

GALERIE

HUBERT

WINTER

IAN HAMILTON FINLAY

Opening reception: February 23, 2017, 7 – 9 pm
February 24 – March 25, 2017

The development of reason and freedom, the self-determination of the individual, the beginning of the Modern European World, these are some of the topics that identify the fascination for the French Revolution. Ian Hamilton Finlay (October 1925, Nassau, Bahamas – March 2006, Edinburgh) addressed in his works repeatedly this fundamental event of modern history.

In cooperation with his estate, Galerie Hubert Winter presents sculptures and prints by the Scottish poet and artist, dealing with the utopian years of uprising between 1789-94 up to the Reign of Terror. Ian Hamilton Finlay initiates – in his neoclassical imagery and concrete poetical world – an overall reassessment of history in its intrinsic actuality.

In a letter to Ernst Jandl he wrote 1965 „I can't agree that just any poem defines itself as art. On the contrary, almost any Scottish poem of the present is offered to one as a comment on life, an aid, an extension, etc. . . . Hence we get inane critical remarks like: "X has something to say" (which actual means, X's poems are crammed with jargon, about politics, hunger, Scotland, his love-life, or whatever). The notion that "something to say" is actually a *modulation of the material* scarcely enters anyone's head.“

He correlates the meaningfulness of poetry directly with life. His desire to study philosophy was denied, but in his artworks he devoted himself to it. After the Second World War he made his living by being a shepherd. His first book *The Sea-Bed and Other Stories* was published in 1958. In 1961 he founded his own publishing house Wild Hawthorn Press. In 1963 his first collection of concrete poetry was released. Within few years he emerged as one of the most noted poets of Great Britain.

In this period Ian Hamilton Finlay realised the first text-based works in public, complying with the classic tradition of heraldry and epigrams. By buying an old farm house near Dunsyre, he found the place, where to realise his artistic vision of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. „Little Sparta“, a landscape garden with temples, where he lived until his death, achieves the fulfilment of the ancient concept of the „sublime“. Ian Hamilton Finlay saw art as an elevation towards beauty, order and as a mean to shape society actively.

**BREITE GASSE 17
1070 VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

**T. +43 (1) 524 09 76 / F.-9
OFFICE@GALERIEWINTER.AT
WWW.GALERIEWINTER.AT**

Ian Hamilton Finlay is unusual for encompassing a variety of different media and discourses. Poetry, philosophy, history, gardening and landscape design are among the. Common to all of Finlay's diverse production is the inscription of language - words, invented or borrowed phrases and other semiotic devices - onto real objects and thus into the world. That language inhabits, for Finlay, a material or real dimension gives rise to the two seemingly opposed but signal characteristics of his work.