

TOUCH



A performance in a zine

Created by Steven Fraser

Introduction

Touch is a Private Play. It is a story about feeling, holding, touching and loving yourself.



What are Private Plays?

Private Plays are intimate performance encounters where the audience read illustrated performance scripts that are presented in a zine. Zines are self-published booklets that cover a wide variety of topics and tend to be made by marginalised people.

Private Plays usually occur in strange and atypical settings. **Touch** occurs in your home.



Private Plays are written to be read and enjoyed by autistic people.

Uncomfortable stimuli associated with crowded theatres and unfamiliar spaces are removed and the reader is in control of the pace of the story. You don't need to be autistic to read and enjoy.

More info at - <https://doittheatre.com/>



How Touch Works

Touch is a performance that happens in your home, specifically a bedroom.

Read the text and follow the instructions. There are photos to help you imagine the story.

The instructions are in **blue**.

Also feel free to ignore the instructions and read the text at your own pace.

The story assumes you have a bedroom, or a private and quiet place that you can feel comfortable in. If you do not have access to a room like this, then please try to imagine this place.

Touch is a digital Private Play. The zine is a pdf document that is best read on a smartphone or mobile device. Feel free to save the document to your phone and read it on the device as you move from room to room.

You can read the text out loud, or you can read it in your head if you prefer.



Mainspring Arts Series

For Mainspring Arts I have created a series of 3 digital zines. Each covers a topic in relation to autism and identity. The focus is on different senses and different forms of intimacy. The three stories are from the perspective of an unnamed protagonist and look to convey personal and distinctive emotions in a thoughtful and considered manner.

The feelings and emotions may not reflect your own, but the intention is to present storytelling in a new, abstract and atypical method.

Scene 1 - The Touch

Please find a private room in your house. This is the best location to read this Private Play.

A bedroom would be best.

Make sure you are alone and the room is quiet. Make yourself comfortable and when you feel ready, read on.



I want to talk about touch.

Touching things,
People,
Textures,
Objects,
The air,
Nothing.

What does it feel like to be touched?

How does it feel to touch other things?



And not just the physical feeling. I want to talk about what you experience on the inside when you are holding something or being held by someone.

Touching things can instil a sense of energy and comfort.

This energy is important.

If you have not done so already, lie down on your bed.

When you feel a sense of comfort, read on.

If your bed isn't comforting, please find a place that gives you that feeling.

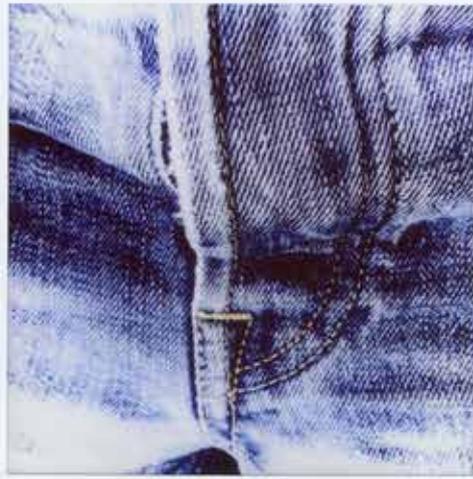
Scene 2 - Distance

In order to touch another person you have to be close together. Intimacy is a big part of touch.

Being physically close to someone opens up new possibilities. You have a connection that cannot be avoided or ignored.

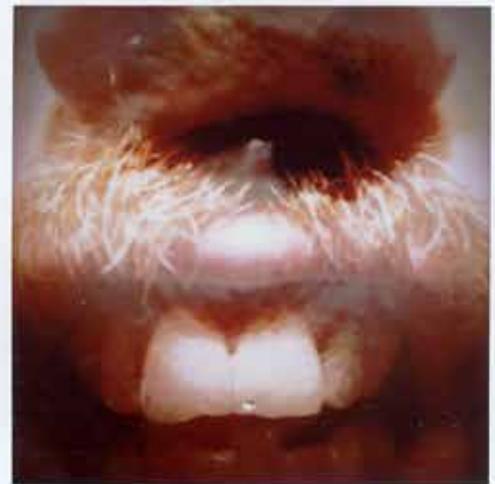
Distance is important.





**When you are close to
me my heart beats faster
and louder.**

**Sometimes I think it will
burst out of my chest.**



It puts me on edge sometimes.

The closeness and the anticipation.

Knowing that someone will be near me.

Knowing that I will be touching someone.

Someone soft and familiar.

The texture can make my day feel worthwhile.

There's a comfort in softness.

Smooth intimacy has a sense of wellbeing.

I wish I could instil that sense of wellbeing with everything I touch. I wish that all intimate interactions were smooth and delightful.

I like things roughly now and again, but I have to prepare myself for something

edgy. I have to be in the mood. I have to be able to count up to ten before I can touch something rough and harsh.

When I get up to ten, then I am ready.

I don't need to count up to ten to experience something smooth.

Rarely do I associate wellbeing with roughness.





Scene 3 - Consent

Have you ever been touched by someone when you don't want to be?

It's not a nice feeling.

Being physically manipulated by someone without them asking is a horrible sensation.





Can I touch you?

(I get anxious just reading that.)



Intimacy is destroyed when the closeness is not welcome.

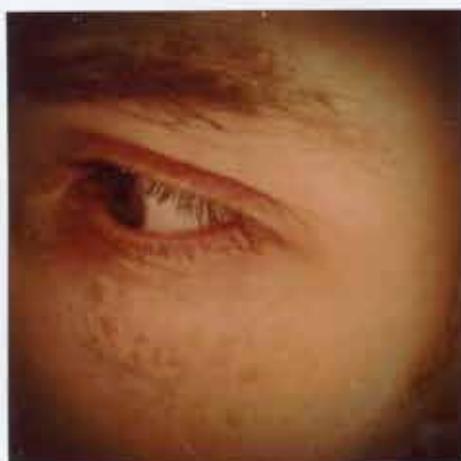
We all have different levels of touch that we can tolerate. No one can assume that they know what another person needs.

Articulating levels of touch can be difficult sometimes.

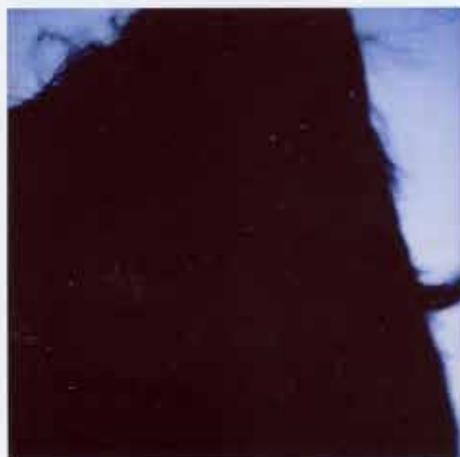
No one can assume that they know the level of intimacy that another person can handle.

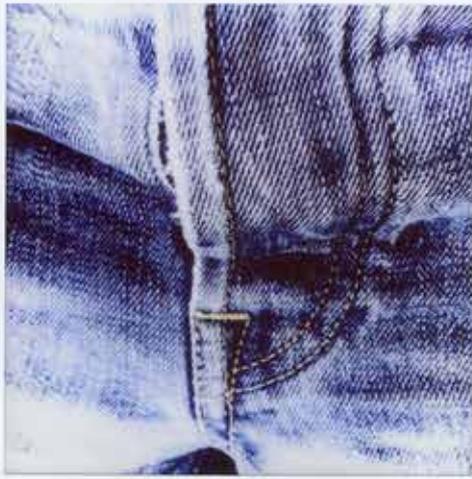
Communication can be hard if you are feeling discomfort.

Sentences can get jumbled up. Words can go in the wrong order or they can get stuck in your mouth.



**It's hard.
I feel stupid.
But I'll do it
anyway.**





Hold Me Gently



Scene 4 - People

I'm going to create a series of badges that explain the level of touch I want to experience.

I'll wear the badges and that way people can see them and understand the level of intimacy and touch I want to experience at that particular time.

The problem is that badges tend to be small, so someone will have to be up close in order to read it.

I could make big badges but that would draw too much attention to myself and I don't want to walk around with a large badge stuck to my jacket that says 'Don't touch me'.

I guess I'll have to put my faith in the fact that people will respect my space.

This can be difficult in crowded places like on a bus, on a train, at a concert or in a bar.

People can get too close in these situations.

And I doubt people would pay full attention to a badge, despite how awesome it looks.

Scene 5 - Objects

Holding objects can be comforting.

Rolling them around in your fingers -
over and over and over and over again.

The repetition is nice.

Knowing that you can carry out the
same action again and again is
comforting.

A few years ago I wrote a note on
repetition in a notepad.

Life exists on the inside. Your mind races around at one hundred miles per hour. Idea after idea and it is all inside you and no one else knows.

It's nice to look back now and again and read words that express how I used to feel.

It's nice to visit the past over and over and over again. It is nice to realise how much I have changed and how far I have to go.

Not all repetitions are good

Scene 6 - Ending

Hopefully you are still in your comfortable and private area. Hopefully you still feel safe. If not please make sure you are feeling good and relaxed and when you are, read on.

What do you touch when you are on your own?

When there is no one looking.

When there is no need for stimulation.

When there is nowhere else to go, but inside yourself.

Touch is important, but it works best around other people.

The End



Credits

Steven Fraser is a writer, artist and animator who makes zines, comics, installations and short films. His work covers many topics and has a focus on autism and identity.

You can see more of his work here -

<https://stevenfraserart.com>

<https://doittheatre.com>

You can buy some of his zines and comics here -

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/DoltTheatre>

Social Media -

[@stevenfraserart](https://www.instagram.com/stevenfraserart)



A PRIVATE PLAYS PERFORMANCE
IN A DIGITAL ZINE.

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