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Spatial references of home –

Moving on the periphery of public space

Denise Ziegler

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Introduction

‘To be the living room of the people, to make you feel at home in public space’ is a common slogan to promote art museums, cultural facilities, and shopping malls today. The dichotomy of the private and the public has shifted the question of ‘where are you living?’ to the question of ‘where are you moving about?’ Today, a public space is considered to be more than a place to reminisce about ‘the dead and the done,’ kings, heroes, battles, conquests, and monumental undertakings. The ability for everyone to access the public sphere is considered the key to inclusion.¹ But what does it actually mean to be ‘at home’ in public space? This text reflects upon how we perceive the notion of home in an urban environment in 2023 and how the notion of home is connected to moving in and through public space. I have consequently excluded from these investigations the geographical and socio-political aspect of the notion of home as the anchor place where you were born, where you grew up, and where you reside or used to reside.

Instead, the main objective of this study is to find, observe, describe, and reflect on the actions and feelings in public space that are connected to what I call a notion-of-home-in-movement. By this, I mean actions and ways of moving in public space that show the characteristics of feeling at home. To detect these notions-of-home-in-movement, I have created four experiential artistic operations, which I will describe below. These operations are part of my artistic research practice, and they often lead to the creation of artwork that is part of the artistic research in question.

First experiential artistic operation:

I adopt the working method of ‘zooming in,’ which was originally applied by artists with a lens-based practice, to detect the notion of home in public space. I am figuratively zooming in on the time frame of the notion of home, considering ever shorter time spans in a human’s lifetime that are connected to the notion of home. This experiential artistic operation disconnects the notion of home from a physical and permanent location and instead connects it to the human body and its movement.

Second experiential artistic operation:

I observe and describe different situations where people’s moving around in public space can be regarded as performative actions of routines, rehearsal, or oddness and self-exposure. For example, I describe the ridiculous act of walking barefoot through the outskirts of the city or the ongoing practice of a hockey player in an ice hockey arena. For me as a visual artist, describing these experiential occurrences in public space in a detailed way is a method to gain awareness of what happens in these situations and to better understand how they connect to the immediate surroundings. The literal descriptions serve as a script or a sketch for my artistic practice, where I restage these performative actions in the form of a video collage, for example.² The encountered movement in the public space is brought into a new context by artistically distancing it from the original context.

Third experiential artistic operation:

I aestheticize the notion of home in public space by bringing it into the realm of conceptual art. I introduce a conceptual public artwork that manifests the notion-of-home-in-movement.³

Fourth experiential artistic operation:

I reflect on a feeling that arises between the absence and presence of home on the border of the imaginative and the real. This is implemented in dialogue with artists, colleagues, and our respective artwork.⁴

Even though in this research I exclude the physical location, such as a house, a flat, or a landscape, as the origin of the notion of home, I acknowledge that the experience of being a European resident has still influenced these investigations. Despite of populist attempts to work towards a homogenized Europe, the notion of home is still associated with an experience of diversity by many of the inhabitants of the multi-state, fragmented, and border-rich Europe.⁵ There are multiple languages, nations, borders, and lived cultures. There are different styles and traditions of architecture, handicraft, and agriculture, as well as different traditions of thinking. Migrating a few hundred kilometers may include not only a change of language but also a change of culture and traditions. In this respect, the definition of 'feeling at home' or 'feeling strange' may change repeatedly during one's lifetime. On the other hand, even if one stays all one's life in the same place, the geographical and social surroundings will undoubtedly have a big influence on the notion of home. This was evident, for example, in a study on elderly people's notion of home conducted in the Faroe Islands. Elderly people who had lived most of their lives in bigger cities experienced home in a community with its social contacts, whereas the ones who were living on small islands were feeling at home in a certain place, a house, or a farm.⁶

From a historical point of view, the changes in our relationship to a dwelling might help us better understand the viewpoint suggested here. In the 1800s, the concept of a dwelling included the idea that you left traces of what you are to the visitors of your home.⁷ The interiors of private homes were considered clues to the individuals' personalities. Along with the rise of the private individual in the 19th century, the place of dwelling became separated from the office, the place of work.⁸ Public space was considered a place where you had to avoid getting exposed as a private person by acting and assuming a role. To the philosopher and sociologist Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985), public space was a place of shame, which can only be endured by using a mask or armor, by acting with diplomacy, or by playing a game.⁹ Public space was opposed to private space, and it was hence the opposite of home. Accordingly, public space and especially public art was directed at commemorating people in their public role. In my experience as a visual artist, this notion of public space and the role of public art is changing. Today, public space is at least promoted to us as something that includes diversity and inclusion. The place of dwelling, on the other hand, is nowadays often connected to trends and fashion, with open kitchen concepts and reality TV shows telling you how to style up your home to be part of the latest standards and trends. The controversial term individuality and its connection to the notion of home in the private and public sphere would constitute a fruitful investigation on its own. However, I will not get deeper into this topic here, as it is largely outside my field of expertise.

Instead, I ask: What if our notions of home went beyond a 'home' as an attachment to a place, a flat, a house, a city, a landscape, a social environment and culture, a shelter, a safe nest where you sprung from and where your return is always welcome. What if home was simply introduced as an experience of moving in an open space, as a relation to the encountering of things and changing situations that happened in this space.

In this text, I critically investigate the notion of home in relation to public space. The aim is to find out how and where someone can feel at home in a changing urban environment. The hypothesis is that the notion of home is a phenomenon that emerges from the fringes of our relationship to our surroundings. This includes how we interact with objects, situations, and encounters in our everyday lives as a whole. The notion of home is seen here as something that follows our actions and movements wherever we are. The notion of home is not attached to something specific (like a physical home) but emerges on the periphery of us being in motion. This investigation is hence conducted mostly in public space and on the move. Because my artistic practice is made in, for, and about public space, it provides the flexibility needed for this research. Spatial References of Home includes the video work *Go Hard – Door Closes*,¹⁰ the conceptual work for public space *Child Bike Seat – at Home in Movement*,¹¹ and the sculptural installation *Window Shutters*.¹² It also includes a collaboration with Glenn D'Cruz's video work *Tape Recorder*¹³ and Alexandra Inkster's text *The Mutable Immutable – A proposition for a future situation*,¹⁴ as well as a collaboration with an independent research group that implements the Continuous Prototype, a dynamic artistic research tool created by the group that allows you to imagine what kind of further development could be deduced based on the current situation.¹⁵

In the implementation of these investigations and in my artistic research practice, I also engage in dialogue with experience research, urban studies research, philosophical anthropology, as well as research on the origin of an artwork and the reason why an artwork has come into existence. In my artistic practice, this means that I develop and resolve material, spatial, or practice-related challenges also by consulting texts of different philosophers and scientists to be able to 'discuss' our respective practices and to learn from them. The artworks created in this process and discussed here are therefore not illustrations of my research, nor are they illustrations of other people's theoretical frameworks; rather, they are essential parts of my fieldwork and research. At the same time, the artwork functions as a parallax and allows the audience to navigate through and experience the forming of a new understanding of their

own daily occurrences in public space. The aim of my research is hence also to contribute to a rethinking of public art and to envision what public art might be like in the future.

A phenomenon emerges on the fringe of our immediate surroundings

In this chapter, I introduce the method of 'zooming in,' which was originally applied by artists with a lens-based practice, as an operational tool in search of the notion of home in public space. I then introduce a second operation in which I describe occurrences in public space in a verbally detailed way. I describe a walk, a rehearsal exercise, and the act of sitting in public space parallel to an experience of temporarily feeling at home. I do this to better understand how the things I have just encountered connect to their immediate surroundings.

To feel at home is usually connected to a durational, extended time period. It takes time to feel somewhere at home. But what would happen if we narrowed down the timeframe concerning the notion of home by asking you where in your home you are this year, this week, or today? When you zoom in on a map, more and increasingly small streets and paths start to appear; similarly, when you adopt a smaller timeframe when thinking about the question of home, our moves, routines, and activities start to matter. The daily commute to work, a walk to the shop, a bar hop, or a doctor's visit are repeated travels in urban space and they follow familiar patterns of where to go and what to encounter. If I narrow down the timeframe even more and consider where I am at home this hour, this minute, or this instant, the home becomes connected with my human body and the feeling of being in the body of a human. The human skin is now my closest home. 'Life is man's best time!' said Finnish ski-jumper legend Matti Nykänen.¹⁶ Especially when riding my bicycle on a familiar route, I feel that I can concentrate on my own thoughts, an idea for an artwork, or plans for the weekend, for example.¹⁷ As in ancient Greek rhetoric, I match my thoughts to the changing urban landscape I am travelling in.¹⁸ While walking through the streets, I like to eat my lunch or hum a song. I do all these things that I would do in a relaxed and homey environment while being 'en route.' I extend the experience of home to include being in motion and connecting my thoughts to the changing surroundings. Home in this sense might be defined as something that follows all human bodies that are in motion rather than being a social arrangement or an institutional programme that depends on the obligations and duties of society and its members.

After the operation of zooming in on the question of the notion of home, I introduce the second operation. This second operation consists of describing occurrences in public space. In describing repeated happenings, such as a walk or a rehearsal exercise, one's ongoing relationship to the surroundings, which are changing during the activity, is an important part of these descriptions. In an earlier artistic research project, I used everyday events and gestures as starting points for artwork and artistic research.¹⁹ Now I will concentrate on relationships: I describe everyday events in connection to their changing surroundings. The aim of the descriptions is to find out where and when 'home' happens. The aim is to bring us closer to the essence of the notion of home and to find out more about 'home' as momentum, the essence and nature of an action. How can we investigate the nature of an action or, at a more general level, the nature of anything? Roland Barthes suggests that we should consider the latter question by way of comparison. He asks: What is the nature of a pair of trousers? He excludes the sleek-ironed and folded object on a coat hanger in a department store from his considerations and instead suggests that the nature of a pair of trousers is the slack passive bundle of fabric left on the bedroom floor by an indifferent juvenile who took off his trousers (Figure 4.1).²⁰ The nature of a thing has to do with what is left after its use. This leftover is not to be confused with scrap or waste; rather, it is energy, something that is gained by recklessly leaving it behind.²¹



Figure 4.1 Research material: Trousers left on the floor after use. Photo by the author.

I adapt Barthes' method of comparison to my own search for the essence of the concept of home. I am aware that comparisons always have their limits, they are always somehow 'lame.' Nevertheless, comparisons and metaphors can still give a different perspective and they might provide new insight on the matter of interest. Like in Barthes' example of the neatly folded trousers, I look beyond the (clichés of) home as a place of shelter and safety with warmth and love. Instead, I will search for an unconcerned, indifferent, lived versions of home – the one used in everyday life. In the following, I describe notions of home that emerge in connection to actions or movements. In these actions, I emphasise the aspects of routine, repetition, and change. It is also essential to note the role of the objects, obstacles, and places found, formed, or built in connection to these human activities.

Walking home

After locking myself out of my studio, I find myself in my socks in the hallway of an industrial building. I cannot reach my phone, my wallet, or my bicycle key, and no one else is working in the early morning hours, so there is nobody I could ask for help. I am forced to walk home to fetch the spare key to the studio. I take off my socks and start the journey barefoot – a trek of about 4.5 km that starts from the industrial area of Arabia, continues across the motorway and the Koskela hill, goes through the Käpylä residential district, and finally ends in Patola, in northern Oulunkylä. It is a sunny summer day, so I have nothing to worry about. Soon I can overcome the disappointment of having to spend my working hours to walk back home. I try to avoid stepping on the small pebbles on the asphalt but get stung by them anyway since my feet are not used to being in direct contact with the pavement. After a ca. 50-minute walk, I not only have blisters on my feet but many thoughts have also emerged in my mind: I remember that when I was a teenager, walking barefoot all summer evoked a sense of freedom in me, and in the end of the summer, the hard skin on the sole of the foot was a sign of connectedness to life on Earth, of being in touch with and at home on our planet (Figure 4.2). Now I only felt quite ridiculous, walking barefoot in the streets with my socks in my hand.

The only direct reaction to my performance was from a small child pointing out to her mother: 'See, the woman has no shoes!' The mother gave a prompt answer: 'That might be a healthy way to activate the blood circulation.'



Figure 4.2 Research material: Foot with a blister 14 days after the event of walking home barefoot. Photo by the author.

Today, home meant going to fetch the spare key to the studio. But it also signified a connection to a memory of home through a concrete, although seemingly senseless and ridiculous, action of walking barefoot on the outskirts of the city. By engaging in this ridiculous act and by accepting the loss of control of what I wanted to do this morning, the 'kitschy concept' of home was dismantled, revealing a feeling of complete unreservedness. According to Plessner, the act of total openness in public space is harmful to us because when someone shows vulnerability, they put their individuality at risk.²² By exposing oneself, one may become ridiculous. As an artist, I have the possibility to approach situations in public space through my profession. To work on the borders of the private and the public is part of my work, and I constantly learn and develop methods and tools to relate to the dichotomy of personal and common features within my working practice. In this line of thought, I wonder what happens to the visitors of cultural institutions that are asked to 'use the public museum space like their own private living room'.²³ Are they asked to ridicule themselves or are they asked to assume a role and play a game? Art museums and other public institutions are – in my experience – no-one's home according to the definition of home of a safe, cosy harmless place; instead, they create situations where you are exposed to and attacked by new ideas and surprised by new, emerging feelings of various kinds.²⁴

Rehearsing home

While working on the notion of home as an activity in public space, I recorded two video sketches that depicted actions related to urban space and its architecture: First, the repetitive physical exercise of an ice hockey professional in an almost empty arena, and second, the heavy wooden door of a cathedral that closes softly without making a noise. The continuity and concentration in the first action and the distinct repetitive closing of the heavy wooden door in the second video sketch start to define and give meaning to the respective spaces. The architectural space gave a home to these movements and actions. The skating hockey player's figure-eight manoeuvres are transmitted not only

visually but also through the sound of the skate blades on the ice and the trainer's loud and distinct voice. The trainer is shouting 'go!' and 'hard!', the skater is speeding up and making a tight turn at the end of the ice rink, turning around, and pushing away the ice to the right and to the left on his way to the other end. After a while, the trainer yells 'done.' Now, the skater glides without a sound, bending his upper body forward and leaning on the hockey stick that is resting against his thighs to be able to breathe more easily. After half a minute, the exercise is repeated. The rehearsal²⁵ confines the volume of the vast stadium with its movement and especially with its distinctive sounds, i.e., the yelled commands of the trainer and the sound of the skates pushing the ice aside. These sounds can be heard from far up in the grandstand. Without the spectacle and distraction of a hockey game event in the arena, the impact of the lone skater's concentrated rehearsal is very impressive. Now, in the almost empty arena, the rehearsal of only one skater fills the whole space that seats 17,000 people! The architecture of the arena is designed to let the space be dominated by movement and especially by sound. The experience of space in the empty arena is set off by the movement and sound; it is defined by what is left of it right after the performance. For me, witnessing this 'home of movement and sound' is equal to experiencing the essence of an arena (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3 Research material: Still from the video work *Go Hard – Door Closes* (2022). An ice hockey professional is practicing with his trainer in an almost empty arena. Photo by the author.



Figure 4.4 Research material: Still from the video work *Go Hard – Door Closes* (2022). A closed heavy wooden door with an attached velvet cord. Photo by the author. Photo by the author.

In a similar way, the closing of the door of the cathedral in the second video clip regulates the air flow of the building (Figure 4.4). The dark and heavy wooden door opens and closes like a giant gill. This happens without a sound due to a soft obstacle that is placed between the two parts of the door. The obstacle is a velvet cord that is attached on both ends to the inner and outer door handle. The cathedral is breathing through the door, letting people in and out without disturbing the congregation or the silence of the empty cathedral.

Following my suggestion of using the method of the Continuous Prototype to work with the video sketches, artist Alexandria Inkster wrote a screenplay based on the two video clips.²⁶ She focuses both on the air flow described above and on a detail in the ice rink rehearsal video clip, which I had neglected to observe myself: Among the half a dozen spectators in the otherwise empty arena, there is one person sitting in the dark foreground of the video image reading a book. The reader in the arena – in his unexpected activity (Why would someone read a book in an arena?) – is indifferent to the events around him and is only immersed in reading. Through his reading activity, he creates an imaginative inner space that overlaps with the actual space of the arena. In Inkster's screenplay, the reader gets company when several other readers join him in the ice hockey arena. Her one-page script ends like this: 66 *Denise Ziegler*

(...) gradually half a dozen a dozen two dozen spectators filter into the arena
some in groups some alone
they sit in the stands, and they read
the coach yells the skater skates and
the space breathes deeply, bodies and effort and expired air
the arena is a library a meditative space and its players continue to rehearse
the cathedral door closes. (Inkster 2019)



Figure 4.5 Research material: Distribution of yellow cloth in the arena. Photo by the author.

Two years later I visited the same arena. Again, we are a small group visiting the empty arena. There is once again a practice session in progress on the ice, but now I start to look around inside the arena. Employees appear in the different sections of the seating areas carrying piles of yellow pieces of fabric in their arms. They start to furnish the back of each dark blue seat in the arena with a yellow cloth. Each employee starts in a different section, and they work slowly through the rows of seats. As they advance, the whole sitting area starts to change colour. 'Hockey is for everyone' is printed on the soft cloth. One corner of the cloth is equipped with a small LED lamp that can be turned on by waving the cloth back and forth or spinning it over the head while holding it in one hand. In the evening's game, the audience will take these pieces of fabric from their seats and use them to cheer for the teams during the game. The preparation of the seats proceeds like a game of solitaire, where the playing cards are revealed one at a time, and soon all the spots are yellow. The employees disappear. I wonder what kind of screenplay Inkster would write for this footage (Figure 4.5).

A year later, I finished editing the video that now included the new clip of the distribution of the yellow cloth. The rhythm of the finished video is provided by altering the long shots of the happenings in the arena and the repetition of the same short shot of the cathedral door closing slowly and softly. I named the video *Go Hard! – Door Closes*. The video work also marks the time span when I was travelling around with my family to ice hockey practices and tournaments as a hockey mom.

Gaining home

One seat in the arena is mine, I have a ticket for it. From this seat, I follow the evening's hockey game in the arena. From this seat, it is safe for me to relate and react to the spectacle that is going on during a game, to show emotions, even to jump up and raise my hands, to wave the yellow cloth, to shout and cry, and to sit down again in my own seat. If I wish, I can rest for a while, start reading a book, and enter a different world. The seat in the arena has both a public and a temporary, private nature at the same time. Occupying it for a few hours gives me the feeling of being positioned towards the centre of a public event, while at the same time, it defines the outer borders of my own space in the surrounding spectacle. I tend to suffer from anxiety issues in large crowds, so I consider my seat in the stadium my safe place for the time of the spectacle. Here, I am safe from the other people. Since I have a seat of my own, I can

participate in the spectacle and even enjoy it. According to Helmuth Plessner, humans are positioned out of the centre of the self without leaving the same centre. He calls excentricity (ex-centricity) a characteristic of humans, which describes their relationship to their surroundings. The self cannot be objectivized; it can only be actualized through an asymptotic approach to the borders of the inner world and the outside spectacle.²⁷ Just like Plessner describes it, an imaginative gap opens between the hockey game around me and my inner world. In my mind, I can switch between me as a spectator, who focuses on the centre of the arena with the game in progress, and me distancing myself from the surrounding events and entering my own world, just like the reader of a book did in the empty arena during the afternoon practice. The outlines of the arena seat mark the physical border between the two worlds. I experience this gap not as distance, but rather as a parallax and a possibility to step mentally out of the centric view of the spectators following the game. This gives me a strong feeling of myself being simultaneously focused on the actions of the spectacle in the arena and ex-centred with regard to my possibility to sit in my chair as in an enclave and to concentrate on thoughts and ideas that have nothing to do with the hockey game. After this experience, I conclude that both positioning and ex-positioning oneself are relevant actions of humans when it comes to the notion of home.²⁸

After I had participated in the mass event in the huge arena, I realized that public space is not a shared space for me, but rather a space that I have gained for myself by actively negotiating its borders. I also realized that I could extend my own experience of (inner) space into public space without having to own this space exclusively or in the long term. I make the space mine in the very moment I experience and relate to it. When the game ends, I leave my seat in the arena and give up its ownership. This was a temporary relationship, or ownership, of public space both because I had a ticket to the game and also because I sat in the seat during the game. Similarly, I might 'own' a pavement by walking or bicycling on it. I 'own' a public space for the time I sit, walk, or cycle there. *Besitzen*, the German word for 'to own,' means literally 'to occupy' or to 'sit on.' Perceiving an event in a public space with the means of artistic practice and considering Inkster's thoughts on air flow and Plessner's remarks on excentricity of humans, I define the notion of home as an ongoing negotiation of the borders between myself and the surrounding world. The feeling of home emerges in these lived moments.

Moving home in public space

In the following, I ponder further on sitting in a public space as an action of negotiating the borders of home. I aestheticize the notion of home in public space by bringing it into the realm of conceptual art.

A prosthesis of home

In contrast to the seat in the stadium that enabled me to follow a hockey game, the subject of this chapter – a child bike seat – is in itself a seat in motion. Motion is one of the key concepts of a bicycle as it keeps its balance only in motion. The child bike seat is attached to this moving vehicle. A child bike seat is shaped according to one-half of a mould taken from a sitting child's lower body. One can clearly distinguish the two legs, the bottom, the back, and even a small niche for the back of the head. Handles on both sides of the frame suggest the child's small arms will rest on the rim of the mould or the frame, and their little hands can hold on to these handles. The child's torso is secured with a three-point seatbelt. The child bike seat is mostly made out of plastic, and the design includes brims and additional folds to make the structure stronger. There are also sets of holes in strategic places to adjust the footgear and security belts to accommodate the changing size of a growing child. The child bike seat is an accessory to a bicycle and at the same time a prosthetic extension of the child's body. It is quite an ugly, if functional, object that integrates the body of a child as part of the bicycle. It is also a shell that protects the child. The seat integrates the child's body into the bicycle's anatomy as smoothly as possible to not disturb its functionality. The seat is attached to the frame of the bike with a lock around the stake that is located right under the saddle at the barycentre of the rider. Being detached from the bike, the child bike seat is an unbalanced object that consists of a plastic, often brightly coloured shell with padding, lining, and two metal rods that stick out of the seat and end in a metal blob (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Research material: A child back seat that has been removed from bicycle and put for sale on the net. Photo by the author.

In the bicycle seat, the child forms a unit with the bicycle and a familiar human being, and they are on the move together. It is like a mobile family unit. The child is safe, protected (seat, seatbelt, and helmet), and accompanied by someone close to them. While driving, the adult and the child are at home on the bike, in motion. The feeling of safety, shelter, and closeness to a familiar adult is combined with the feeling of movement. Sometimes, the child falls asleep while being on the road. The notion of home is easily adaptable to this non-dwelling situation.

An aesthetic experience on the borders of the public and private

In order to manifest the above-described notion-of-home-in motion, I introduce the third operation. This operation brings the child bike seat into the realm of conceptual art. With the publication of this concept, I declare all child bike seats in public urban space as conceptual artworks. All bicycles with a child bike seat – whether parked in front of a shop or an office building, whether driving through the streets with or without a passenger – are part of the artwork *Child Back Seat – At Home in Movement*²⁹ In this conceptual artwork, an everchanging constellation of the notion-of-home-in-motion is happening (Figures 4.7 and 4.8).



Figure 4.7 Research material: A bicycle with a child bike seat, random documentation of the conceptual artwork *Child Bike Seat – At Home in Movement* (Ziegler 2021) in the center of Helsinki. Photo by the author.



Figure 4.8 Research material: A bicycle with a child bike seat, random documentation of the conceptual artwork *Child Bike Seat – At Home in Movement* (Ziegler 2021) in the centre of Helsinki. Photo by the author.

In *Child Bike Seat – At Home in Movement*, the connections to conceptual art and the readymade are obvious, but why does it have to be an artwork? There are two reasons for this: First, I like to refer to James Shelly's argument that there are artworks that do not necessarily have to be perceived with any of our five senses in order to be recognized as artworks that can provide an aesthetic experience.³⁰ The child bike seat, the ugly prosthetic shell of a child attached to a bicycle, might not be received as an aesthetic object at all. However, in its use as a part of a home in motion, and by placing it in an art context, it might be the generator of an aesthetic experience.³¹ This aesthetic experience lies not in the object itself, but in experiencing the whole action of an adult transporting a child on a bicycle, or even in the potential of this action when encountering a parked bicycle with a child back seat. This situation might evoke a notion of a home-in-motion. *Child Back Seat – At Home in Motion*³² emerges as an experience and a feeling of being at home in public space. Wherever a bicycle equipped with a child back seat is present, the *Child Back Seat – At Home in Motion* artwork is happening. In city life, we can encounter this situation every day. By pointing out this everyday situation and declaring it an artwork, the encounters with these situations might start to communicate a new relation to our understanding of the concept of home in relation to public space. The work consists of many live moments of humans in motion rather than commemorating past events as public artworks so often do. Here the notion of home does not rely on the child bike seat as an object; rather, it emerges as an experience evoked by a situation, i.e., from

encountering a bicycle with a child bike seat. By declaring it an artwork, I point to the socio-aesthetic qualities of this situation.

The second reason to introduce my artwork *Child Bike Seat – At Home in Movement*³³ stems from the fact that, over and over again, art historians and theoreticians have used the same readymade artwork, Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), as an example to demonstrate their insights in connection to conceptual art on various theoretical subjects. It is as if Duchamp's work exclusively held the essence of conceptual art from past to eternity! As an artist and researcher, I become bored when I repeatedly see the same example of the signed urinal as an illustration of theoretical thoughts in different contexts. In fact, I object to artwork being mainly used to illustrate the ideas of a different author. I consider examples, experiments, and metaphors as research materials and methods that must be restituted and reinvented to be alive and effective. In addition to the existing classic examples of artwork, we need new metaphors and examples that bring new and different viewpoints to the discourse of the essence of art.

In my opinion, the question of the aesthetic experience of the readymade has already left the gallery and exhibition rooms some time ago and re-entered the everyday life where its paradigms came from. In the artwork *Child Bike Seat – At Home in Movement*,³⁴ motion and changing everyday situations become a part of the nature of the work. In this artwork, the notion of home can be considered an aesthetic experience on the borders of, and in parallax to, the public and the private.

Wanderlust and the screen – representing the unreal-real home

In this chapter, I introduce the fourth and final operation conducted to investigate the notion of home through an individual's relation to public space. I examine two art pieces to demonstrate how the notion of home can be evoked by negotiations on the border of the imaginative and the real. In Glenn D'Cruz's video work *Tape Recorder* (2019), the screen is like a plane for Wanderlust.³⁵ It carries the author away. Into memories, into emotions, into a political statement. I get the feeling that the animated (rather than moving) images might constitute a *Wahlheimat*, a home of choice. In the work, this is translated and re-enacted through digital technology and through artistic work with images and sounds. To me, it is surprising to find that this re-enactment of the past works best where it is at its simplest: One scene of the video shows a black-and-white still photograph of a simple one-story brick building in twilight. A cloudy sky, maybe moonlight. The voice-over is telling the story of a man working early shifts as a bus driver. Suddenly, in one of the windows of the house, a light is switched on. I suppose that technically this effect was created by adding a lighter area to cover the window area in the still image (Figures 4.9 and 4.10).



Figure 4.9 Research material: Stills from Glenn D'Cruz's video: *Tape Recorder* (2019). Photo by the author.



Figure 4.10 Research material: Stills from Glenn D'Cruz's video: *Tape Recorder* (2019). Photo by the author.

This simple gesture of animating a still image not only individualizes the image and connects it to the story told by the narrator, but it also leaves the viewer outside of the house and in the darkness of the night. The gesture of switching on the light suggests that there is an inside to the image, an on-the-other-side to which the viewer has no access. The installation work *Window Shutters*³⁶ has a similar affect on the viewer. An entire facade of a two-story house is restaged by mounting a set of authentic, beige-painted aluminum window shutters in wooden frames onto the wall of a high-ceiling exhibition space. All the window shutters are closed. There is only one window on the second floor with shutters ajar. This particular window shutter is slightly highlighted with a light source. The *Figure 4.9* Research material: Stills from Glenn D'Cruz's video: *Tape Recorder* (2019). Photo by the author. *Spatial references of home* 73

visitor to the exhibition passes by the reconstructed facade and might look up at the slightly opened window shutter. What is going on in there? The *Window Shutters* installation addresses an immediate spatial and formal reference. The window shutters block the light as well as the gaze from the outside. They divide two spaces, preventing access from one direction while allowing it from the other. The line between a simulation and the real life is drawn as an outline of the capacity to see obstacles and possibilities forming realities.³⁷ The notion of someone possibly being at home and gazing through the window shutter emerges in the form of an imaginative possibility in the perception of the exhibition visitor. The notion of home manifests itself in the imaginable. At the same time, the notion of home confirms the position of the outsider – not as something that should be pitied or that would be problematic, but as a statement of a relation to home: The viewer is on the other side – outside – of an imaginative 'home.' Through the obstacle, and in relation to the other side of the image, the ex-positioning³⁸ of the viewer is confirmed, and her standpoint is perhaps made more confident (Figure 4.11).

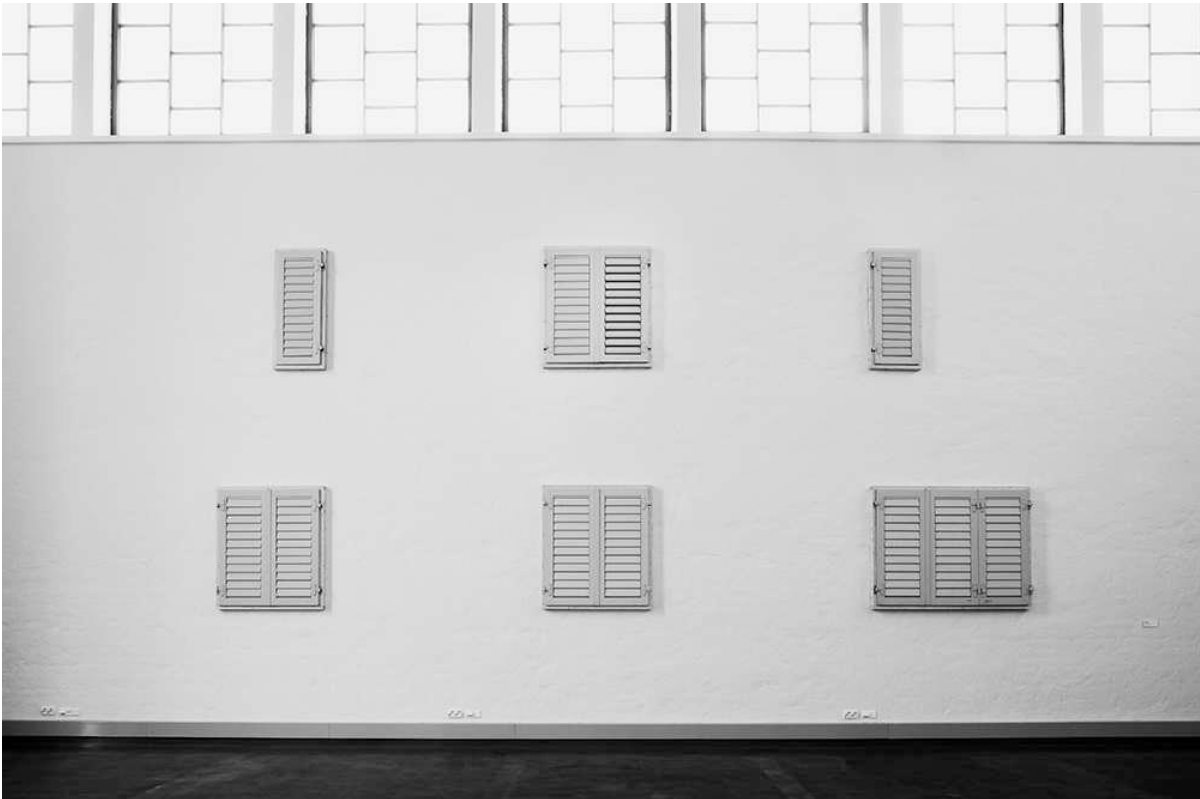


Figure 4.11 Research material: Denise Ziegler, *Window Shutter* (2010) sculptural installation. Photo @Patrik Rastenberger.

The *Window Shutter* installation – similar to the scene with the switched-on light in D’Cruz’s video – makes it possible to address an experience of home that is real and unreal at the same time. To my mind, the video screen is particularly suitable as a medium for representing the unreal-real. It is not even exactly defined formally. For example, the border of a screened image depends on the individual screen used (with or without underscan). By escaping an exact formal definition, the negotiation of the borders of the screen becomes part of the medium.

Conclusion

Specific notions of home are to be found in public space in our everyday life outside of the place of dwelling. These notions of home go beyond a ‘home’ as a place, a flat, a house, a city, a landscape, a shelter, a safe nest where you sprung from and where your return is always welcome. They introduce home as an experience of relating to the things and situations around us. The notion of home may allude to a place and manifest itself in certain locations but only with the intention to evoke something else, something that is part of a specific action or a movement. The notion of home in public space includes a momentum, a created energy, that gives the impetus to further actions. Everyday habits, walks, exercises, itineraries, routines, and returning thoughts and imaginings in public space not only mark the changing borders of our mental and physical field of activity but they can also produce a feeling of calmness and serenity. I named this feeling of belonging to the surroundings through movement as notion-of-home-in-movement. It can be described as feeling at home in public space. By discussing four experiential operations, this text first connected the notion of home to the human body and to movement. Second, it described everyday occurrences and movements and their relation to public space. Then, as the third operation, the notion of home in public space was made into a conceptual artwork. In *Child Bike Seat – At Home in Movement*,³⁹ the prosthesis for a child’s body that was attached to a bicycle ridden by a familiar adult evoked a notion-of-home-in-movement. Finally, the fourth operation was concerned with a feeling that emerges between the absence and presence of the feeling of home on the border of the imaginative and the real. The notion of home is an abstract concept just like conceptual art is. Both need new metaphors in order to get new insights into them. An artistic viewpoint allows us to approach our relationship to our surroundings and our movements in public space through distinct experiences. Home stands here for the attempt of the individual to connect with the surroundings.

Notes

- 1 Unesco 2020.
- 2 Ziegler 2022. *Go Hard – Door Closes*.
- 3 Ziegler 2021. *Child Bike Seat – at Home in Movement*.
- 4 D’Cruz 2019; Inkster 2019; Ziegler 2010a. *Window Shutter*.
- 5 Lindberg 2019.
- 6 Róin 2015.
- 7 Benjamin 1983, 52.
- 8 Benjamin 1983.
- 9 Plessner 2018.
- 10 Ziegler 2022.
- 11 Ibid. *Spatial references of home* 75
- 12 Ziegler 2010a.
- 13 D’Cruz 2019.
- 14 Inkster 2019.
- 15 In the Continuous Prototype research method developed by Tero Heikkinen, Petri Kaverma, and Denise Ziegler in 2018, the present stage of an object or situation is taken as the starting point or prototype rather than an outcome and endpoint of an already finished development (Heikkinen et al. 2017).
- 16 HS 2019.
- 17 Ziegler 2019.
- 18 Kuusamo 1992.
- 19 Ziegler 2010b.
- 20 Barthes 1983.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Plessner 2018, 70.
- 23 Seppälä 2003.
- 24 Heidegger 1960.
- 25 ‘Rehearsal’ meaning to go over again, repeat; literally rake over, turn over again the soil or ground (Online Etymology Dictionary).
- 26 Inkster 2019.
- 27 Plessner 1975, 295.
- 28 Plessner 1975, 292, 295.
- 29 Ziegler 2021
- 30 Shelly 2013.
- 31 Barthes 1983.
- 32 Ziegler 2021.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ziegler 2021.
- 35 Wanderlust: A strong desire to travel.
- 36 Ziegler 2010a.
- 37 Merimaa & Hujala 2019.
- 38 Plessner 1975, 129.
- 39 Ziegler 2021.

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<https://www.hamhelsinki.fi/en/sculpture/lasten-pyoranistuin-kotona-liikkeessa-denise-ziegler/>

Ziegler, Denise. Go Hard – Door Closes, video.