

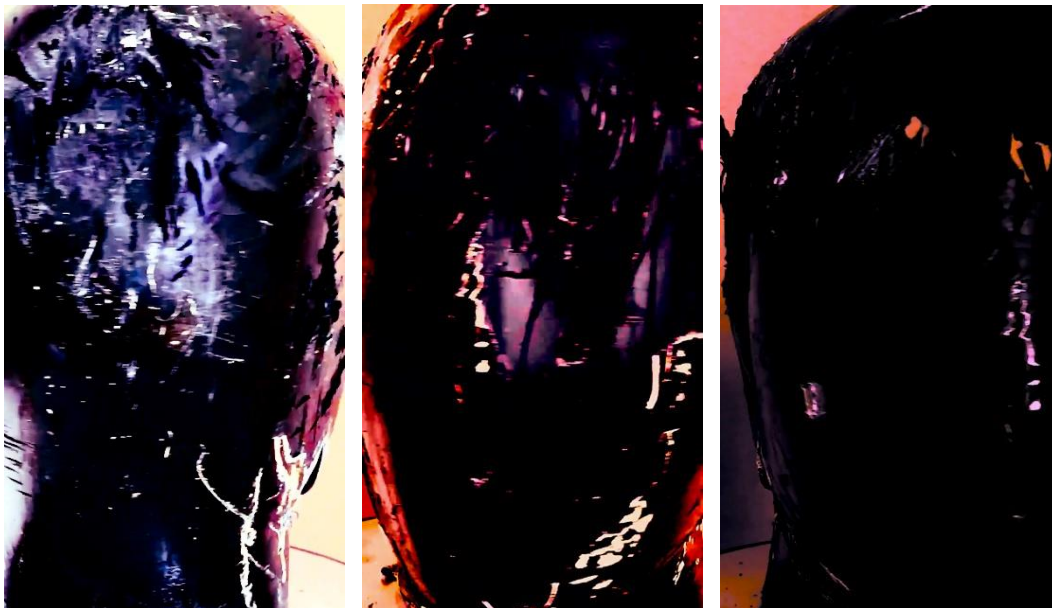
## Double Bind Louisa Clement

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Curated by Dr. Nadia Ismail  
Duration until 26.09.2021

The Kunsthalle Gießen presents the artist Louisa Clement's most recent series of works until 26th September 2021 in the exhibition *Double Bind*.

In her current works being shown for the first time at the Kunsthalle, Louisa Clement departs from the familiar terrain of supposedly unambiguous bodily definitions and creates with her *Repräsentantinnen* (2021) a kind of hybrid being that eludes explicit classification.



Louisa Clement: Circling Heads, Video Stills, 2019

In doing so, she builds on her ongoing conceptual engagement with bodily transformation that she closely associates with the transformation of interpersonal communication. After a lengthy period of intense physical and psychological preparation, Clement has created the perfect image of herself by means of innovative technological processes involving body scans, microphotography and cinematic movement studies. In collaboration with a Chinese company that specialises in the production of sex dolls, the data collected of her body was used to create life-size dolls of her physique that also imitate the artist's unique physical characteristics in terms of skin tone and surface texture. Mobile and sexually functional, the *Repräsentantinnen* not only bear the visage of their creator, they are even programmed to imitate Louisa Clement's facial expressions – as far as is technically possible.

Not only are they outwardly almost indistinguishable from the living model, but the artist has also endowed her *Repräsentantinnen* with aspects of her own mental characteristics. Based upon 2,000 personal questions that the artist truthfully answered in advance, the artificial intelligence (AI) creates an algorithm-based personality that is additionally supplemented with knowledge from the internet.

In contrast to the visual likeness between Clement and her *Repräsentantinnen*, the artist has opted not to imbue them with the timbre of her own voice. Instead, the dolls' sound is deliberately mechanical, their voices reminiscent of smartphone speech assistants or navigation systems. This lends the dolls a subtle degree of autonomy that enhances over time and becomes increasingly customised through linguistic interaction: the *Repräsentantinnen* can communicate with exhibition visitors in English, thus learning from the conversations and constantly developing their own 'personalities'.



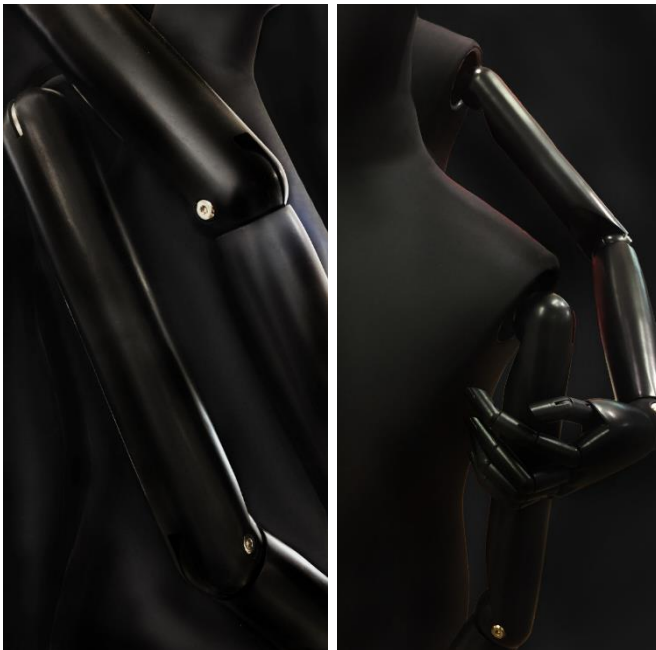
Louisa Clement: body fallacy 20, 2021, 200 x 160 cm, Inkjet Print

Whilst studying at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Louisa Clement was already thematically exploring changes in interpersonal communication through her work, in particular in the digital space, focusing primarily on social media such as Instagram and TikTok. There she observed an increasing display of idealised self-portrayals. The identities presented online are often far removed from one's own self and appear rather as a transfigured ego of desire in a world of flawless illusion. The objective of these self-portrayals is to please, something that is supposed to manifest itself for all to see in the form of so-called 'likes'.

The artist also addresses this growing predicament of the classification of what is real and what is idealised, linguistically with the exhibition's title. The term 'double bind' comes from communication theory and describes a so-called dual message and its associated effects. A 'double bind' is when contradictory statements and signals are conveyed through tone of voice, gestures or actions (for example "Yes" combined with a shake of the head).

At the same time, Clement uses videos, objects and photographs in the exhibition to create a visual link to media-historical ideas of women's bodies as automata and dolls, such as *Olympia* in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Sandmann*, Hans Bellmer's doll body modules, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or Pierre Molinier's pornographic-grotesque collages.

Visitors can experience the fragility of a 'brave new world' through the exhibits and series of works. Heavy bronze shells (*Moulds*, 2019-2020), lie like empty cocoons on the floor of the Kunsthalle, testifying ostensibly to the emergence of the artificial bodies. Entwined with the life-size photographs of the series *Body* (2019), the negative forms of the casts are elevated through digital photography and the application of various filters into voluminous, convex bodies that ultimately culminate in the *Repräsentantinnen* objects. The video works in the series *Circling Heads* (2019) show the heads of mannequins, larger than life size, rotating on their own axis across six monitors. They evoke associations with images from MRI scans, where the structural make-up of the brain is made visible.



Louisa Clement: Gliedermensch #3, #24, 2017, je 100 x 50 cm, Inkjet Print

*Double Bind* plays with the visitors' perception. At times it seems as if Louisa Clement herself is present in the space and a permanent visitor in her own exhibition, while at other times the mechanical, robot-like aspects of the dolls are evident. This impression is supported by the photographs in the series *Gliedermensch* (2017), in which shiny gold joints between the mannequins' body parts are overtly revealed as artificial hinges. By contrast, the latest photographic works titled *body fallacy* (2021) feature the rosy surface of artificial bodies that are barely distinguishable from close-ups of human skin. The depicted parts and extremities of the female body are slightly blurred, suggesting the softness and warmth of skin.

By allowing her *Repräsentantinnen* to appear in public, both conceptually and in title, as a kind of proxy for herself and speaking for her, Clement emphasises their hybrid character and questions the binary system of 'I' and 'You', of 'I' and 'the Other'. This transfers to further concepts, and in the face of an almost perfect self-portrait, categories such as original and replica, doll and clone, human and robot increasingly dissolve.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by Kettler Verlag with texts by Nadia Ismail, Lisa Felicitas Mattheis, Susanne Regener, Noemi Smolik and Thomas Trummer. The publication functions as a kind of logbook. Through texts, a variety of technical, psychological, philosophical, economic and ethical questions are explored and answered in a personal manner from the point of view of both the *Repräsentantinnen* and the artist.

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**Louisa Clement** (\*1987 Bonn) studied at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe with Prof. Leni Hoffman and at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where she completed her studies in 2015 as a master student of Prof. Andreas Gursky. In 2013, Clement received the Max Ernst scholarship from the city of Brühl. In 2016, she was awarded the Förderpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen für Bildende Kunst and received, among others, the Cité Internationale des Arts scholarship in Paris and the Villa Aurora scholarship in Los Angeles in 2019. Clement's work has been shown in numerous international museums such as Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst Aachen (2019/2020 solo exhibition), Sprengel Museum Hannover (2019 solo exhibition), Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, De Pont Museum Tilburg, Netherlands, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter Oslo, Norway, Museum Morsbroich Leverkusen, Huis Marseille Amsterdam, Netherlands, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne (2017 solo exhibition) and galleries such as Konrad Fischer Galerie Düsseldorf (2018 solo exhibition), Gladstone Gallery New York, Sprüth Magers Berlin and Cassina Projects Milan, Italy.