

Thomas Micchelli, *Visions of Home, from Dream Memories to Trump Country*, Hyperallergic, 1 June 2019

## HYPERALLERGIC

# Visions of Home, from Dream Memories to Trump Country

The disparity between what we expect from domesticity and what lurks beneath the surface generates a finely wrought tension that coils throughout this show.

by **Thomas Micchelli**

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Matt Bollinger, a figurative painter from Independence, Missouri, has become one of our most articulate chroniclers of Trump's America. The plainspokenness of his forms and the diluted acid of his palette — the colors of faded postcards — speak to working-class despair as indelibly as the bleakness of his imagery.

"Dawn in Her Ciera" (2019) is a painting of a woman wearing a CVS name tag ("Dawn"), lacing up her work boot in the backseat of a car. For a brief moment the canvas felt out of place — what did it have to do with the idea of home? — but a moment later I realized that the car is her home, even as she holds down a job.

Bollinger's subtlety, his willingness to allow his work to steal up on us, is an invitation to share what would be, for most of his viewers, a foreign experience. In "Gun Cabinet" (2019), he presents several hunting rifles and a pistol stowed away in a wood-framed glass cabinet beside a dresser and mirror. The intimate touches he includes — a black-and-white snapshot of a woman's head tucked into the mirror frame, and a pair of moccasins under the dresser — imbue the scene with the kind of commonality that, without pushing the point, could lead to empathy.

The exhibition also includes *Apartment 6F* (2017), one of Bollinger's labor-intensive, hand-painted animations. It is an elliptical, semi-autobiographical tale that, in a reversal, doesn't concern the heartland but rather a young web designer in the big city, who is left alone when his wife goes away for a few days. Alienated from the people he meets, who are no more happy or fulfilled than those he left behind in the Midwest, he undergoes a near-psychedelic experience and finds peace only when his wife walks back through the door.

Interior Monologues continues at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey (68 Elm Street, Summit, New Jersey) through June 16. The exhibition is curated by Mary Birmingham.



Matt Bollinger, "Dawn in Her Ciera" (2019), Flashe and acrylic on canvas, courtesy of the artist and Zürcher Gallery, New York