

LETTING GO HOLDING BACK

EXHIBITION PROSPECTUS



PHOTOGRAPHY

ELLEN CANTOR

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LETTING GO / HOLDING BACK

ELLEN CANTOR

"Not what we have, but what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance." -Epicurus

Americans have a reputation for living beyond their means and gathering objects that signify their socio-economic accomplishments. The idea of decluttering or reducing our possessions to what we consider essentials reach as far back as Epicurus (341-270 BC) and as recently as Marie Kondo's "The Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing." Economic uncertainty and the increasing use of technology have created a desire to return to simple living. The roots of this idea are far-reaching and those who embrace uncomplicated surroundings do so for many reasons such as personal, spiritual, political and environmental.

As I looked around my home of over forty years, I realized that I had accumulated large amounts of objects and memories: toys, baby clothes, old medicine bottles, paint cans, unused fabrics, and clothing now considered vintage. My closets and garage overflowed with objects even though donating was part of my annual routine. However, like many Americans, my closets and garage continued to be overflowing.

So I changed my routine by **Letting Go**. Prior to donating or discarding unwanted objects, I photographed them, a process that allowed me to "keep" the memory of each item. Photographing the objects transformed a mundane task into an important one. Each item became a still life—evidence of the home I built and the life lived within its walls (marriage, children, illness and survival, career and retirement). These photographs provided the necessary closure, allowing me to let go of the objects.

However, there were certain items I couldn't bear to give away. Hence, "**Holding Back**" became a part of the process.

Ultimately, these images ask several basic questions: What do the objects we cling to say about us? Does one ever regret selling, donating or disposing of items? Are we more than our possessions? Can one find lasting happiness in a more simplistic lifestyle?

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LETTING GO/ HOLDING BACK

EXHIBITION CONCEPT

This is an interactive installation using immersive design elements to showcase my work entitled **Letting Go/Holding Back**. This photographic series explores our American obsession with obtaining material goods and the desire to simplify our lives. It juxtaposes basic material gain with the stark reality of global economic uncertainty.

The series is comprised of four large-scale photographic grids documenting household objects that have been either donated or discarded. Each photographic grid contains 64 individual objects stitched together in Photoshop on a black background. In addition to the items I discarded, there were items I couldn't bear to give away. Hence, **Holding Back**.

By incorporating immersive design techniques, I will transform my grids into custom wallpaper stretching across one wall of the gallery. I will place tearaway pads on top of some object on the grid. Each pad will consist of sheets of paper with reproductions of the photographs of the object beneath the pad. The viewer will be invited to share in the discarding process of the "object" by tearing away a sheet from the pad. A participant could walk along the wall and remove a page from each pad and leave with a collection of images. Once all of the sheets of the tear pads have been removed, only the static image of the object on the wallpaper will remain. This interactive installation becomes a commentary on memories tied to discarded objects and the fact that once discarded, our objects belong to strangers.

In addition to the wallpaper installation, **Letting Go/Holding Back** will include a large-scale 6'h x 8'w vinyl mural of my garage. This large-scale reproduction will create the feeling of walking into a typical American garage continuously overflowing with objects. On display will also be a selection of 5"x5" photographs of individual objects and grids of multiple sizes.

Maximizing social media opportunities, participants will be encouraged to document their experience at **Letting Go/Holding Back**. Included will be a label encouraging the use of smart phones to upload personal photographs using either **#lettinggo** and **#lettinggo4art**. Visitors can take selfies in front of the wallpaper installation and can upload their own objects before donation.

The exhibition will include a brief wall mounted description of the project and additional instructions encouraging viewers to engage with the interactive element.

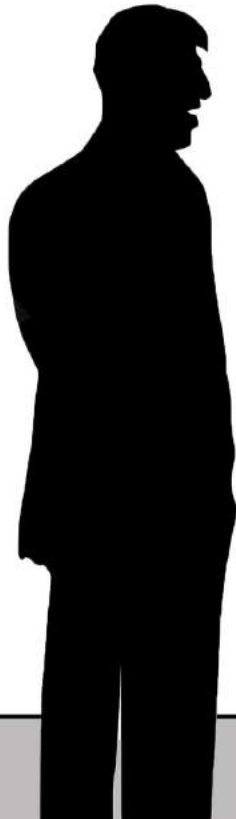
Letting Go Holding Back

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INSTALLATION MOCK UP

Letting Go / Holding Back

Ellen Cantor



LETTING GO / HOLDING BACK

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That what we have built often weighs us down contributes our situation.

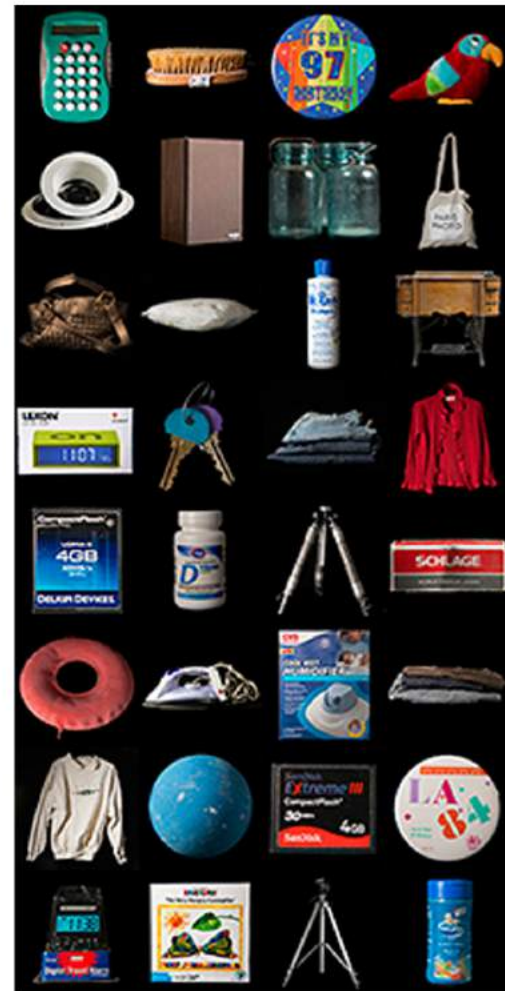
Americans have a reputation for being beyond their means and gathering objects that signify their socio-economic accomplishments. Economic uncertainty, increase in technology use, and growing concerns about our national food system have created a desire to return to simplicity. The point of this show is to re-examine and those who embrace a simplified, minimalist lifestyle for many reasons such as personal, spiritual, political and environmental.

As I looked back over my life of over forty years, I realized that I had accumulated large amounts of objects and memories. Toys for my children, old medicine bottles, paint cans, unused fabrics, and clothing that remained unused. My closet and garage overflowed with objects even though donating was part of my annual routine.

So I challenged my routine for *Letting Go/Holding Back*. First to donating or donating unwanted objects. I photographed them in a manner that allowed me to "forget" the memory of the item. Photographing the objects also seemed to liberate a multiple sense of an important one. Each item was photographed in its original condition just and the life lived within it, such as marriage, children, illness and survival, cancer and recovery. These photographs produced the necessary closure, allowing me to step up the objects.

ESSENTIALLY, THESE IMAGES ASK SEVERAL BASIC QUESTIONS: WHY DO THE OBJECTS BELONG TO US? WHAT DOES ONE EVER REALLY LETTING GO OF THEIR THINGS IN A MORE SIMPLISTIC LIFESTYLE?

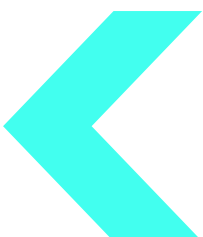
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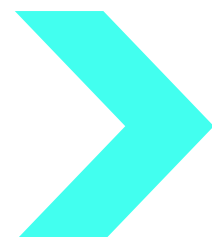
Letting Go Holding Back

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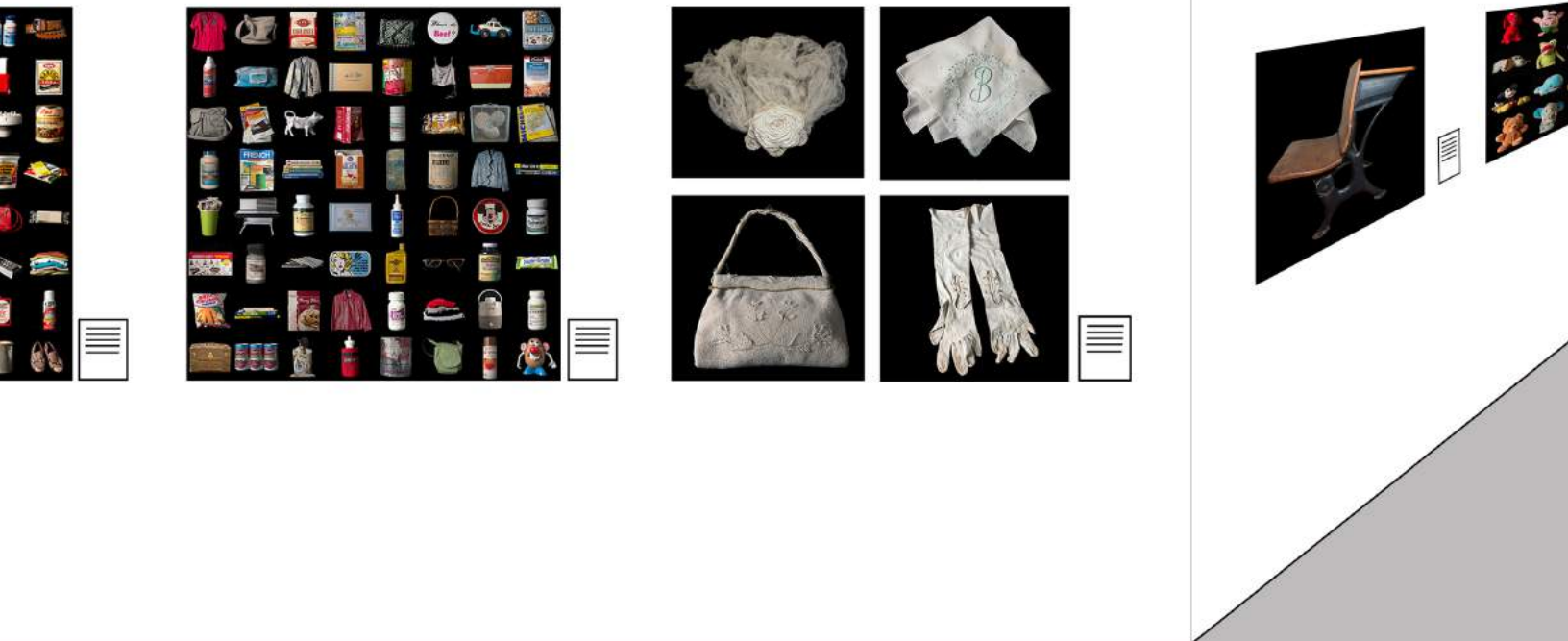
One wall treatment option is to create custom wallpaper with a possible interactive element.



Letting Go *Holding Back*

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Everything I Gave Away 2, 2016, 41" x 41" (multi image grid)

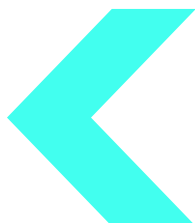
Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something New, 2017, 17" x 17" each (wedding photographs)

Beth's Desk, 2017, 17" x 17" (antique desk), Stuffed Animals I Gave Away, 2017, 17" x 17"

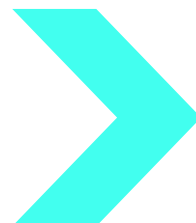
Letting Go *Holding Back*

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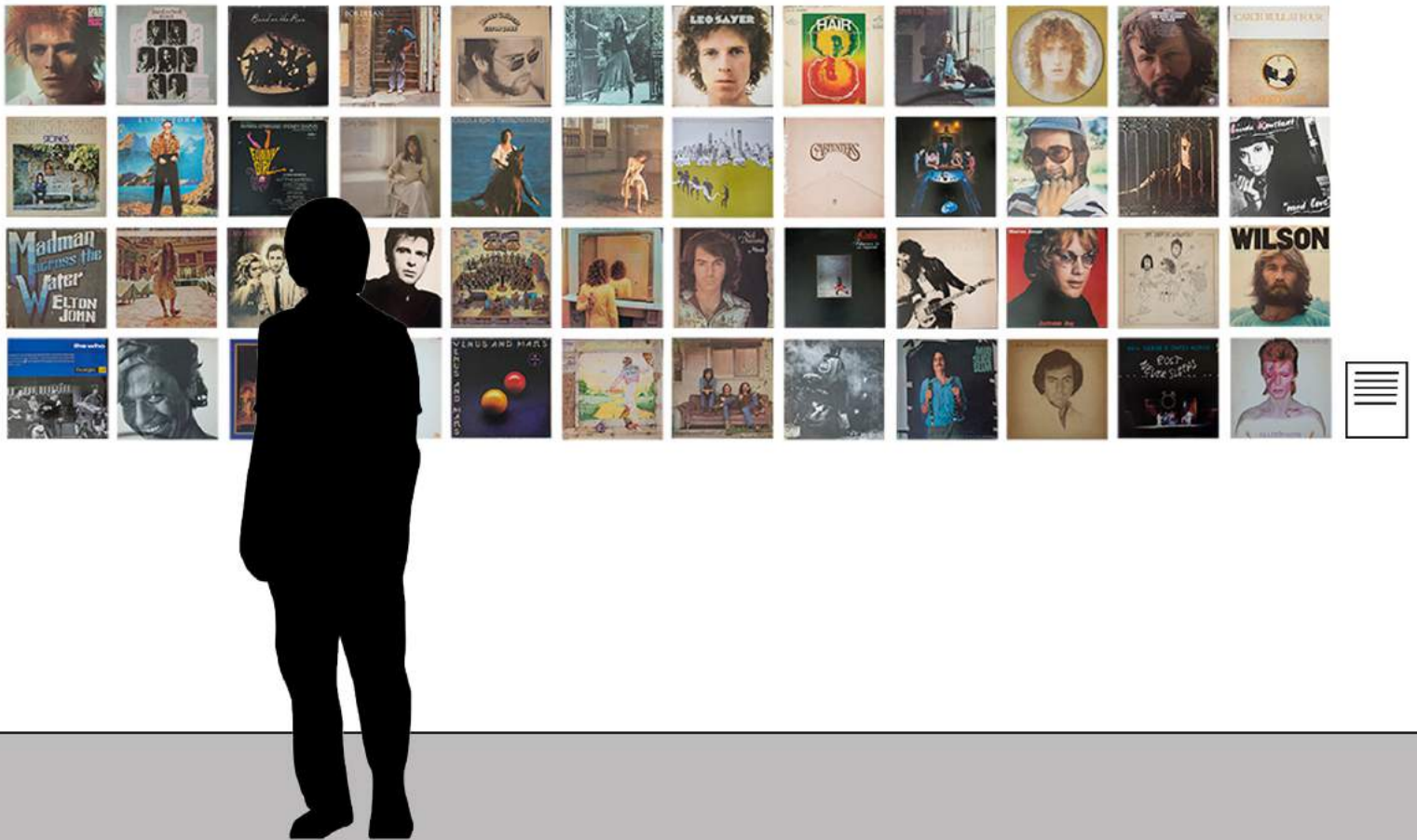
Garage Mural
approximately
8" H x 10" W



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Vinyls I No Longer Listen To, 2016, 2ft x 6ft

BIO

Ellen Cantor

Ellen Cantor is a Southern California artist who uses the camera to reimagine the family photo album and objects that hold personal histories in order to explore the distillation and persistence of memory.

She received a BS from The University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and continued her education in Interior and Architectural Design at UCLA.

Her work has been featured in 17 solo exhibitions including dnj gallery, Santa Monica, CA, The Griffin Museum of Photography, The Center for Fine Art Photography, and The Spartanburg Museum of Art. She was a Critical Mass finalist in 2015 and 2016 and winner of the Julia Margaret Cameron Award for Women Photographers as well as first place in the Fine Art category. Since 2016, she has participated in over 25 national and international group exhibitions which include the Italian Cultural Exchange in Naples, Italy.

Her photographs have been published in Harper's Magazine, Muzee Magazine and SHUTR Magazine and online in Lenscratch, f-stopmagazine, fraction magazine, rfotofolio, Voyage LA Magazine, My Daily Photograph, Lightleaked, a photo editor, Float Online Magazine and Silvershotz.

Ellen is represented by dnj gallery, Santa Monica, CA, Susan Spiritus Gallery, Newport Beach, CA and Truth and Beauty Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

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Stuffed Animals I Gave Away, 2017, 17" x 17"