**Nature Over Again: The Garden Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay** / John Dixon Hunt.—

Prolific garden scholar John Dixon Hunt, Professor of the History and Theory of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, explores landscapes created by Scottish poet, publisher, and gardener Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) in what the author calls an “extended essay.” Divided into sixteen short sections, Hunt discusses the underlying themes of Finlay’s landscapes while focusing primarily on two: Finlay’s own garden in southern Scotland called Little Sparta, which he worked on from 1966 until his death, and Fleur de l’Air in Provence, completed in 2004. Acknowledging recent publications on both of these gardens, Hunt relieves himself of the necessity of providing in-depth descriptions of them, and turns away from research in the archives to the experience of the gardens themselves.

Reading is a crucial part of any Finlay landscape experience. Hunt addresses the cross-fertilization of writing and garden designing in Finlay’s work, particularly the influence of his concrete poetry on inscriptions found throughout his landscapes, and reveals classical references, evident in his use of emblems, aphorisms and sculptural elements. The relationship his work has to its predecessors such as Nicholas Poussin and landscape painting and William Shenstone’s post-1745 garden Leasowes is traced, as is his fascination with the French Revolution and Ermenonville, Girardin’s garden of the 1760s.

Essential to any successful landscape is the designer’s respect for the *genius loci*, or spirit of the place. Hunt relates Finlay’s sensitivity to the *genius loci*, giving his use of inscriptions of Goethe, Pascal, Petrarch and others, and the inclusion of classical garden structures at Fleur de l’Air, as examples.

Hunt uses military analogies of attack and retreat to describe Finlay’s landscapes, relating how the poet conceived the garden as an attack. Not content to let spectators experience only the pastoral and idyllic, or garden as retreat, Finlay insisted on revealing nature’s darker, more ruthless side. This, too, is read to be analogous with the French Revolution.

The final section explores the relationship of culture to nature and nature to culture and the promotion of gardens as art, as Hunt assesses the impact of Finlay’s gardens on contemporary landscape architects.

This book will appeal to the art historian, landscape architect, and semiologist. It is generously illustrated with color photographs throughout, and while many are small and dark making it difficult to discern details, they give the reader a sense of the landscapes and features portrayed.

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