

For my BFA thesis I created a series of photos using bold colors, situated lighting, and the human body to communicate my relationship with touch. My series includes portraits and group photos of individuals showing how physical touch can be represented with one's self or another person. As humans, we crave physical contact from our loved ones in order to feel connected. Physical contact is a powerful way of expressing affection.

Even as a child, I was aware that I needed my Mother to hug me. I craved it. As a Japanese woman, my birth Mother was raised in a traditional culture where women express love through acts of service - but never physical touch. My predominant love language is physical touch and the absence of my Mother's touch left a longing that could never be filled. My craving for touch has followed me for my entire life. The craving for touch stems from my lack of physical connection with my birth Mother. My images are an exploration of touch and how touch influences human connection.

With this series, I separated different forms of touch into three categories: self-love, support, and the need for connection. Self-love is shown by acts such as stretching or connecting with one's own skin. Support, either intimately or between friends, is shown by physically leaning and supporting each other. Lastly, the need for connection is shown by a self-portrait of myself reaching for that connection. By creating images that fit into these three categories, I am inviting the audience to understand how physical touch is presented as my main love language and how it is a way for me to communicate the type of connection that I need, and that others might need as well.

My goal with this series was to start a discussion about how touch is vital to human connection and to let the audience think about how touch has been present or absent in their own lives. I chose to incorporate these ideas into my thesis because the theme of the body has been a huge part of my creative work here at Washington State University. Over the last four years I have represented the human form in different ways in all of my work and feel that sometimes negative discussions can surround the way our bodies are presented. This series is an opportunity for me to open a discussion with both my peers and professors about our relationship to our bodies and the exploration of connection through physical touch.