

ART INSTALLATION

Digital Immigrant

Kristen M. Watson Asks
If Social Media Is Destroying Us

by Darian Newman

Composed of virtual artifacts made tangible and palpable—tweets, Google image searches, and Facebook profiles—Kristen M. Watson's *Digital Immigrant*, an installation at S.P.A.C.E. Gallery in Burlington, challenges us to ask if we have gone too far with constant communication via social media. In our contemporary world, most individuals depend on technology for daily life and social media for communication. These advances have made life exceptionally easier in some areas, but has their usage decayed our communication?

At the entrance to the installation, *Immigration* is a series of panels covered in analog media. The floppy disks, outdated computer parts and cassette tapes remind us where we came from not that long ago. This work feels old school. The panels lead the viewer into the rest of the installation and act as a transition from where we started to where we are now.

In the next part of the installation, the walls of a small room are covered in images from Facebook profiles of Watson's friends and family, printed collages of Google image searches, and a table set with dishware covered in cellphones, serving bowls full of tweets on green and white paper, curled to look like salad, and a tablecloth made up of printouts from various social media platforms. *Eat Your Media* works to show how many people have become obsessed with consuming social media and how it has become involved with even the most mundane aspects of our lives.

Digital Immigrant provokes the viewer to take a step back and ask, How did we get here? Few will dispute the notion that technology is essential to daily life, but when does it become too much? *The Visit* consists of two chairs and a cocktail table on which is a bowl of questions in the "would you rather...?" format. The instructions say "talk with your fingers". This piece drives home the point of the entire installation: How often do we "talk with our fingers" rather than talking to each other?

Kristen M. Watson's *Digital Immigrant* was on view at S.P.A.C.E. Gallery in Burlington's South End Arts District in May 2016. To find out more, visit Watson's website, www.kristenmwatson.com



