

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# The New York Times

### To Honor Mike Kelley, a Replica of His Home

By Randy Kennedy



Corine Vermuelen

*The artist Mike Kelley designed a trailer-size re-creation of the facade of his childhood ranch home.*

Sometimes, artists' homes are turned into museums after they die. Perhaps fittingly in the case of Mike Kelley, the anarchic Detroit-born artist who committed suicide in January, a museum of sorts dedicated to his memory will now be built as an almost precise replica of his childhood suburban ranch home — down to the dimensions of the walls and the white siding.

The project, “Mobile Homestead,” had been in the planning stages for several years, and a small piece of the home, a trailer-house-size recreation of part of its facade, made a kind of ancestral journey — on wheels, towed behind a truck — in 2010 from downtown Detroit back to the suburb of Westland where the former Kelley family home still stands. (Three videos that Mr. Kelley made documenting that journey and other parts of the project will be shown as part of the Whitney Biennial beginning May 16.)

After his death, the full project was put on hold and there were doubts that it would ever be realized. But the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, along with the London-based art philanthropy Artangel and the Luma Foundation, a nonprofit based in Switzerland, are set to announce on Monday that construction on the full-size home will begin in June on a vacant lot behind the museum, and the home is expected to open by early 2013.

It will function nothing like a traditional museum or gallery and will show none of Mr. Kelley's work, at his own insistence. The mobile-home part will remain detachable and will sometimes take its leave of the rest and journey through Detroit. The home as a whole will operate as an unconventional community service office, providing things like haircuts, social services, meeting space and a place to hold barbecues and perhaps for the homeless to pick up mail. “We're thinking that our education staff will actually move

out to the homestead and work from there,” said Marsha Miro, the acting director of the contemporary art museum.

She added: “To have something like this in the city will be so important, not just for the city but for Mike.”

Beneath the house will be two underground levels accessed by ladders that will not be open to the public. Mr. Kelley had envisioned those floors as a labyrinthine place where he would make art or music — a subterranean studio-lair as both fact and a metaphor for the kind of dark subconscious material he mined in his work. The floors might now be temporarily given over to other artists or musicians, Ms. Miro said.

“Mike had planned to do various activities down there that were secret — we didn’t know what they were going to be,” she said. “We’re not really sure what will happen on those floors, since he isn’t around to use them.”

James Lingwood, a co-director of Artangel who had worked with Mr. Kelley for more than six years to plan the home, the organization’s first public art project in the United States, said that Mr. Kelley, a meticulous artist, had approved almost all aspects of the home and signed contracts for the construction before he died.

“Fortunately, enough was shared that none of us are feeling that we have to invent very much here,” he said.

He declined to reveal the cost of the project but said that it was modest compared to many major public-art projects the group had commissioned. In discussions after Mr. Kelley’s death with the trustees of his estate and with the museum, a strong feeling developed “that it was the right thing to do to go ahead with this,” Mr. Lingwood added, “as a kind of memorial, or actually more of a living legacy to him.”

“Mike had an uneasy, conflicted relationship to lots of situations — not least his native city of Detroit,” he said. “‘Mobile Homestead’ was conceived to embody this unease in a characteristically complex and robust way.”