

» EXHIBITION

RICHARD WILSON: HANG ON A MINUTE LADS, I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA...

Until 1 October

De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill

Review by Edward Winters

ight: Wilson's Italian Job coach arches precariously the edge of the La Warr Pavilion

ow: Decked out the red, white and blue of the Union flag, the coach harks back an confident era en Britain rocked

Bores at the pub quiz will quickly tell you which iconic British caper movie ends, literally, in a cliff hanger. They might even tell you that the film ends with Croker (Michael Caine) musing, 'Hang on a minute lads, I've got a great idea.' Designers can be forgiven for knowing, and piping up, 'Harrington Legionnaire', when asked what model of coach is left dangling over the Alp. But even if, arguably, it is cinema's most famous coach, could anyone be expected to know its registration number?

Currently showing at Erich Mendelsohn's and Serge Chermayeff's modernist municipal gallery, the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill, is Richard Wilson's Hang On a Minute Lads, I've Got a Great Idea...

For his latest feat of engineering, there are two interlocking chassis which operate so as to rock the full-size simulacrum of The Italian Job's coach, thus replicating the last wind-blown scenes – when the gold is at one end of the bus and the gang is at the other – teetering on the brink.

The piece is light-hearted, intended as a celebration of Britain's staging of the Olympics; gold being the common objective of the two gangs – Team GB and Croker's collection of talented misfits. Moreover, international competition is at the heart of the film – the UK's



PHOTOGRAPH BY EDWARD WINTERS

THERE ARE TWO INTERLOCKING CHASSIS WHICH OPERATE SO AS TO ROCK THE FULL-SIZE SIMULACRUM OF THE ITALIAN JOB'S COACH

Mr Bridger (Noel Coward), in competition with the mafia, intent on stealing the gold that the Chinese are to invest in Fiat, its little 500 being the European urban runabout of choice with its impeccable design credentials.

Sixties' London mounted a decisive assault on established art,

music and design, and the Italian Job's true heroes are Sir Alec Issigonis's Minis. (While Fiat offered to supply the film as many cars as required the offer was declined as it would have meant replacing the Minis.) At one stage in the film the Minis being chased by the carabinieri make a circuit of the roof-top test-track of the Lingotto building in Turin, designed by architect Matté Trucco for Fiat and opened in 1923.

The film uses the architecture of Turin – both its excellent baroque and its equally impressive modernism – as a constant backdrop against which the Minis, the cheeky chappies of Croker's team, the mafia, and the ineptitude of the carabinieri play out their competitive strategies. So it is a remarkably apt analogue for Wilson's greater oeuvre. His works constantly play themselves off against the nature of the architecture on which they assert themselves.

Wilson is famous for his site-specific installation sculptures which transform the architectural spaces in which they intervene. First exhibited at Matts Gallery in East London, 20:50 for example takes time to appear. So highly reflective is its black used sump oil that you take the oil to be missing – until, that is, you realise just where the surface is. And even then it is hard to see it.

Writing of baroque and modernism, his Turning The Place Over, a revolving 8m-diameter circle cut through the front elevation of a hum-drum modernist building that

once housed a Yates Wine Lodge, turns it into a baroque voluminous space – the flatness morphed into a soap bubble. It is like looking at Borromini's revenge on Corbusier.

His sculptures take an architectural space and then place a work in relation to it – rather than placing the work in it. Watertable, installed at Matts Gallery, dug out the foundations of the gallery down to the London water table. A concrete mains pipe was then fitted vertically through a full-size billiard table so that the green baize sat just below the surface of the floor of the gallery. The sound of the water lapping and echoing in the pipe made the spectator aware of the depth of London's water table. Everything exhibited was just outside of the gallery's volume.

Wilson's coach, like the livery of Britain's sporting challengers, is painted in the red, white and blue of the Union flag. It is openly patriotic and harks back to the confident era in which Britain rocked. It is perched precariously, using the edge of the roof and the elevation as a fulcrum – again just outside of the volume of the building. It is a humorous, nostalgic piece that celebrates our sportspeople in their quest for honours. It is well worth a visit.

The Harrington Legionnaire was one of just that came of the assembly line at Hove in Sussex, and the coach in The Italian Job returned to normal service in Sussex afterwards. And by the way, its registration number was ALR 453B. For the pub quiz.

