

## Robot scribe copies the Bible as a performance art event

After seven months of writing day and night, a robot in Germany clutching a fountain pen has completed a 'manuscript' Bible in cursive handwriting.

The exercise was a piece of performance art by the Centre for Art and Media in the German city of Karlsruhe, which uses state funds to explore new art ideas.

The machine, dubbed 'Bios (Bible)', began copying the Bible in June onto a 900-metre-long roll of paper, with its arm forming each letter with the pen after all 66 books of scripture had been loaded into its memory.

Artists Martina Haitz, Matthias Gommel and Jan Zappe formed a unit, Robotlab, in 2000 to programme robots for art.

'More than a million robots are working in the factories of the world. We want to explore their artistic potential,' said Zappe.

Bios (Bible) inscribed 3.5 million letters, using 700 ml of ink, to complete the German-language bible.

The artists call this a 'ready-made' project, meaning the robot is a standard one, not a work of art.

'It's just a working machine, yet it's a participant in society,' said Gommel. The robot was thus a 'mediator' in the process of social communication.

Asked why they chose the Bible, Zappe said: 'Because it is one of the most significant books of the age and contains a huge amount of data.'

The group did not explain how the robot misspelled two of the 800,000 words.

The machine's memory contained the text of the Bible, information about each letter and data on how to form it. It had to transfer the data through these three levels.

The long scroll is to be cut into pages, and displayed at the centre along with the robot.

'We don't propose to retain this valuable product of our installation in museum fashion,' said Gommel.

The solution, they said, may be a request from a Christian community in the US, which says it would quite like to have a manuscript German-language bible to read from in church.

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