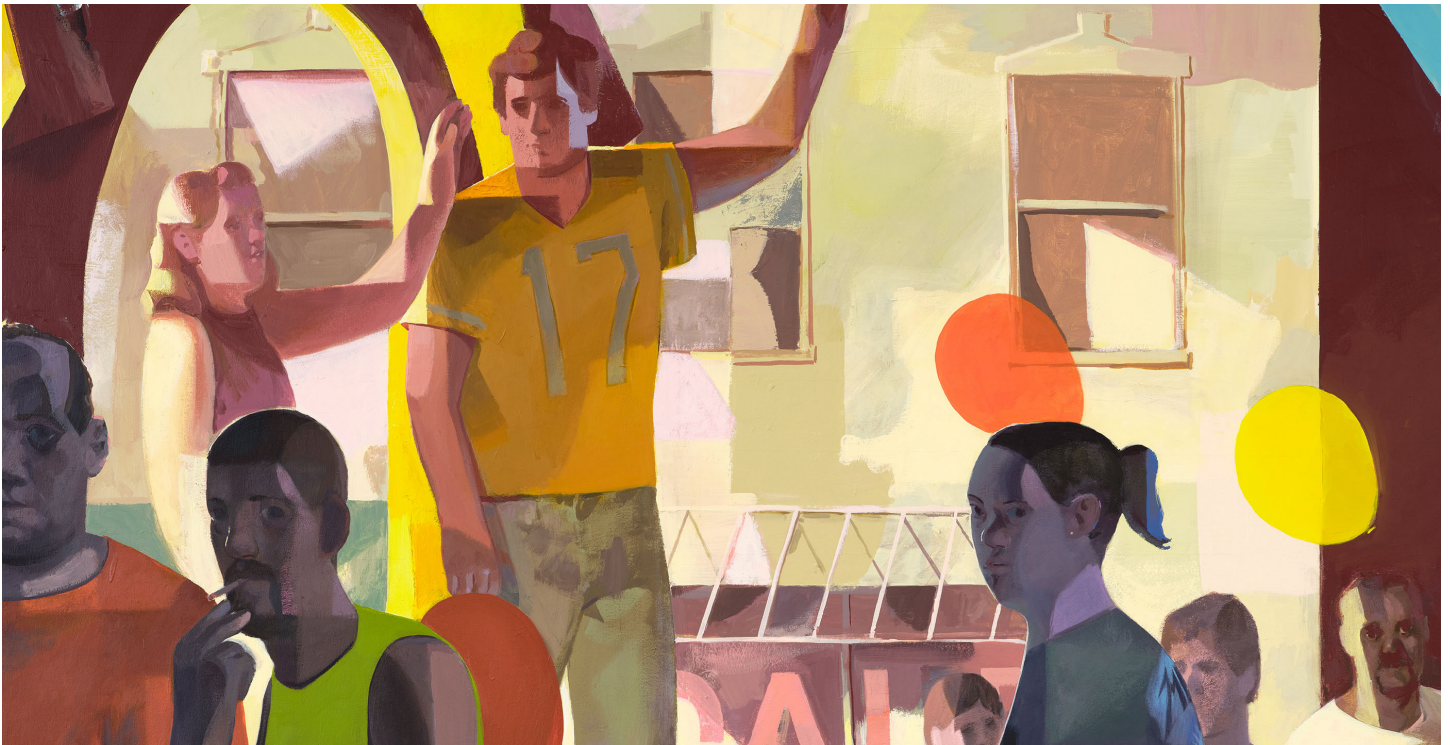


Matt Bollinger

*Homecoming*

June 28 — July 26, 2025



François Ghebaly is proud to present *Homecoming*, the newest exhibition by Ithaca-based artist Matt Bollinger and his first time showing at the Downtown Los Angeles gallery.

American artist Matt Bollinger creates vivid, layered tableaux that synthesize meticulous painterly technique with a unique, semi-fictional approach to narrative storytelling. In his portrayals of imagined rural Missourian communities (not far from the Ozarks of his upbringing) he combines partially-invented settings and characters with observational study, art historical reference, and personal recollection. Bollinger's empathetic chronicles of the American working class are at once sensitive and shrewd, piercingly attuned to the perils of social and economic alienation.

In his latest exhibition, *Homecoming*, Bollinger draws from the ubiquitous small-town "homecoming" parade to explore ideas of cyclicity, resilience, and (empty) promise across social divides. Bookending the show are two of Bollinger's most ambitious works to date. The title piece *Homecoming* is a monumental painting spanning over ten feet that depicts the ostensibly joyful parade from telling perspectives, while *Dawn* is a stop-motion animation six years in the making that narrates a recent art school graduate's precarious daily existence. Like all of Bollinger's work, *Homecoming* and *Dawn* brim with subtle narrative turns and literary inversions. Skewed glances, chromatic shifts, alternate endings, and cues to time past both instruct and undermine viewers' intuitive readings of his scenes. Alongside Bollinger's other painted subjects—auto workers, pining adolescents, sun-bleached storefronts, and tenacious weeds—the works in the exhibition become potent, evolving meditations on circuits of hope and entrapment in rural American life. Critic and writer Faye Hirsch discusses *Homecoming* and *Dawn* in an accompanying essay on the exhibition:

"In *Homecoming*, a foreground frieze of figures backlit and therefore shadowy—two men, a mother shooing her child, and an old geezer in a folding chair—adopt the outward gaze, toward us, and their random curiosity renders our position very much as that of outsider. Beyond that human, almost sheltering barrier unfolds the

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parade, which feels a rote and strangely joyless ceremonial, except for the bright palette that lights the event: a garishly yellow flatbed float, on which perch the rather stiff, casually dressed king and queen; multi-colored balloons; facades drenched in the sunlight of a cloudless day. No one smiles, but the colors ignite an inner light that sets the mid-ground on fire.

*Dawn*, the animation, is titled for its main character, a young woman whom we eventually understand as a recent art-school graduate. Action takes place over a single day, but Bollinger has created multiple versions of that day, most with very slight variations, and those versions shuffle randomly over the course of potential viewing hours so that it feels like an endless loop. Like the morphing strokes of paint that constitute the visuals, muffled ambient sounds, rare snippets of dialogue, and an oddly mournful guitar riff permeate Dawn's world, moving it dreamily along. Such subtle shifts lend the work a delicate, incremental mobility.

Dawn is broke, unhoused and lives in her car; she is stuck in a low-level job at CVS with a petty tyrant of a boss and surly customers. Most of the day's events are recurrent: she wakes, pulls herself together, and attempts to start her car. In most versions, the car does not start, she locks herself out, and she spends the day worrying over what to do about that. In one scenario, she breaks the window with a brick, in another, she gives up and reluctantly calls her co-worker, unaware of Dawn's unhoused state, of which she is ashamed, to ask if she might crash at her place. In a very few versions, the car starts, but it makes little difference in the thudding repetitiveness of her workday.

To discover all its minute variations, one must watch the looping film for hours, and the shuffled structure carries with it a visceral and rather brilliant replication of Dawn's own working life, the inverse of the kind of creative labor that might free the maker. Her yearning for something different is revealed only in a few heartbreaking moments modestly tucked into the narrative, and easily missed. Catching a second at the checkout, for example, she sketches Louis Bourgeois's *Womanhouse*; moreover, one of Bourgeois's giant spider sculptures—the very symbol, to Bourgeois, of positive, creative industry—constitutes the home page image on Dawn's phone. Less ironic is the fate of the sketch, crumpled up and tossed in the trash, in an uncharacteristic moment of passion, as shocking as when Dawn discovers she has locked herself out of her car. 'Fuck,' she mutters, and we do, too."

Matt Bollinger (b. 1980 Kansas City, MO) was awarded a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute (2003) and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Art and Design (2007). His recent solo exhibitions include François Ghebaly, Los Angeles, New York; mother's tankstation, London and Dublin; Zürcher Gallery, New York and Paris; and M+B, Los Angeles. Bollinger's work has featured in recent museum exhibitions including The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania (2022); South Bend Museum of Art, Indiana (2020); Phillips Museum, Lancaster, Pennsylvania (2018); Nerman Museum, Overland Park, Kansas (2016); and Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Saint-Etienne (2016).