

# NEW YORKER

## DECEMBER 2019

### GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN: MATTHEW WONG

by Johanna Fateman

In this Canadian painter's two-part show "Blue"—titled for both its palette and its melancholic undertow—moonlit landscapes and interiors are rendered with hypnotic pointillism, rhythmic stripes, and seamlessly blended areas. The effect is both crisp and somnolent. (One gallery is filled with large canvases; the other space, on the same block, presents small works on paper.) Wong wore his influences on his sleeve: the dramatic vista of "Starry Night," from 2019, nods unabashedly to van Gogh, with its turbulent sky over a bucolic village, though it is more restrained and methodical than its famous precursor. Painted from memory and inspired by walks in Sicily with his mother, Wong's unpeopled nocturnes often feature streamlike paths, serenely winding their way to a vanishing point on the horizon. Wong died in October, at the age of thirty-five, making this transporting body of work from his brief blue period a tragic swan song.