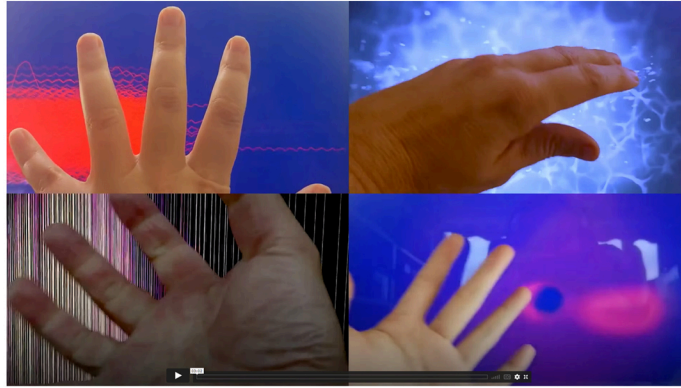


## Distance no object – PLAY! and the team that made told-hold



Even those of us not into sport know what it feels like to be part of a really good team. That feeling of wellbeing is not just about achievement. It is also about the qualities of trusting and being trusted, meaningful autonomy, and the sense of common purpose we get from team interactions.

The UNESCO Media Arts Cities project, City to City, which began in 2020, is about creative collaboration in our distanced times. Already it is leading to other, wider, interactions between York and our 21 sister cities around the world. One of the five works launched on 9 February this year, told-hold, was made by the dancers and choreographers ARCOS, from Austin, the composer Meiyen Chen from Karlsruhe, and media artist Taeheon Lee from Gwangju, Korea, whose virtual residence in York was hosted by the Guild of Media Arts and Jorvik.

City to City: PLAY! asked artists for their responses to the prospect of being able, once again, to pick up relationships, make new friendships and rediscover our communities. Four online workshops helped teams to grow and gel around creative ideas, before they began an intensive and self-managed production process. This was also 'located' online and across every time zone, posing additional questions about how we become confident in one another's company, and ready to share common goals.

<https://arcosdance.com/about-told-hold>

The artists, drawing on their personal experience, describe how becoming acquainted, and overcoming fears and biases, can be a matter of playfulness. 'In this social game, we ask: is it possible to truly care for someone we've never met? And can we, in turn, trust a stranger to hold our own story?' The told-hold creators offer visitors choices of image and sound to accompany their 'danced' response to another visitor's story. The user's hand conveys emotion directly, creating and recording movement between the story on a screen and the user's smartphone. A library of encounters is being created as visitors hold the stories told by others.

We might even say there are lessons here for our increasingly fractured society. While we commonly refer to 'cultural differences' as barriers to effective communication, and regard digital space as inherently dangerous, the team that made told-hold show how open-minded engagement can enable positive cultural connection across time and space.  
told-hold is here

<https://mediaartscities.com/city-to-city-2021/told-hold/>

Chris Bailey  
Clerk, Guild of Media Arts  
Focal Point, York UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts