



Contemporary & Post-War Art | Prints & Multiples (653)

Wed, 11th Aug 2021, Live Online | Viewing in Edinburgh

Viewing Times:

Viewing now closed

Lot 139

Estimate: £8000 - £12000 + Fees

§ IAN HAMILTON FINLAY (SCOTTISH 1925-2006) '1794 - THE FALL OF CROTON', 1994

From a series of six fragments created in 1994 with Annet Stirling, Purbeck limestone

Approx. 56cm x 111.8cm

Exhibited: David Nolan Gallery, New York

Note:

Ian Hamilton Finlay was one of Scotland's great polymaths: a poet, visual artist and writer. He is recognised and collected on an international stage. Significant examples of his work remain scarce to market and Lyon & Turnbull are subsequently delighted to present 'The Fall of Croton' for sale.

Finlay's work is noted for its sophisticated, scholarly reference points, and he also continually explored specific motifs throughout his career. Writer and gallerist Richard Ingleby explains this work in more depth:

"The first thing to note is the date of the inscription **1794**. Ian made this work in 1994, 200 years after the *inscribed* event, looking back to that most dramatic of years when the 'terroir' took over the French Revolution, and the likes of Robespierre, Danton, St Just, and indeed many others, lost their heads. It is one of a series of six 'fragments' made in the early 1990s which pair a particular year of the main events of the French Revolution with an appropriate epithet.

The Fall of Croton refers to another point in history when a form of 'terror' reigned, specifically, it refers to the city of Croton, or Crotona as it was also known, in the South of Italy circa 400BC. History has long since forgotten its significance, but at one point in time it was a place of great learning, culture, and debate - both philosophical and political. In fact it was one of the most populated and powerful places in the ancient world - dominated by the philosophical oligarchy of Pythagoras, before it was destroyed by the rampaging hoards of democracy - the Loctrians and Rhegians. Such was the devastation and slaughter that the city never recovered and civilisation, as they knew it, effectively vanished.

In short, it is a piece that articulates Ian's relationship with the French Revolution and the classical world: a relationship with complex nuance but a fairly straightforward central drive. To borrow the words of Jean de Loist writing in the Cartier Foundation catalogue *Poursuites Revolutionnaires* in 1987:

"For Finlay, the French Revolution is not a theme which illustrates, as one might ordinarily say of a painter and his subject. The Revolution is a metaphor of the artist's moral attitude to the world."

We are grateful to Richard Ingleby for his kind assistance in cataloguing this work.