

**Guide to the Peter Davidson  
Collection of Ian Hamilton Finlay  
MSS.013**

Finding aid prepared by Ryan Evans; Collection processed by Ryan Evans.

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April 29, 2016

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Center for Curatorial Studies Library & Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Finlay, Ian Hamilton
<b>Title</b>	Peter Davidson Collection of Ian Hamilton Finlay
<b>Date</b>	1987-1997
<b>Extent</b>	1.0 Linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English

### Preferred Citation

Published citations should take the following form:

Identification of item, date (if known); Peter Davidson Collection of Ian Hamilton Finlay; MSS.013; [box number]; [folder number], Center for Curatorial Studies Library and Archives, Bard College.

## Biographical/Historical note

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Ian Hamilton Finlay was a Scottish sculptor, graphic artist, and poet born in Nassau, the Bahamas in 1925. Finlay briefly attended Glasgow School of Art, but first made his reputation as a writer, publishing short stories and plays in the 1950s. In 1961 he founded the Wild Hawthorn Press with Jessie McGuffie. The volumes Finlay produced under Wild Hawthorn Press established him firmly as a preeminent concrete poet, but also laid the ground for his cross-over into the visual arts. In 1966 Finlay and his wife, Sue, moved to the hillside farm of Stonypath, south-west of Edinburgh, and began to transform the surrounding acres into a poet's garden called Little Sparta, with carefully placed ponds, trees and vegetation in response to manmade elements including sundials, inscriptions, columns and garden temples. Many of the sculptures in Little Sparta incorporate Finlay's poetry carved into stone. Finlay was awarded many large-scale projects throughout the world, including the 'Sacred Grove', created between 1980 and 1982 at in the Kröller-Müller Sculpture Park, Otterlo.

Peter Davidson, professor of Renaissance Studies and Art History, was born in 1957 and was raised in Fife and Glasgow in Scotland. He received a degree in English and Classics from Cambridge University, and was serving as Professor of Renaissance Studies at Aberdeen University in Scotland when he met Ian Hamilton Finlay. The fellow Scotsmen met through Joyce Laing, a mutual friend, in the mid-1980s and became quick friends and frequent collaborators. Finlay asked Davidson to compose music for various events, and Davidson often helped Finlay pen letters and other works in French. Their friendship covered the important year of 1988 with the battle over the garden commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture and its cancellation due to allegations of IHF's association with Nazi symbols. Davidson served as a key member of the Saint Just Vigilantes in the United Kingdom. Peter Davidson also helped with the construction and upkeep of the garden at Stonypath. In the 1990's Davidson took an academic job in Holland, and their correspondence became less frequent.

Finlay passed away at Stonypath in 2006 in relative reclusivity, and is survived by his two children Alec and Ailie.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The Peter Davidson Collection of Ian Hamilton Finlay consists of the correspondence between Davidson and Finlay from 1987 to 1996. This includes original letters by Finlay to Davidson, as well as photocopied correspondence from Little Sparta that was circulated by Finlay surrounding the cancellation of his French Bicentenary commission with the French Ministry of Culture. The correspondence also documents his battles with the Strathclyde Regional Council concerning the status of the garden at Little Sparta. In addition are numerous artist books, multiples, and editions from Wild Hawthorn Press (among others) that Finlay sent to Davidson (many of which are inscribed), as well as Davidson's research and writing on Finlay.

## Arrangement note

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The collection is comprised of three series:

**Series I: Correspondence to Peter Davidson**, arranged chronologically.

**Series II: Correspondence from Little Sparta**, arranged chronologically.

**Series III: Cards, Broadsides, and Ephemera**, arranged chronologically, and according to the numbers provided in the Wild Hawthorn Press catalog.

**Series III: Writing on Ian Hamilton Finlay**, arranged chronologically.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Center for Curatorial Studies Library & Archives April 2016

### Access Restrictions

The collection is open to researchers without restrictions. Appointments are necessary to consult manuscript and archival materials. Access copies for media materials may not be available yet. Please contact the CCS Archivist for further details.

### Use Restrictions

Collection use is subject to all copyright laws. Permission to publish materials must be obtained in writing from the Director of the Library & Archives at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. Please contact [ccslib@bard.edu](mailto:ccslib@bard.edu) for more information.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials note

Mary Jane Jacob Papers

### Separated Materials note

[Click here for a list of separated materials.](#)

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Genre(s)

- Artists' books (books)
- Brochures
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Invitations
- Letters (correspondence)
- Multiples
- Notes
- Posters
- Press releases
- Promotional materials

### Personal Name(s)

- Davidson, Peter, 1957-
- Finlay, Ian Hamilton

### Subject(s)

- Art, Modern -- 20th Century
- Artists' writings
- Conceptual art
- Concrete poetry
- Sculpture gardens

## Series I: Correspondence to Peter Davidson

## Collection Inventory

## Series I: Correspondence to Peter Davidson

## Scope and Contents note

This series contains original correspondence, both typed and handwritten, from Ian Hamilton Finlay to Peter Davidson.

		Box	Folder
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1987 October 15	1	1
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1988 April 7	1	2
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1988 April 30	1	3
Press clipping (June 30 1988) with note from Sue Finlay	c. 1988	1	4
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1989 September 9	1	5
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1990 January 4	1	6
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1991 January 31	1	7
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1991 March 31	1	8
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1991 July 7	1	9
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1992 March 29	1	10
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1993 January 9	1	11
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1993 March 10	1	12
Letter from Ian Hamilton Finlay	1993 December 20	1	13
Undated postcard from Ian Hamilton Finlay	c. 1996	1	14
Undated letter from Sue Finlay	n.d.	1	15
Envelopes addressed IHF to Peter Davidson	1987-1988	1	16

## Series II: Correspondence from Little Sparta

## Scope and Contents note

This series contains mostly photocopied correspondence (including open letters, community meetings, and symposia) circulated from Little Sparta in order to gain support following the controversy surrounding the cancellation of Finlay's bicentenary exhibition in Paris.

		Box	Folder
Letter from IHF to the arts editor of The Independent	1987 September 28	1	17
Letter from IHF to the editor of The Guardian	1987 September 28	1	18
Letter from IHF to the Director General of the National Trust	1987 September 28	1	19

## Series II: Correspondence from Little Sparta

"La Declaration d'Edimbourg" from Diagraphe (Section Francaise des Vigilants Saint-Just) Numero 42	1987 December	1	20
Meeting convened at Graeme Murray Gallery in response to Glasgow Herald article, minutes and following correspondence	1988 February - March	1	21
Letter from Sue Finlay to the editor of The Scotsman	1988 February 19	1	22
Letter from IHF to the editor of The Scotsman	1988 February 19	1	23
Open letter to the French Ministry of Culture and following correspondence	1988 March - April, n.d.	1	24
Letter from IHF to the arts editor of The Guardian	1988 March 1	1	25
Letter to the editor of The Scotsman from Alexander Stoddart (Saint-Just Vigilantes)	1988 March 31	1	26
Letter from IHF to the editor of the Glasgow Herald	1988 March 31	1	27
Letter from IHF to the editor of The Guardian	1988 March 31	1	28
Delegation of support and open letters presented to the French Embassy in London	1988 April - May	1	29
Open letters to Catherine Millet at Art Press	1988 April, n.d.	1	30
Open letter from IHF to Michel Blum, President of Human Rights League, Paris, and following letters	1988 April	1	31
Statement from Little Sparta by IHF	1988 April	1	32
Letter from IHF to The Press Council, London	1988 April 1	1	33
Open letter from the Finlays to Chris Dercon and Jeff Cornelis	1988 April 4	1	34
Letter from IHF to Ralph Beyer, sculptor	1988 April 7	1	35
Letter from Sue Finlay to Galeries Magazine, Paris	1988 April 15	1	36
Letter from IHF to Waldemar Januszczak of The Guardian	1988 April 16	1	37
Statement from Little Sparta	1988 April 16	1	38
Letter from IHF to Michel Blum, President of the Human Rights League, Paris	1988 April 17	1	39
Program, card, and drawing by Joyce Laing for <i>Diagraphe à Edimbourg</i> (Vigilants Saint-Just)	1988 April 21	1	40
Letter from Sue Finlay to the Saint-Just Vigilantes	1988 April 29	1	41
Press Release from Little Sparta, Strathclyde Regional Council	1988 April 30	1	42
Letter from IHF to the Director of Manchester City Art Galleries	1988 May 4	1	43
Letter to IHF from Serge Grunberg, French artist	1988 August 8	1	44
Open letter from IHF to Francoise Woimant and Anne Moeglin	1988 August 12	1	45



**Series III: Cards, Broad­sides, and Ephemera**

Press Release: Maquette by IHF and Chemetoff on display at the Royal Institute of British Architecture	1988 August 14	1	46
Statement by Sue Finlay - Saturne en Europe Press Conference, Strasbourg	1988 September 17	1	47
Letter from Patrick Ayres via New Arcadian Press (reiterate the order of Saint-Just)	1988 October 1	1	48
Letter from IHF to the editor of The Spectator	1987 October 14	1	49
Letter to Sue and Ian Hamilton Finlay from Peter Day	1988 November 4	1	50
Letter to Ian Hamilton Finlay from Alan Edwards	1988 November 5	1	51
Open letter from IHF to Simmons, Muirhead and Burton, Solicitors, and to the legal department of Times Newspapers	1988 November 18	1	52
Letter from IHF to Messrs. Imon Uirhea & Urto, Solicitors to Jonathan Hirschfeld	1988 November 20	1	53
Letter from IHF to President Mitterand of France	1988 November 25	1	54
Letter from IHF to the legal manager of Times Newspapers	1988 November 23	1	55
Letter from IHF to Marcel Patrick Manchon, Paris	1988 November 25	1	56
Letter from IHF to the Jewish Chronicle, London	1988 November 25	1	57
Letter from IHF to the editor of Artension	1988 November 25	1	58
Letter from IHF to Yves Jouffa, President of Human Rights League, Paris	1988 November 25	1	59
Letter to Human Rights League, Paris	1988 December 31	1	60
Draft of the droit de reponse sent to the French Press by Jean-Claude Zylberstein, Finlay's attorney	n.d.	1	61
Relevant Quotations, Little Spartan War (Saint-Just Vigilantes)	n.d.	1	62
Public Statement from Little Sparta, Strathclyde Regional Council	n.d.	1	63
Public Statement from Little Sparta	n.d.	1	64
Public statement from Little Sparta (withdrawing from the Autoroute A86 project)	n.d.	1	65
Press Release from Little Sparta, Finlay's attorneys Seaward and Zylberstein	n.d.	1	66
Statement from Little Sparta calling for support		1	67
Open letter from Little Sparta to the Saint-Just Vigilantes	n.d.	1	68
Statement calling for support from Little Sparta	n.d.	1	69
Addresses distributed from Little Sparta	n.d.	1	70
Press - Little Sparta and IHF	1987 October - 1988 September, n.d.	1	71

**Series III: Cards, Broad­sides, and Ephemera**

## Series III: Cards, Broad­sides, and Ephemera

**General note**

\* indicates title was taken from the catalog: Ian Hamilton Finlay & the Wild Hawthorn Press. Edinburgh: Graeme Murray, 1990. Catalog numbers are included.

**Scope and Contents note**

This series contains editions and ephemera given to Davidson by Finlay, much of which is inscribed.

		Box	Folder
The Wild Hawthorn Press: New Publications: 1987/1988 (pricelist)	[1988]	2	72
"Card for the Third Anniversary of Strathclyde Region's Assault on the Garden Temple" [4.201], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1986]	2	73
"Marat" [4.216], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	1986	2	74
"The Enlightenment" [4.235], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	1987	2	75
"Imprisoned in Every Italian Battleship..." (with Mark Stewart) [4.242] printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	76
"Advertising Fascism" [4.247], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	77
"Louis Treize" [4.248], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	1	78
"Myriam Salomon Owns..." [4.249], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	1	79
"Brout" [4.250], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	1	80
"Head of Gwyn Headley" [4.251], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	81
"Head of Waldemar Januszczak" [4.252], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	82
"La Tricoteuse" [4.253], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	83
"A Young Blade" [4.254], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	84
"From 'Clerihews for Liberals'" [4.255], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	85
"The Garden Is Open" [4.256], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press		2	86
"To All Saint-Juste Vigilantes..." [4.261], printed Christmas card (inscribed), Wild Hawthorn Press	1987	2	87
"Nature Is the Devil..." [4.265], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	88
"Cruel and Ingenious Sophists..." [4.266], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1987]	2	89
"Paris Is the Sink of All Vices" [4.267], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	1988	2	90
"1930/1980" [4.269] printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1988]	2	91
"Hedgehog Garden Hint" [4.277] printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1988]	2	92
"Basta" [4.278], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	[1988]	2	93
"After Basho" [4.282], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press	1988	2	94

**Series IV: Writing on Ian Hamilton Finlay**

"But Pleasures Are Like Poppies Spread"* [4.283], folding printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press [1988]	2	95
"A Definition of Michel Blum. Ambiguous, N."* [4.284], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press [1988]	2	96
"Desmoulins Connection"* [4.285], 25 printed cards, Wild Hawthorn Press [1988]	2	97
"A Fragment"* [4.287], printed Christmas card (inscribed), Wild Hawthorn Press 1988	2	98
"Carnation"* [7.29] card cut-out in envelope, Wild Hawthorn Press (inscribed) [1987]	2	99
[Ligue des Droits], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press n.d.	2	100
[Saint-Juste Vigilantes Watch This Space!], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press n.d.	2	101
[Shepherds-Bath Towels-Angels-Sheets...], folded, printed Christmas card (inscribed), Wild Hawthorn Press 1991	2	102
[A flak-damaged B-17 finds a friendly escort...] (with Gary Hincks), folded, printed Christmas card (inscribed), Wild Hawthorn Press 1993	2	103
[Saint Sebastian: martyred by liberals making 'points'], printed card, Wild Hawthorn Press 1994	2	104
[the October-coloured sails of Old Thames barges...], folded printed Christmas card, Wild Hawthorn Press 1994	2	105
[Midship Section] (with Gary Hincks), folded, printed Christmas card (inscribed), Wild Hawthorn Press 1996	2	106
Quotation cards, "Revolutionary Pursuits", IHF, Fondation Cartier 1987	2	107
Invitation: "Ian Hamilton Finlay: Works 1966-1986" 7/14-8/29/87 Victoria Miro Gallery [1987]	2	108
Invitation: "Ian Hamilton Finlay: Prints 1963-1997" 9/14-11/9/97 Museum am Ostwall Dortmund [1997]	2	109

**Series IV: Writing on Ian Hamilton Finlay****Scope and Contents note**

This series contains Davidson's academic writing and research on Ian Hamilton Finlay.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
"Ian Hamilton Finlay: (De)Signing the Landscape" - Peter Davidson n.d.	2	110
"Forces of Unity in the Heroic Emblems of Ian Hamilton Finlay" - Jeannine R.C. Gosschalk 1993, n.d.	2	111
Biography of Ian Hamilton Finlay - Peter Davidson n.d.	2	112
Secondary Bibliography (Ian Hamilton Finlay) n.d.	2	113
<i>Chapman 78-79 (Scotland's Quality Literary Magazine)</i> : Ian Hamilton Finlay 1994	2	114

**Series V: Other Materials**

<i>Word &amp; Image</i> vol. 21, no.4: "From Book to Garden and Back: Ian Hamilton Finlay" 2005	2	115
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**Series V: Other Materials**

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
<i>New Arcadian's Journal</i> no. 19, Autumn 1985: "Rousham" 1985	2	116
Materials on Stephen Bann 1981-1999, n.d.	2	117
Materials on Alec Finlay 1993-2014, n.d.	2	118
Materials on and by Harry Gilonis 1996-2004, n.d.	2	119

**Oversize Series III: Cards, Broadsides, and Ephemera**

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
"Blades"* [4.273] (with Gary Hincks), printed concertina, Wild Hawthorn Press [1988]	3	120
"Bicentenary with Tricolour"* [5.133] (with Gary Hincks-illustration, score - Peter Davidson) folded poster, Wild Hawthorn Press 1989	3	121
[Five Finials] (with Andrew Townsend), printed concertina, Wild Hawthorn Press 1992	3	122
[Apollinaire: A Variation] (with Gary Hincks: Christmas 1997) folded printed poster 1997	3	123
T-shirt with Tate Gallery tag, with text 'Fête-Champêtre' and illustration of airplanes n.d.	3	124