

Byron Kim

January, 2018 | Alex Garner

JAMES COHAN GALLERY | CHELSEA **533 West 26th Street** **January 5–February 17**

For the past seventeen years (and continuing through the duration of this show), Byron Kim has painted a swatch of sky every Sunday, to which he appends a few diaristic sentences in a slanted, loose cursive with the date, location, and time of painting. Hung in a straight line at eye level across the gallery, the paintings create a narrative that weaves the intimate with the profound and, occasionally, the delightfully mundane.



View of "Byron Kim: Sunday Paintings, 1/7/01 to 2/11/18," 2018.

The series "Sunday Paintings," 2001–, takes us through 9/11 ("Too sad for words"), the election of Barack Obama ("Today we have a black president"), and the election of Donald Trump ("Italy survived Berlusconi. I'm wondering whether the U.S. will be as lucky"), punctuated by the artist's musings about Ludwig Wittgenstein, the ups and downs of marriage, financial debt, and the glories and annihilations of his children's soccer games. Kim writes honestly about the uncertainties and insecurities in his life, and the text is both comical ("Sometimes I feel like Bob Ross when I make these paintings") and devastating ("I don't deserve such a generous and kind child"). Of course, Kim is leagues beyond Ross—his paintings are reminiscent of On Kawara. The routine and regularity of the project clearly serve as a comforting, consistent process for the artist—one early panel reads, "All of my work is falling away but these paintings."

Having chosen perhaps the most dependable subject, Kim has created an impressively vulnerable body of work. Against calming blues, he poetically states concerns most of us keep to ourselves. I left the show reminded of the last lines of a favorite poem from Federico García Lorca: "Bumping into my own face, different each day. / Cut down by the sky!"