

MESSY, MESSY

Simplify your life and get rid of the excess, Stouffville author says

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A three-bedroom home has an average of 350,000 items in it and when you calculate all the time we spend looking for lost stuff, it totals four days a year.

Stouffville's Christine Wood is not, however, your average owner of things. She has spent her entire life clutter-free.

"It's always been a passion of mine to keep things simple, keep the possessions down," she said.

As an architectural technologist, Ms Wood has been privy to the insides of homes that contain a vast amount of stuff as the homeowners have wanted her to build additions for all their things.

In her book, *The Dangerous Art of Decluttering*, Ms Wood recalled one house, which was a sizeable three-bedroom bungalow with just two adults living in it. They'd recently inherited furniture and belongings from their parents and wanted her to design an addition for them.

As Ms Wood looked around the house, she could hardly open the door to a couple of the rooms as they were waist-high with stuff.

The couple wanted to keep all of these items for their university-aged children, who, at the time, could not take it themselves.

"I told them I didn't want to take their hard-earned money, suggesting they pitch most of the stuff keeping only one heirloom per person — then they wouldn't need an addition. I've walked away from a few potential jobs like this," she wrote.

People cannot throw away the ornament their five-year-old son made, although he's now into his 50s. Secondly, we keep things out of insecurity: you never know when you'll need that particular item.

Why do people accumulate so much stuff? Because, according to Ms Wood, of sentimentality. People cannot throw away the ornament their five-year-old son made, although he's now into his 50s. Secondly, we keep things out of insecurity: you never know when you'll need that particular item.

Although there are a lot of decluttering

books, magazines and TV shows available to help people, they don't provide concrete numbers, according to Ms Wood in explaining why she wrote her book. They don't answer the basic questions of how many pairs of shoes is too many or how many wine glasses should someone own?

As Ms Wood looked around the house, she could hardly open the door to a couple of the rooms as they were waist-high with stuff.

"Wouldn't it make sense to have the number of wine glasses for (the number of) people you can fit in your house at one time?" Ms Wood said. "I think you have to have a limit. I think that's why people move to bigger homes and want additions."

Items people should only have one of include purses, televisions, dish sets, dining tables, kitchen gadgets, family heirlooms and pets.

Things Ms Wood writes are acceptable in twos, include eye glasses/contacts, keys for each lock, gloves, hats, towels per person, blankets and sheet sets per bed and baking dishes.

"The one thing I hate in my kitchen is things piled on top of each other. The one baking dish you want is always on the bottom. I hate that," Ms Wood said.

For the record, Ms Wood said nothing is stacked on top of each other in her kitchen.

When Ms Wood's children were young, for every Christmas gift they received, they had to donate an equal number.

"That way your possessions will remain at zero growth," she wrote.

Ms Wood admits she is not a good gift-giver and is a firm believer in gift cards or vouchers. The vouchers can be for services such as baby sitting or dog walking the giver will bestow upon the recipient when asked.

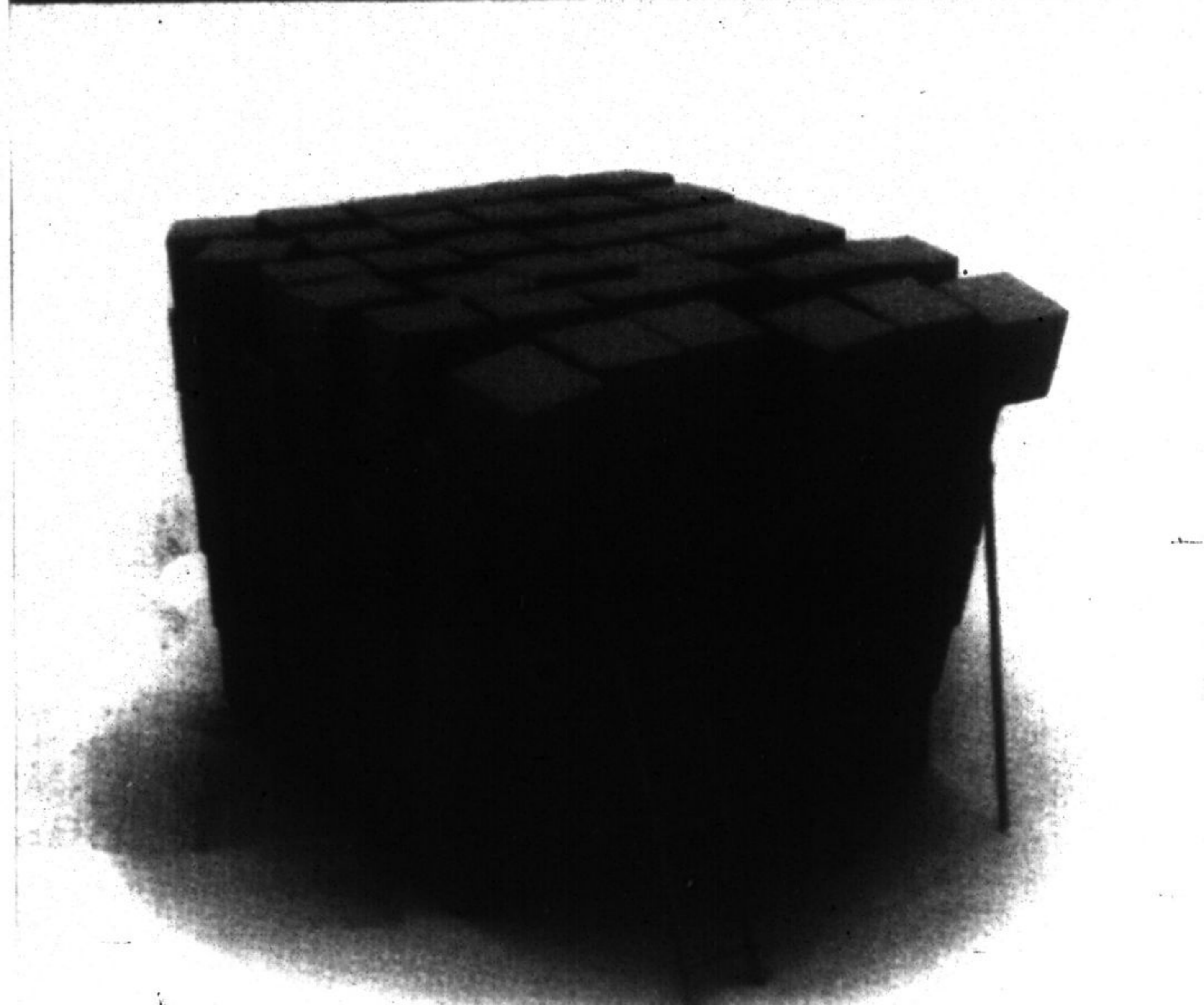
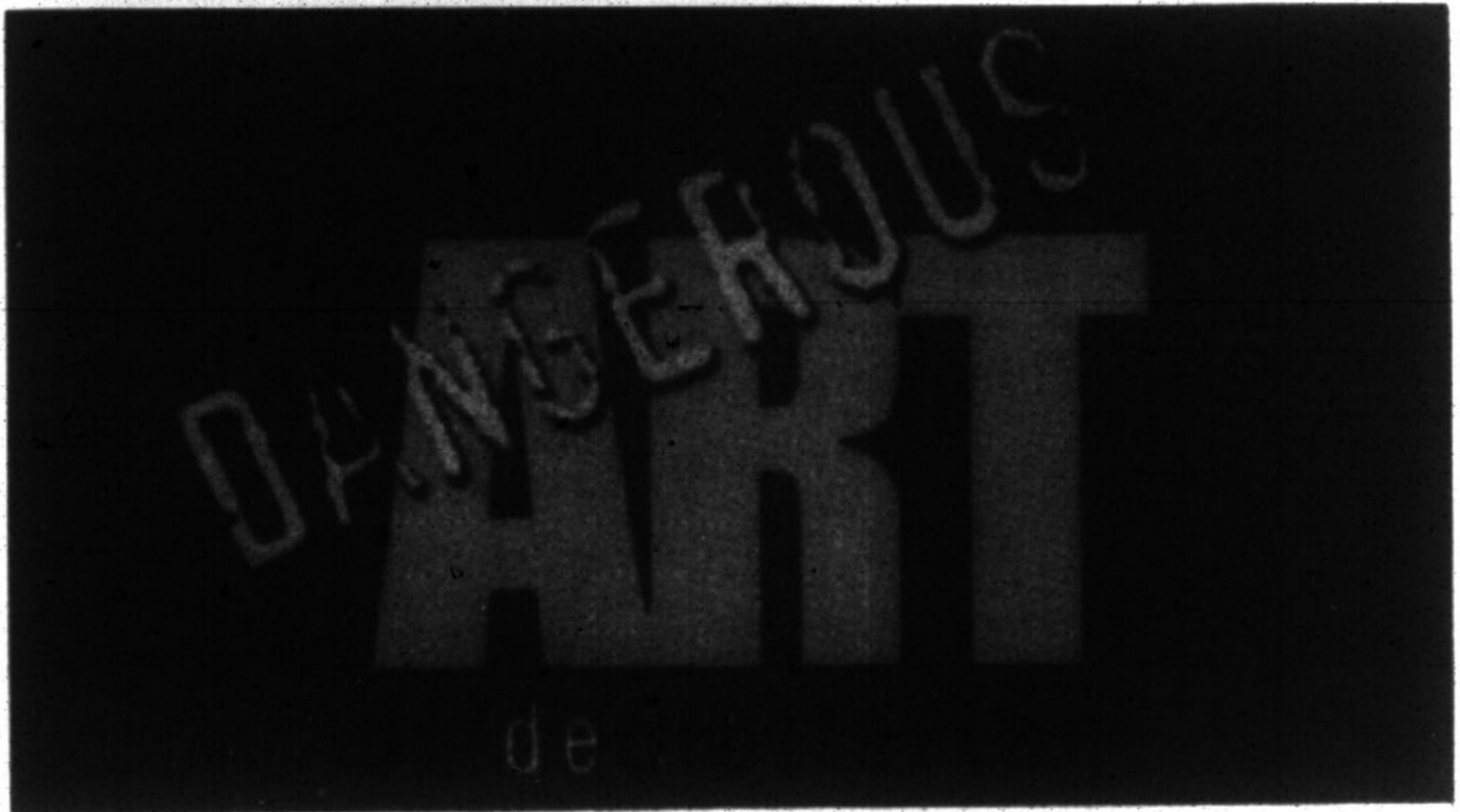
"Whatever your passion is," she said. "A voucher is more personal, you put yourself into it."

By the way, each person should have no more than five pairs of shoes, which equals only one pair for the following categories: dress, running, boots, sandals and slippers.

For more information or to obtain a copy of her book, contact Christine Wood at 905-640-5647.



Stouffville's Christine Wood has written a book on her passion — decluttering. You should only have one purse and TV and five pairs of shoes, she says.



CHRISTINE WOOD

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