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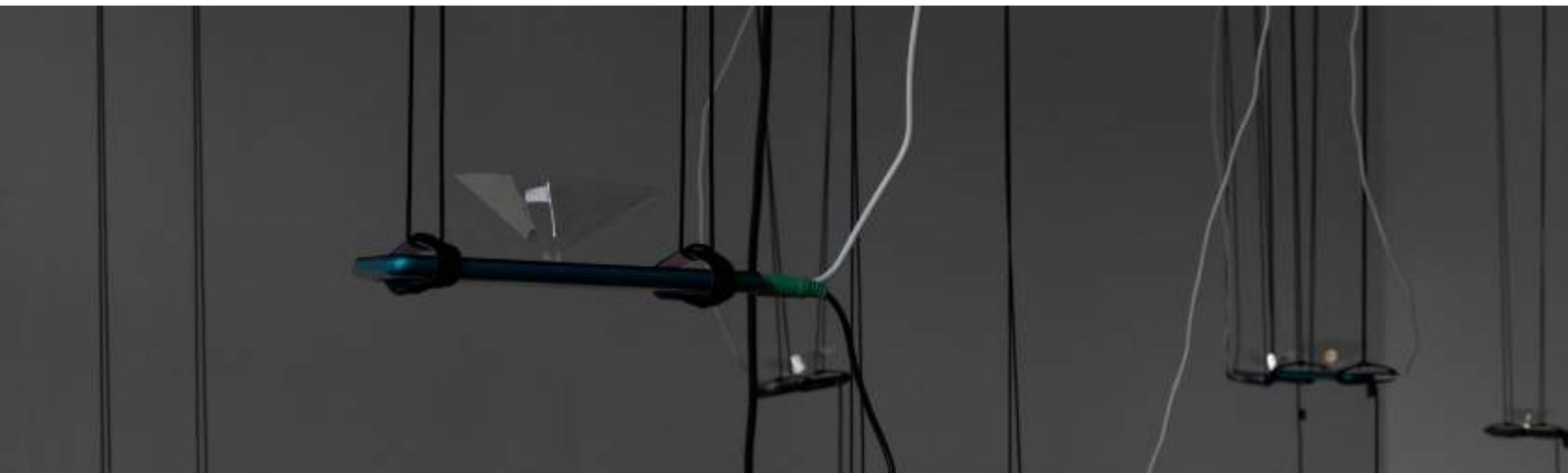


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[Issue 229](#)

Marilia Furman Puts an End to Excess

At PSM, the artist's low-tech, smoke-and-mirrors intervention traces the connection between capitalism and militarism

BY [PATRICK KURTH](#) IN [EU REVIEWS](#), [EXHIBITION REVIEWS](#) | 25 MAY 22

A cacophony of music and foley from Marilia Furman's solo show 'Monstrous' spills out from the entry of PSM, then separates into discrete parts: an orchestral motif from Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* (1850); the call-and-response of military cadence; sinister back-masked laughter; and the hammer click of a cocking gun, among other sounds. Inside, splashed across one wall of the first room, the on-screen sequence *Untitled (3 cenas)* (Three Scenes, all works 2022) features three plastic barrels that explode volcanically with the at-home chemistry concoction known as 'elephant's toothpaste', while *Growing (Hologram)* burbles against an opposite baseboard with a one-second snippet from Larry Cohen's horror-satire *The Stuff* (1985), about a zombie-making goo sold as a zero-calorie dessert. The overflow present in both these videos is punctuated in all-caps with 'THE END BY EXCESS', one of four curt phrases laser-cut into the burnished metal plates of *Untitled (As)*.

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Marilia Furman, 'Monstrous', 2022, exhibition view, PSM, Berlin. Courtesy: the artist and PSM, Berlin; photo: Marjorie Brunet Plaza

The exhibition's eponymous, clamorous centrepiece lies in an adjoining space. A tangle of cords, ports and adapters creeps several metres downward through the window-tinted, skim-milk-blue air from a canopy of fencing panels and terminates in clusters of desktop speakers coiled about the floor. The power strips overhead resemble lurking spiders; their columned trails of cables aping the sticky-silk filaments that hold still both offspring and prey. Here, the wiring has snared at eye level a constellation of translucent, tealight-sized holograms, each projected from a smartphone using an inverted plexiglass pyramid and flickering like will-o'-the-wisps.

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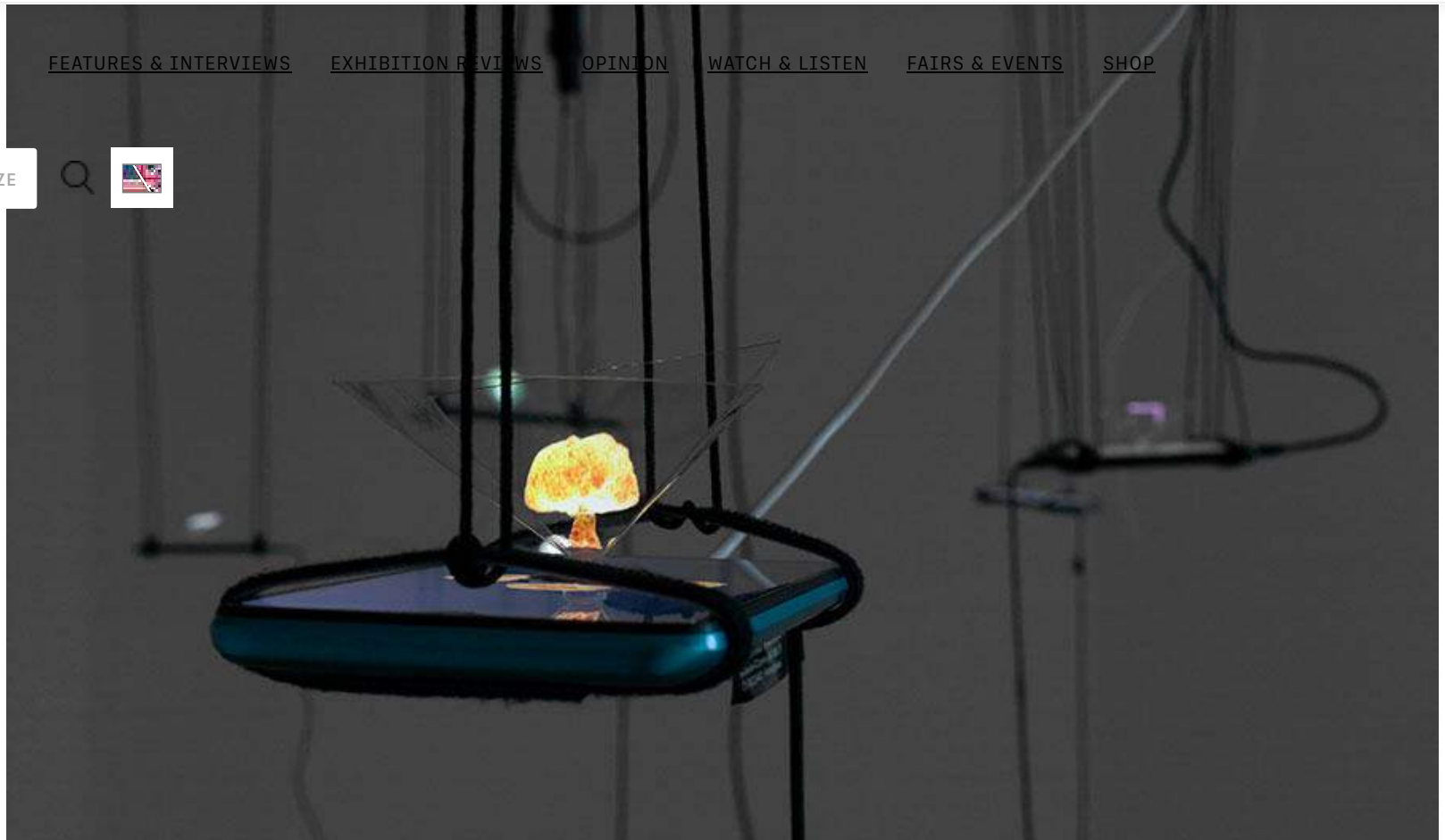


Marilia Furman, *Monstrous*, 2022, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and PSM, Berlin; photo: Marjorie Brunet Plaza

The phantomic images projected into these prisms are all recent or current hallmarks – albeit with varying degrees of legibility – of the nexus that has powerfully wed capitalism and militarism for the last half-millennium. Plainest are stock photos of a handgun, a cop car and a mushroom-cloud, along with slightly jerky, kinetic clips of gyrating post boxes and a token flipping between one Euro and the Bitcoin logo. More evocative are the glyphs satirizing the violent psychoses of the US state in films from different epochs, including a cowboy bucking rodeo on the tip of a nuclear missile – cribbed from *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) – and the treadmill-like charge of Alex Murphy, the corporate, cybernetic soldier deployed against Detroit’s libertarian dystopia in *RoboCop* (1987).

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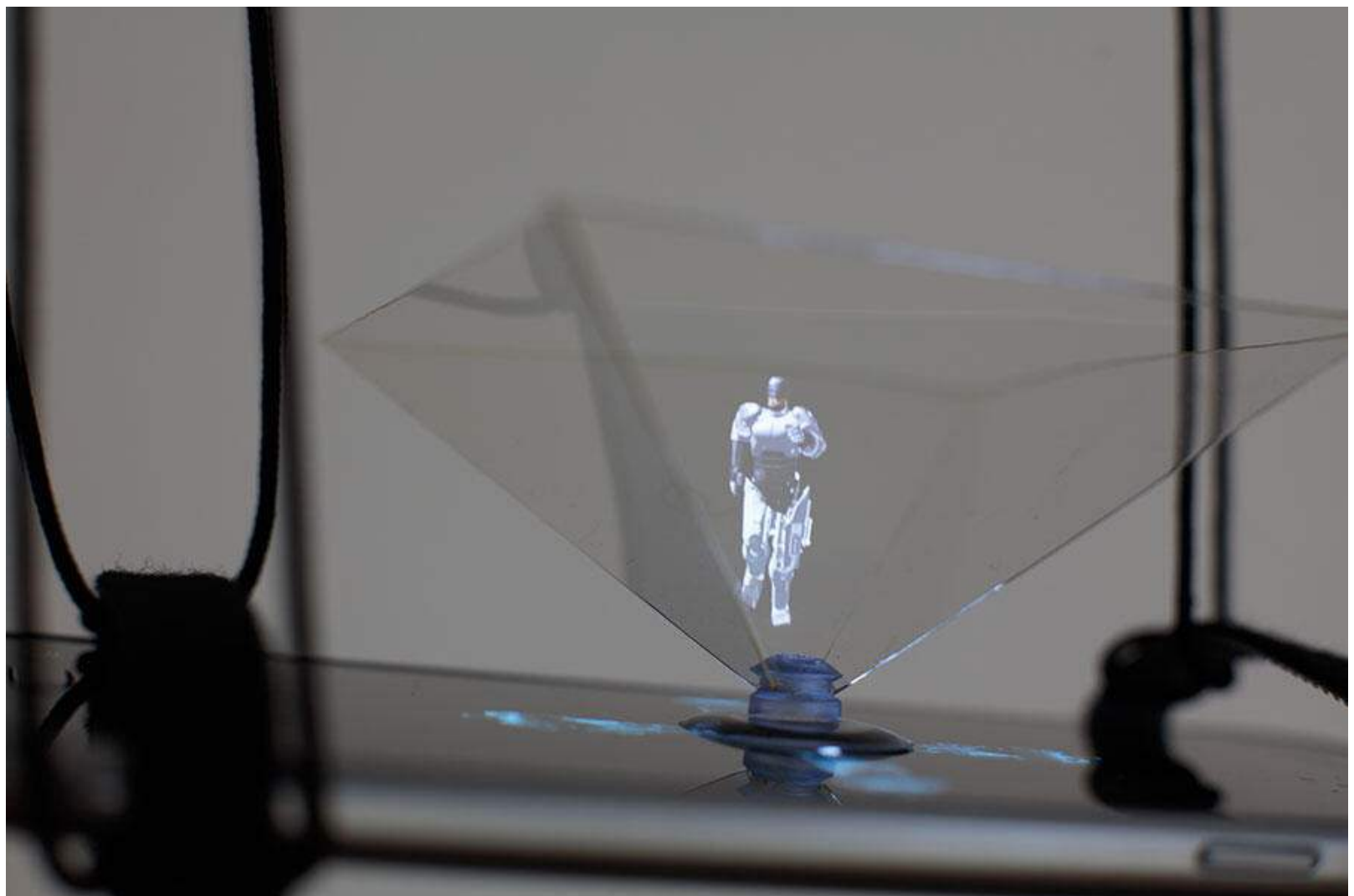
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Marilia Furman, *Monstrous* (detail), 2022, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and PSM, Berlin; photo: Marjorie Brunet Plaza

The ensemble's skeleton key eerily displays an overturned table that twitches with its legs in the air, echoing the insect stuck on its carapace in the opening passages of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915). This image, however, is drawn from the first chapter of Karl Marx's *Capital* (1867), where it was deployed to explain the transformation of objects into commodities through the accrual of exchange values, or the amounts of money things can be bought or sold for. These values come to eclipse the worth of those goods as physical objects in manners unrelated to their material natures and crafted forms. In the case of the wooden table, for example, such commodification diminishes the substance of wood as wood and the function of the table as a table, while imbuing the object with a power lacked by both the material and its form – i.e. the ability to dance.

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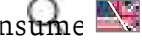


Marilia Furman, *Monstrous* (detail), 2022, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and PSM, Berlin; photo: Marjorie Brunet Plaza

stemmed in no small part from their use of tricks of light and shadow to produce uncanny visual phenomena and, in so doing, to transmit an ambivalence between the ethics of reason and superstition. Furman carries forward the appeal of those roadshows in this updated low-tech, smoke-and-mirrors intervention – essentially a bin of used electronics and DIY widgets – to offer a powerful metonym for the phantomic machine wrought by the fusion of war and unchecked markets.

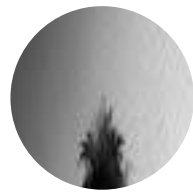
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*Marilia Furman's **'Monstrous'** is on view at PSM, Berlin, until 26 June 2022.*

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PATRICK KURTH

Patrick Kurth is a writer and editor based in Berlin, as well as the co-founder with Stela Žižak of the poetry publication SELDOM Press.

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