

DAVID NOLAN **NEW YORK**

527 West 29th Street New York NY 10001

Tel 212-925-6190 Fax 212-334-9139

info@davidnolangallery.com

www.davidnolangallery.com



Ian Hamilton Finlay *The French Revolution*

September 15 – October 22 2005

Opening reception:
Thursday, September 15 2005 6-8 pm

Anarchy within, invasion from without. A country cracking from outside pressure, disintegrating from internal strain. Revolution is at its height. War. Inflation. Hunger. Fear. Hate. Sabotage. Fanaticism. Hopes. Boundless idealism . . . and the dread that all the gains of the Revolution would be lost. And the faith that if they won, they would bring Liberty, Equality, Fraternity to the world.
—R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*

Inspired by the inequality between rich and poor and the injustices of royalty, and perfumed by the dream of a utopia, the French Revolution did briefly achieve some trappings of an ideal society before it was overwhelmed by chaos and violence. And in the end, barbarity became the Revolution's most salient feature. Under the Reign of Terror, whose victims included even children, revolutionary tribunals tried 200,000 souls, of which 20,000 to the guillotine.

In this exhibition, the Scottish poet and sculptor Ian Hamilton Finlay plays upon the metaphoric quality and universality of the French Revolution. Through a series of bronze sculptures, he invokes the intellectual heroes, and visionary symbols that influenced the thinking of the time, men such as Robespierre, Danton, and Marat; the revolutionary calendar and the tri-color. Finlay moves these stirring but antique events to a contemporary relevance, raising quietly radical issues. Does man's desire for political and social reform always begin with hope and enthusiasm and then degenerate into corruption?

This exhibition is held in honor of Ian Hamilton Finlay's 80th birthday. Finlay is most famous for his philosophical garden on classical themes, Little Sparta. He has completed many public and private commissions, mostly in Europe, including *Fleur de l'Air*, a monumental garden in the south of France. Ian Hamilton Finlay has shown at Nolan/Eckman since 1994.