Guide to the Concrete Poetry Collection

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Guide to the Concrete Poetry Collection, 1960-1973

Collection number: Mss 16

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Concrete Poetry Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1960-1973
Collection Number: Mss 16
Collector: Finlay, Ian Hamilton
Extent: .3 linear feet (1 half-size box and 1 oversize folder)
Repository: University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Department of Special Collections
Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010
Physical Location: Del Sur
Language: English.
Access Restrictions
None.
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Acquisition Information

History/Biography
Concrete Poetry, a movement developed in the 1950s that reached its peak in the 1960s, emphasized the visual aspects of words and examined the relationship between visual form and literary content. Art critic William Feaver described it as a "blend of words used for their literal meanings and words used for their face value or visual appearance." It traces its origins to the traditions of visual poetry, found in the experimental works of Stephane Mallarmé, Lewis Carroll, and Ezra
Pound. Adopted by members of the literary avant-garde of the mid-twentieth century, Concrete Poetry became the first truly international poetry movement.

The movement was initiated in 1953 by the Swiss poet Eugen Gomringer, who published a book of poems inspired by the earlier concrete painting movement. That same year, three poets in Brazil, Haraldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos, and Déicio Pignatari, formed a group known as Noigandres to publish works in a style they termed Poesia Concreta. Working independently, the Swedish artist Öyvind Fahlström developed his own Concrete Poetry manifesto in 1953, but unfortunately, it was neither translated nor widely disseminated for many years. He had been inspired by experiments in musique concrète produced by the French sound engineer Pierre Schaeffer.

By 1962, Concrete Poetry was an established artistic movement, and it attracted the attention of the Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay. Having recently established the Wild Hawthorn Press to produce the works of contemporary artists, Finlay was soon using his publications to showcase his own explorations of the new form. Having corresponded with both Gomringer and the Noigandres group, Finlay became a major promoter of the genre, organizing and participating in numerous exhibitions.

Ian Hamilton Finlay was born in 1925 in the Bahamas, but his family returned to Scotland while he was a child. His formal education ended at the outbreak of World War II, when his family was relocated to the remote Orkney Islands. After serving in the army towards the end of the war, he began writing short stories and poetry, with his first published work coming in 1958. With his friend Jessie McGuffie, he founded the Wild Hawthorn Press in 1961, through which he published the periodical Poor. Old. Tired. Horse., which was a showcase for Concrete Poetry. In the mid-1960s, Finlay and his wife settled on a country estate outside Edinburgh called Stonypath, where he began building a garden that incorporated both his poetry and sculpture. The garden, known as Little Sparta, became very popular in the 1980s, largely through Finley's protracted - and well-publicized - battles with the Scottish Arts Council.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The manuscript collection contains copies of brochures, catalogs, conference guides, exhibit notices, flyers, lists, posters, programs, and prospectuses, mainly European, collected by Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay, founder of Wild Hawthorn Press. This is part of a larger collection of several hundred titles, most cataloged individually and searchable on Pegasus, the UCSB Libraries online catalog.

| Box 1: 1 | United Kingdom, 1965 - 1971 |
| Box 1: 2 | Germany/Austria, 1964 - 1973 |
| Box 1: 3 | Italy, 1966 - 1972 |
| Box 1: 4 | Spain, 1966 |
| Box 1: 5 | United States, 1965 - 1967 |
| Box 1: 6 | Other Countries - Argentina, Czechoslovakia, Japan, Netherlands, Yugoslavia, 1965 - 1971 |