Mapping the meanings of home through art

A large-scale exploratory analysis of art exhibitions on home

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Abstract

This Working Paper contributes to the literature on home with a large-scale exploration of the ways in which home is represented and translated into art. An extended primary dataset (N=846) was produced for this purpose, considering art exhibitions held worldwide from 2007 to 2020. The data were gathered through a query on the website MutualArt.com, involving the following keywords: *Home, House, Dwell* and *Domestic.* Art exhibitions are charted along lines of space, time, artistic forms, and main thematic cores. Key findings can be summed up as follows: artists and exhibition curators have increasingly been oriented to inquire the meanings of home and the home-migration nexus; thematizations of home are remarkably different across geographic areas; art forms are employed differently to materialize and perform different home-related themes. Last, co-occurrence semantic networks are used to visualize the main connections between home-related themes drawn by artists and curators in the production of exhibitions.

Keywords: Home – Exhibitions – Art – Meaning structures – Home and migration – Semantic Networks

Introduction

The recent development of theoretical and empirical research on 'home' has been paralleled by a widespread effort to reflect on the concept itself. As many authors have stressed, home is not quite an ordinary concept, inside and outside academic discourses. As an everyday-life category, home is extremely elusive and magmatic, at the same time bearing a strong evocative and mobilizing potential, marking some of the most fundamental human experiences and emotions (Easthope 2004; Boccagni 2017; Boccagni and Duyvendak 2019). It is no surprise that such a configuration attracted broad exploration and in-depth inquiry. While academic scholars have been researching the concept and related phenomena across disciplines, such an endeavour has also interested different kinds of actors.

Art, in particular, is nowadays often conceived as a form of research in itself. In a famous article about home, Mary Douglas discussed Suzanne Langer's thought in relation to home, art, analogies and forms of knowledge: "*she insisted that art is not a depiction, a copy of something else that is not art. Art for her is a communicative effort that makes specialized projections of the common dimensions of experience. This is why art should never be separated from reasons if we are to understand rational processes*" (1991: 291). Relative to scientific research stricto sensu, artistic research works through different methods to produce different kinds of knowledge. These, however, have porous and blurred boundaries and can be fruitfully integrated (Busch 2009; O'Neill 2008; Sheringham et al. 2020; Váňa 2020).

Like other evocative and thought-provoking themes, home has largely been inquired and communicated through artistic practices (Lauzon 2017, Perry 2013). Reflecting its multifaceted and stratified nature, home has been approached from a wide variety of standpoints and through different artistic forms. Moreover, given the exploratory and reflexive principles guiding many contemporary artistic practices, art makes for an interesting window through which to inquire about what aspects of home are most thought-evoking, interrogative, and problematized.

In this Working Paper I develop a preliminary map of the ways in which home and closely related notions have been transposed into artistic practices and products. In doing this, I draw on a rather large and specially produced archive dataset (N=846) of home-related exhibitions, based on the website MutualArt.com. With no presumption of exhaustivity, this is a novel attempt to chart the main lines along which the concept of home has been inquired and conveyed through artistic practices. My analysis will not consist of an in-depth hermeneutical effort, but rather of a broad mapping of the forms and themes more frequently addressed in connection to home. As a way to classify the often nuanced and complex contents of art exhibitions, the interpretation and categorization suggested in this paper is necessarily quite rough-edged. Nonetheless, this data structure and analysis provide an interesting opportunity: exploring what themes and meanings are more often evoked in connection to home, and what artistic forms are more often employed to materialize and perform them, as emerging from a large dataset of cultural products on a global scale.

This working paper, then, will be oriented by some broad research questions:

What are the main ways in which home and neighbouring notions have been addressed in artistic practices? In reference to which other concepts and topics were these

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articulated and developed? Are these meaning configurations stable across time and space? How do artists and exhibition curators interlace artistic forms and topics (within and between them) in confronting the issues that revolve around home?

1. A methodological background on data selection

The data I present have been gathered online, through queries on the website MutualArt.com. This particular website provided a remarkably large database for exploration. It also offered a basic rationale for field delimitation, in a way both more convenient and less arbitrary than a query on the broader web[1]. MutualArt.com was selected after comparative analysis with other similar websites. As a matter of fact, it is the most complete source in terms of amount of stored data, as well as the most convenient one for internal organization of information and the browsing features allowed by its search engine. In short, MutualArt.com is the most suitable option for the research purpose of HOMInG.

The website was created in 2008. It mostly works as a platform oriented towards the art market, as it aggregates information on artists, artworks, lots, exhibitions and auctions. It also provides pricing information and market analyses. It currently counts more than 500,000 users and includes data on over 300,000 artists and 17,000 museums. Upon data collection from this source, I also tested the completeness of the website's information by searching into it several exhibitions found by separate online queries. The matching between the two sources was adequate in most cases.

As mentioned above, in building this data archive I have taken exhibitions as units of analysis. Relative to research by single artworks, the option for exhibitions has concrete advantages in terms of data completeness. Together with name and date of each relevant item the website provides geographical information (i.e. where the exhibition was held) and, importantly, a written presentation, typically made out of press releases and curatorial texts, for each exhibition. This self-presentation format gives a concise and relatively complete overview on how artists and curators themselves interpret the exhibition, or at least of what they see as the most important aspects. These self-presentations have allowed me to quickly access key data on the main specifics, subjects and thematizations of each exhibition[2].

My case selection focused on four different keywords in the website's search engine: *Home*, *House*, *Dwell* and *Domestic*. The query for *Home* produced around[3] 1,780 result, that for *House* around 1,250, *Dwell* had about 90 and *Domestic* around 170. Data gathering based on keywords in exhibitions' titles might be considered as a limitation, since important exhibitions and artworks on home-related themes do not include such keywords in their titles (among others, cfr: Lauzon 2017; Lusini 2014). However, this has been a viable and relatively systematic way to inquire how the concepts expressed by those keywords were transposed artistically. The same could be said about the fact that

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[1] Importantly, no pre-existing database was available, unless through the option of a 'general' online search.

[2] In a few cases, the website did not provide such presentation. In these cases, I searched for the exhibition's missing information online.

[3] The query was made between April and July 2020. The numbers I just cited are not punctual because of their slight increase throughout that period.

the query was only performed in English language. This clearly sets an arbitrary boundary, which precludes the consideration of much content articulated in different languages. However, any alternative language(s) option would have arguably been as arbitrary. Besides, the status English language currently has as a 'lingua franca' must be considered, as well as the relatively Anglo-centric nature of the data source itself.

Interestingly, a large amount of the results produced by the queries proved to be unrelated with the topics at issue. In some cases, home as a topic of home was only indirectly addressed in the relevant exhibition.

An interesting case in point comes from the exhibitions whose content was not directly linked with home in a material sense, and yet the use of 'home' in the title had a powerful metaphorical sense. Tropes like the search for home, or one's movement towards it, were employed in these cases to convey the key message of one's artistic and personal reflexive research, even if the artistic content of the exhibitions was sometimes unrelated to any meaning of home. Titles such as "Homecoming", "Going Home" "Looking for Home" and the like often articulate ideas of identity search, finding oneself and one's metaphorical 'place in the world', and thus forth. These resonate with notions of home as employed in queer studies: Bryant (2015) discusses the relevance of 'home' in reference to 'queer subjectivity'. He discerns, however, two intertwined yet discernible concerns: home as a 'narrative metaphor' and as more directly anchored in materiality and space. I did not include this sub-group of exhibitions in the HOMInG database. While the choice may have been arbitrary, it has been driven precisely by the substantive exclusion of home from the artistic content of the exhibition, unless in a solely metaphorical way. Finally, I had to exclude a few cases due to the impossibility to find satisfying information about their content, either in MutualArt or by online search more generally.

The more straightforward data I gathered for each exhibition consists of title, date and location of the exhibition. Information enclosed in exhibitions' presentations and press-releases has been coded considering two different criteria: the different artistic forms employed in the exhibitions, and exhibitions' main thematic core.

2. Key criteria for classification

Classification by form of art

The first criterion for classification is relatively straightforward and pertains to the different material features of the exhibitions. Art exhibitions may materialize home and adjacent themes by relying on physical objects and spaces. In taking this into account, I classified this information by using the main macro-categories that define artistic products in its physical forms, as follows: *Photography*; *Sculpture*; *Painting and drawing*; *Video art*; *Installation* and *Performance*. In addition to these, I added a further category, *Architecture/Design-oriented*. This includes displays of design objects and architectural projects, structures and scale models.

Importantly, since many exhibitions featured more than one single form, the categories could not be applied in a mutually exclusive way. In fact, it was often the case that exhibitions featured a plurality of different media. When the employed forms were enlisted, they have also been, of course, considered separately, while in some cases the

exhibition was only presented as including an unspecified plurality of media. The *Other* category includes residual forms consisting of few cases, such as textile art, augmented reality, printmaking and participatory projects. Last, in a very few cases I was unable to trace the forms employed in the exhibitions, hence, not include them in the dataset.

Classification by main topic

The second criterion of classification, regarding the substantive topic, is more complex and nuanced. The categories were mostly elaborated through a circular and recursive process of interpretation (Reed 2011; Timmermans and Tavory 2012), considering emerging data patterns as well as theoretical considerations on home (e.g. Boccagni 2017; Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020; Duyvendak 2011) and its transpositions into art (Lauzon 2017; Perry 2013).

Of course, in many cases there was a plural and nuanced approach to the mentioned themes, making the categorization difficult. One might even expect artistic language precisely to re-interpret, blur and unsettle existing categories. On the other hand, though, some themes clearly and explicitly emerged in the exhibitions' "self-presentations", consisting of press-releases or other promotional materials. These gave the major advantage of communicating, condensed in a few lines, the main themes and features of the exhibitions. Usually, these were purposely highlighted and brought to the fore by curators or artists themselves, operating in this way a first, important, step in reducing complexity. As in any classification, such a reduction of complexity was necessary, in this case to build a large database suitable for quantitative analysis.

Furthermore, as for the art form categories, theme categories are obviously *not* mutually exclusive. Rather, they could better be thought of as the result of a process of qualitative coding (Böhm 2004) of the exhibitions' promotional material, allowing to describe the sometimes wide array of themes the exhibitions covered. The number of categories, of course, had to be limited for the sake of analysis.

I enlist below the thematic categories emerging from my analysis, reporting their relative frequency in the overall dataset and a very concise explanation for each of them:

> *1 - **Home and its diverse meanings (29%)**:* exhibitions that explicitly thematize home, phenomenologically and as a concept. These address questions on the meanings of 'home' themselves, by dealing with its great polysemy, complexity and ambivalence (Boccagni 2017: 2). These are sometimes revisited in light of the different meanings of home across cultural contexts or in plural societies, where people with diverse cultural backgrounds, and holding different prevalent notions of home, live in close proximity. This latter aspect is not necessarily linked to migration. It may also be related, for instance, to minorities such as 'natives' in 'settler colonialist' countries (Zreik 2016; Veracini 2011).

> *2 - **Domesticity and domestic objects (38%)**:* exhibitions addressing issues about domestic experience, practices and social dynamics. Some of these cases regard artists' own domestic environments: past, present, or idealized in the future. Often, domestic objects are employed in these exhibitions in ways "other" than the ordinary ones (cfr. Lauzon 2017; Kokoli 2016).

3 - Everyday-life environments (37%): exhibitions focusing on the built or natural environments as spatial entities in which everyday life takes place. Aside from domestic dwellings, examples are neighbourhoods, cities, natural environments and their interplays (cfr. Blunt and Sheringham 2019). Sometimes, artists reflect on their own attachment to the environments in question. The category, however, also includes broader reflections and problematizations of the spatial environments in which people live, how they affect and are affected by them, and socio-spatial dynamics such as gentrification and other urban transformations.

4 - Mobilities, migration and place-making (14%): exhibitions engaging with home as connected to the making and unmaking of 'place' (cfr. Giyerin 2000; Easthope 2004), often stemming from reflections on human mobility. These include broader thematizations of migration-related issues, ranging from forced migration, refugee camps and migrant domestic workers to artists' biographical experiences as migrants in search for home.

5 - Political critique and the unhomely (22%): this category gathers exhibitions addressing three main, closely connected, aspects of home: first, its connection with political issues and processes and artists' critical stances on them; second, a focus on unhomely and oppressive domesticity, including violence and abuses, oppressive and problematic family structures, gendered domestic work, feelings of home-uncanniness; third, issues of gender and sexuality, such as sexual orientation, gendered and sexualized bodies, masculinity/femininity and so on. The three issues are closely tied, as much of the critical politicization of home was originated, and still is well-grounded, in feminist thought and practices (Young 2005; hooks 1990).

6 - Memory, identity and belonging (14%): exhibitions concerning these three "meta-concepts", deeply entangled with home and home-making (Ratnam 2018). This category includes, for instance, inquiries on how the domestic contexts in which artists grew up have influenced the construction of their personal and social identities. It also involves, e.g., thematizations of nostalgia of a variously defined home, territorial belonging to some "homeland", and collective memories.

7 – Homelessness (3%): exhibitions with a focus on the condition of homeless people, their personal life-histories and bodies, everyday-lives and practices, trajectories of social mobility. This is done through various art forms, from paintings and photographs of homeless people to performances and participatory projects.

8 - Architecture/Design-oriented (21%): exhibitions having architecture or design as their main perspective, or as a main focus. These do not necessarily overlap with those having as their main form the exposition of design or architectural objects and projects.

9 - Historical perspectives (4%): exhibitions adopting a historical perspective in approaching home-related themes, whether this involves the

history of domesticity (e.g. an exhibition on the history of Australian housing standards), art itself (e.g. an exhibition on historical drawings of domestic architecture), or critical events of the past (such as the Great Depression, or the India-Pakistan partition).

3. Descriptive statistics and selected results

In this section I present a few statistical descriptions of the data, in order to sketch a mapping of the exhibitions in the dataset along the lines of time, space, art forms and themes of the exhibitions. When useful, these will be arranged separately for *Home, House, Dwell* and *Domestic*, allowing to delineate and compare characteristics specific to each of the keywords composing the dataset.

As regards the exhibitions' **locations**, artistic transpositions of home are diffused on a remarkably wide, global scale (see Figure 1). The recorded *Home* exhibitions were held in 40 different countries, the *House* ones in 36, and the *Domestic* ones in 24, all spreading in 5 continents. *Dwell* exhibitions, probably due to the smaller number, were spread in 10 countries and 4 continents.

At the same time, however, the distribution is heavily unbalanced. This is perhaps unsurprising given areas and population sizes (mostly of the USA), and, perhaps most importantly, given the linguistic boundaries guiding the data gathering. Despite the often international-oriented scale of museums and art galleries, anglophone countries are highly over-represented in the dataset. Table 1.1 in the Appendix shows how exhibitions held in the USA range from 47% to 51% across keywords, those in UK from 13% to 16%. The sum of exhibitions from USA, Canada, UK, and Australia amounts to 73% for *Domestic*, 72% for *Home* and *Dwell*, 69% for *House*. Non-anglophone European countries contribute overall with 20% for *Domestic*, 19% for *Home,* 24% for *House* and
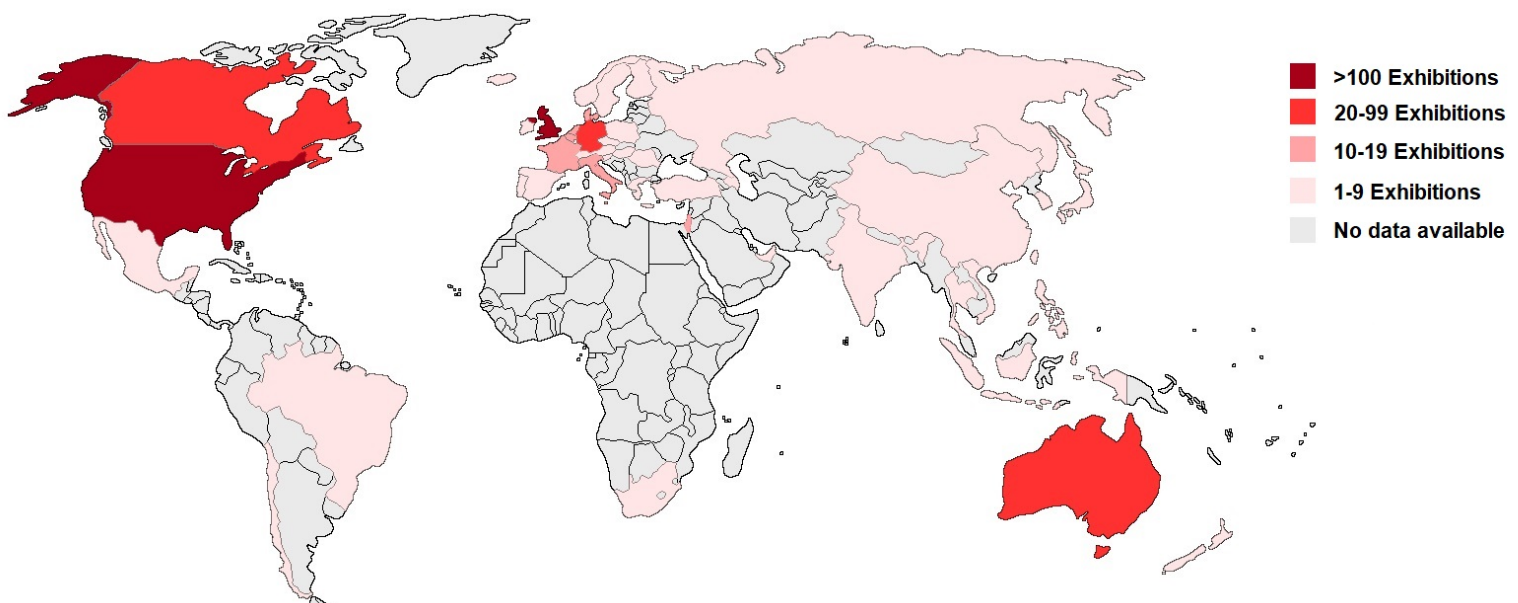

Figure 1: Frequency distribution of art exhibitions registered in the dataset, per country, considering all keywords. As explained below, the data refer to the period 2007-2020

12% for *Dwell.* No significant difference emerges between these different keywords in exhibitions' spatial distribution.

For what concerns the **time** in which exhibitions took place, the first available data are traced back to 2007. As the website MutualArt.com was launched in 2008, exhibitions registered in it only date back to just a few months before that. For all keywords, there is a rather linear trend of growth (see Figure 2), which might indicate an increased interest in the relevant topics. However, it is also likely that the trend coincides with the overall expansion of the website, hence of the amount of data registered in it.
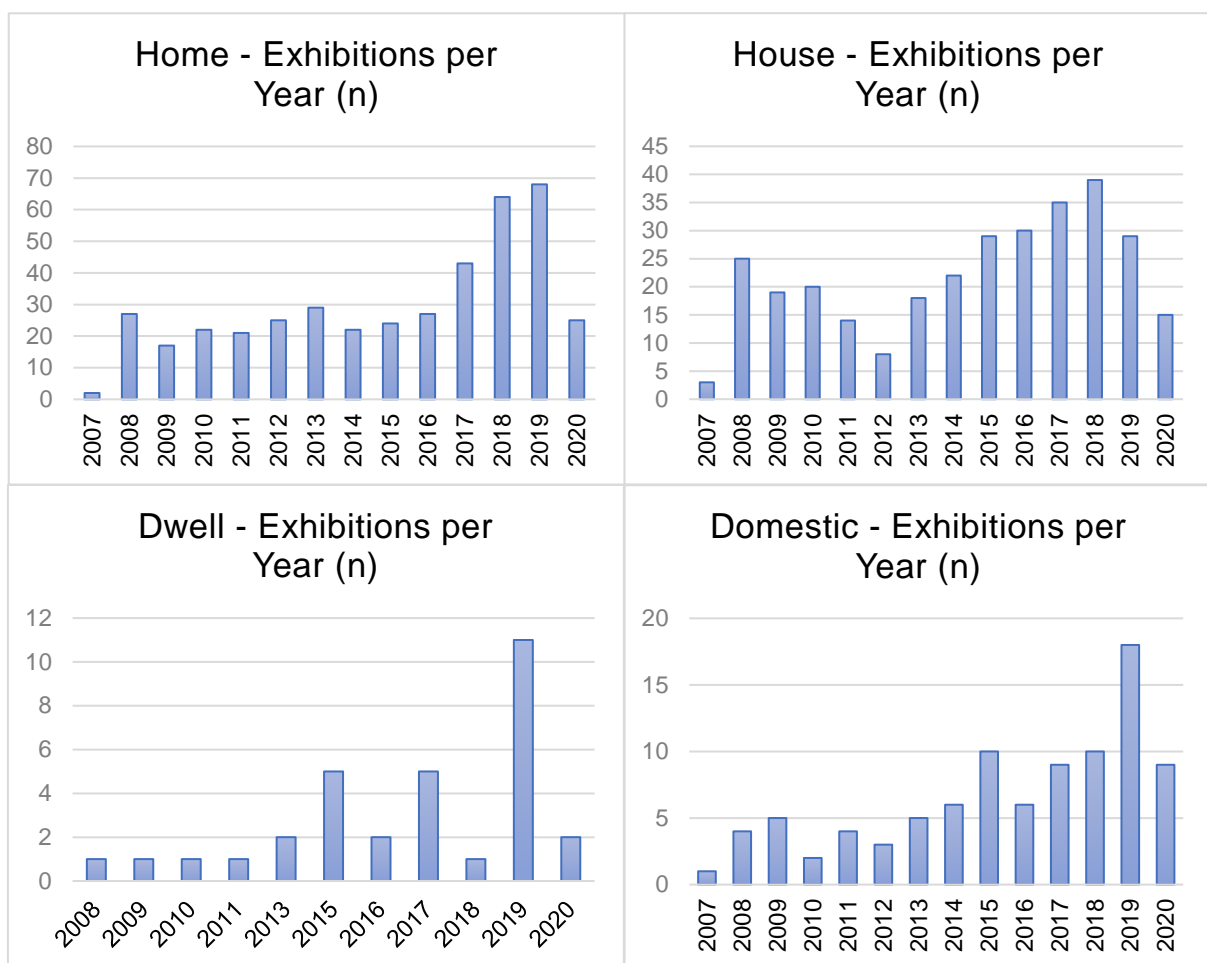
Figure 2: Frequency distribution of exhibitions per year, per keyword

I now turn to describing the content of exhibitions in terms of art forms and substantial themes, again divided by keyword.

On average (see Table 1.2 in the Appendix), the home-related concepts at issue are most frequently transposed in **form** of painting and drawing (34%), followed by photography (27%) and installation (26%). The least frequent are video art (8%) and performance art (3%). While painting was the most frequent form for all other keywords, in the case of *House* this was the case for installation. This resonates with Gil Perry's

(2013: 14) consideration on the installation form as particularly effective in artistically researching the material and embodied features of home: "*In its three-dimensional forms, installation art has a special potential to stimulate ideas and memories through the embodied experience of material objects*". *House*, as a matter of fact, is the keyword whose meanings are most closely linked to the material features of home (Kusenbach and Paulsen 2019). *House* is also the keyword most often associated with Architecture/Design-oriented exhibition forms, its share (19%) being almost double of other keywords. Perhaps in converse to this, paintings are the least frequent in *House* exhibitions (26%), being instead the most frequent in *Home* ones (39%).

In terms of substantial **themes** (Table 1.3 in the Appendix), following the above classification, the most frequent in the overall dataset are *Domesticity and domestic objects* (38%) and *Everyday-life environments* (37%). The two are very frequent across all keywords. Their average relative distribution is raised by two peaks: *Domesticity and domestic objects* was present in 70% of *Domestic* exhibitions, while *Everyday-life environments* was present in 78% of *Dwell* exhibitions[4].

A similar consideration can be made for *Home and its diverse meanings* and *Architecture/Design-oriented*. The former theme, which faces the complex issue of what home means, is over-represented among *Home* exhibitions (45%), the overall frequency being 29%. The latter one, present in 21% of all exhibitions, can be found in 34% of *House* ones. As sketched with respect to forms, this is again hardly surprising. *House* exhibitions also include *Memory, identity and belonging* themes less frequently (5%), themes which, arguably, are connected to the materiality of housing in a less direct way.

The concept of home is also particularly involved in dynamics of *Mobilities, migration and place*-making. This is testified by a bourgeoning scholarly debate in the social sciences, to which HOMInG contributes (cfr., among others: Boccagni 2017; Miranda-Nieto, Massa and Bonfanti 2020). The concept of *Home* is the one that artistic practices connect the closer to these issues (23%), almost 10% more than the second more connected, *Domestic* (14%). It is remarkable in itself that almost one exhibition on *Home* out of four explicitly thematized phenomena of migration and mobility, or at least processes of making and unmaking of place, often explored in relation to the former by artistic research (Sheringham et al. 2020). In fact, not unlike academic scholars, the findings of this Working Paper show how artists have explored the home-migration nexus, as a particularly fruitful field and approach for inquiring the processuality of home in all its complexities. Claudette Lauzon (2017) highlighted how the thematization of home in contemporary art often revolves in a crucial way around its negative: the unmaking and unsettling of home, in a variety of meanings and scales, allows to unveil dynamics and processes usually flowing below an untroubled surface. Home, as a condition and a process, is in this way deeply connected with conditions of mobility and displacement, global flows, diasporic and migrant subjectivities.

Further observations can be made about the category of *Political critique and the unhomely*, which in some cases intersects with the category concerning matters of

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[4] The peaks are relative, however, to keywords counting much smaller numbers of cases than the *Home* and *House* ones, hence the overall relative distribution does not depend heavily on those peaks.

migration and displacement[5]. As the label suggests, this is the category which is most directly concerned with socio-political problems and processes. The category of the unhomely itself is often directly associated, in artistic practices, with societal and political issues (Lauzon 2017; Perry 2013). In the dataset I collected, half of all exhibitions featuring *Domestic* in their titles deal with these topics (49%), the second closer being *Home*, with "only" 22% of its exhibitions. This convergence suggests some considerations about the concept of domesticity. *Domestic*, among the keywords I considered, is arguably the most directly associated, in its prevalent meaning, to the socio-interactional dimension of home. In defining processes taking place within a house/home, it inherently delineates social boundaries between (interactional, social, political, or else) processes pertaining to an 'inside' as opposed to an 'outside'. Besides being used, e.g., for defining specific 'unhomely' phenomena like "domestic abuse" and "domestic violence", addressed by some exhibitions, it is also an important category in the language of domopolitics (Walters 2004; Duyvendak 2011). For example, categories like "domestic affairs" or "domestic policy" discursively demarcate the boundaries of nation-state polities. Last, many of the critical accounts in exhibitions come from critical feminist and LGBTQ perspectives. These are often committed to revealing how material and social structures of domesticity are crucial sites of patriarchal oppression (Bowlby et al. 1997; Young 2005; Madigan et al. 1990) as well as of possible resistance (hooks 1990; Jeffries 2016). This political claim is often embraced through artistic practices as well (Kokoli 2004; Jefferies 2016; Robles 2017).

Table 1 shows the relative weight of different topics across time periods, considering all keywords. Two thematic clusters most solidly gained in relevance in the last 13 years: *Meanings of Home* and *Mobilities, Migration and place-making*.
Figure 3 illustrates how the former consistently and linearly raised its presence in artistic exhibitions throughout the period, while the latter saw a sharp increase of interest, in particular after 2016. It seems reasonable, on speculative grounds, to connect this peak of exhibitions on (home and) migration to the global impact of the so-called refugee and migrant 'crisis' of 2015-2016. As a major current socio-political phenomenon, this was extensively communicated through mass media (Georgiou and Zaborowski 2017) and it often assumed crucial positions in political discourses (Colombo 2017).

An interestingly countertrend case is that of year 2020: the topic of *Domesticity*, relatively stable in previous years, has gained a central position in 2020, apparently hegemonizing most of the artistic production concerned about home. Its frequency almost doubled that of 2017-2019 (from 34% to 60%) as well as that of the second most-frequent topic in 2020 (*Everyday life environments*, 34%), while in previous years it was much closer to other issues' frequencies. Almost all other topics, conversely, either lost relevance or kept stable. It is hard, in this regard, not to consider the impact that the Covid-19

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[5] The two, of course, largely differ too. Several accounts of place-making and migratory experiences are mostly concerned with the ways such phenomena are personally experienced, and don't bring explicit politicizations to the fore. Although the political/personal binary surely is problematic, different exhibitions stressed either the more intimate dimensions or the socio-political implications of migration and mobility in rather clear ways. As not every exhibition on migration was politicized, nor exhibitions foregrounding political critiques, of course, were exhausted by the issues of migration and displacement. These, more generally, aimed at unsettling notions of home by highlighting their inherent blind spots, contradictions and problematics.

pandemic and the consequent lockdown policies had on the domestic sphere (Risi et al. 2020). The raised concern of artists about domesticity might be related to such a societal shock.

Theme	2007-2011	2012-2016	2017-2019	2020
Home and its diverse meanings	**22%**	**25%**	**39%**	26%
Domesticity and domestic objects	36%	43%	34%	**60%**
Everyday life environments	32%	41%	38%	34%
Mobilities, migration and place-making	**12%**	**7%**	**22%**	8%
Political critique and the unhomely	20%	22%	24%	22%
Memory, identity and belonging	11%	14%	17%	18%
Homelessness	4%	3%	5%	4%
Architecture/Design-oriented	22%	29%	15%	12%
Historical perspectives	4%	5%	3%	12%

Table 1: Frequency distribution of themes, by time frame
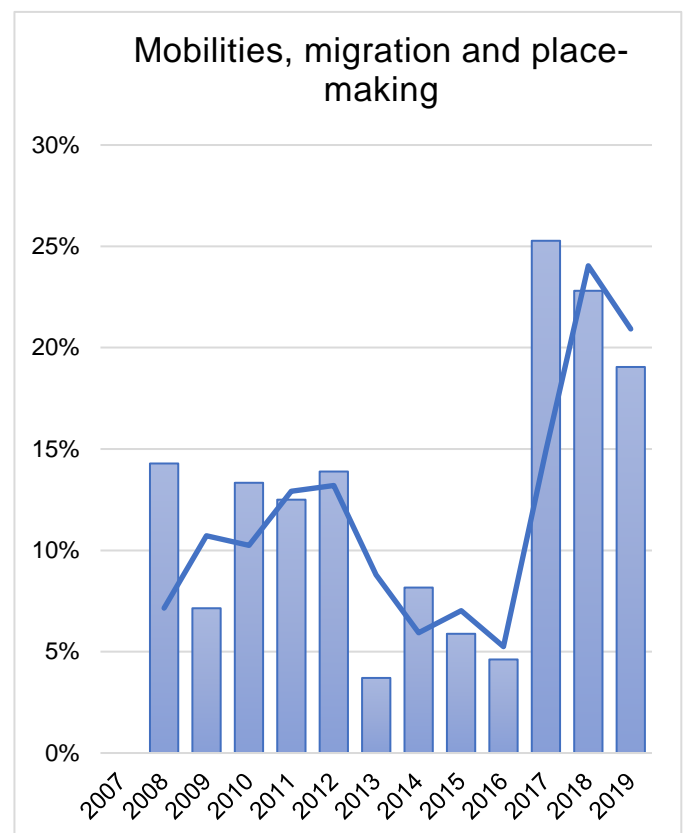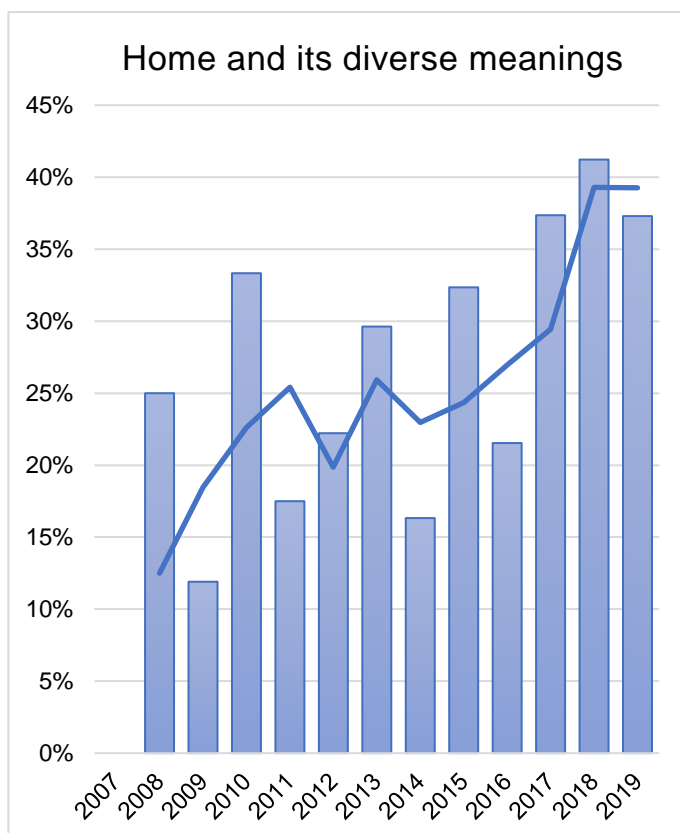

Figure 3: Relative frequency distribution of 'Home and its diverse meanings' and 'Mobilities, migration and place-making', considering all keywords, by year

Concerns connected to home seem to also differ across geographical contexts. Exhibitions in Oceania (i.e. mostly Australia), have thematized *Mobilities, Migration and place-making* as well as *Political critique and the unhomely* less often (4% and 13%, respectively) than those in Europe and UK (14% and 23%) and North America (14% and 22%), the difference being for each theme of about 10%. At the same time, exhibitions in Oceania dealt with *Home and its diverse meanings* more frequently (45% of cases, vis-à-vis 25% in Europe and 30% in North America). Despite the data sub-sets referred to different continents being quantitatively unbalanced, the mentioned trends are very clear across all keywords. Future research might work more in depth to further inquire about these territorially-based differences.

Themes	Europe and UK (%)	North America (%)	Oceania (%)	Total (%)
Mixed themes	58%	56%	49%	56%
Home and its diverse meanings	25%	30%	45%	30%
Domesticity and domestic objects	41%	38%	32%	39%
Everyday life environments	43%	35%	40%	38%
Mobilities, migration and place-making	14%	14%	4%	14%
Political critique and the unhomely	23%	22%	13%	22%
Memory, identity and belonging	10%	16%	13%	14%
Homelessness	3%	5%	0%	4%
Arch/Design-oriented	22%	21%	19%	21%
Historical perspectives	6%	4%	2%	4%

Table 2: *Frequency distribution of themes, by continent (only including the largest three in the dataset)*

One last aspect I address is that of the ways in which different themes were materialized by different artistic forms. These were, in fact, not uniform: some themes are more often mediated through specific art forms than others (see Table 1.4 in the Appendix). For example, video art was most employed in exhibitions dealing with *Mobilities, migration and place-making* and *Political critique and the unhomely*. The same can be said about for photography exhibitions, which also addressed *Homelessness* as the third most frequent category. This aspect might possibly connect to the particular aptness of video art (often consisting of footage) and photography to document and display concrete socio-political phenomena with (relative) immediacy.

It is interesting to note that art forms are more frequently integrated when dealing with some themes (see the "Mixed forms" column in Table 1.4 in the Appendix) than others. This might suggest a common attempt by artists and curators to grasp particularly complex themes by refracting them through a plurality of media, thus providing more layered aesthetic experiences (Lindstrand and Insulander 2012). The thematic categories concerning migration and mobility, the meanings of home, and political

critique are the most significative in this regard. Similarly, *Home and its diverse meanings* and *Mobilities, migration and place-making* are also the themes that were more often materialized through relatively 'unconventional' art forms (falling under the "Other" category). This aspect, too, might trace back to the tendency of attempting to grasp some specific concepts from a wider variety of angles.

4. Co-occurrence networks

After having mapped home and related concepts by looking at the distribution of artistic forms and exhibition themes, in this section I further explore these categories. I do so by analysing the prevalent meaningful connections between home-related themes which artists and curators drew in producing art exhibitions. To graphically represent these, I rely on co-occurrence networks, based on themes co-occurrence tables. This will provide a more literal charting of home and neighbouring notions as meaning structures emerging from the dataset, in a way similar to a semantic network.

For each keyword, two co-occurrence tables were built. Such tables show how often, in data sub-sets, art forms and themes co-occur, meaning they are employed or addressed in the same exhibition. The graphs, based on co-occurrence tables, are organized as follows: each node represents a theme, its dimension corresponding to their frequency in the data sub-set. For the sake of legibility, only ties over a certain strength (the number of co-occurrences between the two nodes they link) are represented. Over these thresholds, indicated in each graph's caption[6], each tie's thickness is proportional to its strength.
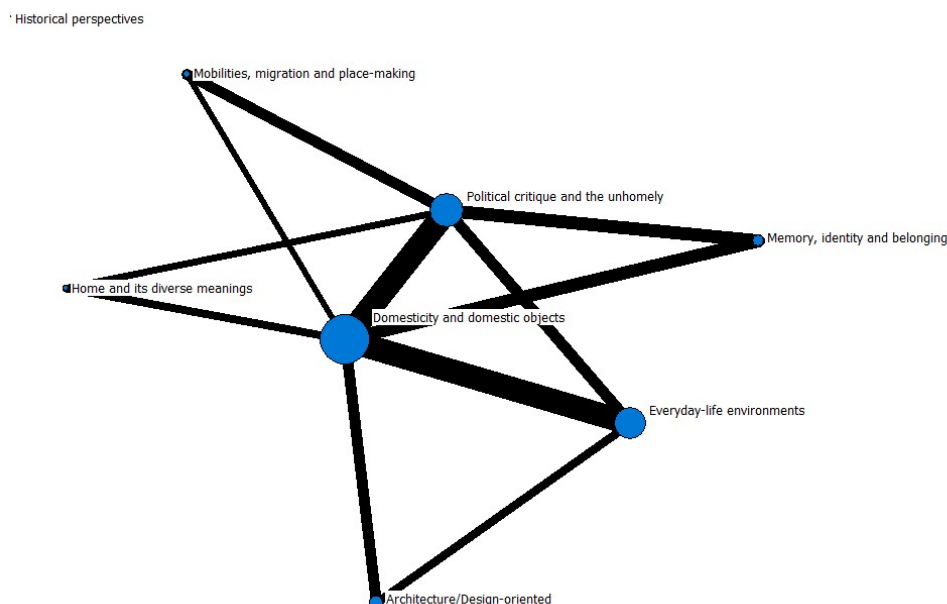

Figure 4: *Network of themes in 'Domestic' exhibitions. Tie strength over 5.*

The themes addressed by *Domestic* exhibitions (Figure 4), as already seen, very often consist of *Domesticity, Political critique* and *Everyday-life environments*. The former is often thematized together with the latter two. To a lesser extent, being however significant given the relatively small size of the node, *Memory, identity and belonging* is also well connected to *Domesticity,* as well as with *Political critique.* Themes of *Mobilities, migration and place-making,* which are touched by 14% of exhibitions, are mostly related to *Political critique* and less strongly to *Domesticity i*tself*.* These same two connect with *Home and its diverse meanings,* a set of themes addressed by only 10% of *Domestic* exhibitions.

The themes addressed by *Dwell* exhibitions (Figure 5) mostly regard *Everyday-life environments,* as seen, suggesting a major focus on dwelling spatial environments rather than domestic practices, and a notion of dwelling often extended beyond the sphere of domesticity. This theme was then most often linked with the less frequent themes of *Domesticity* and *Memory, identity and belonging.* Explicit inquiries on meanings of home, feeling at home and related concepts are not very frequent, and are connected to all three aforementioned categories, the four forming a dense mini-cluster. Themes regarding *Mobilities, migration and place-making* were rarely addressed and are isolated from all other themes.

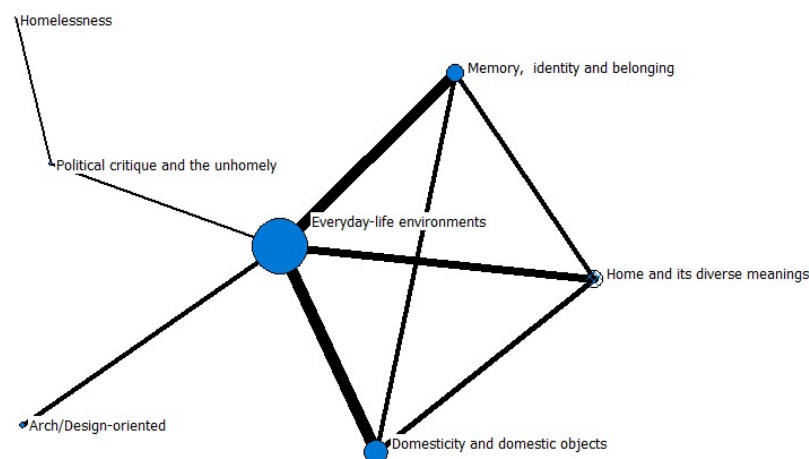*Figure 5: Network of themes in 'Dwell' exhibitions. Tie strength over 1.*

Coming to *House*-related themes (Figure 6), there is a particularly strong link, although unsurprising, between *Domesticity* and *Everyday-life environments.* The latter is also quite strongly connected to *Political critique* and to themes of architecture and design. As already noted, the latter are much more frequent here than in the other sub-sets.

Historical perspectives are only linked to *Everyday-life environments,* while themes of *Homelessness, Mobility, migration and place-making* and *Memory, identity and belonging* are isolated and very infrequent. As we have seen, this might trace back again to the semantic difference between *Home* and *House*, with the former including a whole range of different meanings extending way beyond the materiality of the house (Kusenbach and Paulsen 2019).
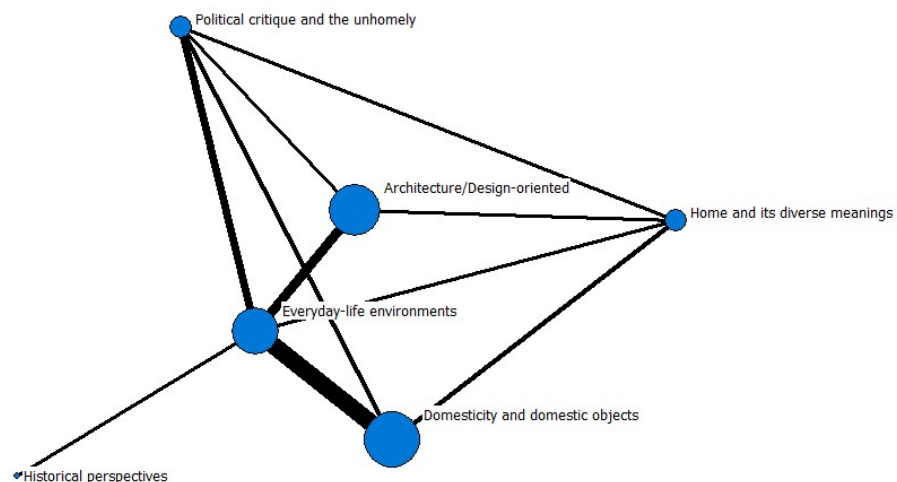
Figure 6: *Network of themes in 'House' exhibitions. Tie strength over 5.*

Exhibitions including *Home* in their title provided rather different thematizations from other sub-sets (Figure 7). One of the reasons is that, as noted, of the greater number of exhibitions explicitly dealing with the issue of the meanings of home (and closely related concepts) in their manifoldness and diversity. The node representing this thematic category is very central and holds the strongest ties with most other nodes. The only tie stronger than those to *Home and its diverse meanings* is the one, very consistent in every sub-set, between *Domesticity* and *Everyday-life environments.* These latter nodes are also highly central, although the strength of their ties is very unbalanced.

The node representing themes of *Mobilities, migration and place-making*, which are strongly over-represented in this sub-set, is also very central. Its strongest tie is that with the *Home and its diverse meanings* category, followed by those with *Memory, identity and belonging*, *Political critique and the unhomely*, and then *Everyday-life environments* and *Domesticity.* Issues of mobility and migration are therefore most frequently addressed in relation to attempts to discuss the meanings of home. This again reinforces the relevance of home and migration having an especially deep nexus. The problematization of notions of home through a thematization of migration and mobility resonates with the idea of these being a counterpart to common understandings of home,

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intending it as relatively stable, anchored in certain places and 'nested' in concentric territorial scales. Phenomena of mobility, given their inherent friction with such assumptions, seem particularly apt for revealing their constructed nature and highlighting the processuality of home.

As mentioned, matters of home and migration and home are also strictly connected with issues of *Memory, identity and belonging* (Ratnam 2018). Figure 7 shows how this topic is the second most connected with the one of mobility. The data show how migration issues are also remarkably connected to critical thematizations of home. In addition to the many political implications of migration phenomena being well-known, the connection observed in the dataset seems particularly clear when considering, as seen above, that a very large share of exhibitions on mobility and migration was promoted in the years following 2015-2016, peak of the so-called refugee 'cirisis'.
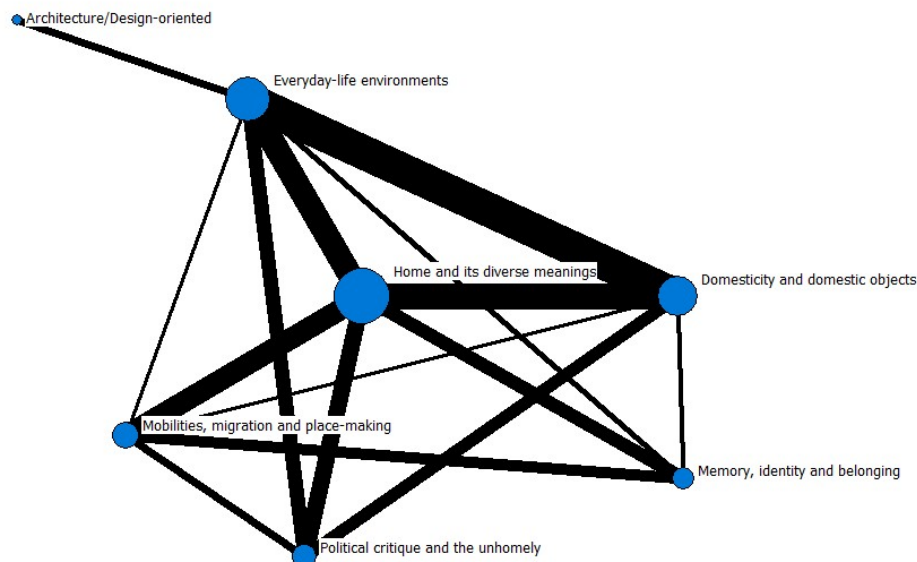
Figure 7: Network of themes in 'Home' exhibitions. Tie strength over 15.

5. Some preliminary conclusions

This Working Paper explored how home and other close concepts are transposed into art. By relying on a large primary dataset on art exhibitions (N=846), it provided a broad mapping of the main ways in which artists from varied national backgrounds approached and represented the notions of *Home*, *House*, *Dwell* and *Domestic*. This exploratory analysis proceeded along the lines of space, time, artistic forms and thematic content of the exhibitions. Interactions between these data were also taken into account.

As a first finding, it can be noted how exhibitions on home are widespread across most of the globe, despite the research being conducted in English only.

The most common themes regarded domesticity and dwelling environments (38% and 37% in the overall dataset). Almost one exhibition out of three (29%) explicitly raised

questions surrounding the powerful notion of home and its elusive meaning. This share gets to 45% when considering exhibitions including *Home* as a keyword in their titles.

Artists and exhibitions curators, in parallel to scholars in the social sciences, have been remarkably sensitive to questions of home and migration. Almost one exhibition out of four (23%) in the *Home* subset included thematizations of mobilities, migration and place-making.

Interest in the topic, moreover, seems to have raised over time. This is especially the case for exhibitions dealing with the plural and diverse meanings of 'home', and of those, again, thematizing home in connection to migration. While the former has linearly increased its relative weight throughout the years, the latter has seen a peak after the 2015-2016 refugee 'crisis'.

Exhibitions dealing with domesticity as main topic increased very sharply in 2020 (almost doubling those held in 2017-2019), possibly in connection with the worldwide lockdown policies in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, differences across geographical contexts mostly concern some of the thematic contents that were evoked in the exhibitions, like migration, the meanings of home and political issues.

Art forms were not equally employed in addressing different topics. For example, video art is most frequently used in exhibitions on political issues and mobilties. The same goes for photography, which is very frequently employed in exhibitions on homelessness. Moreover, exhibitions dealing with the diverse meanings of home and with mobility and migration are more likely to employ a greater plurality of forms. These same themes are also materialized in relatively 'uncommon' forms more often.

Networks based on co-occurrence tables, by showing the ways in which thematic foci were put in connection, illustrated the prevalent meaning configurations associated through artistic and curatorial practices with each keyword.

To conclude, artistic practices and productions are promising materials that might reveal more about the ways in which home is experienced, interpreted, and communicated. This Working Paper offered a novel exploration of artistic practices and productions on home, mostly in quantitative terms. Future research could use similar materials to shed more light on these issues, possibly combining large-scale analyses with more in-depth interpretation. Importantly, following Mary Douglas' (1991) argument about home and art, knowledge and analogies, artistic materials might be integrated on a deeper level in inquiries of the meanings and experiences of home. In this direction, a closer dialogue with artistic research itself, and the different forms of knowledge it produces, could be a fruitful resource (O'Neill 2008; Sheringham et al. 2020; Váňa 2020).

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Appendix

Country	Home (n)	Home (%)	House (n)	House (%)	Dwell (n)	Dwell (%)	Domestic (n)	Domestic (%)	Total % (n)
Americas	**217**	**52%**	**164**	**54%**	**17**	**53%**	**51**	**55%**	**53% (449)**
Brazil	1	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Canada	11	3%	8	3%	2	6%	3	3%	3% (24)
Chile	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	0%	0% (1)
Mexico	1	0%	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (2)
USA	204	49%	155	51%	15	47%	47	52%	50% (421)
Europe	**133**	**32%**	**112**	**37%**	**9**	**28%**	**29**	**32%**	**33% (283)**
Austria	3	1%	2	1%	.	.	.	.	1% (5)
Belgium	4	1%	7	2%	2	6%	1	1%	2% (14)
Switzerland	1	0%	2	1%	.	.	1	1%	0% (4)
Czech Republic	2	0%	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (3)
Germany	11	3%	21	7%	2	6%	3	3%	4% (37)
Denmark	11	3%	5	2%	.	.	1	1%	2% (17)
Finland	2	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (2)
France	10	2%	7	2%	.	.	.	.	2% (17)
Greece	1	0%	3	1%	.	.	1	1%	1% (5)
Hungary	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1%	0% (1)
Iceland	.	.	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Ireland	1	0%	2	1%	.	.	1	1%	0% (4)
Italy	7	2%	5	2%	.	.	4	4%	2% (16)
Kosovo	1	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Lichtenstein	1	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Lithuania	1	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Luxembourg	1	0%	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (2)
Netherlands	9	2%	6	2%	.	.	2	2%	2% (17)
Norway	.	.	2	1%	.	.	.	.	0% (2)
Poland	1	0%	3	1%	.	.	.	.	0% (4)
Portugal	4	1%	1	0%	.	.	.	.	1% (5)
Romania	1	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Slovenia	.	.	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Spain	4	1%	1	0%	.	.	2	2%	1% (7)
Sweden	2	0%	1	0%	.	.	2	2%	1% (5)
United Kingdom	55	13%	40	13%	5	16%	10	11%	13% (110)
Asia	**31**	**7%**	**21**	**7%**	**4**	**13%**	**7**	**8%**	**7% (63)**
United Arab Emirates	2	0%	1	0%	.	.	1	1%	0% (4)
Azerbaijan	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1%	0% (1)
China	3	1%	3	1%	1	3%	.	.	1% (7)

Hong Kong	4	1%	1	0%	2	6%	.	.	1% (7)
India	2	0%	4	1%	.	.	.	.	1% (6)
Israel	8	2%	2	1%	.	.	1	1%	1% (11)
Japan	4	1%	3	1%	.	.	1	1%	1% (8)
Philippines	1	0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Russia	2	0%	2	1%	.	.	.	.	0% (4)
Singapore	2	0%	1	0%	1	3%	1	1%	1% (5)
South Korea	1	0%	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (2)
Thailand	.	.	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (1)
Turkey	1	0%	1	0%	.	.	1	1%	0% (3)
Taiwan	1	0%	1	0%	.	.	.	.	0% (2)
Vietnam	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1%	0% (1)
Oceania	**31**	**7%**	**7**	**2%**	**2**	**6%**	**5**	**5%**	**5% (45)**
Australia	31	7%	7	2%	1	3%	1	1%	5% (40)
New Zealand	.	.	.	.	1	3%	.	.	0% (1)
Indonesia	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1%	0% (1)
Africa	**4**	**1%**	**2**	**1%**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**1% (6)**
South Africa	4	1%	2	1%	.	.	.	.	1% (6)
Total	**416**	**100%**	**306**	**100%**	**32**	**100%**	**92**	**100%**	**846 (100%)**

Table 1.1: Frequency distribution of exhibitions' location, by keyword

Art form	Home (n)	Home (%)	House (n)	House (%)	Dwell (n)	Dwell (%)	Domestic (n)	Domestic (%)	Total % (n)
Architecture/Design-oriented	41	10%	59	19%	.	.	8	9%	12% (108)
Installation	108	26%	90	29%	8	25%	14	15%	26% (220)
Painting and drawing	165	39%	82	26%	12	37%	30	33%	34% (289)
Performance art	15	4%	.	.	.	.	8	9%	3% (23)
Photography	130	31%	64	20%	10	31%	29	31%	27% (233)
Sculpture	45	11%	46	15%	5	15%	23	25%	14% (119)
Video art	43	10%	15	5%	.	.	9	10%	8% (67)
Other	51	12%	16	5%	2	6%	9	10%	9% (78)

Table 1.2: Frequency distribution of art forms, by keyword

Theme	Home (n)	Home (%)	House (n)	House (%)	Dwell (n)	Dwell (%)	Domestic (n)	Domestic (%)	Total % (n)
Home and its diverse meanings	188	45%	44	14%	9	28%	9	10%	29% (250)
Everyday-life environments	151	36%	98	32%	25	78%	42	46%	37% (316)
Domesticity and domestic objects	136	33%	115	38%	11	34%	64	70%	38% (326)
Mobilities, migration and place-making	95	23%	5	2%	4	12%	13	14%	14% (117)
Political critique and the unhomely	93	22%	47	15%	3	9%	45	49%	22% (188)
Memory, identity and belonging	81	20%	15	5%	8	25%	18	20%	14% (122)
Homelessness	24	6%	5	2%	2	6%	.	.	3% (31)
Architecture/Design-oriented	47	11%	107	34%	4	13%	19	21%	21% (177)
Historical perspectives	20	5%	12	4%	.	.	5	5%	4% (37)

Table 1.3: Frequency distribution of exhibition themes, by keyword

Theme	Mixed forms	Other	Architecture/ design-oriented	Performance	Video art	Installation	Sculpture	Photography	Painting
Mixed themes	30%	10%	10%	3%	10%	25%	15%	31%	37%
Home and its diverse meanings	**31%**	**14%**	3%	3%	9%	32%	14%	25%	43%
Everyday-life environments	25%	8%	10%	2%	8%	27%	14%	31%	37%
Domesticity and domestic objects	24%	10%	6%	2%	6%	29%	18%	25%	37%
Mobilities, migration and place-making	35%	13%	2%	8%	**20%**	26%	16%	**39%**	32%
Political critique and the unhomely	**32%**	10%	7%	6%	**15%**	24%	14%	**38%**	32%
Memory, identity and belonging	27%	11%	3%	6%	10%	20%	14%	34%	41%
Homelessness	16%	10%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	35%	29%

Architecture/Design-oriented	30%	5%	55%	1%	4%	21%	16%	20%	22%
Historical perspectives	27%	8%	24%	5%	11%	16%	5%	32%	38%
Total % (n)	27% (209)	10% (78)	14% (109)	3% (23)	9% (67)	28% (220)	15% (119)	30% (233)	37% (289)

Table 1.4: Frequency distribution of exhibition themes, by art form