William Blake versus David Shrigley

Under God's Hammer - William Blake versus David Shrigley, opening at the Art Gallery of Western Australia on 16 September, brings together two contrasting responses to the Old Testament's famously enigmatic Book of Job. In this story, Job becomes a plaything of the devil as God watches on, in order to test the strength and foundation of his faith.

William Blake's fastidiously detailed etchings of this subject, held in the State Art Collection, were completed in 1825 and critically engage with the form and nuance of Job's faith in a God who had abandoned him.

In work produced especially for this exhibition, contemporary Scottish artist David Shrigley – who has also produced animated videos for the likes of Blur and Bonnie Prince Billy – has responded to the Book of Job with a series of airy and uptight drawings that convey a humorously nihilistic take on a blighted species operating in the absence of a benevolent higher power.

Robert Cook, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, says “Both artists' works use the Book of Job to examine the frustration of the simplistic religious narrative of reward for good behaviour. As well as highlighting distinctions between how faith is experienced in 1825 and 2006, therefore, this unique combination of artistic approaches charts the ongoing significance of the Book of Job as a moral fable of continuing and challenging relevance”.