

# I Lived There, Once.

James Holden

A writer's response to the exhibition  
*Mike Kelley, Mobile Homestead Videos*  
Site Gallery, 8 June – 20 July 2013

I lived there for eighteen years. And then, one summer morning, I didn't live there anymore.

The removal men came and packed all our things into their lorry. In a matter of minutes they'd lifted and loaded the boxes we'd spent days meticulously labelling.

One of the men, a modern day Atlas, picked up our washing machine, balanced it on his mighty chest and carried it out the back door. I watched, slack-jawed in astonishment. I would scarcely have been more impressed if he'd picked up our whole home and carried it across the fields on his broad shoulders. To this day I can remember how he smiled at his titanic achievement, his every sinew straining with a weight as great as the sky.

It wasn't long before everything we owned was strapped in and ready for departure.

Our home, my childhood home, had become a mobile home, ready to be driven away. It was being taken to a site further out, further away from the town centre, at the other end of the new roads.

I didn't actually get to see our mobile home make its one and only voyage. As such, I can only imagine how its wheels must have bumped down off the curb as it pulled away. It was surely a precarious moment, and one that must have threatened to stop the journey before it had even begun.

Once it was safely on its way it would have passed blank industrial units, purpose-built retail outlets and roundabouts leading to places that weren't there yet. Its only observers would have been the non-comprehending sheep in the fields. Then, in the distance, the red bricks of houses would have become visible. At this point, our home would have pulled off The Dual Carriageway.

The driver took things at a carefully artistic pace: the short journey lasted about fifteen minutes whereas, an hour earlier, it had taken me just five.

There wasn't any great fanfare when the lorry arrived at its destination. We hadn't organised a party. No bands had been booked. There was just me. As the vehicle swung around the corner into the close I raised my right hand in acknowledgement, a gesture returned with a nod.

The time had come to rebuild our home on this new site, in this new building.

This was all years ago now, you understand.

I don't live there anymore. However, I did live there, once.

---

James Holden is a writer, critic, reviewer and academic based in Hemingfield, Barnsley.

[www.culturalwriter.co.uk](http://www.culturalwriter.co.uk)

© James Holden 2013