

Every day I go out and wander through my neighborhood in Brussels: Anderlecht, Moulenbeck, Danseart. There, on the sidewalks, I approach people whom I invite for a walk with me hand in hand.

We stand next to each other. I offer you my hand. You put yours in mine. Our walk begins.

We walk slowly, in silence. Our hands communicate. Pretty much I understand where you want to go. I just follow. Let myself be surprised. Not knowing where we are going. Strolling, without a destination, I rarely walk through the city like this.

It is warm. Our hands, in each other, sweat. The humidity makes our hand-holding feel even more intimate. An exchange of fluids. I associate sex.

Our immediate physical connection triggers a sense of dependence in me. Where I go is no longer my decision alone. I want to walk in the shadows. I hope you want to, too.

We walk down sidewalk streets, then through a park, past other people. We are seen. hand in hand. We see the others. We are having an impact. I feel like we are shaping public space right now. So are the people around us. It makes a difference how we show up, how we walk in public. Whether we walk alone or in pairs. Whether we are close to each other or even hold hands. Only by going out on the street in a certain posture can we stage ourselves. The public space is our stage. And at the same time, it is also staged by all the other people around us.

I wonder if I can feel you through our hand connection. Feel how you are right now. Where you are right now.

We meet a group of kindergarteners. They walk hand in hand, in rows of two. All at once I feel childlike with you too. Holding on to you. To be held tightly. Not to get lost.

Hand in hand, we take up more space on the sidewalk. Only now do I notice that the sidewalks here are so narrow that sometimes we can't even walk side by side. Individualistically designed for people of a city who do not walk hand in hand? Or so that the cars have plenty of room?

You stumble. I can hold you. We are hand in hand. If you had really fallen, I would have caught you automatically.

My measurements have changed. I've grown wider and navigate through space differently. Together we are less agile and flexible. Approaching a construction site, we slow down, see if we can pass in our full width, or let the other person go ahead. I feel a responsible for you as well.

We are passed by a couple holding hands. They swing their arms, hand in hand. Is this love? Or just an image of it? What image are we giving off?

My attention oscillates, between the contact of our hands, what I perceive there, and the outside world, which I keep looking at curiously. It passes us by leisurely, we by it. I see more, discover new things. Hanging plants on house walls, a facility where new furniture is built from old, a social restaurant. I see people interacting. Hear a few scraps of words. They could be movie scenes.

How ordinary and easy it is to walk hand in hand with you by my side, even though we are strangers. And at the same time how unusual and strange. To ask for it too.

hand in hand. I am no longer alone. We are no longer alone. But two of us. I feel stronger. Connected. Out here.

People smile at us. As two women hand in hand, we stand out more. Sometimes I hear comments, behind us. From people who read the sticker on our backs. hand in hand with you, whom I don't know yet.

Tension falls from me. There is nothing to do, except to decide now and then where to go next. All I have to do is breathe. And that goes by itself. It is peaceful and easy to walk together hand in hand. Almost like a meditation.

Although the strangeness, I feel familiarity with you. As if this familiarity is possible with every human being when we walk hand in hand with each other.

It is a very sensual way to meet, to get to know each other. And even if it remains with this one walk, at least we have accompanied each other for this time. Were close to each other. That is rare. With how many people do I walk hand in hand? What precious time.

Time has changed. I don't know anymore how long we have been walking. I am surprised when the alarm clock rings and half an hour has passed.

Slowly we let go of our hands. But the impression of you remains as a memory in my body. Inscribed in my hand. All the different hands. Fragile, robust, delicate, warm, strong, soft, weak, familiar. I guess I know a little bit who you are, having felt your hand.