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EILEEN GRAY

Invitation to an Intellectual Journey

*Carmen Espegel***Introduction**

Despite the limited number of works that the Anglo-Irish designer and architect Eileen Gray (1878–1976) has left us, the amazingly high quality of her creative legacy reveals her historical role as one of the most prominent figures of twentieth-century modernism. Her in-depth research into form-building rooted in her thorough knowledge of contemporary spiritual and material needs of humanity. She was capable of incorporating subjectivity into the realm of the objective, finding synergies between science and conscience, and integrating rationality and intimacy during the time of great political, economic, and social upheavals. Arguably, the spiritual energy and the vital force conveyed by Eileen Gray's work stimulated the remarkable aesthetic excellence and transcendence of her trail-blazing ideas, paving the way to establishing the paradigms of modernism.¹

During the interwar era, her designs were widely published in lead architectural periodicals such as *L'Architecture Vivante*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui*, *Der Baumeister*, *Les Cahiers d'Art*, *L'Arredamento Moderno*, *Wendingen*, *Vogue*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. But over the course of the two decades that followed World War II, they virtually disappeared from the professional scene. It was not until 1968 that, thanks to the scholarly contribution by the foremost architectural historian Joseph Rykwert, the work of this “pioneer of modern design” was taken into consideration once again.² After the famed Hôtel Drouot auction held in Paris in 1972, where personal belongings of the fashion designer and patron Jacques Doucet (1853–1929) were traded and where the folding screen by Gray's design, ironically named *Le Destin*, was sold for the considerable sum of 36,000 USD, her name resurfaced in the world of architecture, creating a resurgence of interest in her extraordinary pieces.

Eileen Gray, who always designed for herself, that is, for a specific individual, has received the unanimous admiration of the most demanding critics; a broad recognition of her creative, productive career; and an ethical and aesthetic stance of long-standing rigor toward her 150 designs and forty-five architectural and interior renovation projects, of which only nine were built.

Independent and solitary, she was never interested in belonging to a specific group, even though she did have close ties with the most radical avant-garde figures of the time. Her great longevity—her remarkable intellectual production lasted for seventy years—allowed her to observe how her designs served as a link between the efforts of the pioneers of early twentieth-century avant-garde and the critical work of the revisionists toward mid-century modernism. She entered the profession through the world of craftsmanship, making lacquered pieces, and furthered her practice by producing single objects and furniture, as well as developing interior spaces, and finally, at the age of fifty,



Figure 7.1 Eileen Gray. Portrait by Berenice Abbot, Paris, c. 1926.

Source: National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

she crossed the threshold to the world of architecture. The varied scale of her commissions conferred a remarkable uniqueness to the outstanding range of her creativity.

Gray: A Nonconformist

Born into a distinguished family, Eileen Gray spent her youth in her native Ireland and in London, the city that inspired her growing interest for drawing and fine arts. However, she was only able to escape the constraints of Victorianism after immigrating to Paris in 1902, where she continued her studies in graphic arts and painting at the École Colarossi and the Académie Julian. During those tumultuous years, Paris was the renowned capital of Cubism, Art Deco, and Sergei Diaghilev's Russian ballets, which would greatly influence Gray's worldview and the way she integrated body and movement into her designs of objects and furniture. The city of Paris "adopted" her, and she spent her life there until her passing in 1976 at the age of ninety-eight.

Eileen Gray's cultural "exile" was shared with that of her compatriots, the Irish avant-garde writer and literary critic James Joyce (1882–1941) and writer and theater director Samuel Beckett (1906–1989). In aspiration to withstand the rigid Victorian morality, they were calling for the incorporation of emotional, vital, and sensitive components into the realm of the arts, perceived through the lens of reason and science.

Eileen Gray's first visit to Paris in 1900 for a World's Fair was life-changing—two years later she decided to leave the stubborn and constrained British capital and establish herself in France, and she

settled in a Paris apartment on Rue Bonaparte. The City of Light provided the setting for extraordinary avant-garde movement bursting into the artistic scene, and despite her shyness, Gray felt at home in this bohemian atmosphere. With the assistance of the Japanese craftsman Seizo Sugawara, she perfected her lacquering technique and started decorating large surfaces, experimenting with metal, mother of pearl incrustations, and bas-reliefs, while expanding her chromatic palette beyond the traditional range of colors toward including deeper blues and greens.

She sought to bring the opposites together in an attempt to create integrative designs that merged modernism and tradition, functionalism and spirituality, abstraction and figurativeness. Arguably, that approach would explain why *Le Destin*, the folding screen commissioned by Jacques Doucet and designed in 1913, paved the path that Gray would take to create her modernist pieces. In this work made of four panels lacquered in an intense red color, she combined sinuous abstract lines on the back side with an allegorical front side imagery depicting two naked youths, one of whom carried an old man wrapped in a cloak. The clash of styles presented the unique new take toward the syncretism of her future designs.

Eileen's passion for travel led her to a transatlantic journey to New York in 1912, and she spontaneously decided to cross the entire North American continent by train all the way to California and then travel along the coast from San Francisco to Seattle.

During World War I, she resided in London and continued to work on lacquered pieces with Sugawara, yet without visible commercial success. Her first notable interior design commission, aimed at integrating lacquered work, textiles, and furniture, was the *Rue de Lota apartment* in Paris, which belonged to Madame Mathieu-Lévy, the second owner of the Suzanne Talbot fashion house. Gray started working on that project upon her return to Paris at the end of war, and it turned into an ongoing effort consisting of several phases. Gray was immersed in the eccentric and sensual Orientalist atmosphere of the time, yet she managed to keep a distance between her bohemian circle and her practical commission, conceiving of a proposal that was functional and abstract at the same time and therefore contained essentially modern properties while also conveying an outspoken respect toward the stylistic revival. Her sumptuous furnishings were contrasted not only with panels decorated with a rhythmically undulating motif but also with an extensive collection of antique art. In her last intervention in 1924, this contrast was enhanced by incorporating vestibule spaces decorated with 450 lacquered black blocks, creating an effective, cohesive atmosphere.

In 1922, following the business model established by the French architect and designer Pierre Chareau (1883–1950) and craftsman and interior designer Francis Jourdain (1876–1958), Eileen Gray established her own shop in Paris, the *Galerie Jean Désert* on 217 Rue de Faubourg Saint-Honoré, a store that sold her own pieces and remained open until 1930. That commercial space witnessed a gradual transformation of the artist, from the aesthetics of decorativism to the splendors of pragmatic modernism. Gray seemed to have a profound knowledge of the materials she worked with, their *raison d'être*, and their limitations and peculiarities, be it steel, sycamore wood, or celluloid. A team of artisans assisted her in perfecting each piece, following consecutive experiments and tests. Her synthetic approach balanced the intellectual rigor with the meticulous precision of manual labor.

For her first designs, set in the world of Art Deco, she chose highly sensual, luxurious, and sumptuous materials, while for her later works she focused on the industrial austerity of modern matter.

Gray's mysterious *Monte-Carlo Boudoir*, displayed at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in the Pavillon de Marsan in 1923, was the unambiguous predecessor of what would be her open plan spaces divided into different areas by the use of furniture. This eclectic piece blended a variety of practical uses together to create an autonomous atmosphere brought to life by a breath of lyricism. Its size and transformative properties were conceived as the traits of a complex cell envisaged to accommodate a personal pursuit of an individual, an idea that would inspire the Modern movement.



Figure 7.2 Chambre à coucher-boudoir Monte-Carlo, design Eileen Gray, exhibited in the XIV Salon des Artistes Décorateurs, 1923.

Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Credit: © The National Museum of Ireland and Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Gray: A Modernist

From 1924, her personal relationship with Jean Badovici (1893–1956) greatly influenced Gray's professional life by orienting her career toward architecture and modernism. Badovici, a Romanian architect and critic resettled to Paris, in 1923–1933 codirected with Christian Zervos and Albert Morancé one of the most prestigious periodicals in Europe of the time, *L'Architecture Vivante*, which published the iconic works of the new, modern, international architecture. Around 1926, Badovici commissioned Gray to design a small refuge for him in southern France, with the aim of creating a pioneering, experimental model integrating the ideals of the Modern movement. Gray, a woman of talent and a great open mind who also retained sufficient financial resources, purchased a plot and gave it to her partner as a present, and there she began to learn the practice of architecture, by frequently using *L'Architecture Vivante* as a textbook.

Gray's approach to architecture was self-taught; a radical change took place in her career with the design of the villa in Roquebrune, the E.1027 or *Maison en Bord de Mer*, where with a critical stance, she adhered to the ideals of the avant-garde.³

In this small but infinite house, the human existence reverberated toward a phenomenological experience. The primary functions of the house were hidden in order to reveal new, previously unheard of uses, turning the dweller into an actor that dialogued with an inventive and eventful stage set–like design. Gray transformed useful practical elements into the objects of art, thus creating a place for laidback enjoyment.



Figure 7.3 Living room of E.1027, design Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, 1929.

Source: © The National Museum of Ireland and Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Courtesy: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

By combining two compositional principles which, a priori, were antithetical, such as the *collage-objet trouvé* and *symmetry*, Gray revealed her creative abilities. First, she placed a set of unassociated elements in one continuous space, bringing them together and forming a balanced unit with parts that complemented one another. In the same way, the syntactic rules of a plastic composition were based on the actions of decentering, joining, or folding volumes and surfaces. In E.1027 the eclecticism manifested itself by Gray's view on modernism, which for her was rooted both in English domesticity and in the Mediterranean tradition. The rationalist functionality of the Anglo-Saxon interior and the Mediterranean approach toward the relationship with its natural surroundings—for example, the implementation of architectural elements that mediate between the interior and the exterior, along with the use of climate control features—made the house an extraordinary object of the avant-garde.

Traditional separation of interior design and architecture was irrelevant, due to an ongoing process of transformation from immobile elements to movable furniture. Her holistic approach to architectural workmanship led Gray toward the integration of a wide variety of artwork. Her walls became more solid by incorporating dense macrostructures used as furniture. Similarly, fixed and movable objects constantly made spaces vary and change. Walls, windows, awnings, niches, partitions, built-in features, curtains, folding screens, rugs, and chaises constituted a multilayered, choreographed architectural composition filled with lyrics and poetry. Even the names she gave to her pieces of furniture presented a combination of enigmatic and modern tones, that is, the *Nonconformist* chair, the *Transat* chair, and the *Bibendum* chair.

Gray: A Builder

Eileen Gray experimented with industrial materials and new assembly techniques, both in her designs for the *Maison en Bord de Mer* and for the furniture she continued to produce for the Jean Désert gallery. The combination of intellectual and trade-based approaches enabled her to imply correct construction methods and perfectly execute her designs. Retrospectively, her pieces of furniture did not belong to a specific style; what defined them was their efficiency. Her advanced pieces differed greatly from her first exercises.

After the construction was finished in 1929, she became a founding member of the Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM), along with Pierre Chareau, René Herbst, Le Corbusier, Robert Mallet-Stevens, Jean Prouvé, Sonia Delaunay, the sculptors Jean and Joël Martel, and Gustave Miklós, among others. The UAM united interior designers and architects who opposed the conservative positions of the dominant Société des Artistes Décorateurs.

In 1929, Gray reconstructed Badovici's Parisian apartment on *Rue de Chateaubriand*.

In developing the designs for this place with an irregular plan and a single room of barely forty square meters, she took to the extreme the utilitarian approach that she experimented with at *Roquebrune*. The most audacious area was the hallway, which also served as the entrance to the bathroom, and included ceiling storage spaces as well as the kitchen closet camouflaged by shiny curtains and perforated steel screens.

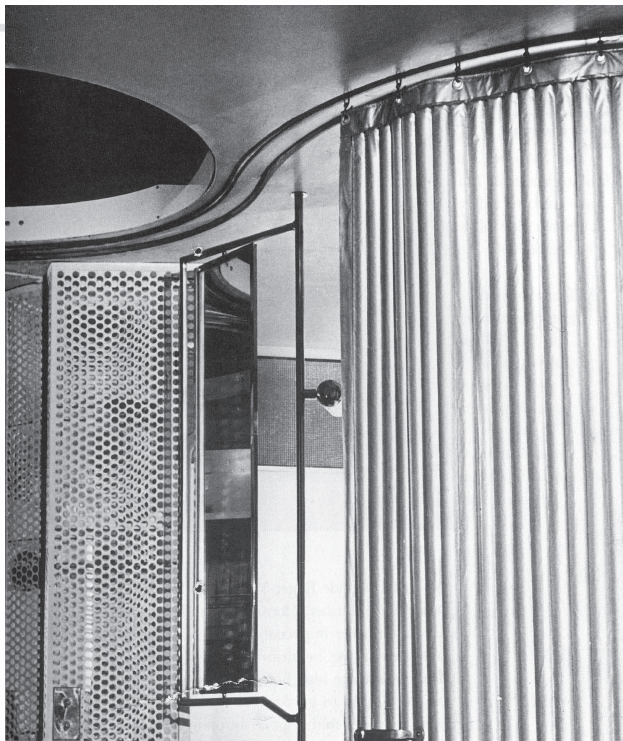


Figure 7.4 Apartment for Jean Badovici on the Rue de Chateaubriand, design Eileen Gray, 1929. Detail of the entry-storage and shower with metallic curtain.

Source: National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Two events marked the year 1930 for Eileen Gray: the closing of the Jean Désert Gallery and the presentation of E.1027: *Maison en Bord de Mer* at the first exhibition of the Union des Artistes Modernes held at the Pavillon de Marsan in the Tuileries Palace in Paris.

In the designs that followed, she continued her research. Just a few years later, Gray and Badovici separated, and she moved to what would become her new summer home near the mountains of Castellar, *Tempe à Pailla*, where the simplicity of Roquebrune evolved into elaborate yet less spectacular designs. The house was built by adoptive reuse of the existing structure of water cisterns, two of which were turned into a garage and a basement. Both at Tempe à Pailla and at E.1027, Gray incorporated an interior skin that had greatly impacted the living spaces.

In 1936, when vacationing in France became a conventional practice, Gray designed a complex vacation center that combined a permanent infrastructure with a series of temporary housing units. The permanent section accommodated several types of properties—the dormitories, bathrooms, and laundromat on the upper level, and a kitchen, dining room, and library on the ground floor. Gray also designed another building with a restaurant and several dining halls and foresaw the installation of a series of cultural and sports facilities.

After the end of World War II, she designed a social and cultural center, a multifunctional place with a distinctive roof that served as the ceiling over the large performance hall and as the seating area of an outdoor amphitheater. The facility also accommodated a restaurant, a library, and an exhibition room.

When she was seventy-five years old, Eileen Gray started a new building project, *Lou Pérou*, the extension of an old cabin finished in 1958 that would become her last summer residence looking over St. Tropez. A stone wall enveloped the building along the perimeter, “creating a terrace and a garden at the same level as the house. To the west of the existing structure, she built a new wing with a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and a loggia.”⁴

Gray: A Precursor

Eileen Gray’s works became the basis for a critical revision of the Modern movement—they amalgamated the variety of trends of the 1920s avant-garde, and they breathed life into the stubborn rationalism. In the late 1950s, the third generation of modernists would adopt these premises by establishing a meaningful reverse from the functionalist orthodoxy through a deeper understanding of the context and regional and social factors.

By resorting to the world of senses as opposed to the mere rationalism, Eileen Gray was a pioneer, and that was her argument in the conversation with Jean Badovici, published in the magazine *L’Architecture Vivante* along with the article illuminating E.1027. In her response to the question that Badovici suggested in that dialogue, about her take on the challenges of the theoretical abstraction of modern architecture not being able to meet the spiritual or physical needs of humanity, Gray stated that the syncretism of both concepts—science-abstraction and senses-spirituality—was inevitable. She noted that intellectual frigidity was needed for modern architecture to grow roots and develop but that the time of transition had passed, and now people who inhabited architecture return “to an emotion purified by knowledge, enriched by ideas including the knowledge and understanding of scientific achievements.”⁵

This relatively utopian stance reflected on her study of the idea of human habitat with the aim of improving it that led her to projects she carried out after Roquebrune, with the focus on minimum dwellings, collective buildings, and designs for the vacation center. Few architects have expressed so much meaning in such a limited set of built objects. Her self-imposed obligation to adhere to the essence of things and to renounce ornamentation did not pilot a sterile functionalism. To the contrary, there is an extraordinary quality that gives those objects, which in a way are colloquial, a secret

magnetic attraction, a sheen that keeps them alive in our memory. Gray's work, firmly sustained by her refined command of the construction trade, and her dexterous understanding of art as a vicarious extension of life remained unequaled.

Eileen Gray and the Great Figure of Reference

Gray and Le Corbusier shared certain ideological stances in the sense that they both understood architecture as a form of art. However, Gray rejected an epic approach to practice and chimerical idealism, choosing instead a more lyrical, everyday path. Her revolutionary perspective was more democratic, since she understood the individual as a specific being and not as a generic entity, unlike Le Corbusier, who had more elitist, abstract, and solipsistic views. Gray's position is utopian in a positivist sense, not because she hoped to free society from suffering but because she researched human habitat through the E.1027 house in order to improve it. Let us recall her later designs regarding minimum dwellings, collective housing, and the vacation center.⁶

At the *Maison en Bord de Mer*, she did not use mechanical analogies to mimic the form of a machine but focused on functional efficiency. The concept of a machine was implemented, instead, as a design mechanism, from the application of the "camping" style, to the division of spaces, to the noble presentation of all utilities, without diminishing the frankness of the idea by distorting it into decorativeness.⁷ The Taylorist notion of efficiency, economy, productivity, and precision was consented and used by Eileen Gray as a representation of maxims in her design for E.1027.

Gray aimed to convey mystery in her designs. In this sense, a door was a passage to a surprise, a wish to penetrate, and a transition that was about to reveal the pleasure of suspense. Le Corbusier admired the E.1027 villa and admitted that the house was a product of a sophisticated intellectual process.⁸ Le Corbusier visited Roquebrune frequently, and there he discovered Gray's design for the vacation center and decided to offer her a stand at the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris. He described the project enthusiastically in the catalogue *Des Canons, Des Munitions? Merci! Des Logis . . . S.V.P.*⁹

There are many affinities between Gray's and Le Corbusier's proposals. In fact, Stanislaus von Moos even speculated that the master collaborated with her in the design of E.1027, saying that "he was a friend of Badovici and probably supported his efforts to become an architect. . . . It is certainly no accident that it shows similarities with the house that Le Corbusier built for his mother in Vevey in 1923."¹⁰ Le Corbusier would later write a letter to Gray praising the villa and recognizing that she was the author, even though he also expressed a veiled criticism toward certain details, such as his suggestion to Badovici to remove the curved screen at the entrance, something that, fortunately, the latter never did.¹¹ Le Corbusier argued that this piece was a visual obstacle that prevented the direct, panoramic perception of interior spaces, an interpretation that disputed Gray's proposal of a refined progression and gradation of privacy in the entrance area.

In 1938 and 1939, Le Corbusier painted several frescoes in the Maison without even asking permission from the architect. This action, which hurt Gray deeply to the point of considering it an act of vandalism, led to the eventual distancing of the Gray-Badovici couple from the master. In total, Le Corbusier painted seven murals, of which five still remain in the house, one of them covering the service entrance in the vestibule, thus invalidating the beautiful and enigmatic entrance that Gray had conceived; another one spans the white wall behind the large divan in the multipurpose room, thus altering the peaceful resting place that she had envisioned.¹²

The third mural was painted on the wall that separated the dining room from the staircase, the fourth in the guest room, and the fifth and most well known of them all, titled *Sous les Pilotis*, was materialized on the ground-floor wall between the porch and the house. Both the iconography used by Le Corbusier, nudes with a highly erotic component, and the forceful plasticity of the figures



Figure 7.5 Fresco by Le Corbusier on the wall of E.1027 house between the living room and the shower area, 1937–1938.

Source: Frescos Le Corbusier/ADAGP, 2015, L4 (10)53.

came into conflict with the softness and gradual fluidity of the interior spaces of the villa, also affecting the subtle balance that existed between the architectural elements.

After the painting of the murals, the relationship between Le Corbusier and Gray deteriorated. In April 1948, in a special issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* dedicated to Le Corbusier, the master stated that

this villa which I have animated with paintings was very beautiful, with a white interior, and could have well done without my talent. . . . The walls chosen to receive the nine grand murals were precisely the dullest, the most insignificant. In this manner, the beautiful walls remain and the indifferent ones become interesting.¹³

Gray's name was not even mentioned in a footnote, and Le Corbusier never attributed the work to her until he wrote the epitaph on Badovici's passing in 1956.

There is an interesting epilogue to the story of E.1027 that brings Gray, Badovici, and Le Corbusier back together. In 1950, the master bought a small plot next to the Maison, and there, two years later, he built his experimental cell, the Cabanon, in the hope that one day he would also own the villa. After Badovici's death, the property was passed on to his sister, a nun who lived in Romania, and Le Corbusier persuaded his Swiss friend, architect Mme. Schelbert, to buy it, which she did in the belief that the house had been built by Le Corbusier himself. Eileen Gray never entered the house again—she

was not even able to collect her furniture—but Mme. Schelbert kept the house exactly the way Gray had it while she lived there, and she invited Le Corbusier over for a longer stay. In August 1965, at the age of seventy-eight, the master went down to the sea for a swim and never came back.

Conclusion: Mediterranean Sensuality

Throughout Eileen Gray's work, and especially in the *Maison en Bord de Mer*, there is a persistent, radical, pioneering idea that serves as the unifying thread of her creative career: the Mediterranean sensuality, understood as a form of living and a culture of a vital bond with the environment.

The Mediterranean culture and modernity are concepts that even the theorists of the Modern movement linked together in order to conceal their rebellion against history. From the Mediterranean tradition, the Modern movement took external parameters that, actually, determined it, such as pure, noble, fresh, and abstract whiteness; clear-edged volumes; and the flatness of the roofs. However, very few modernist buildings convey the knowledge of use of light, the mixed spatial gradations between the exterior and the interior, the defensive and erotic forms of concealment, the infinite gray areas between the open and closed spaces, the richness of light-control mechanisms, and the lucid, contemplative, classical features that are intrinsic to Mediterranean architecture—the traits that, however, can be found in the *Maison en Bord de Mer*.

Many of the parameters that differentiate a villa from a house were adopted at Roquebrune—the culture of leisure that it encourages with its spaces for reading or enjoying music; the promise of isolation that it offers by means of its multiple and unique partitions between rooms; the invitation it makes for self-search as an individual and as member of an intellectual collective; the spatial



Figure 7.6 Terrace of E.1027 by Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, furnished with a rug and the Transat chair, design by Eileen Gray.

Source: National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

richness that it conveys by expanding inner spaces outward while also compressing them inward; the construction of a lost paradise recreating a lifestyle that shuns class and gender; the way it becomes a cultural symbol that expresses its ideological commitment to the creative avant-garde; the way it harbors individual development without renouncing the collective by endlessly searching for multiplicity; how it reflects on anthropomorphism and ergonomics and establishes a relationship and a dialogue between art and nature with the coetaneous use of naturalism and artifice; its search for privileged views while avoiding being seen; the certain ambiguity it transmits, in the sense of the “fourth dimension” between reality and illusion that Goethe mentioned, by the thoughtful use of materials, geometries, and spaces; the mechanisms used to represent the inhabitant through signs and symbols that can only be understood and deciphered by followers; the mutation that takes place from the cult of construction to the art of the void by conforming spaces without physical barriers; the form in which it humanizes nature to give it its real scale, highlighting and dramatizing the outer universe by introducing a measured geometry.

It also reveals an understanding of a culture that is deeply rooted, slow, simple, and dramatic. E.1027 stipulates an abstraction of modernity due to fact that it is located in a specific place. It is a “regional” house, in the best sense of the word, if we consider it the spearhead of the movement that would reinterpret modernist postulates in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁴ However, Martiensen, in his article “Mediterranean Houses,” published in the *South African Architectural Record* in 1941, argued that it was a highly abstract work, antithetical in its approach to more vernacular stances and a rationalized solution to Mediterranean issues when compared to the works that Gio Ponti (1891–1979) or Bernard Rudofsky (1905–1988) built in this same geographical region. Rykwert elaborated that Gray delivered the language of the Modern movement in this house, even though it was an “original interpretation” of it.

The integration of modernity and the Mediterranean character is readable in the design of the entrance, reflecting in its functionality on the Mediterranean paradigm by channeling a zigzag layout, producing a gradual and erotic access. Moreover, the “mechanical windows” recall the *fenêtres en longueur* of modernist orthodoxy, but they are taller, in accordance with the Mediterranean tradition. They play a crucial role in the masterful permanent ventilation system and almost reach the floor level in order to offer views of the plot, thus conveying the feeling of all-embracing openness, conceived as screens in themselves, given their lightness and mobility as objects and their capacity to transform closed spaces. The flat roof also addresses this approach by the way it intertwines the modernist canon with the Mediterranean environment: double-layered, it provides shade and cross-ventilation.

While the Maison is greatly indebted to the Mediterranean tradition, it also peeks into the future, sensing and pioneering architectural aspects that would be clearly defined in years to come, that is, vitality, randomness, a complex understanding of interior design and architecture, mobility, and transience.

From the 1970s onward, Gray’s work would turn into a subject of research interest for critics because of their unique interpretation of the otherwise unyielding premises of the Modern movement. Eileen Gray’s work could be summarized as a condensation of and a careful balance between varieties of contemporary architectural trends. The value of her work resides in that it is synthetic, dialectic, and mystifying, yet rational. Her ethical and aesthetic commitment achieves, without succumbing to eclecticism, a simultaneity of the classical and the modern vocabulary. This reveals her great talent and refinement which, in turn, enabled her to produce more diverse and complex designs, resulting in an architecture as an enduring query.

Notes

1. In the article that Jean Badovici, an architect and architecture critic active in Paris, published in 1924 about the Monte Carlo Boudoir, titled “Eileen Gray. Interior 1922,” which can be considered a first encounter

- of the ideas Badovici and Gray would develop on the *Maison en Bord de Mer* in 1929, the author elaborated on the role of an artist as the conveyer of the internal connection between humanity and the universe: “The role of an artist is to foresee the eternal movement of sensibilities, to express the secret relationships between mankind and the universe, and to discover the uncharted paths that science only reveals as abstract and theoretical implications.” He further argued that “among the works of all artists of our time . . . nobody contributes more than Eileen Gray, in adherence with the laws of the mysterious world that science reveals to us.” He also implied that “her work is not a more or less laborious application of abstract concepts, it is the evidence to a rising integrative spirit” of the time and that Eileen’s “strong, albeit restless personality, inspires the austerity of the geometric constructions” and her “breath of deep lyricism enlivens the abstract conception.” Jean Badovici, “Eileen Gray. Interior 1922,” *L’Architecture Vivante* (Fall–Winter 1924): 27–28. Translated from French by the author.
2. Joseph Rykwert, “Eileen Gray: Pioneer of Design,” *Architectural Review* (December 1972): 357–61.
 3. The alphanumeric game expressed in E.1027 is a reference to the collaboration between Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici for the construction of this project. The code was E = Eileen, 10 = Jean, 2 = Badovici, 7 = Gray.
 4. Carmen Espegel, *Women Architects in the Modern Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 122.
 5. Jean Badovici and Eileen Gray, “De l’Éclectisme au Doute (Dialogue),” in *L’Architecture Vivante* (London: Da Capo Press & Trewin Copplestone Pub. Ltd, 1975), 17–21.
 6. Petite Maison 2 (40 sq. m for a couple with two children), Petite Maison 4 (37 sq. m for a couple with four children), Maison Minimum 5 (33 sq. m for a couple with two children). In Stefan Hecker and Christian F. Müller, *Eileen Gray, Works and Projects* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1993), 164–66; Maison Famille Nombreuse, Maison Collective (forty-two housing units for two, three, or seven people). In Hecker and Müller, *Eileen Gray*, 168–71. A design carried out between 1935 and 1937 combined a residential building, a restaurant complex, a theater, a gymnasium, demountable stalls, and prefab concrete homes (*Maison en Ellipse*). It included graphic material, a model, and photographs and was on display in Le Corbusier’s *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* in 1937. See: Hecker and Müller, *Eileen Gray*, 196–207.
 7. Description: *L’Architecture Vivante* (Fall–Winter 1929): 25–28.
 8. Le Corbusier even gave the South African architect Rex Martienssen a guided tour of the house in 1938; later, Martienssen would publish it under the title “Mediterranean Houses” in the *South African Architectural Record* (October 1941): 350–58.
 9. Le Corbusier, *Des Canons, des Munitions? Mercil Des Logis . . . S.V.P.* (Paris: L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui, 1937): 96–97.
 10. Stanislaus von Moos, “Le Corbusier 1933–1960,” *Oppositions* 19, no. 20 (Winter/Spring 1980): 106.
 11. Quoted from the letter that Le Corbusier wrote to Jean Badovici in 1949, in which he criticized the spine-screen furniture piece at the entrance. In the same letter he included a sketch of the entrance of E.1027: “Je vous conseille de dévisser dans la salle cette guimbarde en contreplaqué qui ne fait qu’un pseudo et illusoire pendant à celle de la salle de bains. Votre pièce se transformera et l’entrée en sera tout autre.” (I recommend that you disassemble this piece of junk made of plywood that is nothing more than a pseudo illusory companion of the one that exists in the shower area. This room will change and the entrance will be totally different.) Document from the *Archives Fondation Le Corbusier*, Paris.
 12. Le Corbusier himself, as well as other historians, mentions nine paintings, even though only seven have been documented.
 13. Reference made to frescoes painted by Le Corbusier in villas at Cap-Martin and at Vézelay. *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, Special issue dedicated to Le Corbusier (April 1948).
 14. In reference to Kenneth Frampton’s statement on regionalism.

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