

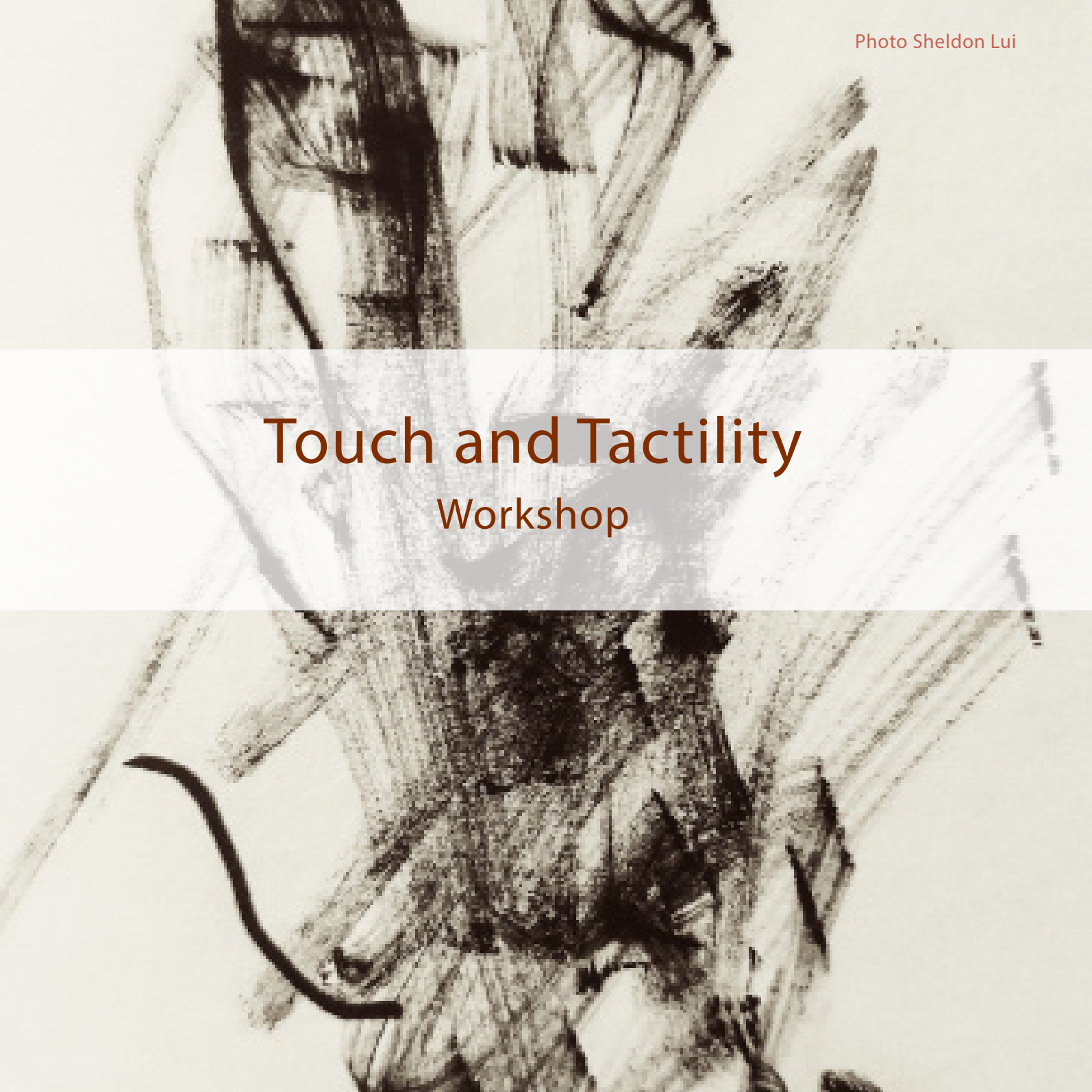
RE-PLAY/RE-MOVE

Touch and Tactility

Photo Sheldon Lui

Touch and Tactility

Workshop



RE-PLAY/RE-MOVE

RE-PLAY/RE-MOVE is a series of workshops that consists of the re-enacting and re-playing of dance and art works.

The goal is not to copy or imitate the dance or art work, but to use it as a creative source for movement exploration.

‘To enact is to act out, to perform, to put into practice. In this sense, re-enactment is more than re-staging an event, it is the translation into an act. To re-enact is to put a past event in action again. To create it again’ (Hermans, 2021).

RE-PLAY/RE-MOVE can be done at home, in school, before you go to bed, or when you have just woken up. It can be done with friends, parents, classmates and even with friendly animals such as rabbits, dogs, cows or goats. You can also invite objects, stuffed animals and furniture to play along. We however think it is not wise to invite wild animals, such as elephants, lions or snakes and also wasps and mosquitos are not welcome. It is the best to find a place where you can move around, and also a place where you can get dirty: a gym, playground, an atelier are perfect. Not so good places are: toilet, shower or closet.

Put comfortable clothes on (no high heels or flipflops) that also can get dirty.

It is important to start with the right mood: that is cheerful, yet serious, and an adventurous mind is of course very welcome.

And yes, it is okay to have fun!

We appreciate a sense of humour, and we like some strangeness and absurdness as well.

For the teachers:

Well, to start with, in the workshops you are not a teacher and you are also not teaching. You are a co-laborator, a helper, a participant, a co-worker, a teammate, an assistant.

There is no hierarchy: every-one has an equal voice (and this is also true for all the objects in space). We advocate a pedagogy of listening and radical dialogue.

Remember: every idea can be a brilliant idea. It can of course also be a lousy idea - but most of the times you don't know in front if something is lousy or brilliant - so just do it, and find out for yourselves.

RE-PLAY/RE-MOVE consists of three interrelated themes:

1. Touch/Sensorial play
2. Creative movement exploration
3. Play with objects

In this workshop, we take Touch as the starting point for creative movement exploration.

In this workshop we re-visit dance and artworks that take TOUCH as the central starting point. The dance and art works are used as an entrance, a way in. The goal of the workshop is to explore different notions of touch in an experiential way. The touch exercises not only activate the sense of touch, but also the other senses (kinesthesia, sight, sound, taste, smell). body, in turn, presses back upon the chair. A double force is at work here: we constitute worlds while at the same time we are constituted by the world.

The tactile exploration brings an appreciation for the various materials that are being used and what can be done with them. Materials have various attributes (e.g. texture surface, consistency) and children gain a deeper understanding of all these sensorial qualities through the touch exercises. Working with different sensorial materials expands their imagination and creativity. The children are invited to use different body parts: not only the hands and the fingers but also the feet, the legs, the head, and in fact the whole body. Through tactile exploration of different material, children build up embodied knowledge of the stuff, the materials the world is made of.

In this workshop we re-visit art works that take touch as the central starting point. The artworks are used as an entrance, a way in. The goal of the workshop is to explore different notions of touch in an experiential way. The touch exercises not only activate the sense of touch, but also the other senses (kinesthesia, sight, sound, taste, smell).

Goal:

1) tactile exploration, an appreciation for the various materials that are being used and what can be done with them.

2) materials have various attributes (e.g. texture surface, consistency) and we gain a deeper understanding of all these sensorial qualities through the touch exercises.

3) working with different sensorial materials expands our imagination and creativity. The participants are invited to use different body parts: not only the hands and the fingers but also the feet, the legs, the head, and in fact the whole body. Through tactile exploration of different material, we build up embodied knowledge of the materials the world is made of.

Artists and artworks referenced in this touch book:

Tactile boards (part of the Manifesto of Tactilism by F.T. Marinetti)

The education of touch: a set of instructions (part of the Manifesto of Tactilism by F.T. Marinetti)

Temporary Arrangements - Sarah Christie

Drawing Performance - Trisha Brown

Body Tracks - Ana Mendieta

Needless to say, that the process of creative exploration is more important than the product.



Touch, we could say, is contact, is being with, is to co-exist with the other and the world. To touch is to communicate, to exchange affects, intensities, and forces.

TACTILE BOARDS

F.T. Marinetti (1921)

On the evening of 11 January 1921, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (founding father of futurism), claimed a new form of art: Tactilism, the Art of Touch. At the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in Paris, he read aloud the futurist manifesto and he presented a tactile board. He stated that this work of art should not be experienced through the visual sense, 'but by touch, through the direct tactile perception of the art object in its material constitution' (Antonello, 2013, p. 38). The tactile boards were quite fragile, and only one remained (Sudan-Parigi, 1921).

Marinetti also refers to the tactile boards as hand journeys:

These tactile boards have arrangements of tactile values that allow hands to wander over them, following colored trails and producing a succession of suggestive sensations, whose rhythm, in turn languid, cadenced, or tumultuous, is regulated by exact directions. (Marinetti, 1921, par. 22)

Of course, it is a pity that only one tactile board remained. You are therefore going to re-make the tactile boards.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Collect all kind of touchable materials, i.e. materials that hold multiple tactile cues and textures. Do not only stay in the classroom or studio. Go outside for a walk, to the park, the playground, or if possible, to nature (the forest and the sea are perfect places for finding all kind of materials). Look in the hallway, on the street, in the kitchen, in your own room. Put all the stuff on a big sheet in the midst of the classroom or studio.

Think for example of:

- all kind of foods (pasta, macaroni, spaghetti)
- all kind of fabrics (velvet, silk, velours, cotton, hairy, smooth, rough)
- all kind of natural materials (leaves, chestnuts, bark, stones, pebbles, flowers, grass, shells etc.)
- all kind of building materials (sandpaper, nails, screws, etc.)
- all kind of small household objects and materials (scouring pad, matches, picks, elastics, aluminium foil etc.)

2. Build small board with these touchable materials. Make a 'tactile catalog' together with the children.

3. Tactile boards: you can make boards with a variety of tactile materials but you can also sort and arrange the materials in tactile qualities (a soft tactile board, a rough tactile board, a smooth tactile board etc.)

GOAL:

The children are making artworks from all the materials and textures that they collected themselves. Keywords: exploring, sensing, collecting, ordering, structuring, re-arranging, putting together. The children are factual and sensorial explorers: they collect all kind of materials. They then start to classify and refine the materials bringing to consciousness many impressions that were previously unconsciously absorbed. The goal is to stay as close as possible to the materiality of the stuff they collected: to use tactile perception and to explore material qualities such as texture, hardness, elasticity, flexibility, friction, temperature, weight etc. The tactile boards refine and sharpen the senses and creates sensory, tactile awareness.

QUESTIONS:

- What kind of names can you give to the different qualities of the material? For example: soft, hard, elastic, smooth, cold, flexible, bumpy, grainy, sharp, spiky. Maybe you can also invent new words for some tactile qualities that are difficult to describe, such as boinky or slingle. Try to express the tactile qualities in a free word improvisation, where you only use sounds and vocalizations.

-Can an object or material have different kind of tactile qualities? Can it be rough and smooth at the same time? Can it have multiple qualities at once?

-Close your eyes and touch the object: Can you guess what kind of object or material it is?

-Can you make a distinction between the surface of an object and what lies beneath the surface? Explore objects such as: balloon, egg, bottle of water, a cactus, a rose etc.

The tactile boards are only a start. According to Marinetti (1921) we should also re-construct society in terms of tactility: think for example of tactile rooms, tactile streets, tactile theaters, tactile words etc.



Sudan-Parigi
F.T. Marinetti
1921

THE EDUCATION OF TOUCH

F.T. Marinetti (1921)

In 1921 Marinetti wrote in his manifesto about touch as a neglected and underestimated sense, and the need to liberate touch from its low standing in the senses' hierarchy. Marinetti points to the necessity of a systematic (re-) education of one's sense of touch. Through his girlfriend (and later wife) he became acquainted by the writings of Maria Montessori and the tactile materials that she had developed. According to Montessori, the child is a 'sensorial explorer': through the senses, the child studies his environment. Through the exploration of sensorial materials, the child is given the keys to classifying the things around him: it helps him to structure and understand his own (sensorial) experiences.

Marinetti only gives a few instructions/assignments on how to train the sense of touch.

1. It will be necessary to keep the hands gloved for many days, during which the brain will attempt to condense in them the desire for varied tactile sensations.
2. To swim underwater, in the ocean, trying to distinguish tactilely the plaited currents and different temperatures.
3. Enumerate and recognise every evening, in absolute darkness, all of the objects in the bedroom.

We have elaborated further on these touch instructions:

1. Wear gloves all day.
Perform all kind of daily actions with gloves on: dressing yourself, brushing your hair, making breakfast, reading a book, doing the dishes etc.
2. Close your eyes and visualize all objects in the room, where they are located and what kind of textures the objects are made of. You can do this in the classroom, but also in your own home (for example before you go to bed).
3. Wear socks in the night, when you go to sleep
4. Take a shower with a raincoat on.
5. Take a walk outside on bare feet.
6. Double action: take a nip from your hot tea and then immediately drink something that is iccold.
7. Tie your shoelaces with cold fingers.
8. Smear sticky stuff (jam/peanut butter or something else) on your hands or even on your face. How does it feel?
9. Have your shoes on the wrong feet, and walk around.
10. Try to run with the boots of your father. Or: fill your own boots with water and try to run.
11. Try to eat yoghurt without a spoon.
12. Double action: put an ice cube in your right hand and a warm jar in your left hand. Or: put one foot in a bucket of cold water, and one foot in a bucket of warm water.
13. When you are in a place where you have never been before (for example a hotel room); put off the lights, and explore every inch of the room blind-folded. When you are finished: draw a map of the room.
14. Double action: hold a (very) heavy bag in you right hand and a (very) light bag in your right hand. Swap bags after a while.
15. Put trousers on or a dress that are too tight. Try to move.
16. Stroke with a feather unto the soles of your feet. First, you do it yourself. Then, you let some-one else do the stroking. What is the difference?
17. Go to the beach. On a stormy day: try to lean against the wind. On a sunny day: let your feet sink and squish into the wet sand at the edge of the waves.

18. Back writing. In pairs: write letters or numbers with your finger on the back of the other person. The other person has to guess the letter or number. You can also divide the group of children into teams (no more than six in one team). The child at the back of the line should 'write' each letter of the word with his finger, on the back of the child in front of him. That child then does the same on the back of the child who's in front of him in the line, and so on. The child in the front has to write the letter(s) on the board. The team that has the most correct letters on the board wins.

19. Wear too many clothes on a hot day.

20. Double action: stroke simultaneously with your right hand over sandpaper and with your right hand over a satin fabric.

21. Transformations:

- touch an empty balloon and a balloon that is blown up
- a dry sponge and a sponge filled with water
- a flashlight that is on and off (do this last one blindfolded and guess if the flashlight is on or off...)

22. Close your eyes: imagine that you touch several objects in your imagination (a rock, a cactus, a teddy bear etc.)

GOAL:

To enhance awareness of touch. In educational terms, there is much to learn from creative engagements with touch, as touch is one of our most refined senses. Touch exercises, in addition to being fun and pleasurable, encourage children to explore and investigate. The touch activities also allow children to refine their thresholds for different tactile information and to build stronger connections with different tactile input. Through these exercises, the child builds up an embodied library of all kind of tactile experiences.

QUESTIONS:

- Discuss and reflect with the children on the different touch exercises. How does it feel to wear gloves while you are brushing your teeth or putting on your coat? Does it feel awkward? Is it more difficult to perform the action? How does it feel to wear your shoes on the wrong side? Can you describe how it feels? Try to find words: strange, different, funny, pinching etc.

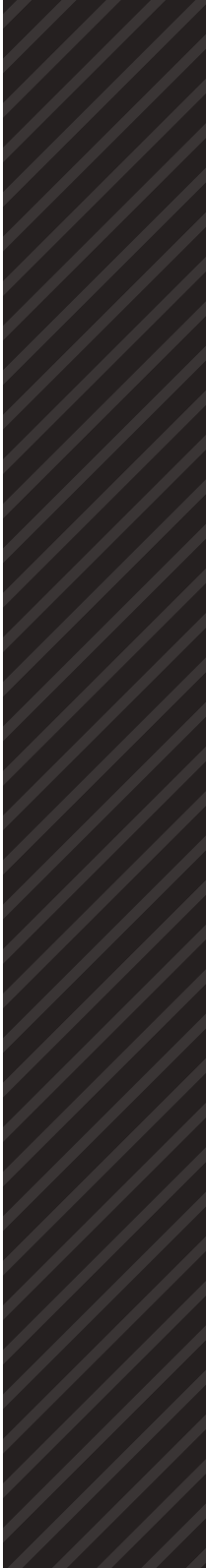
- What was your favourite exercise? Why? Which one you didn't like? Why?

- What happens when you have to do two actions at once? Can you feel both hands at the same time (when you are holding something cold in the one hand, and something warm in the other hand)? Can you experience two things at once?

- Can you feel objects even when you are not touching them? Can you sense an object in your imagination?

Of course, it would be great if you invent your own touch instructions.





'Touchable things in the world constitute our touching bodies as much as our touch reveals them.'
(MacLaren, 2014, p.97)

TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

Sarah Christie

Sarah Christie is an artist and educator working in clay and drawing. She has a strong interest in material interactions, emergence, place and the senses, and works with clay as a material of transformation. Not everything becomes a finished piece of work, but instead contributes to a longer process of revealing something, and informing what might come next. (

Sarah Christie's practice explores the embodied traces and expressions of touch and forms of contact, recording and materializing imprints and passages formed by touch in movement. Working with clay, drawing, and other materials, her practice engages with physical experience and change, sometimes attempting to make repairs, and bridge gaps.

'Skin reminds us that the body moves all the time, composing and decomposing itself, sensing all the while. Senses play on and beyond our surfaces – our skins – enabling not only new ways of coming to experience, but different ways of thinking the relation between making sense and sensing, between knowing and sensing, between expression and and content, between surface and depth.' (Manning, 2007, p.114)

INSTRUCTIONS:

In this exercise the children receive a small piece of clay. The goal is not to make something out of it, but the shaping and kneading itself are the goal.

Kneading: with one or two hands, rolling it forwards and backwards, making holes, curves and spirals, pressing and stretching the material, folding over, rubbing, squeezing, wringing, stroking, twisting, massaging, altering etc.

In this exercise, the children should focus on how their fingers and hands make contact with the clay, how they press themselves into matter, how the touch is imprinted in the clay and how it leaves traces. At a certain point, you can also ask the children to close their eyes and to explore the clay only with the hands and fingers. Also pay attention to fingerprints.

GOAL:

To explore the act of kneading and folding, to follow the physical traces that the fingers leave in the clay. How you can press into the clay, and how the clay follows your movements. The goal of this exercise is to zoom in, to explore the notion of touch through the tiniest movements of your fingers. To become sensitive in the smallest possible scale.

QUESTIONS:

Explore the different phases, qualities of clay:

- When it is still fresh, how does it feel?
- When you drop a bit of water unto it, how does it feel then?
- A few days later: when the clay is stiff and hard, and you can no longer press in it...

Make an exposition of the temporary clay arrangements:

Which one is yours? Can you still find traces of your fingers inside the clay? Can you see the loops, arches and whorls of your fingerprints? Can you follow its lines, its minutiae?

Take a good look at the clay arrangements: What do they look like? Use your imagination. An animal? A strange creature? A funny object? Try to make a list of associations together.

Finally: destroy your own own clay creature with a hammer or with your own bare hands.





DRAWING/PERFORMANCE

Trisha Brown, 2018

Already from the beginning of the seventies, Trisha Brown has used drawings as notations that visually track and represent her movements. She uses drawings as a tool to build up movement vocabularies. However, the drawings are more than a tool for movement exploration: the drawings are independent artworks in themselves.

Trish Brown is interested in lines, movements and bodies. 'The line is a releasing of energy, a force pressing unto surfaces. Lines are material results of movements in the form of tension and direction' (Kandinsky, in Day, 2016, p.17).

Movements create lines, and lines suggest movements.

In the Drawing Performance we see Trisha Brown moving across a large piece of paper, holding charcoal and oil pastel in her hands or feet. She traces her movements with the charcoal and the oil pastel. Her body draws invisible lines in space, and with the charcoal Brown tries to capture these invisible lines.

Brown tries to capture these invisible lines through touch and tactile exploration. It is through the direct connection between paper and the drawing body that invisible traces are made visible.

'To touch is to encounter a surface, a contour. To touch is to feel the perceived limits of my contours, my surfaces, my body in relation to yours. To touch is to expand these contours, creating new perimeters.' (Manning, 2007, p.13)

GOAL:

This is an exercise in tracing touch and in bodily awareness. The aim of the exercise is to discover bodily contours of the self. Research of Moore, Mealiea, Garon and Povinelli (2007) shows that body self-awareness is heightened in exercises that require self-monitoring during movement. In this exercise the external contours of the bodily self (by drawing the outlines of the match) are a framework through which the child can explore his inner contours. The aim is also to create spatial awareness: how dynamics of movement can create dynamic lines in space. Finally, the child explores in a tactile way the traces of his own movements.

QUESTIONS:

- Collect the drawings of the hands and feet and hang them on the wall. The children have to guess which hands, feet and bodies are their owns. Questions: Was it difficult to collect your own body drawings? How could you recognize your own body? What made it difficult?
- Extra assignment: write inside the drawing things you like about yourself and on the outside others write what they like about you. Then, you discuss it together. You can continue with this exercise by letting the children draw their future body.
- The drawing of the movement improvisation: you can use the drawings as a geographical map. Go outside, and let yourself be navigated by the map. Or: make the drawing three-dimensional by putting all kind of textures on top of it (by using all kind of fabrics/textiles).

BODY TRACKS

Ana Mendieta, 1982

Performance by Ana Mendieta, wearing a bay white shirt and a pair of trousers. In this performance, uses animal blood and tempera paint to create imprints of her hands on white paper. She repeats this ritualistic gesture in silence throughout the performance, forming variations of her silhouette (Hemispheric Institute, n.d., par. 1).

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is another exercise that is done on sheets of paper that hang on the wall. It is important that children wear an old T-shirt or an apron, since they can become dirty.

Use skin friendly (red) body paint. Let the children dip their hands and arms thoroughly in the paint. On the first sheet of paper, press their hands and arms firmly to its surface. On the second sheet of paper, the children are allowed to move (but without losing contact with the paper), for example downwards and sideways.

GOAL:

This is an exercise in tracing touch and in bodily awareness. The aim of the exercise is to create tactile awareness, specifically of arms and hands and to collect tactile traces of their own body. The exercise allows the children to experience the body from the inside (through tactile exploration) and the outside (through the body tracks).

QUESTIONS:

- Discuss with the children that the original artist, Ana Mendieta, used animal blood in her performance. What do the children think of this? What is the difference between using red paint or blood?
- Discuss with the children how the body leaves traces in daily life: think of walking in snow, in sand, in wet concrete, in mud. Also discuss body traces such as hair, nails and poo.
- Make a walk outside (in the park, a forest or near the sea) and look for traces of animals (footprints, shells, owl balls, poo etc.).



From the tactile exploration in the previous exercises, we now move to interpersonal touch. It is very important that children feel safe and that you discuss rules and conditions of touch (see also page 9 on ethical considerations).

Use simple warm-up games (chain tag game, ninja slap games) and exercises ('bring the balloon in pairs to the other side without using your hands') to make the children feel comfortable with touch.

The following basic contact exercises can be done with children:

BASIC CONTACT IMPRO

1. Rolling on the floor: solo

Legs and arms are close to the floor, and the head and neck are relaxed.

Goal is to follow the initiation of the leg or arm, that guides you in the roll. In the next step you can also let the children roll with a more curved back, like a banana.

2. In pairs: back to back and roll

Children stand back to back and they slowly move to the ground.

- the children should have straight backs when they sit down and go up together

- they have to keep contact with pelvis area throughout the whole exercise

- the person on the floor is the wave, relax and let the wave do the work

- the person who is lying over the wave should relax and stretch out.

3. Simple contact exercises: only hands in contact, solely arms and shoulders in contact, only the torsos in contact etc. These are exercises where children can experience leaning and counterbalancing, while not using full body weight yet.

4. Head-to-head dance: two children stand opposite each other, they lean their heads together so they are sharing a little weight. Start with simply giving a bit more weight. Then try to

move to the ground while the heads keep contact. Make a roll on the ground and then try to move up again.

5. Table-top exercise: one child is standing on hands and knees (on four legs) so that his/her back is more or less horizontal to the floor. In this position, another child can practise many things: how to balance on the "table" so their hands and feet can leave the floor, various ways to get up into that position and various ways to come back down. The one who is the table: engage core, and take care that hands are straight under shoulder, and the knees straight under your hips. The one who is the flyer: roll like you do on the floor, use hands and feet to move from the back to the floor and vice versa.

6. Simple group exercises: Sit together in a close circle, knees touching the knees of your neighbours. Stand up together.

7. Simple group exercises: Stand close to each other in a circle. Put your hands over the shoulders

of your neighbours. One person breaks the circle and slowly walks inside so that bodies spiral into each other.

8. Lifting up the legs:

Sit together in a close circle, knees touching the knees of your neighbours. Put your hands over the shoulders of your neighbours. Lift first one leg up, then both of them. The persons besides you have to take in your weight. (Not every-one is lifting his legs up at the same time. Number 1 lifts legs up, number 2 carries weight, number 3 lifts legs up, number 4 carries weight etc.)

9. Trustfalling exercise and lifting:

A trust fall is a team-building exercise in which a person deliberately falls, trusting the members of a group to catch them. In this exercise the group stands in a circle, with one person in the middle with arms folded against his chest and falls in various directions, being softly pushed by the group back to a standing position before falling again. At the end of the exercise the whole group lifts the person up and then puts him or her gently on the feet again..

SOME FINAL WORDS

In this small booklet I have described a set of touch exercises that can be done with children in the age of 4-9 years old. The booklet is not written as a method, or as a model. It provides a practice, an approach that allows children to engage with touch in a safe and playful way.

Play and dance improvisation have much to offer when it comes to touch. In educational terms, there is much to learn from creative engagements with touch, as touch is one of our most refined senses of perception. Touch is vital for growth, for developing a sense of self, for being and relating to the world. It is from tactile experiences that we learn to endow the world with meaning (Montagu 1984). By stimulating awareness of the skin, we stimulate self-awareness and awareness of the world we live in. Touch experience is fundamental to our bodily self-understanding in relation to the world.

Carolien Hermans, March 10, 2021, Amsterdam

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