

The Kitchen

presents

Fia Backström

The Last of US — that safe spot in the dot above the I in the word life

March 10–12, 2022

Performed by Fia Backström and Andrea Sisson

Fia Backström stages a two-person performance as the final element of her new work *The Last of US — that safe spot in the dot above the I in the word life*, created for the group exhibition *In Support*.

Backström charts an associative trajectory in this multifaceted work, which has unfolded in stages since the exhibition's opening in November. The foundation of the work is a set of what the artist calls "givens" in The Kitchen's space—existing materials related to historical or recent activities such as temporary structural remedies, wall colors, and artworks previously installed. Blurring the borders between past and present, real and staged, Backström doubled each of these "givens" for the opening of the exhibition through the insertion of materials and representations in The Kitchen's space between staff-only areas and publicly accessible points. In the work's second phase, these "givens" act as springboards from which the artist explores connections to personal stories and broader cultural forces. Across these elements, Backström focuses on language operations in relation to psychotic breaks and authoritarian propaganda—two distinct forces correlated in the ways they impair or undercut a sense of reality on an individual or collective level, respectively.

On the final days of *In Support*, Backström's new performance brings together the accruing associations of *The Last of US — that safe spot in the dot above the I in the word life*. The performance lays out a fragmented narrative while winding a path through The Kitchen's building that bridges the locations of the "givens," artworks including the series *Language Holders* Backström created in response, *Alphabet Set* (2019) on loan from artist Katherine Hubbard, and language written with one of artist Shannon Ebner's photographic typefaces called WET LETTERS (2019–). The performers will pull and transform language from various sources—including personal, clinical, and historical—to explore the visceral and mutable speech acts of psychotic experiences and fascist rhetoric.

Organized by Alison Burstein, Curator, Media and Engagement, with project management by Zack Tinkelman, Production Manager

The components of *The Last of US — that safe spot in the dot above the I in the word life* (2021–2022) are listed below according to the different phases of the piece. Please view the *In Support* exhibition booklet for information about where the elements of the work appear in the building.

Included in performances from March 10–12, 2022:

(Backström made cooperative agreements with artists Shannon Ebner and Katherine Hubbard to write with their photographic typeface and neon-and-glass alphabet, respectively, as part of her performance.)

Shannon Ebner's WET LETTERS are printed on Photo Tex, the dimensions are variable, and the photographic typeface is courtesy of the artist.

Katherine Hubbard, *Alphabet Set*, 2019. Neon lights. 26 pieces, 10 x 5.5 x .24 in. each. Courtesy of the artist and Company Gallery, NY.

Clipboards; file folders; sticky notes; bullhorn; hammer; gag gift; Benjamin Moore paints; paint brush; railroad chalk; theater light; animation (1:29 minutes).

On view since February 10, 2022:

Eight *Language Holders* (pigment prints on clear film, dimensions variable); three animations (black and white; 1:02, 1:29, 1:40 minutes); three sound pieces (2:52, 4:59, 5:57 minutes); theater lights; orange gel.

On view since November 18, 2021:

Tarp with duct tape holding cork; walls painted by Publicolor;

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Laurie Anderson*, 1987

Gelatin silver print, 28 1/2 x 27 3/4 in. (framed), edition 4 of 10.

© Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Courtesy of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, New York, and Gladstone Gallery, NY and Brussels.

Plastic sheeting; gaffer tape; tie line; Benjamin Moore paints; theater and office lights; computer screen;

Roe Ethridge, *Smoke for Ice and Fire (Kitchen Office)*, 2020. JPEG. Courtesy of the artist.

Bios

Fia Backström (b. 1970, Sweden) is an interdisciplinary artist and writer, whose work ranges from projects including institutional frameworks and participants to text-based performances, photography, and installation-based exhibitions. Backström's works have been shown at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2019); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019, 2010); MUSAC, Léon (2014); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010); Serpentine Gallery (2007); and The Kitchen (2007), among others. She represented Sweden at the Venice Biennial in 2011 and participated in the Whitney Biennial in 2008. Her work was the subject of the Artist's Institute fall season 2015. Her books include *COOP a-script*, Primary Information (2016) and *Fia Backström*, Sternberg press (2011).

Andrea Sisson (b. 1987 Cincinnati, Ohio) is an interdisciplinary artist with a social practice living between Los Angeles and New York City. They are a 2010 Fulbright Fellow and hold an MFA from Bard College, Milton Avery School of the Arts. Their medium spans video, image and sound, participatory and community projects, and writing. They also incorporate peer mediation into their practice. Their current project is a video/experimental documentary and essay project focusing on the-stuff-of-memory, and the carcerality of the mental health care system and how it affects the clients and families within it. Sisson has been a visiting artist at Carnegie Mellon School of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Maryland Institute College of Art, and the University of Cincinnati, and their work has been shown at São Paulo Museum of Image and Sound, broadcasted on SFE ART TV at Palais de Tokyo in Paris and on European public television stations, PAM Los Angeles, Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, S1 Portland, Swapmeet at Andrea Zittel's High Desert Test Sites, Poetic Research Bureau Los Angeles, the Contemporary Art Center Cincinnati, and several film festivals including Full Frame Documentary Film Festival and Los Angeles Film Festival. andreasisson.com

Support for *The Last of US — that safe spot in the dot above the I in the word life*

Stage Manager: Joe Wakeman

Installation: Kate Alboreo, Nic Jerabek, Wyatt Moniz, Sky Parnes, Tom Prinsell, Joe Wakeman

Audio: Siena Sherer

Special thanks to Shannon Ebner; kaufmann repetto, Milan/New York; Katherine Hubbard; and Company Gallery.