

or subversive enough, though likewise *Last Tango*, 2011. This raises the question of selection, and while the curation is reasonably taut, the invitational premise of the screening series, wherein cultural institutions in other countries submit artists for consideration, can wrest odd juxtapositions.

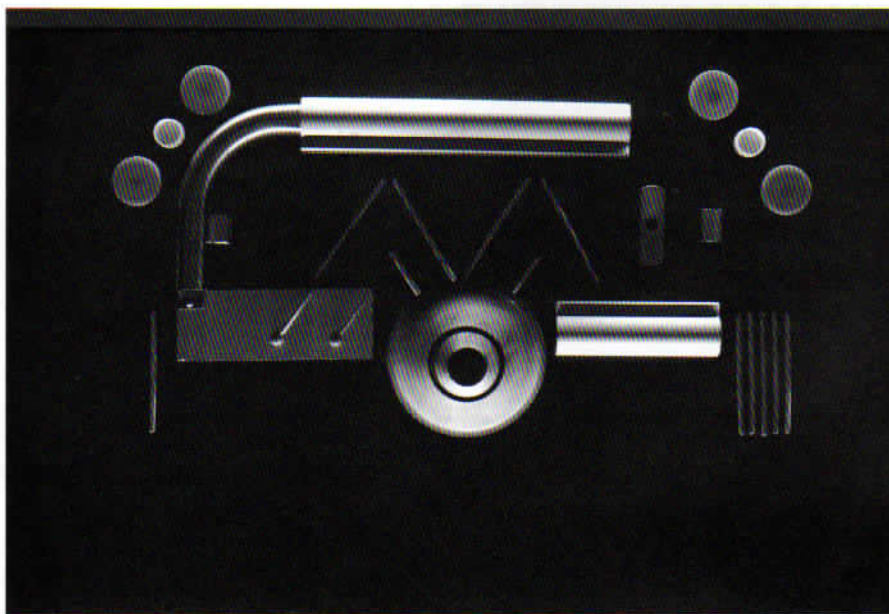
Inevitably, the form of artists' film as anthropological or sociopolitical enquiry suggests as many problems as it offers solutions, yet this is the nature of experiment, and its purpose is more to open a discursive space as to propose concrete resolutions. But in 'othering' the message, or alternatively of normalising or assimilating the narrative of the 'other' into a western discourse, it becomes more precarious. It might be tempting, then, to accuse the De Serios of 'othering' the refugees yet further and submerging their stories still deeper in the sea of history – of assimilating them to a western narrative, however much that narrative may be driven by false virtues of guilt and pity – and of rendering them less, not more visible via a process which aestheticises and dramatises their plight as an instrument for a structural artistic conceit. But the artists' sure-footedness and command in negotiating the hermeticism of the histories they stalk ensures that this does not happen. Rather, *Stanze* reads as a radical attempt to obfuscate and defuse the march of history and *Zeide Isaac* as a warning about tablets of stone. The artists implicate and short-circuit their own histories, conflating past and present, and, crucially, in doing so maintain an open border in which the written is unravelled and the spoken remains fluid. ■

ADAM PUGH is a writer and curator based in Norwich.

Max Hattler: Shift

Tenderpixel London 9 March to 28 April

For his first solo London exhibition, animator and media artist Max Hattler presents *Shift*. The film is the first in five new commissions by Channel 4, in collaboration with Animate Projects, as part of the broadcaster's Random Acts strand, the daily three-minute slot that is an updating of its now-defunct 3 Minute Wonders series dedicated to showcasing new work by young directors. On display in Tenderpixel's recently opened basement space is the eponymous film supported by two small-scale films of animated test footage,



Max Hattler *Shift* 2012 video

each lasting fewer than ten seconds, looped to ten minutes apiece.

The film *Shift* demonstrates a repositioning in Hattler's working practice, replacing overtly computer-generated animation for a traditional stop-motion technique. Referencing influences from early 20th-century modernism and the original period of mechanisation, Hattler possesses materials (including metal tubing, fixtures, brackets and ball bearings – the fundamentals of industrial engineering) with the dynamic automatism and kinetic sculptural aesthetic of movements including German Expressionism and Italian Futurism. His objects transform themselves into cyborgian monstrosities, and *Shift* is a work that cambers onto a line of thinking that may have once been termed 'social progress' but which actually reminisces on the fears of the modern age.

The accompanying exhibition text states that the intention of the work is to create a 'cinematic interpretation of an apocalyptic shift', and this is adequately represented in the film's underground display (the gallery space still has exposed brickwork and is in need of refurbishment, though its bunker-like qualities are useful here). *Shift* is not subtle, but Hattler's work would never be described as such. The Stars and Stripes-meets-Islamist semiotic satire *Collision*, 2005, the twin pieces *1923 aka Heaven*

and *1925 aka Hell*, both 2010, which present journeys into monuments inspired by both fascist and spiritualistic architecture, and *Spin*, 2010, the dance animation – arguably Hattler's best-known work – played out by warring plastic toy soldiers in a homage to Busby Berkeley and Leni Riefenstahl, were all vibrant lampoons on the spectacle of conflict dosed with cynicism and handfuls of black humour. However, the effect that *Shift* has is jarring.

For an artist who presents itinerant exhibitiv acts – his films can be seen in galleries, on cinema screens, online, on smartphone and tablet apps (*1923 aka Heaven* was even screened for two weeks in April 2011 on the projected advertising hoardings on the westbound Central Line platform at Liverpool Street Station as part of a pilot for a public visual arts programme) – Hattler's work settles into a temporary fixed display with a strong control over its visitors and is supported well by an absorbing audio set-up and a visual aesthetic that remains as striking as it ever has been. ■

AJAY RS HOTHI is a writer and documentary filmmaker from London.

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