

Look up from your iDevices and notice the world

By Suzanne Carbone

I had to put my iPhone down to write this story because it is about people putting their gadgets away and noticing the world.

The Look Up YouTube video by British film-maker Gary Turk has notched 32 million hits at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7dLU6fk9QY> and that's impressive because it is not a music video but a sentimental poem about the more connected we become, the more time we spend alone.

Mr Turk generated goosebumps and gibes over his five-minute video about a love story and would-could-have-been scenario, saying: "When you step away from this device of delusion, you awaken to see a world of confusion. A world where we're slaves to the technology we mastered."

Yes, it's ironic, that the message is spread via computer but sending homing pigeons would have caused air-traffic congestion. Just when we're being told to Look Up, an inverse movement is looking up in a self-absorbed way with the "Selfie Stick", a handy third arm for the vainglorious.

Online retail warrior Ruslan Kogan launched the "Zuckerberg Selfie Stick" last year, dedicating it to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, and others have popped up. Melburnian Sharon Gottlieb is the marketing manager for "My Selfie Stick" and her \$30 device always attracts a crowd. "People ask 'What is that? Where can I get one?' So funny."

Movements to pull the plug on technology probably began when technology intruded into our lives, but in 2011, New York rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein launched the video "A Day to Disconnect" and urged people to "Disconnect to Connect".

In 2012, Australia's Bianca Venuti-Hughes launched "Social September", a movement to "Disconnect to Reconnect", and she marvelled at Look Up. "It's so powerful because it resonates – everyone gets it."

Breaking up is hard to do after a Harvard University study found social media is addictive because we love disclosing information about ourselves. An MRI test found regions of the brain connected with reward activated the same part associated with pleasure, such as eating, or receiving money.

Psychologist Jocelyn Brewer specialises in the impact of digital technology and said about Look Up: "While it's powerful, does it call you into action?" It's "slacktivism" - supporting a cause by pressing "Like" or "Share".

Cold turkey isn't the answer: "I'm not a fan of digital detox, I'm a fan of digital nutrition - teaching people to use it for good and balancing it out."

“Give Up” has become popular and that’s quitting Facebook, Twitter or Instagram due to feeling overwhelmed, feeling inadequate about the kaleidoscopic lives of others, #hashtag overload, or finding it is a shallow pool of narcissism that wouldn’t prevent Narcissus from seeing his reflection.

And fakery thrives when the ambitious can buy followers, likes and comments from “click farms” that employ bots to work their mouse. As Mr Turk said: “Give people your love, don’t give them your ‘Like’.”

British philosopher Alain de Botton recommends that we stop taking photos and draw. The late British art critic John Ruskin, who died in 1900, campaigned to get people to document their memories through drawing and Botton’s website, The Philosopher’s Mail, said: “Attempt to draw the interesting things we see, irrespective of whether we happen to have any talent.”

In that case, I’ve drawn my iPhone, taken a photo of it and uploaded it to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/look-up-from-your-idevices-and-notice-the-world-20140509-zr6wh.html#ixzz31GSbl6yH>