

LOUISA CLEMENT

Des Tänzers Weg der Seele

Opening: 15 September 2017, 6 – 9 pm

Exhibition: 16 September – 28 October 2017

Text by Nico Anklam

In her first solo show at WENTRUP, Louisa Clement is showing the new series *Gliedermenschen*.

In 27 large-format photographs, we see sections of black manikins before a dark background, their screws and joints in shining gold. Some manikins have their arms folded, others assume anatomically impossible poses, and over time, a tenderness amongst the figures becomes evident, when their fingers touch, or one manikin embraces another.

The manikin as an object of cultural history appears in various shapes; as an aid for drawing and anatomical studies it is well known to art history. But it also became an autonomous work of art, for example in cabinets of curiosities. Especially the history of mechanical manikins at the courts of the 18th century – the *automatons* – are an important point of reference for Clement's photographs, because these machine manikins of automaton art were much more than objects of study – they became animated creatures that seemed to have a soul.

Over recent years, Louisa Clement has been exploring in her photographic series questions about *real* and *simulated* bodies. In her recently realized series of *Avatars*, Clement showed new variants of brightly colored discarded shop window mannequins made of acrylic resin. The frame of reference here ranges from Edgar Atget's shop window photographs from the early 20th century to more recent developments such as the genesis of the digital avatar at the turn of the century. In both cases, at issue was an animation in the literal sense, that is to say, giving the objects behind the windows or screens a soul.

Clement assembles her new series of *Gliedermenschen* at WENTRUP under the title *Des Tänzers Weg der Seele* and thus paraphrases Heinrich von Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater* (1810) [On the Marionette Theater]. This essayistic short story that proposes that a perfect naturalness in movement is only possible in the following moments: namely through a divine and thus infinite consciousness. After the fall of man, that seems unachievable. Or could a perfect, natural movement manifest itself in the complete absence of consciousness? The latter state comes about, Kleist writes, in the manikin as marionette. Because the "machinist" controlling the marionettes, Kleist writes, shifts the marionette's center of gravity along a line that is nothing less than the "path the soul of the dancer takes."

Louisa Clement's concept of *Gliedermenschen* at WENTRUP is therefore precisely not an assembly of pictures of manikins, but shows close-ups and sections of intimacy, closeness, vanity, and fragility of the automatons transformed into humans: a group of *Gliedermenschen*.

Louisa Clement (born in 1987 in Bonn) lives and works in Bonn, Germany.

Currently, photographs by Louisa Clement are presented in a solo exhibition at the Wallraff-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, Germany. In the summer, Clement participated in the group show *Lyrics on a Battelfield* at the Gladstone Gallery in New York, USA.

In 2016, Louisa Clement had group and solo shows at Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (all Germany), Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, the Rencontres Photographiques de Toulouse (all France), and at On Stellar Rays Gallery in New York, USA.

For 2017, Louisa Clement received the EHF 2010 Stipendium from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. In addition, she was awarded the Förderpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen and a prize from the Cité Internationale des Arts in France. In 2016, she received the Artistic Residency of the 6th Marrakech Biennial.

Clement's photographs are part of the collection of Altana Kulturstiftung, Bad Homburg; the collection of the city of Brühl (all Germany) and Sammlung Ringier in Zurich, Switzerland.

At the same time WENTRUP presents a solo exhibition of Debo Eilers curated by Elisa R. Linn at WENTRUP, Potsdamer Str. 91, 10785 Berlin.