Günther Uecker's The Book of Job is an artist's book with forty-seven original prints signed by the artist. Each double-page spread consists of an image on one page and the biblical text in Hebrew and Martin Luther's German translation on the other. The book was produced at the printing studio of Har-El in Jaffa, Tel Aviv, using screen printing in combination with the complex terragraph process, which employs sand as a pigment. The Art Council of the German Bundestag has acquired a copy of this book, a work of equal significance to Christians and Jews, and is displaying it in the Bundestag's Art Room before it takes up a permanent place in the Reflection and Prayer Room of the Reichstag building.

Two other artist's books produced at the Har-El studio are also on show, testifying to the concepts and working procedures embraced by this gallery in Jaffa. The books are *The* Gospel of St Thomas by Jannis Kounellis and The Book of Genesis by Emil Schumacher.

Günther Uecker The Book of Job

The Book of Job belongs among the most important works of world literature. It addresses one of humankind's chief existential problems – its idea of God and, in particular, theo- formal composition. The dicy, the justification of God's omnipotence and goodness in a world marked by evil, by land of Uz who lived an physical and moral ills. Human happiness and suffering often bear no apparent relation to individual conduct. Satan to put his righteousness to the way in which a person acts and thinks. Reflection on such issues automatically leads to the fundamental question as to what kind of life can appear 'just' (that is, justified) in the eyes of God. The possibility of justification was central to Luther's religious thinking, so it is only logical that his German translation of the Book of Job should accompany the Hebrew text in Uecker's book.

The Book of Job can be seen as part of world culture not only in terms of its content, but also with regard to its skilful biblical narrative tells the story of Job, a rich man in the upright and contented life. His happiness suddenly comes to an end when God permits to the test. Satan tries Job by robbing him of all his children and herds and by subjecting him to physical affliction. Friends come to console him. In discussions with them he complains that he has been made to suffer although he has done no wrong. In this way he contradicts his righteous friends, who believe he must be guilty in some way and seek to persuade him to admit as much.

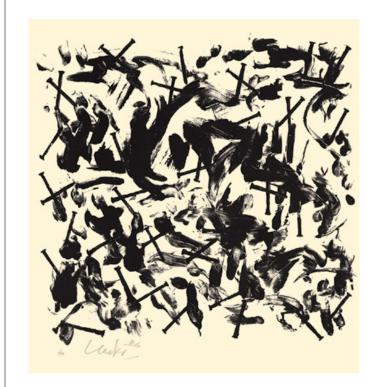




הפעתיק המשלם: "הפעתיק Monsch nicht mehr behalten kunn gegen Gott. אר מפרציז ארץ ספקוסה. Alak or Last, mit ihm av strikton, so kann or ihm auf tauend nicht eins anwonen. -Gott ist weise (עַפּוּדֶיהָ יִתְפַּלְצוֹן: הָאֹמֶר לַחָרֶס רְלֹא יִוְרָח וּכְעֵד כּוֹכְכִים ימשה עש and maching won int's je golangen, der sich grgen עש יותרב: «עשה עש המוכה במחיים: «עשה עש ישה נדלות עד אין סקר (פריכה וחדרי הפן: עשה נדלות עד אין סקר ibn gestell had sEc vessent Berge, the se es יותבר עלי ולא אַרְאָה innoverden; er kehrt sie um in seinem Zoen. «Er יים אָרָיו bewegt die Ende von ihrom Ore, daß ihre Pfeller ווחלף ולא אָבין לו: קדן החתף כי ישיבנו כי יאסר אַרָיו שאים אתחנו: פאם אינה למשפט אתחנו: פאם אינה למשפט אתחנו: פאם Moon. -Ex macht den Wagen am Hirmed and מושר בשערה באים פי באון כי באון כי באון כי באים לא אום מוחס den Otion und die Stebengestirn und die Steme לא יהגגי השב הזחי בי הישופעי והרבה פצעי הנם: --לא יהגגי השב הזחי בי des Sadens. »Er ou große Dinge, die nicht zu בים לכה אפיץ הגה (אם למשפט erfunchen, und Wunder, die nicht zu zählen sind. י יוערדני: אס אצרק פי ורשיעני תם אני מעקשנים (Sebe, er geht an mir worther, ohne daß ich's מו לא אדע נפשר מפים באסת סיים growth worde, and wander vorter, ohne dal idi's מרתי הם קלה: מאם שום יסית moke. «Sicke, worn or wegofft, wer will ihm ילְעָנֵי פּאָרֶץ נְתְנָה כְיִד רְשָׁע פָּנֵי שׁפְּטֵיהָ wehren) Wer will m ihm sagmt Was machet de? יבקחו אם לא אפוא פי הוא: פונטי קלו פעי בי קרחו Gott welet seinem Zom nicht, unter ihn mußten ימרש אכה קלשר אבה אכה קלשר מובה: מרולפו עם אניות אבה קלשר ימרש

ich ihm annungen und Worte finden une ihm? 17 Wenn ich auch recht habe, so kann ich ihm doch nicht antworten, sondern ich müßte um mein Recht fiehen. 16 Wenn ich ihn such anrufe, daß er mir antwortet, so glaube ich nicht, daß er meine Stimme hört, avsielmehr greift er nach mir im Wettersturm und schlägt mir viele Wunden ohne Grund. »Er läßt mich nicht Atem schöpfen, sondem sättigt mich mit Bittemis. ss Geht es um Macht und Gewalt. Er hat sie. Geht es um Recht: Wer will ihn voeladen? ss Wise ich gerecht, so militer mich doch mein Mund verdammen; wäre ich unschuldig, so würde er mich doch schuldig sprechen, zu Ich bin unschuldig! Ich möchte nicht mehr leben; ich verschte mein Leben, :: Es ist eins, darum sage ich: Er bringt den Frommen um wie den Gottlosen. 21 Wenn seine Geifel plötzlich tötzt, so sportet er über die Verzweiflung der Unschuldigen. 32 Er hat die Erde unter gottlose Hände gegeben, und das Antlitz über Richter verhällt er. Wenn nicht er, wer anders sollte es tun? » Meine Tage sind schneller grwesen als ein Litefer, sie sind dahingeflohen und haben nichts Gutes erlebt, a Sie sind dahingefahren wie schnelle

The Book of Job, forty-seven original prints by Günther Uecker, signed by the artist, on acetates, edition copy 10 of 99, 2007, screen print and terragraph, produced in the studio of Har-El in Jaffa, Tel Aviv, hand-printed by Nissim Ben-Nun, Gilad Margol and Orly Spinzi



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Job calls on God to explain the reasons for his suffering, but by disclosing his omnipotence, is unquestionable because it which allows of no justification or discussion of the reasons for his acts, no questioning of his aims. God thus rejects any assumption of a causal relationship between guilt and suffering. Job humbly submits to God's will and repents his presumption in demanding justification. God forgives Job and doubles his previous wealth. Job eventually dies at the age of 140, 'old and full of days'.

The Book of Job is among the Old Testament books that present God as a deus absconditus, a 'hidden God'. Written between 350 and 200 BC, it reflects the 'crisis of wisdom' generated in the Mediterranean world by the spread of Greek rationalism, which posed a threat to mythical thinking

and shattered belief in a divine justice that was definable and predictable. Later alterations to the book cannot disguise its core message, which consists in the humble, almost terrify-God rebukes him and responds ing recognition that God's will forms part of his omnipotence as a being hidden from us.

Günther Uecker has made an artist's book from this work of literature. Few artists can be better suited to engaging with such demanding subject matter. Uecker ranks among the most highly respected artists in Germany and abroad, and he has repeatedly addressed issues relating to human nature and humankind's attitudes to creation and creator. His most important recent works include the Reflection and Prayer Room in the Reichstag building, a space that encourages dialogues between religions and embodies a profound theological interpretation of the things that various faiths have in common.

Jesus withdrew for forty days to fast and pray. In his Job Uecker's Book of Job meets the cycle Uecker has devised same kind of high theological compelling visual equivalents demands. None of the fortyto the basic religious tenor seven prints relates to the text of the text: God is someone in an illustrative way: none who cannot, and may not, be is a conventional narrative imaged in human terms, who image. Instead, the prints resides in primal shapes like a consist of ur-forms and urprimal force (in the metaphorstructures. Nail shapes and ical, not the deist sense), who traces of hands are occasionalis revealed in those shapes ly recognisable, but otherwise and who confronts humanity the viewer is confronted with as a focus of energy, as a geometrical figures – dots, circling whirlwind emerging circles, a triangle, large rectfrom the weather (as the Book angles and, time and again, a of Job poetically puts it), as a big disc like a powerful whirlforce field embodying his wind – and with gestural omnipotence. marks, usually in black and

white, but sometimes the

colour of sand. The latter con-

on the surface using the terra-

graph technique invented by

the deserts of the Middle East,

the environment inhabited by

biblical narratives, the place

the Har-El printing studio.

sist of real sand, imprinted

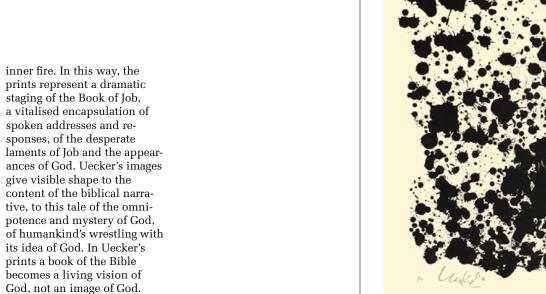
Anyone familiar with Günther Uecker's work knows that it reflects physical acts in an immediate way. In a sense, his works are a kind of 'action art'. Physicality is perceptible in The sand is symbolic. It evokes the Job prints as the vigorous, rhythmic motions involved in painting and shaping, as the expression of mental and where God revealed himself to emotional excitement, of an

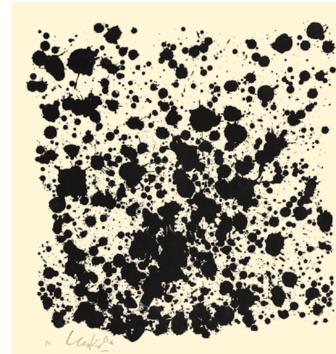
Moses in the Burning Bush,

the wilderness into which

inner fire. In this way, the prints represent a dramatic staging of the Book of Job, a vitalised encapsulation of spoken addresses and responses, of the desperate laments of Job and the appearances of God. Uecker's images give visible shape to the content of the biblical narrative, to this tale of the omnipotence and mystery of God, of humankind's wrestling with its idea of God. In Uecker's prints a book of the Bible becomes a living vision of

> Günther Uecker, born in Wendorf (Mecklenburg) in 1930, is based in Düsseldorf and Berlin.







Art at the German Bundestag Günther Uecker – The Book of Job



