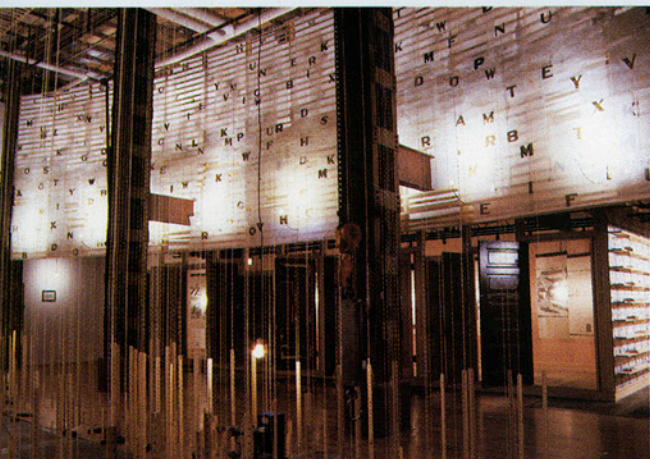


Ellen Rothenberg

Gallery 312, **Chicago**

Ellen Rothenberg's stirring portrayal of the Anne Frank chronicle neither memorializes Frank's indomitable spirit, nor recreates her two desperate confinements—the one protective and the other filled with peril. Instead, *The Anne Frank Project* resembles a requiem. Rothenberg minimizes likenesses of Frank to maximize the effect of her terrible absence. The dissolution of her body is artfully conjured through an image of an old undershirt photocopied on to translucent bamboo paper. Glowing with light from a bare bulb, it embodies the awful fragility of life. Other free hanging works contain fragments of text, official identification papers, and an intimate diary passage in which the young Anne, poised to enter womanhood, discovers the wondrous complexity of her own physiology. Absence is further evoked by the bookshelves left vacant by the untimely death of their author. Rothenberg documents the legacy's continued entanglement in cultural and national politics. In the '80s, a Neo-Nazi faction denounced the Anne Frank diary as a fraud. Their accusations forced the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation to undertake an elaborate forensic analysis of the document. Authenticity, it concluded, was "A Probability Bordering on Certainty," presented in the installation as enlarged handwriting from the diary. Transferred to translucent velum, these gestural markings resonate like ghostly apparitions. Another post-mortem breach violation against Anne Frank was, ironically, perpetrated by her own father who deleted evidence of his daughter's emerging sexuality and their family conflicts. Thick black lines not only obliterate diary passages, they underline the tragic silencing of their author. A third section of *The Anne Frank Project* refers to the German obsession to document the physiology of those who so offended the Aryan ideal. It is represented by a maze of measuring devices (hanging rules, thermometers, pocket watches, weights, and scales). Finally, the installation addresses the artist's personal relationship to this legacy. At age twelve, Anne Frank supplied Rothenberg's definitions of valor and forgiveness. As an adult, Anne Frank exemplifies the complex relationship between nostalgia and horror. Viewers are privileged to join Rothenberg in her tender struggle.

Linda Weintraub



Jean-Marc Bustamante

Donald Young Gallery, **Chicago**

Jean-Marc Bustamante has a keen sensitivity for those moments when nature and humankind lower their guard just a bit: to relax and begin to reveal their true profile. In many ways Bustamante is a very traditional photographer. This series, entitled "L.P." (2000), is comprised of twelve large, striking photographs of lakes and their surrounding communities in the Alpine regions of Italy and Switzerland. In terms of composition they seem almost classical in tone—all have a body of water in the middle, with the trappings of human colonization framed amidst spectacular mountains and dramatic vistas. These photographs collapse several different layers of time: the immensity of geologic time, and the briefer and more ephemeral quality of human, botanic, and historical time. Bustamante makes images that unmask the curious ways we scurry around these incredible places, the little buildings we set on their surfaces, the accoutrements of domestication that become no more than ants crawling around a colossus. His subject ineluctably becomes the uneasy layering and commingling of the bourgeois and the eternal, with the earth abiding forever. People are never actually present in these photographs, but their residue is everywhere. Little gardens, bits of railway track, small cemeteries, the modest boxes of human habitation, construction machinery, paved roads, and even churches and classical columns can be glimpsed here and there, dwarfed by the stony perpetuity of the mountains nearby. All the human traces finally appear foreign, applied to the earth and never part of it, temporary and yet somehow poignantly futile. The lakes, which appear universally cool and glassy, provide visual respite and a sense of a true horizontality in the midst of so much angular play. In the spectacular meeting of stone, sky, and water that the Alps provide, Bustamante convincingly discovers and reveals the fascinating and ineradicable taint of human presence.

James Yood



Jean-Marc Bustamante, *L.P. VI*, 2000, color photograph, framed dimensions 232,4 x 185,4 cm.

Ellen Rothenberg, *Conditions for Growth*, 2001. Installation view. Photo by Tami Miyahara.