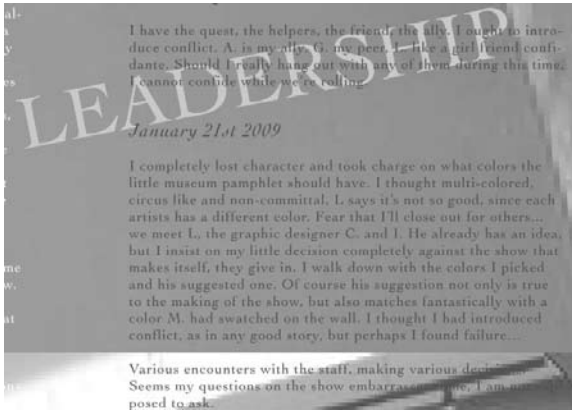


(January 23 – February 8)

2— The Front Room

FIA BACKSTRÖM



Often misbehaving, New York-based Swedish artist Fia Backström believes in the eruptive and disruptive qualities of art. Relentlessly rejecting any category, singular medium, or signature style, she conjures that attractive fantasy called agency. She creates an art of irritating inconsistency: while based in performance, it could also include printed materials, consumer products, written texts, or paintings and photographs borrowed from other artist-friends. Central to her thinking are the constructed social interrelations between humans, images and surfaces. Formats and the logics of display are sifted through their changing connections to propaganda, marketing, and notions of subjectivity.

For her project *The Front Room*, *Studies in Leadership (a family affair)*, Backström uses the basic elements of making an exhibition to engage in exchange with the museum staff. Looking at contemporary styles of leadership—and reaching beyond the traditional dualities of disciplinarian/benign or dictatorial/democratic—she departed from the classic role of the autocratic, visionary artist and chose, instead, to play the role of an ambivalent, insecure artist without a vision and unable to make any decisions. Consequently, the exhibition took shape over the course of five days before the opening, as a result of the interplay between her refusal to lead and a displaced version of a joint effort.

The project started off at a meeting between Backström and Chief Curator Anthony Huberman at Les Enfants Terribles, a bistro in New York. This is also the name of a 1929 novel by Jean Cocteau, in which two siblings play a manipulative game in “The Room,” a space that resembles

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a prison cell or a bungalow, all set in moonlight atmosphere. The erected structure in The Front Room—a home, a shelter, a frame for the game, discourse and dialogue—contains traces of activity, from the absurd negotiations between the artist incapable of making choices, and the staff employed to fulfill her wishes. A personal diary completes this layered exhibition process, or perhaps this “family affair.”

Fia Backström was born in Stockholm, Sweden, she currently lives and works in New York. Her solo exhibitions and performances have been presented at White Columns, New York; Sculpture Center, New York; Swiss Institute, New York; and Index gallery, Stockholm, among others. She has participated in group exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States, including De Appel, Amsterdam; Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland; White Flag Projects, St. Louis; *The Whitney Biennial*, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; United Nations Plaza, Berlin; Serpentine Gallery, London; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and The Kitchen, New York.

Image:
From *Diary for Studies in Leadership*
(*a family affair*), 2009
Poster/publication, 19 x 13 inches
Courtesy of the artist

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