This was the only place I referred explicitly to her mortality," said Rothenberg, "using the literal skin of an animal. But I couldn't bring myself to show these cow bellies flat on a table. It was just too blatant; it felt, somehow, forbidden."

A Rothenberg installation is a troubling experience. We do not merely "visit," or "view," nor do we wish to "inhabit" the space. Yet when we leave, the separation does not feel permanent. We have confronted a profound achievement, and that sensation stays with us.



A Rothenberg installation continually asks us to ask ourselves: What, exactly, do I see? What connections can I articulate? What narrative(s) attempt to construct? What meaning can I create? There is such a profusion of objects, so many elements and images, that we can answer only very incompletely. Our field of perception overflows, our visual memory is overwhelmed. We cannot fully grasp the totality of what is put before us. That sense of *missing* what is right before our eyes is an essential part of a Rothenberg experience. So too is the struggle against that loss, the determination to see more, to see better, to see more lastingly. For each of us, certain images remain *indelible*, and these, I would suggest, induce the complicated experience that is our own inward memorial: the after-image we articulate to ourselves and attempt to share with others.

In these days of controversy over ways to "remember," "commemorate," "memorialize" the Holocaust, we naturally wonder: How is Rothenberg's work different from a permanent memorial to Anne Frank? By way of an attempt at response, there is no anchored site for this monumental work. With each exhibit, the installation is created anew: elements are created, re-assembled, re-arranged, and re-framed. The piece declines to offer the stability, the guidance, the narrative frame we associate with memorials. Nor does it give us the sense of "doing the right thing" by coming to gaze. No boundary marks off the events in question; history, we are made to *see*, is continually being constructed. And we should be agents in that process.

If we, as viewers, are inspired to see better, more deeply, more lastingly, it is because this, precisely, is what Rothenberg endeavors to do.

It is six years since Rothenberg has had a large-scale presentation of this work. Yet the present show is in no wise a memorial to the enterprise, or to its history. The culmination of over a decade of work, Rothenberg calls it *The Anne Frank Project*, suggesting a fresh approach, a new beginning, an *essai*. For the artist, the work is in part created by the "dilemma of the space." And so this show at Gallery 312—formerly the boiler room of a warehouse, it has been called "a cathedral in a cave"—is unique. Each of the previous installations was discrete. "Now," says Rothenberg, "there is leakage. There is no reason to keep things separate. The series, and the space, come together to make a single whole." Before long, the installation will be dismantled, this particular "site of memory" will not exist.

But Rothenberg has set aside a space for writing and contemplation. Viewers may withdraw, repair to a relatively private place. And there begin, who knows, the complicated process some might call a *diary*.

**Notes**

1. "Afterword," *The Definitive Edition: The Diary of a Young Girl: ANNE FRANK* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), 334.
2. Cynthia Ozick, "Who Owns Anne Frank," *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997, 76-87. Ozick provides a bracing, well-informed analysis of the controversies that have attended the *Diary's* various editions, adaptations, and reception worldwide.
3. *Diary*, op. cit., 256.
4. *Ibid.*, 300.
5. *Ibid.*, 69.
6. *Ibid.*, 71.
7. *Ibid.*, 53.
8. *Ibid.*, 331.
9. Rothenberg's comments are from our interviews of December 2000.
10. Whitney Chadwick also likens the panels to "skin," in her essay for the catalogue, published by the Tufts University Art Gallery, 1994.

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

All works, except where noted, are courtesy of the artist

### PARTIAL INDEX, 1990–2001

BOOKS, 1991

26 books, lead

ANNE FRANK WALLPAPER, 1991–2001

photographs, black line

LICE WALLPAPER, 1991–2001

ink, rubber stamp, paint

BANNERS, 1991

29 images and text printed on

bamboo paper with wax

INDEXES, 1991

ink jet prints

MISC.: wood, electrical fixtures, doors

### PROBABILITY BORDERING ON CERTAINTY, 1991–2001

FOOTPRINTS, 1991

felt, wax, printed paper

Collection of Charlene Engelhard

HANDWRITING ANALYSIS, 1993

xerography 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, 1991–93

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 text, foam rubber

GUILT ERASERS, 1993

unlimited edition

rubber with printing

SIGNAGE, 1993–2001

framed photographs

SPECIMENS, 1993

printed paper, gelatin, pins, frames

VIDEO PROJECTION, 1993

video by Dan Eisenberg

### CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH, 1994–2001

ALPHABET WALL, 1994–2001

decal letters, glassine sheets, wax, wood

CALENDARS

5 cow hides with stamped text

ESSAYS AND STORIES

kid gloves with stamped text

MEAL TICKETS

rolls of tickets with text

MISC.: rulers, thermometers, string, steel

footprints, scales, clocks, bread, pencils, etc.

### RELATED WORKS

THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTICITY, 1992

handmade paper, printed glassine

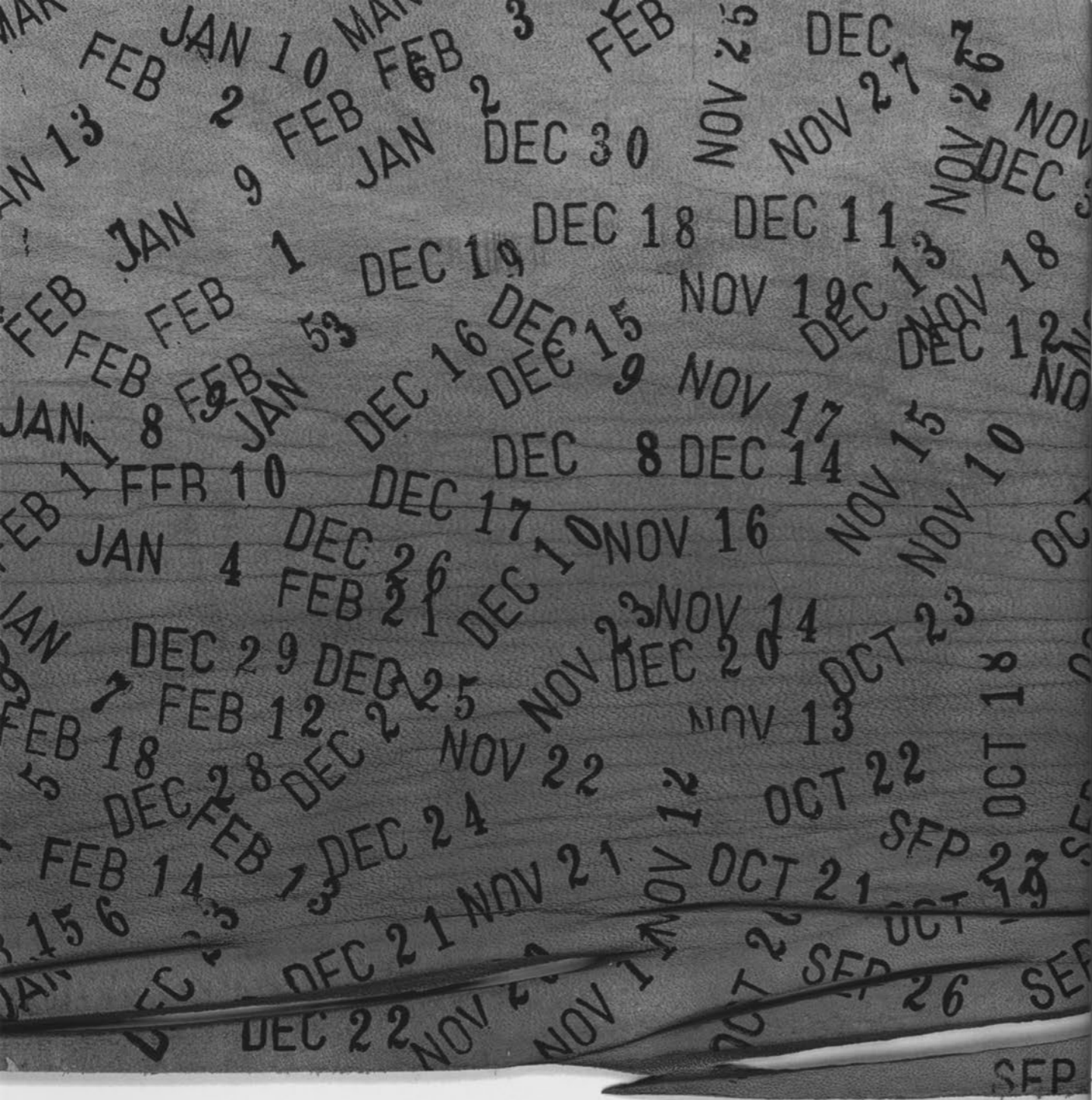
MEMORIAL TO FORGETTING, 1992

steel hook, straw wreaths, printed banner

SCALP, 1994

felt, pins, vellum text





Calendars  
(detail)

## ELLEN ROTHENBERG

b. 1949, New York City

### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

**2001**

"The Anne Frank Project", solo exhibition, Gallery 312, Chicago, IL (catalog)

"Con/textual, Art and Text in Chicago", The Chicago Cultural Center, IL (catalog)

**2000**

"Beautiful Youth", solo exhibition, Vedanta Gallery, Chicago, IL

"Searching the Criminal Body", University Art Museum, State University of NY, Albany (catalog)

**1999**

"Telling Histories", Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, MA (catalog)

"Gathering Information, Photography and the Media", The Photographic Resource Center, Boston, MA

**1997**

"No Small Feat", Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL

"Portraits, from the collection", Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

**1996**

"Difference", Kent Gallery, New York, NY

"Re-Inventing the Garden City", Sculpture Chicago, Union Park, Chicago, IL

**1995**

"After Auschwitz", Royal Festival Hall/London, Manchester City Art Gallery, City Gallery Sunderland, England, and City Arts Center/Edinburgh, Scotland (catalog)

**1994**

"Partial Index" and selections from "A Probability...", solo exhibition, Kent Gallery, New York, NY

"Conditions for Growth", solo exhibition, Aidekman Arts Center Tufts University, Boston, MA

"Partial Index" and "A Probability...", solo exhibition, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME

"Burnt Whole", Washington Project for the Arts, Washington D.C., Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (catalog)

"The Label Show: Contemporary Art and the Museum", Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

"Milena Dopitova in Context", Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA

"Impossible Evidence", Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, PA (catalog)

**1993**

"Partial Index" and "A Probability...", solo exhibition, University Art Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara (catalog)

"A Probability...", solo exhibition, The Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA (catalog)

**1992**

"Three Choices", Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston, MA

"The Object Is Bound", Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

**1991**

"Boston Now", Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA

"Center Margins", Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston, MA (catalog)

**1990**

"Installation and Place", Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

**1989**

"Reproductions", Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

"Allusion Dimension", Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (catalog)

"Explorations in Handmade Paper", DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA (catalog)

"SPEAK!", One Woman Show, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA (catalog)

### GRANTS/FELLOWSHIPS/COMMISSIONS

**2000**

Illinois Arts Council, Visual Arts Fellowship

**1999**

Illinois Arts Council, Project Completion Grant

**1998**

Community Arts Assistance Grant, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs

School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Faculty Enrichment Grant

**1997**

Illinois Arts Council, Visual Arts Fellowship

**1995**

Sculpture Chicago, "Re-inventing the Garden City" Public Art Commission

**1993**

NEA New Forms/Artists Projects, Regional Fellowship

NEA Regional Fellowship in Sculpture

The Charles W. Engelhard Foundation Grant

**1992**

Public Art Commission, NEA, Dept. of the Interior, The National Historical Park, Lowell, MA

LEF Foundation Grant

Bunting Fellow, Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA

**1991**

Project Grant, Tides Foundation

**1989**

NEA New England Regional Fellowship

### SELECTED PERFORMANCES

**1997**

"Hurry, hurry!", Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL

**1993**

"Hello Traitor..", Festival Giannozzo, Berlin, Germany

**1988**

"Subway/Rebus", Artstops Program, Boston, MA

"Common Sense", Cityplace, Boston, MA

**1987**

"Common Sense", Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT

"SPEAKISPEAKISPEAK!", Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT

"The Great Circle", Artstops Program, Cambridge, MA

## CATALOGS

### 2001

"Con/textual, Art and Text in Chicago", essay Buzz Spector, catalogue Chicago Cultural Center, co produced with "Whitewalls"

"The Anne Frank Project", essay Marguerite Feitlowitz, Gallery 312

### 2000

"Searching the Criminal Body", essay Susan Erony, University Art Museum SUNY Albany

### 1999

"Telling Histories", essay by Mary Drach McInnes, Boston University Art Gallery

### 1995

"After Auschwitz", essay by Monica Bohm-Duchen, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Sunderland

### 1994

"Burnt Whole", essay by Karen Holtzman, Washington Project for the Arts

"Impossible Evidence", essays by Andrea Liss and Jill Snyder, Freedman Gallery, Albright College

"Ellen Rothenberg", a mid-career monograph, essays by W. Chadwick, Lynne Cooke, D. Eisenberg, and Cindi Katz, Tufts University, Medford MA

### 1993

"Reading The Anne Frank Project", an essay by Elizabeth Brown, University Art Museum, UCSB

"Ellen Rothenberg: A Probability Bordering on Certainty", essay by Whitney Chadwick, The Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College

### 1992

"Center Margins", Rockefeller Arts Center, State University of New York at Fredonia and the Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston, MA

### 1989

"allusion DIMENSION", Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham MA

"Explorations in Handmade Paper: A Selection of Work from Rugg Road", Decordova Museum, MA

"SPEAK!", essays by Dan Eisenberg and Johanna Branson, Mass College of Art, Boston MA

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

*ART JOURNAL*, Spring 2001, "Restless Mobility" artists project  
*NEW ART EXAMINER*, June 2000, Extended Review by Jeffrey Skoller  
*WHITEWALLS*, Fall/Winter Issue, "Crafting History" 1999

*JEWISH AMERICAN ARTISTS AND THE HOLOCAUST*, 1997, Matthew Baigell, Rutgers University Press

*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*, 11/4/96, "Union Park celebrates years of unity," James Hill

*NEW ART EXAMINER*, Fall Issue 1996, "Staking a common ground", Audrey Mandelbaum

*FRIEZE*, Sept/Oct Issue, "Sculpture Chicago 95/96", Laurie Palmer

*THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE*, 6/23/96, "...Park Place", Alan Artner

*THE CHICAGO SUN TIMES*, 6/18/96, "Art In The Park", Kevin Williams

*THE NEW ART EXAMINER*, April 1995, "Order out of chaos", Martha McWilliams

*THE WASHINGTON POST*, 10/30/94, "The Holocaust Obliquely", Paul Richard

*ART NEW ENGLAND*, Aug./Sept. 1994, Spotlight: "Doubtful Histories", Miles Unger

*ART NEWS*, 3/94, "Ellen Rothenberg", Mary Haus

*BOSTONIA*, Spring 1994, "Recommended"

*THE BOSTON GLOBE*, 3/94, "Dissecting the organization of evil", Nancy Stapen

*THE VILLAGE VOICE*, 1/18/94, "VOICE CHOICES", Kim Levin

*SANTA BARBARA NEWS PRESS*, "The Best of 1993", 12/31/93, Michael Darling

*SANTA BARBARA NEWS PRESS*, "A Frank Diary", 10/8/93, Michael Darling

*BOSTON GLOBE*, 6/23/93, "A vital re-viewing of Anne Frank's Life", Christine Temin

*ART NEW ENGLAND*, June/July 1993, "Preview", Rachel Weiss

*BOSTON GLOBE*, 10/15/92, "Galleries show their finest artists for fall", Nancy Stapen

*SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER*, 4/24/92, "Conceptual Art by the book", David Bonetti

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

*BOSTON GLOBE*, 1/9/91, "Marginalized People and Issues", Christine Temin

## COLLECTIONS

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA  
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, MA  
and numerous private collections

## ARTIST RESIDENCIES AND VISITING ARTIST

### 2000

California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, CA  
Alfred University, Alfred, NY  
Columbia College, Chicago, IL

### 1999

Vermont College, Montpelier, VT, MFA Program in Visual Arts,  
Norwich University

### 1998

Columbia College, Chicago, IL

### 1997

Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

### 1996

Hunter College, New York, NY  
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

### 1995

University of Illinois at Chicago

### 1994

School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL  
University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

### 1993

University of California, Santa Barbara  
San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

### 1992

Yale School of Art and Architecture, New Haven, CT  
School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

### 1991-92

Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany

## EDUCATION

BFA College of Art and Architecture, Cornell University,  
Ithaca, NY, 1971.

MFA Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA, 1978.

ELLEN ROTHENBERG lives and works in Chicago, IL  
and teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago



Conditions for Growth  
(installation view)

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**GALLERY 312 STAFF**

Paul Brenner: Program Director  
Tami Miyahara: Gallery Assistant

**ANNE FRANK PROJECT**

Sheryl Ridenour: Exhibition Coordinator  
Dara Solomon: Program Coordinator  
George Basta, Javier Soto, Michael Andrews: Installation Fabrication

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