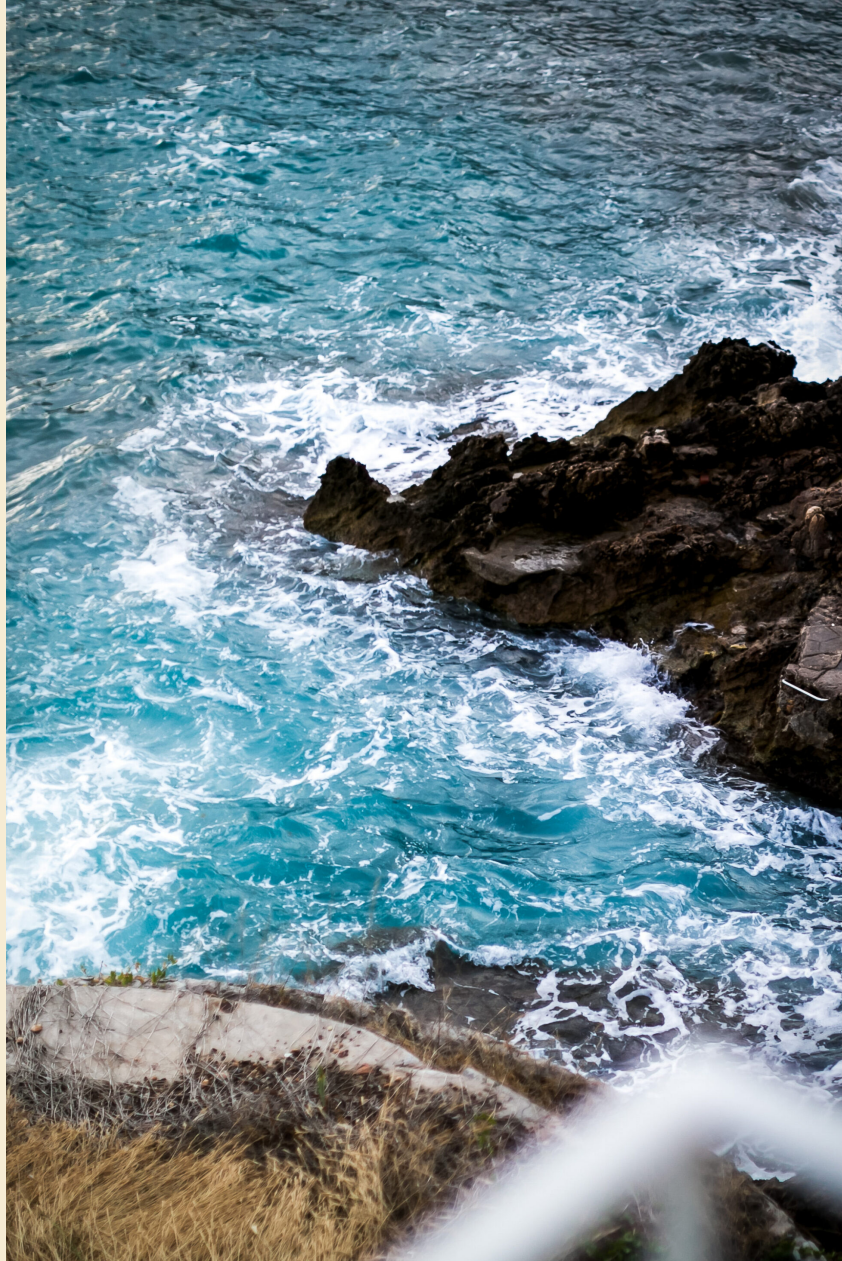


LAYERS OF

REMEMBERING EILEEN GRAY

(IN)VISIBILITY

"I realised, she was the one I had been
looking for and longing for."



KERSTIN OLSSON
SUPERVISORS / ISABELLE DOUCET & BRI GAUGER
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CHALMERS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND CIVIL ENGINEERING



CHALMERS

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(IN)VISIBILITY

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MASTER THESIS IN ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY
CRITICAL SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES

CHALMERS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND CIVIL ENGINEERING

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Bri and Isabelle, for encouraging me to find my own voice when writing, for believing in my idea, and for sharing your knowledge with me. Having you as my supervisors have been fantastic. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Amanda and Frida, I am forever grateful that architecture brought us together. With you by my side I found my place in the school, at last.

To Anna and Lars, mum and dad, thank you for your endless love and support. You are my world.

Frida, for making me feel confident enough to write about the things that are sometimes difficult to express. I will keep you in my heart forever. I love you.

This project is to all of us who have struggled to find our place in this world.

ABSTRACT

Keywords: *Eileen Gray, Queer Archives, Queer Cultural Heritage, Preservation, Visibility, World Heritage List*

In the beginning of the twentieth century Eileen Gray was one of the most influential designers and architects in Paris. Her lacquer work, furniture and rugs were acquired by famous singers, authors, art collectors and fashion designers. Her decadent aesthetics with rich, luxurious, sensual materials positioned her as a new promising young designer. However, with a growing public interest in Eileen Gray also the rumours began to circulate. Paris was at this time a vibrant cultural city and a haven for women with queer desires. Eileen belonged to this group of creative women that had come to Paris to live their life free from prejudice. But the freedom had a price.

After the World War II Eileen Gray's contributions to architecture and design were largely forgotten. Her most famous work, villa E.1027, had instead been credited to the male architect Jean Badovici, and many of her furniture designs, rugs and lacquer screens had been destroyed or gone missing after the war. Eileen Gray's refusal to sign her work and the limited amount of text she had written about it, turned her celebrated career into scattered fragments. A few years before she died, she destroyed most of the photographs and letters that reflected her personal life.

In regard to such a background this thesis aims to contribute to the visibility of Eileen Gray by analysing the layers of invisibility that have marked her remembrance. The first chapter introduces the work and life of Eileen Gray, and the second chapter gives a background on how women architects, historically have been made invisible. The third chapter discusses the rediscovery of

Eileen Gray, performed through heterosexual male gazes, resulting in moments of silencing and oppression. The fourth chapter identifies three mechanisms behind the invisibility of Eileen Gray: Archival Research, Presence and Preservation and, Heteronormative Heritage, all related to the queerness in her life, and the fifth chapter analyses what role the World Heritage List could play for the visibility of Eileen Gray, and the visibility of queer heritage.

In recent years, feminist scholars as Katarina Bonnevier and Jasmine Rault have shed new light on what the queerness meant for the development of Eileen's career. Before that, the traces of queer desires and lesbian intimacy in Eileen's work, had been largely overlooked. Bonnevier and Rault's analyses and interpretations of Eileen's work, performed through non-heterosexual gazes, have been inspirational and influential to this project.

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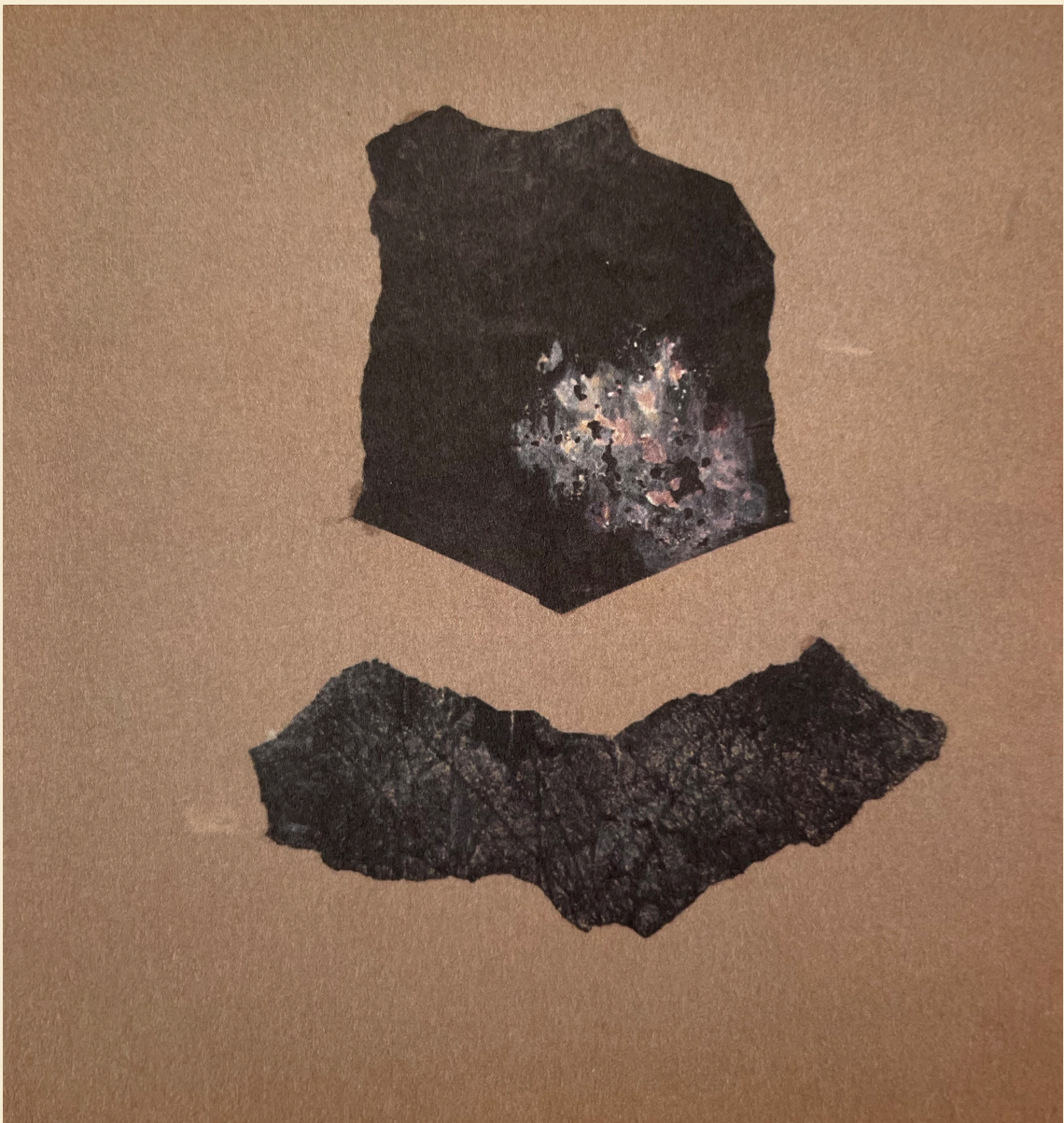
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BACKGROUND

The Thesis and I

Fig. 1 **Gouache and collage on paper - Untitled, ca 1940**, made by Eileen Gray



THESIS BACKGROUND

AIM

The thesis aims to contribute to the visibility of Eileen Gray by exploring three questions. The first one critically examines the rediscovery of Eileen Gray and her architectural work, the second one identifies three of the mechanisms that led to her invisibility, and the third one discusses what role Unesco's World Heritage List could play for the visibility of Eileen Gray, and the visibility of queer heritage.

The three mechanisms of invisibility identified in the second chapter all relate to places and situations where Eileen has been, or still is, invisible. The first mechanism concerns archival research and the problems that occur when searching for a queer person in a normative straight environment. The second mechanism concerns the aspect of preservation, focusing on Eileen Gray's architectural work E.1027. The third mechanism concerns architectural heritage and the fact that *the queer* in architectural heritage is often overlooked or disregarded.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How, when and by whom was Eileen Gray rediscovered?
2. What mechanisms led to the invisibility of Eileen Gray and her work?
3. What role can Unesco's World Heritage List play for the visibility of Eileen Gray, and the visibility of queer heritage?

METHOD

This part aims to give an insight in the development of the method, and the extensive material it has contained. The project started as a continuation of my essay, *Vem var du Eileen Gray*, and developed into an exploration of remembrance and visibility. The *Intro* and *Outro* are written as personal reflections on what Eileen Gray has meant to me. The reader is invited to understand my point of departure - my longing for a role model to identify with, and the manifestation of ambivalence when she was found. The method has been examined through in-depth literature reviews. The many articles, interviews and books that I have read, reviewed and critically analysed have been assembled for years. They are written by journalists and authors that are well acquainted with Eileen Gray and her work, many of them have spent several years to research and analyse her visibility. Their different approaches to her work and life have added new dimensions to my understanding of her world, and they have been a constant reminder of the many ways we can study Eileen Gray's legacy. The method of study has been an iterative process and was reformulated and refined throughout the project. It has allowed me to get lost, to doubt and to struggle, but to never lose faith in my voice and the power it holds.

The first chapter, *The Work and Life of Eileen Gray*, introduces Eileen Gray as a painter, designer and architect. The text is based on the biographies by Peter Adam, the feminist analyses by Jasmine Rault, and the queer interpretations by Katarina Bonnevier. The second chapter, *The 'Disappearance' of Women Architects*, is based

on literature reviews of Despina Stratigakos' book, *Where Are the Women Architects?* and Isabelle Doucet's article, *Entangled Histories: Architecture, Women, 1968*. In the third chapter, I have written about five events of rediscovery of Eileen Gray, collected from her biographies by Peter Adam, *Eileen Gray: Architect/designer: A Biography*, published in 1987 and the revised version published in 2000, as well as the latest one, *Eileen Gray: Her Life and Work*, published in 2019. Joseph Rykwert, Alan Irvine, Zeev Aram, Jaques Doucet and J. Stewart Johnson will, in the chapter, be known as the men who shaped the rediscovery of Eileen Gray, and their roles will be analysed in depth. From Adam's research I found new articles, books, interviews and stories, such as Joseph Rykwert's article, *A tribute to Eileen Gray, design pioneer*, J. Stewart Johnson's book, *Eileen Gray: Designer*, Emma Cullinan's interview with Alan Irvine and Zeev Aram for The Irish Times, and the story of Jaques Doucet and his interest in Eileen Gray's design.

In the fourth chapter, I have identified three mechanisms behind the invisibility of Eileen Gray: 01. *Archival Research*, 02. *Presence and Preservation* and, 03. *Heteronormative Architectural Heritage*. The first mechanism, Archival Research, is introduced with a review of Kathryn M. Hunter's article, *Silence in Noisy Archives: Reflections on Judith Allen's 'Evidence and Silence - Feminism and the Limits of History' (1986) in the Era of Mass Digitisation*, where she discusses the limitations of archives. The review of M. Hunter's article is followed by another review, where three authors have written about queer women's invisibility in straight archives: Jasmine Rault's and, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity: Staying In*, Diana Souhami's and, *No Modernism Without Lesbians*, and Despina Stratigakos and, *Where Are the Women Architects?* Another researcher, Janina Gosseye, and her introduction to the book, *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural*

Research, argues for acknowledging who is telling the story, and her words encouraged me to investigate the role Eileen Gray's biographer played in making her queer desires, values and life invisible. The study of the biographer is followed by the search for queer women in straight archives and, again, analyses of Rault and M. Hunter's work, this time in relation to a study of the Swedish, *Riksarkivet*, or, *the National Archives*. The Lesbian History Group's book, *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985*, and the Lesbian Herstory Archives have also been valuable resources to better understand the invisibility of queer women in straight archives. Lastly, the knowledge I gained from archival research was applied to a study of Eileen Gray's (in) visibility in her own archives. Information about what Eileen Gray's archives contained was collected from Bard Graduate Center, Johnson, Adam and Rault.

The research of the second mechanism, Presence and Preservation, was influenced by artist Sarah Browne and her artwork, *From Margin to Margin (Looking for Eileen)*. Browne's work inspired me to continue the search for Eileen Gray. I revisited the spots where Browne had been looking for Eileen - her Paris apartment, her gallery and the cemetery where she was buried, but I also found new ones. The study I made of Eileen Gray's presence in her work and the preservation of her memory led me to two of her buildings, Villa Tempe à Pailla and E.1027. Besides Browne's artwork and Adam's biographies the webpages of Ministère de la Culture, Unesco and The Cap Moderne Association were useful sources of information.

In the third mechanism, Heteronormative Architectural Heritage, I have introduced Bonnevier and Rault's research on Eileen Gray's work, followed by a review of Matt Smith and Richard Sandell's article, *Bringing Queer Home*, from the book, *Prejudice and Pride: LGBTQ heritage and its contemporary implications*. I have applied Smith and

Sandell's arguments for making queer lives visible in historic buildings, to my own study of E.1027 and the Cap Moderne Association.

In the fifth chapter, I have analysed Unesco's World Heritage List and what role it could play for the visibility of Eileen Gray, and the visibility of queer heritage. Mechthild Rössler, Director of the Unesco World Heritage Centre and the Heritage Division, who has researched the List from a gender perspective, inspired me to continue the exploration of representation on the List. I have used Unesco's website to search for the women architects highlighted in Nicky Rackard's Arch Daily article, *The*

10 Most Overlooked Women in Architecture History. The study was followed by my argumentation of what an inscription of Eileen Gray's architectural work, E.1027, could mean for her visibility in the queer architectural landscape as well as in the architecture history.

Current Page/

Fig. 2 **Citadelle de Saint-Tropez, ca. 1950**, photographed by Eileen Gray



INTRO

My Acquaintance with Eileen Gray

Fig. 3 **Bois Pétrifié**, ca. 1950, photographed by Eileen Gray



THE STRUGGLE TO FIND MY PLACE IN AN ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL

"Shortly before her death she burned almost all the letters and photographs that concerned her personal life. The discretion she had manifested all her personal life prevented her from leaving any traces, except in her work."

PETER ADAM

August 2013, I am 21 years old and a first year architecture student at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden. I have been studying architecture in London the year before, but this is my first meeting with the Swedish education. The experiences I have, make me feel encouraged that this is what I want to do, to study in a creative field with people like myself, with whom I share the interest in architecture and interior design. Soon I will understand that the education here will be something different from what I have imagined.

The first semester we are taking the course, *Architecture History*, and for many of us this is our first encounter with the subject. When only a handful women architects are mentioned throughout the course, among hundreds of men, it certainly creates a sense of frustration. Either there were very few (almost none) women architects active before the 21st century or the women architects simply did not make it into neither the history books nor the history lectures. It is indeed difficult to accept any of it. What is maybe even more difficult to understand is the fact that none of the teachers comment on the lack of representation in the course.

As a direct reaction to this, a student group with first- and second year students is formed. We call ourselves, *Genusgruppen* (*The Gender Group*), today *Jämlika Arkitektstuder* (*Architecture Students for Equality*). The first meetings are tentative,

even if we all share the same belief, that the underrepresentation of women architects in the course is the result of a structural problem in the field of architecture, we do not know how to address it, yet.

The following years will teach me a lot about gender issues within architecture, both at the universities in Sweden, at the offices and in the history books. The Gender Group establish a long-term dialogue with the academia, arrange theme days for students and teachers with workshops, lectures and discussions. We draw attention to, not only the lack of historic women architects in the history course but also the lack of women tutors, professors and teachers, and finally we get to develop the course, *Architecture and Gender*.

I am forever grateful to my colleagues and friends in the Gender Group who gave me perspectives on architecture that I would not have got elsewhere in the academia at the time. We shared a vision of a more inclusive education and today, when I look back on what we wanted to accomplish I understand that this was very much the beginning of my search for my own role model. Even though the Gender Group was seen a welcomed initiative by both students and teachers the work was also met with resistance and ignorance.

My involvement in the group had a major influence on the projects I made. I addressed issues regarding heteronormativity in the planning and construction of housing, I implemented feminist design strategies in city planning, I explored the method of civil dialogue and I researched the bodily experience of space. But on the presentation days I often felt misunderstood and that the values I had been focusing on were overlooked or not taken seriously. There

was little room for one's own interpretation of a task and the student's results were expected to look more or less the same. I believe that my struggle to find my place in the architecture school partly stemmed from the feeling that the education was not shaped for someone like me.

When Eileen Gray came into my life, I was a second year student. One evening I went to a book club gathering where we had read a few chapters in Katarina Bonnevier's thesis, *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture*. The book was thick with a glossy cover in light blue picturing the living room of Eileen

Gray's building E.1027. Even though I had never heard about her before I realised, she was the one I had been looking for and longing for. I admired her architecture and design, I desired her sense of materiality and decadence, I was inspired by her unconventional way of living and I became obsessed with the stories about her. The thesis is a personal reflection on a woman that I got to call my heroine. It is also a reflection on my own position as a queer women architect in a context where I have struggled to find my place.



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Fig. 4 **View from E.1027**, photographed by Mary Gaudin

Opposite Page/

Fig. 5 **Roquebrune-Cap-Martin**, photographed by Mary Gaudin



"WHO WERE YOU, EILEEN GRAY"

During the last semester of the Bachelor, we were supposed to write an essay on a subject of our interest. My essay, *Vem var du, Eileen Gray* (*Who were you, Eileen Gray*) was an exploration of her work and life from a queer perspective. I decided to write my essay to Eileen, but I never called her by her name. I wrote it to you, and I kept asking myself who you were. I never attempted to find an answer, but rather to address the complexities when writing about someone who left very few traces behind.

The point of departure was the intersection between the work of three influential researchers,' Peter Adam, Katarina Bonnevier and Jasmine Rault. Their books and articles became central to the development of my own understanding of Eileen's work and life. Adam, who wanted to give Eileen recognition by placing her in a heteronormative context while Bonnevier depicted her non-heterosexual desires and searched for the queerness in her building, E.1027. Rault, on the other hand, did not picture Eileen as a queer person but as a woman architect in a Sapphic modernist movement.

I remember writing about Eileen felt like a huge responsibility, it was a lot at stake. I was claiming space for, not only Eileen Gray in the architecture school, but for myself. I wanted to make visible the intimate experience of Eileen's architecture, that Bonnevier, through her queer analyses, had taught me to see. Bonnevier's way of writing about hidden messages in queer architecture became inspirational when writing the essay. She made me reflect upon my own position as a queer architecture student and I began to think of my own architectural experiences as something valuable.

The essay started as a response to the gender imbalance in the architecture history course but developed into something bigger. It became a celebration of Eileen's architecture and design and an attempt to unfold the layers of the woman behind the architect. In the conclusion I wrote,²

"In the beginning I wondered who you were, I still do. I wanted to get to know you, but I was often disappointed how you were portrayed. You were more than that. Your place in the architecture history course should have been self-evident. Not because you were a woman architect or lesbian, even though that is important for a more nuanced history writing. But because your way of working, your design and your architecture became influential and norm breaking. Your history is often told from a heterosexual perspective, because only in a world where heterosexuality is the norm, something else can be norm breaking."³

My acquaintance with Eileen Gray also became the acquaintance with an architect and her work that I, for once, could identify with. Further in my essay, I wrote,⁴

"You destroyed many of your letters and writings and you decided what you wanted to leave behind. Though, when there are gaps in someone's life story there is also a risk that these gaps will be filled with the life story of someone else."⁵

In the thesis, *Remembering Eileen Gray: Layers of (in)visibility*, I have put more emphasis on the fact that Eileen was a woman architect in a male dominated field, and a queer architect in a straight modernist architectural movement.

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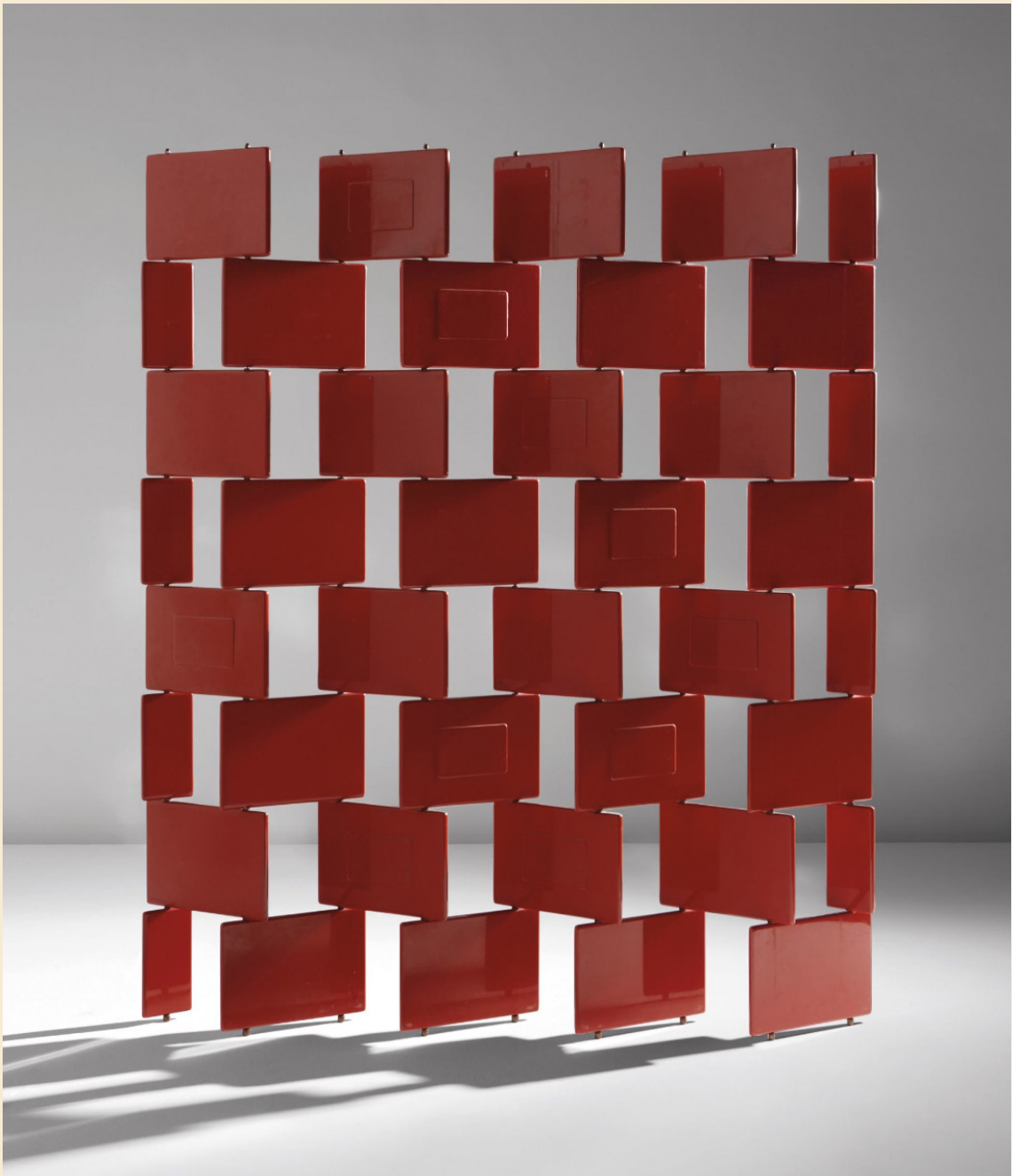
Fig. 6 Interior of E.1027



CHAPTER ONE

The Work and Life of Eileen Gray

Fig. 7 **"Brick" screen in red lacquered wood**, designed 1922-1923 by Eileen Gray



INTRODUCING THE WORK AND LIFE OF EILEEN GRAY

Eileen Gray grew up in a wealthy family in the southeast of Ireland as the youngest of five children. The family home of Brownswood, beautifully situated on the banks of the River Slaney in County Wexford, was her home for the first twenty years of her life. Eileen's childhood in Ireland has been described as *restricted*, she was privately educated at home by governesses and lived a quite isolated life. In the early 1900, Eileen's longing for freedom made her leave Ireland for England and London. She moved in to her parents' townhouse in South Kensington and began to study at the Slade School of Fine Art.

The Slade had a good reputation and was the choice for many young women and men of the upper and upper-middle class these days. Though, Eileen was not very impressed either by the teachers or the education, both of which were heavily influenced by tradition. London was different from Ireland in many ways, the museums and theatres gave her access to a new world and Soho, the artists' quarters at this time, was a foretaste of what real freedom could look like. In London, Eileen met Kathleen Bruce and Jessie Gavin (Jackie Raoul Duval) and in 1902 they all three moved to Paris together.⁶

Paris was, at this time, cheap and bohemian, and Eileen moved into an apartment on Rue Bara, and she, Kathleen and Jessie continued to study art. First at École Colarossi on Rue de la Grande Chaumière and later at Académie Julian on Rue de Dragon. Eileen lived an unconventional life and had no interest in marrying a man or having children. Her view on sexuality was liberal, she had fought for women's sexual liberation but was not very interested in discussing her own sexuality. In Paris the

romantic feelings between Jessie and Eileen developed into a serious relationship, and Jessie, who sometimes cross-dressed, took Eileen to places where a woman otherwise would have needed the company of a man. Paris offered the two women a haven they had only wished for, a place far away from their past lives. Even though the relationship between Eileen and Jessie ended after a few years they remained close friends for the rest of their lives.⁷

Eileen had a big interest for new technical inventions, she got her driving license in the beginning of the twentieth century, and two decades later she flew from Mexico City to Acapulco on the airmail plane as one of the very first passengers. Eileen's curiosity for new techniques is also to be found in the development of her career. Even though the art educations in Paris were far less traditional as the one at the Slade, Eileen started to get bored. She felt a desire to work in a more practical manner, and so the idea of designing screens and panels came to her mind. She was intrigued by lacquer techniques and when she, during a visit to London in 1905, stepped into Mr D. Charles' lacquer repair shop, it became her first encounter with the lacquer process. Eileen spent several weeks in the shop to learn the basics and developed a great fascination for the material and its elegance. Back in Paris she met the Japanese lacquer artist Seizo Sugawara, who became her tutor. Eileen began to produce smaller objects - plates, trays and boxes, and moved on to larger panels in lacquer, coloured in black, reddish brown, brilliant red or original blue. She was the first one to achieve this eccentric blue colour in lacquer which would later be so synonymous with her aesthetic.

In 1907, at the age of twenty-nine, Eileen

moved in to the apartment on 21 Rue Bonaparte, in which she would stay her entire life. The new home was spacious with two bedrooms, a big saloon, a dining room and a kitchen. The apartment also contained her work space, a study painted in blue, where she experimented with colours and textures of the lacquer, adding silver or gold, crushed egg shells or mother-of-pearl. In her address book from this time, one would find lists of workshops for leather, ivory, chrome, cork and every other material she could possibly need. Working in lacquer was both time-consuming and toxic and Eileen's growing interest in weaving influenced her to design rugs. Evelyn Wyld, a childhood friend from Ireland, would supervise the production of the carpets in the workshop at 17 Rue Visconti while Eileen designed the patterns.⁸

In 1913 Eileen, accompanied by the most promising names of the French design world, exhibited some of her lacquer panels at the VIII Salon de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs. The exhibitions established Eileen as an influential designer and her work was admired by famous writers and collectors in Paris. Twenty years, and five exhibitions later, her work was shown at the Salons for the last time. Today, her name does not appear as one of the participants, as if her exhibitions at the Salons never existed.⁹

Jaques Doucet, the well-renowned couturier, became one of Eileen's first important customers. Doucet bought several of her early work such as the screen, *Le Destin* (one of few objects she ever signed), the Lotus table, a round black-topped table, a side table in black and coral lacquer with two drawers and a large wardrobe in red and blue lacquer.¹⁰

In 1919 Eileen was commissioned with her, so far, most extensive interior design project - the decoration of Madame Mathieu-Lévy's apartment on Rue de Lota. The finished result was sculptural, influenced by Cubism and included major pieces of lacquer work,

it was luxurious and theatrical.¹¹ And in the years that followed Eileen started to gain recognition as an interior designer.¹²

Eileen surrounded herself with other creative women who would encourage her design and influence her career.¹³ When she was in her forties, she met the famous singer Damia (Marie-Louise Damien) through their common friend, Gaby Bloch, and she fell in love. This green-eyed woman invited Eileen into a world she barely knew existed.¹⁴ Damia brought a lot of joy into Eileen's life and Eileen gave Damia some stability in hers. They went dancing at nightclubs, visited restaurants, and took long walks in the forest of Fontainebleau.¹⁵ Damia decorated her home with Eileen's furniture; the Siren chair and a large mirror were designed especially for Damia as gifts from Eileen.¹⁶ Damia also invited Eileen to Nathalie Barney and Gertrude Stein's 'charmed circle', a group of literary American women living in Paris.¹⁷ Eileen sometimes also visited Nathalie Barney's feminist and sexually transcendent literary salon at 20 Rue Jacob.¹⁸ The salon, *Temple de l'Amitié*, was a lesbian haven and according to Adam, "the meeting place for artist and intellectuals, an Académie des Femmes."¹⁹

In 1922 Eileen's name appeared for the first time in a French article, in the *Feuillets d'Art*, written by Elisabeth de Gramont (also known as the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre). She admired Eileen's work and Eileen had found someone who truly understood her work.²⁰ Gramont was a frequent visitor of her lover, Nathalie Barney's, literary saloons and a close friend of the North American poet Gertrude Stein.²¹

The relationship with Damia meant a lot to Eileen, but eventually it came to an end. For the rest of her life Eileen kept the things that would remind her of their love: Damia's records, the dresses, the two evening coats by Poiret, and several photographs of Damia with affectionate inscriptions to Eileen.²²

In May 1922 Eileen opened her gallery, *Jean Désert*, run by her friend and later partner,

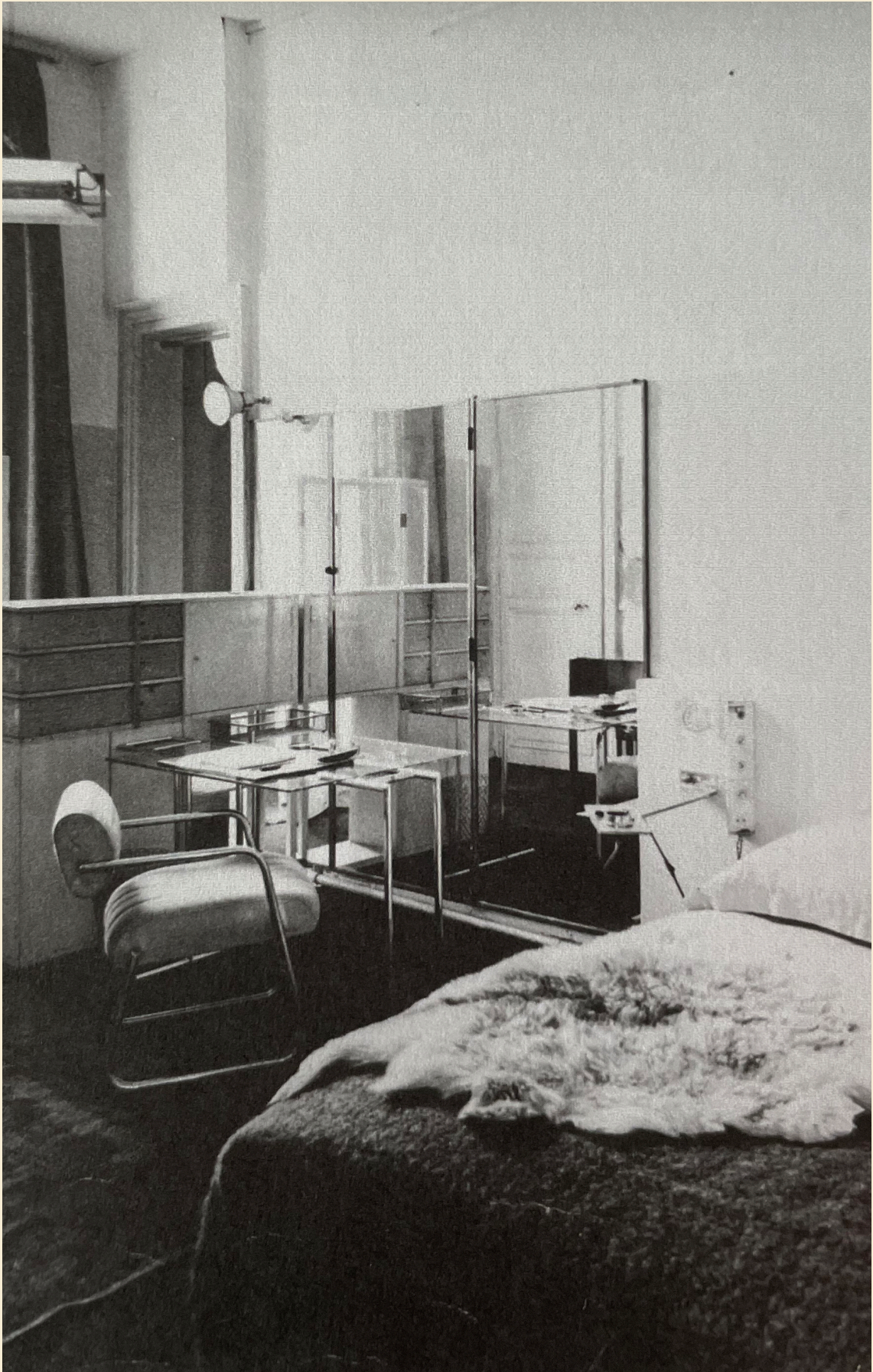


Fig 8. **Eileen's Bedroom**, Rue Bonaparte 21

Gabrielle (Gaby) Bloch.²³ The opening of Jean Désert and the interest in her lacquer screens made Eileen's work visible to a larger audience and her designs appeared in articles in British *Vogue*, *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Chicago Tribune*.²⁴ An old friend of hers, Kate Weatherby, had for many years encouraged Eileen to exhibit her work, and in 1922 the Salon d'Automne showed pieces from her collection, along with Le Corbusier's *Citrohan house*. Around this time Eileen met the young Romanian architect, Jean Badovici. They eventually became a couple, and she would later design her first building commissioned by and dedicated to, Badovici.²⁵

At the age of forty-five, 1923, Eileen had designed screens, furniture, lamps and carpets, two interiors - the Rue de Lota apartment and the Monte Carlo room at the XIV Salon des Artistes Décorateurs, as well as her own gallery space. Her interest in architecture had developed throughout the years and would now become the next step of her career. Badovici encouraged her to build, and introduced her to the young Polish architect, Adrienne Gorska. Eileen was taught to make architectural drawings by Gorska and continued to practise the techniques on her own.²⁶ In 1924 Eileen furnished Badovici's house in Vézelay and he then asked her to design him a 'little refuge'. She accepted the commission and after a few days of driving around in the areas along the French Riviera she found the perfect plot of land for the house. Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, located between Menton and Nice railway, an isolated place at the time, thirty metres above the Mediterranean - it was the place she had been looking for.

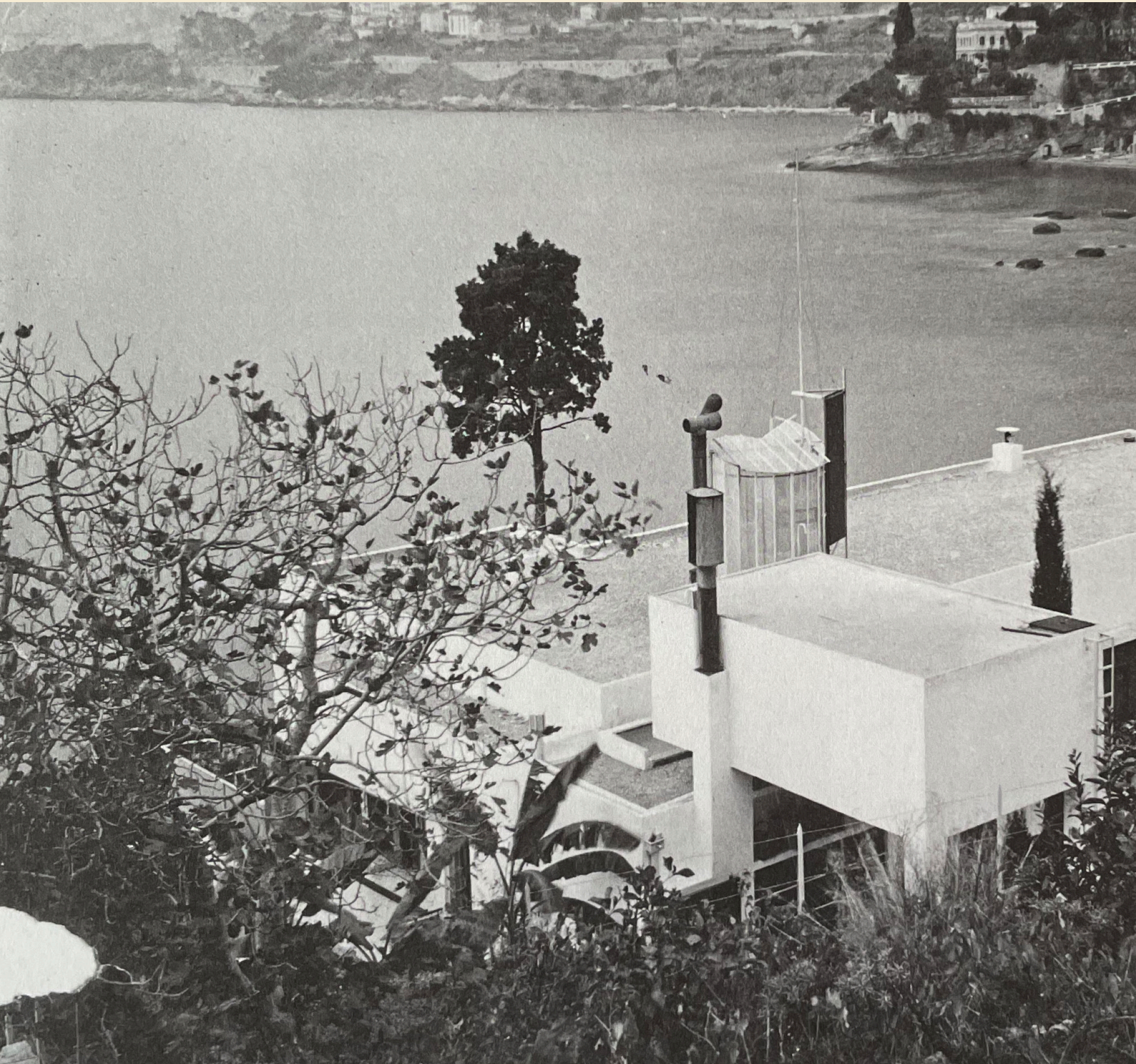
In 1926 the construction of the villa began. Eileen rented a flat in Roquebrune and stayed there until the building was finished. Three years later, in 1929 her first building was completed, overlooking the blue sea - to the right was the rock of Monte Carlo and to the left, just water. The building, in reinforced concrete, was named,

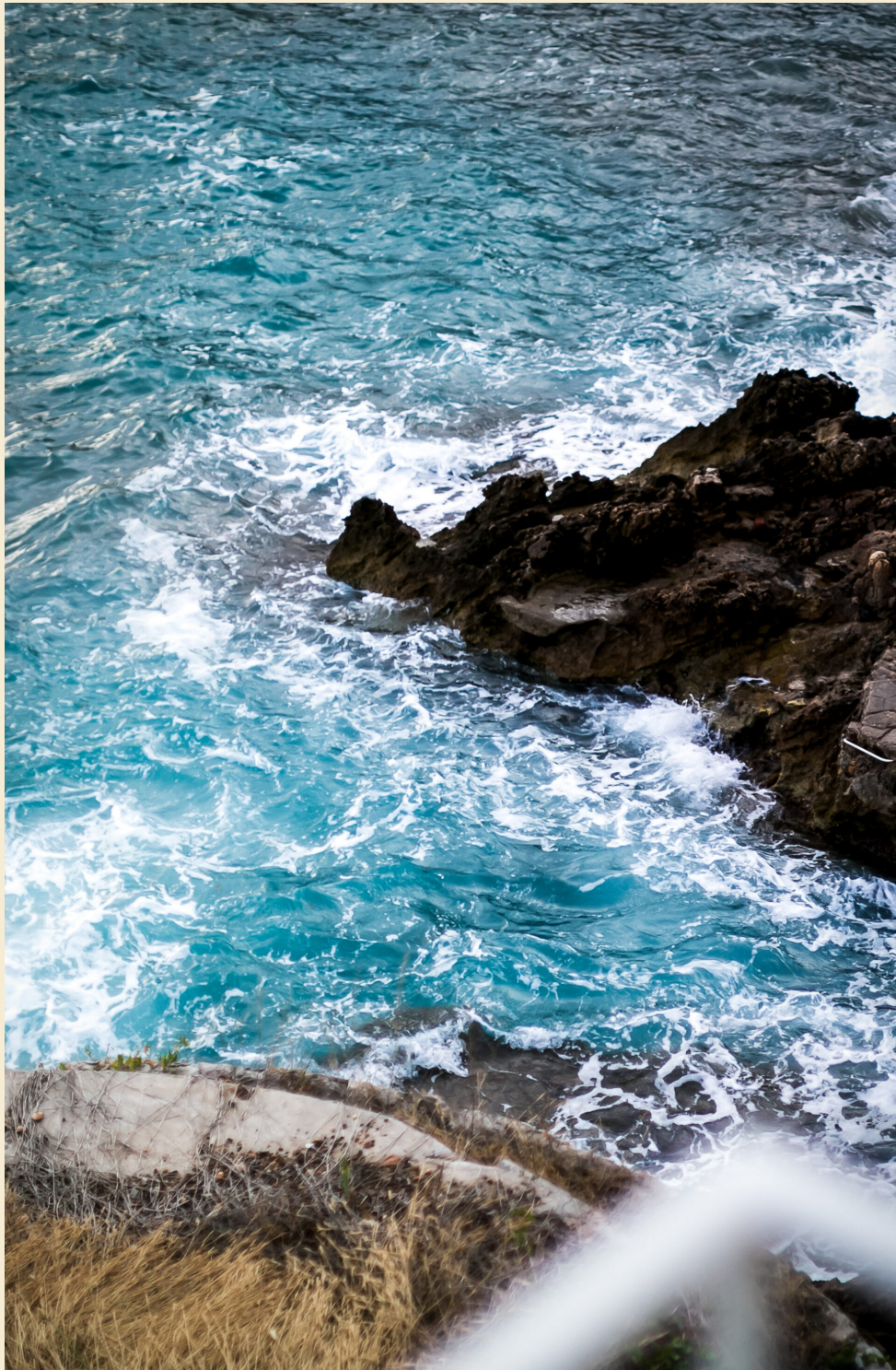
E.1027, a symbol for Eileen and Badovici: 'E' for Eileen, '10' for Jean (J - the tenth letter of the alphabet), '2' for 'B' and '7' for 'G'.²⁷ The building's two floors were connected with a spiral staircase and each level was designed to maximise its space. Built-in headboards for the beds, movable partition walls to divide a room into smaller spaces and screens to turn terraces and balconies into solid spaces. From the core of the house, the living room, one could access the terraces, loggias, kitchen and bathrooms. Even though the building was quite narrow, with its two bedrooms and a maid's room, the creative use of the space made it feel bigger than it was. The variety of wall colours, dark and light surfaces, reflective materials and mirrors all gave the interior its spacious look. To Eileen, independence and freedom was important, also in terms of a building's architectural organisation. Therefore, all the rooms in E.1027 were located so that they would not interfere with each other and had their own outside spaces.

Eileen, inspired by Le Corbusier's *architectural promenade*, designed her own, more mysterious, promenade through the Mediterranean villa. Every step, from entering the house, putting the umbrella in its stand and placing the coat on the hanger, to the impression the visitor would get by looking out at the sea from the living room, was thought through with care. Messages painted on the walls like *ENTREZ LENTEMENT* ('Enter Slowly') in the entrance hall was part of the spatial organisation and indicated that there were two different ways one could continue the promenade, either through the door into the service area or through the door into the living room. Other inscriptions were *INVITATION AU VOYAGE* ('Invitation to a Journey') in the living room and *DEFENSE DE RIRE* ('No Laughing') in the entrance. To the question where Eileen had got the inspiration for the inscriptions she answered: 'Life, the sense of life, is my inspiration.' E.1027 and its furniture were designed, thinking of



Fig. 9 **Spiral staircase in E.1027**, photographed by Manuel Bougot





its interaction with the human body. Both architectural elements and furniture could be *turned, bent, tilted* and *opened up*, to create new purposes and spaces. Eileen designed all furniture and carpets herself, and some were designed specifically for E.1027.²⁸

Even though Eileen, in the end of the 1920's was well known for her furniture, interior decoration and architecture, she did not get much recognition from the circle of architects in France. Badovici did not state that Eileen was the architect behind E.1027, or that they at least built the house *together*. Eileen said that 'Jean was the man they wanted to see.' Eileen eventually left Jean Badovici, with whom she had not lived a very happy life and in 1932 she began to build another house, this time for herself. The plot was quite challenging to build on, with its difficult terrain and the many old lemon trees. Therefore, she constructed the villa on three existing water tanks, one became the garage, another the cellar and the third was kept as a rainwater reservoir. The spatial organisation of the building's two floors was very much alike the one at E.1027, each room separated from one another, and with its own outdoor area, provided the inhabitants or visitors with privacy. The furniture, integrated in the building, inventive solutions for storage, and multifunctional use of the interior, created an imaginative space. It took Eileen two years to complete the villa, and in 1932 it was finished. She named it Tempe a Pailla.²⁹

After Eileen had left Jean, she would still come to visit E.1027 once in a while. Though, without her consent but with the permission from Badovici, Le Corbusier covered the interior and exterior walls with eight murals between the years 1938 and 1939.³⁰ He, who had several times expressed his admiration of Eileen's work, had now "defaced her design."³¹ After that she never returned to the house.³² When Badovici in the late 1940's wanted to restore the villa into its original appearance by removing the murals he wrote to Le Corbusier. Le

Corbusier replied that he wanted the murals to be photographed before they were to be removed.³³ The correspondence between the two men continued, and Le Corbusier made fun of Eileen and her inscriptions on the walls, and called Tempe a Pailla a "submarine of functionalism."³⁴

In 1948 Le Corbusier published photographs of his murals from E.1027 in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*. In the article he only referred to E.1027 as 'a house in Cap Martin,' nowhere was Eileen mentioned, and Adam writes,³⁵

"It was almost as if he wanted the world to believe that the house had not been built by Eileen Gray."³⁶

After Le Corbusier's intrusion in E.1027, the building and many of its furniture were often recognised as the work by Le Corbusier. Even in the 90's there were different opinions in who the architect was, often Badovici was solely known as the architect of E.1027, sometimes it was said to have been a collaboration between Badovici and Gray.³⁷ The villa was often called 'Maison Badovici' or 'Villa Badovici'.³⁸

In 1953, at the age of seventy-five, Eileen began to construct her last building in the South of France, in Saint-Tropez. For this project she transformed an old house, to the locals known as Chapelle-Sainte-Anne, into a modern building. She kept some of the features of the Chapelle, like the vaulted ceiling, but added new large sliding windows in the facade and modernised its interior. Five years later, Lou Pérou was finished and

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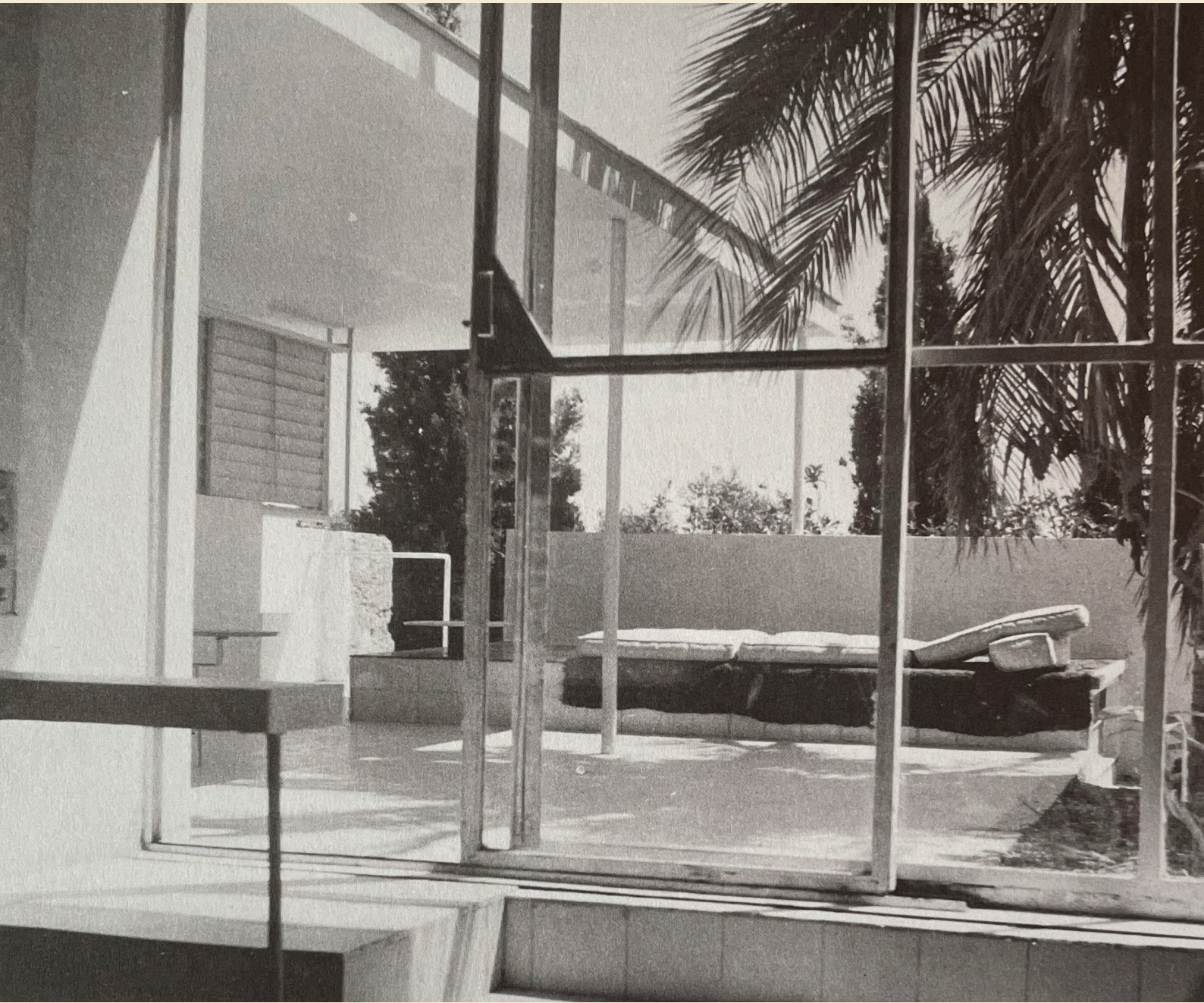
Fig. 10 **View of the roof of E.1027**, photographed just after construction was completed, ca 1929

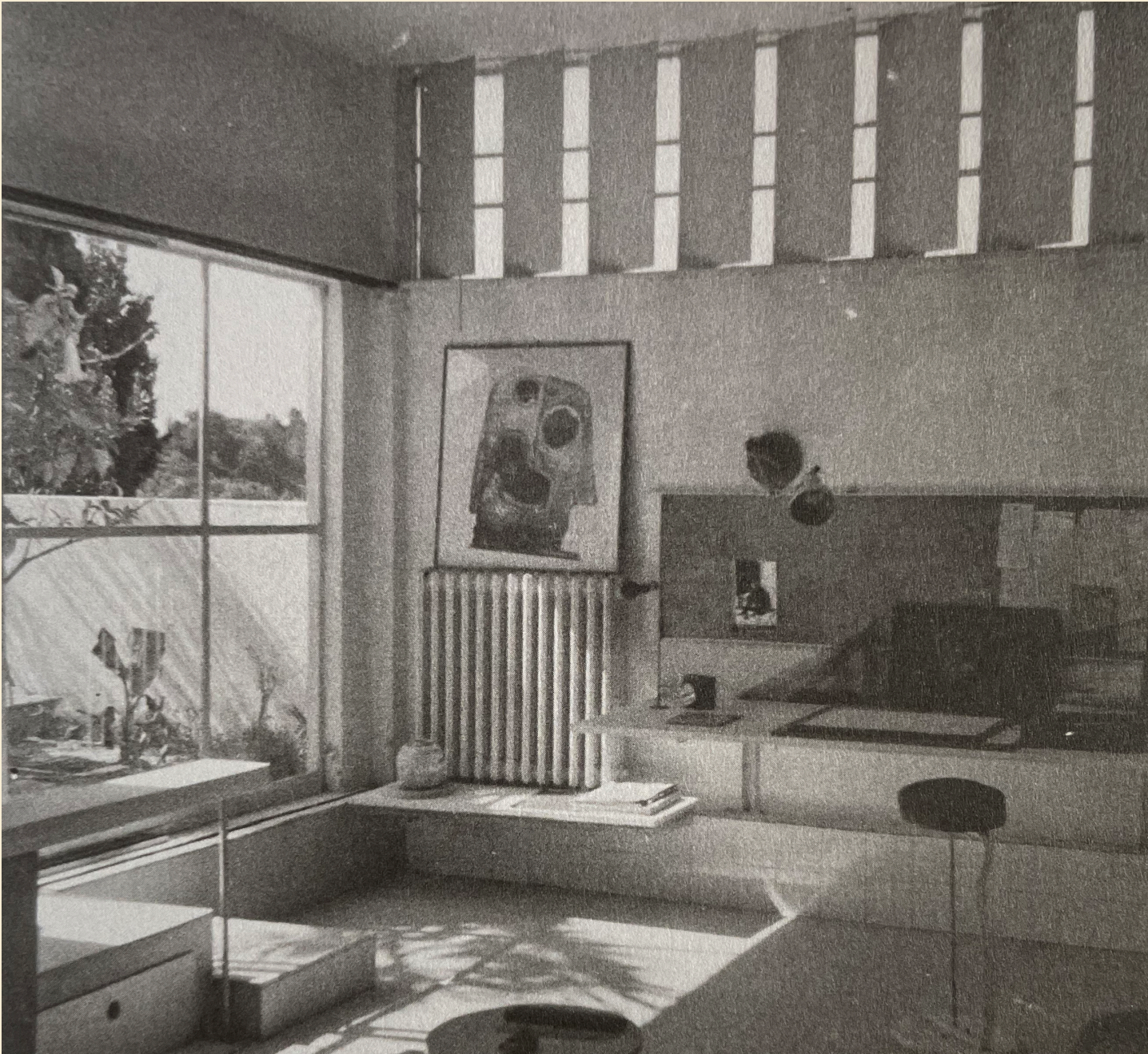
Fig. 11 **View from the terrace in E.1027**, photographed by Henrik Nero

Opposite Page/

Fig. 12 **Guest room of E.1027**, photographed by Mary Gaudin







Eileen and her long time housekeeper Louise Dany moved in. Even though Eileen had designed several buildings throughout the years only three of them were realised.

During the construction of Lou Pérou, Eileen began to assemble material for a book about E.1027 and Tempe a Pailla. Though, when the publisher decided not to proceed with the book after all, Eileen instead put together two large scrapbooks showing her work. They consisted of photographs, drawings and short captions - a record of her work.³⁹

The two portfolios were later acquired by The National Museum of Ireland, who are also the biggest collector of Eileen's design.⁴⁰ Other known collectors are The Victoria & Albert Museum in London that holds several of her designs, drawings and sketches⁴¹ and The Architectural Archives at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia that holds a small collection of her drawings.⁴²

The 25th of October 1976, at the age of ninety-eight, Eileen Gray died in her home at Rue Bonaparte, and the 5th of November, she was buried at the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. The ceremony was quiet with three of her friends present. In 1988 the plot for the grave, had not been renewed and her remains were moved to another,⁴³ less central cemetery in the suburbs of Paris.⁴⁴ Her resting place is no longer marked, and biographer Peter Adam finishes his book about Eileen with the words,⁴⁵

"Eileen Gray's desire to leave only her work to this world has been fulfilled."⁴⁶

PETER ADAM

Today only one of Eileen's three buildings have survived and none of the interior decoration projects remain.⁴⁷ In 2016 E.1027 reopened to visitors after a major restoration, the villa had been neglected for decades.⁴⁸ Each year ten thousand visitors come to see the building and are guided through the area with the magnificent view over the Mediterranean sea.

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Fig. 13 Terrace in Tempe a Pailla,
viewed from the living room/studio

Fig. 14 Living room/studio in Tempe a Pailla,
with work table and terrace threshold

Opposite Page/

Fig. 15 Sothern facade of Lou Pérou in Saint-Tropez,
viewed from the garden,
with outdoor furniture from Tempe a Pailla

Fig. 16 Eastern facade of Lou Pérou in Saint-Tropez,
viewed from viewed from
vineyard



The 'Disappearance' of Women Architects

Fig. 17 **Oil and collage on paper - Untitled la lune, ca 1940**, made by Eileen Gray



"WHERE ARE THE WOMEN ARCHITECTS?"

"History is not a simple meritocracy: it is a narrative of the past written and revised - or not written at all - by people with agendas [...] The reasons we forget women architects are varied and complex. Until recently, historians assumed that there were no female practitioners before the mid-twentieth century, so they did not bother to look for them."⁴⁹

DESPINA STRATIGAKOS

In her book, *Where are the Women Architects?* published in 2016, Despina Stratigakos explores why we forget women architects, and how we can 'unforget' them. The title of the first chapter, *May Women Practice Architecture? The First Century of Debate*, is inspired by an article with the same title, *May Women Practice Architecture?* written by Thomas Raggles Davison in 1902. Davison considered women unsuited for the architectural profession since they were 'temperamentally unfitted' to the 'production of good architectural design' and lacked the masculine 'strength of handling'.⁵⁰

Another critical voice on women's participation in architecture belonged to the renowned German architectural critic, Karl Scheffler. In his treatise on gender and creativity from 1908 he claimed that it would cost women their femininity if they entered the profession of architecture, and described the women who did, as 'irritable hermaphroditic creatures' whose behaviour could lead to prostitution or lesbianism.⁵¹ Scheffler, like Davison, argued for women's unsuitability as architects, and wrote that the architectural profession required 'great masculine qualities.' In 1911, German architect Otto Bartning published his article, *Should Women Build?* in which he claimed that the lack of architectural quality

in women's work, was because they listened too much to the client. Bartning strongly questioned women's collaborative approach which Stratigakos writes, "undermined the masculine ideal of the architect's autonomy."⁵²

The discussion about women's invisibility in architecture goes back to 1872 when women's rights advocate Julia Ward Howe held a speech at the Victorian Discussion Society in London. Howe wondered why women had not yet entered the field of architecture, and claimed that their immaculate taste and inner sense of beauty would be beneficial and make them suitable for the profession.⁵³ Though, Howe also stressed that women who entered the field of architecture would not forsake their capability to remain "the very best daughters, wives, and the most tender mothers."⁵⁴ Stratigakos says, that the women who practiced architecture at this time were both encouraged by the suffragists, and held back by the traditional ideas about the gender roles.⁵⁵

During the first half of the twentieth century women's recognition in architecture increased as they were awarded in several prestigious architectural competitions. Though, the stereotypical image of women architects would persist.⁵⁶ In 1971 when Rita Reiff interviewed Marcel Breuer for *New York Times*, the Bauhaus-trained designer was asked about women architects and said,⁵⁷

"How much is tradition and how much is biology, I don't know, but so far we just don't have great architects."⁵⁸

Even though Breuer described the women he hired as 'excellent craftsmen' he did not think that they were capable of doing

everything as their male colleagues. To Reiff he explained,⁵⁹

"I think the biggest problem of all is the biological story. Being married, being a mother is a full-time job. Somehow liberation women do not want to recognise it."⁶⁰

In the concluding words of the first chapter Stratigakos says that,⁶¹

"[t]he second wave of feminism in the 1970's [...] once again pushed the issues of gender discrimination in architecture to the fore [which resulted in] greater awareness of women's history in the profession, the challenges they continued to face, and the need to organise to effect change."⁶²

Though if we look back at the twentieth century, Stratigakos stresses that the progress towards gender equality in architecture has been 'surprisingly limited'.⁶³

The last chapter in Stratigakos' book, is titled, *Unforgetting Women Architects: A Confrontation with History and Wikipedia*, in which she uncovers the mechanisms that have led to the disappearance of women architects. Stratigakos stresses that we have forgotten women architects by a number of reasons.⁶⁴ For example, when we search for the contribution and history of women architects, we may need to look beyond archives, libraries and institutions since they "have been slow to collect women's work."⁶⁵

In 1985 Bulgarian architect Milka Bliznakov started to build up the *International Archive of Women in Architecture*, at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, since the work by women architects was seldom archived. Bliznakov saw that archives showed little or none interest in the work by women architects and that much of their drawings, plans and records were thrown away. Today, the International Archive of Women in Architecture's collection has been digitised and on the Archive's website they describe its purpose "to document the history of women's contributions to the built environment."⁶⁶

Stratigakos claims that another aspect of women architects being forgotten lays in, the often well established, models for how architecture history is written. Architectural history tends to celebrate the (often male) genius, where personal achievements are referred to as *bold, independent, tough*, and *vigor*, attributes that, in the Western culture, are seen as typically masculine. Stratigakos says that the monographic writing model has worked almost as a 'genealogy' over the 'great men' in architecture and have been less applicable on women architects.⁶⁷ Though, during the last two decades one can see a shift in the format of writing architectural history where historians have "moved away from the monograph's confining format."⁶⁸ Despite this, the monograph is still the most recognised way of writing which continues to reproduce the image of the architect as the sole hero and, collaborative work, that women often are part of, are discouraged. Stratigakos stresses that "[t]his has contributed significantly to the forgetting of women architects."⁶⁹

Further, Stratigakos says that, "Women have sometimes enabled their own disappearance," and refers to the different expectations that men and women are facing.⁷⁰ Male architects generally consider their contributions important and actively preserve their legacies, they write memoirs, and they save their models, drawings, and correspondence.⁷¹ While women, who have been "taught that self-promotion is an unattractive female trait - have made less effort to tell their stories."⁷² Some women architects from older generations, who have worked together with their partners, have even "chosen to stand in the shadows in order to shine the spotlight on their husbands," Stratigakos writes.⁷³

"Positioned as a researcher in a professional school of architecture, I feel compelled to

"WOMEN ARCHITECTS AND 1968"

write entangled, thick, and alternative (hi) stories not just because they can contribute to scholarship but also, importantly, because they can bring to the teaching of architecture examples of alternative ways of practicing and contributing to the built environment."⁷⁴

ISABELLE DOUCET

In her research project, *Women Architects and 1968*, Isabelle Doucet, professor of theory and history of architecture at Chalmers University of Technology, explores women's contribution to architecture after May 1968. In the article, *Entangled Histories: Architecture, Women, 1968*, Doucet gives a background on how the political development would find its way into architecture, and where the contribution of the architects active in the movement can be found today.⁷⁵ Doucet, like Stratigakos, stresses that the way architecture history is written is "defining, and also restricting, what is considered worthy of recollection."⁷⁶

In the part 'Finding' *Women Architects* Doucet encourages us to broaden our search fields when looking for women architects from the 1970's. She says that the architectural offices might be the place to start. There women could have had positions as 'lead designers' or, more commonly 'members of design teams'. We can also find their contributions in 'collective housing experiments' or working in 'public administrations', 'heritage societies', and 'cultural foundations'. Other areas where women have been active are as 'prolific writers', 'critic commentators', and 'editors' but they have also been engaged in 'grassroots activism', 'community action', 'political pressuring', 'public speaking', and 'campaigning'.

At the same time, Doucet stresses that the work by women have "often being kept anonymous."⁷⁷ Women did not always put their names on their work why they often remain unknown and the search for their contributions is made much more complicated. As we know from Stratigakos' article, it has been more common that the work by women is seen as trash than considered valuable enough for the archives.⁷⁸ Doucet provides us with a similar image of the work by women architects of the 1970's. At this time, women's *architectural production* rather contained newsletters, banners, posters, (self-build) design manuals, than architectural drawings, plans and records. Doucet says that this kind of material might not be found in the regular architectural archives but rather in people's home and "in the archives of citizens groupings and non-profit organisations".⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

To enter the architectural profession as a woman during the twentieth century meant disregarding the norms of society and the traditional way of living. The suitability for women to be trained as architects was questioned throughout the twentieth century and in the 1970's male architects stressed the difficulties for women to combine the life as a mother and wife, with a career as an architect. Women's capability was questioned through various outlets, and enrolment in universities and employment in offices were met with resistance. The debate often referred to women's feminine attributes, which were considered almost impossible to combine with the profession. An architect needed to be strong, independent and confident - qualities that women were considered to lack.

Even though the history of women architects covers a century of fighting oppression and acknowledgement of hard work, not much of their contributions are to be found in history books, at architecture offices or in archives. Both Stratigakos and Doucet elaborate on the reasons behind this and their researches navigate us through the process of finding the disappeared and forgotten women architects. The resistance towards women architects presumably made them reluctant to even enter the profession, and the ones who did, got their competence questioned. It is not difficult to imagine that women architects during the twentieth century was not in a position where they could easily defend their contributions in a project. Moreover, as Doucet stresses, women usually worked in teams or in partnership with others which might have made their work even more invisible. While

male architects could entirely focus on their career, women architects were balancing the profession with the requirements it meant to be a wife and a mother.

According to Stratigakos, women architects made, in general, less effort than their male counterparts to preserve their own work. In many cases, their collective work has literally disappeared as a consequence. Since women's work was not considered worth saving, their drawings, sketches and models were more often thrown away than archived. This has resulted in the fact that very few archives contain their contributions. One exception is the *International Archive of Women in Architecture* initiated by Bliznakov. Such initiatives are important, but we must also acknowledge the downside of archives that only celebrates *women*. When limiting an archive to only one gender other marginalised identities will be excluded, and these people's contributions will remain invisible. We might also ask ourselves what we gain from gendered archives and who is gaining from these collections. If women and non-binary architects were to be included in already existing archives, their contributions are at least given a chance to become equal to the ones of male architects.

When we are looking for women architects that, for different reasons are invisible in today's architectural history, Stratigakos encourages us to extend our research methods and to look beyond the archives, libraries and institutions. Women architects have often been standing in the shadows of male architects, both in offices and in partnerships with their husbands. The idea of the male genius has diminished women's contributions, who were taught not to promote themselves (which was unattractive) and who rarely signed or wrote

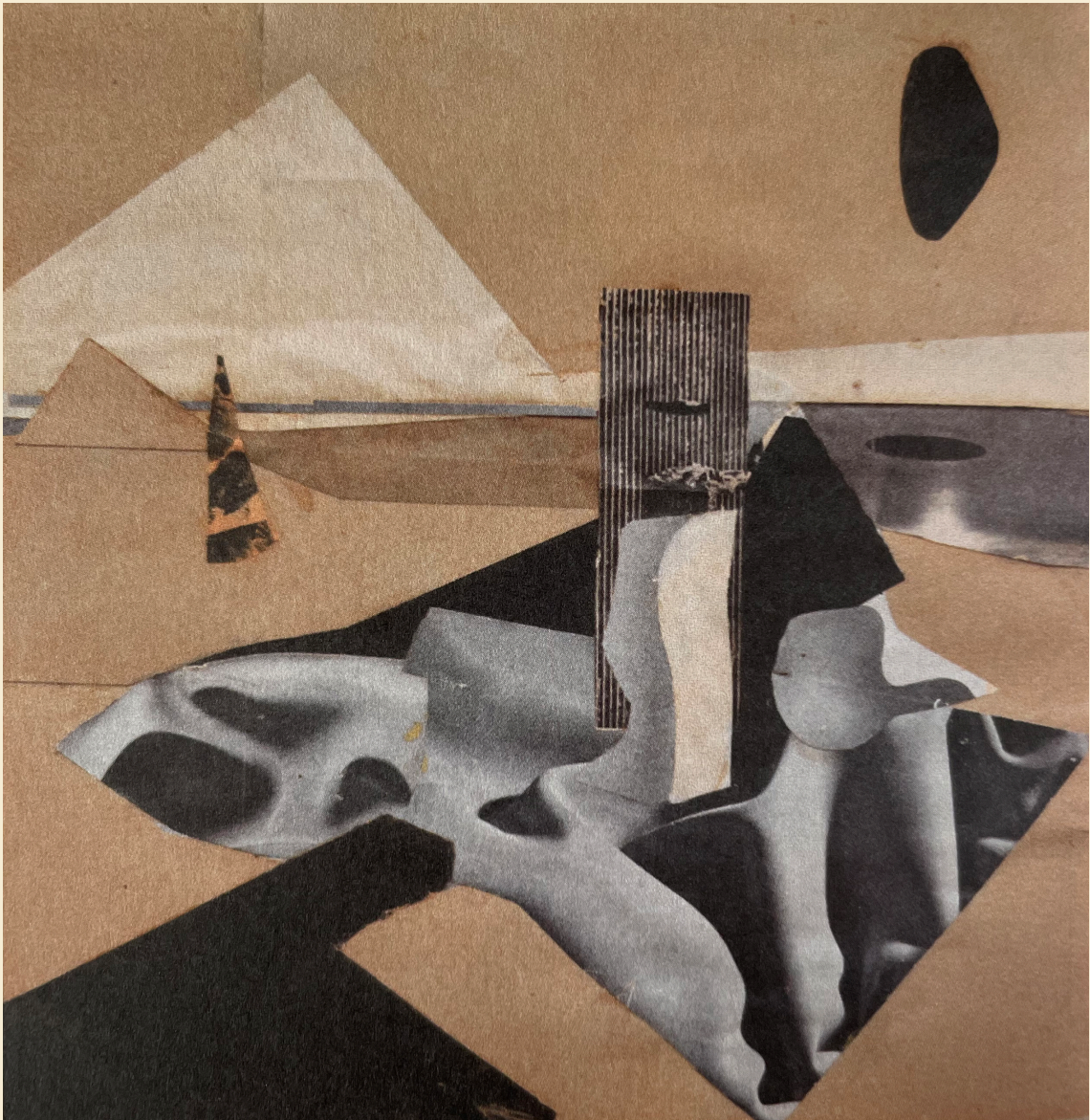
about their work (they usually worked in larger teams and again, no self-promotion). Like Stratigakos, Doucet encourages us to extend our research and the places we look for women architects. Because even though the contributions by women architects have been visible their names have not.

To conclude, there are several mechanisms behind the disappearance of women architects. Stratigakos states that the architectural history still reproduces the image of the architect as the male genius and claims that this is one of the underlying reasons for the invisibility of historic women architects. For a long time, women were also regarded unsuited to practice architecture, their entry into the profession was challenging, to say the least. When women later did enter the field, they rarely signed their work, their contributions were kept anonymous and often overshadowed by male colleagues. Further, women's work was seldom preserved in archives, and when historians have written about architectural achievements those have been about the ones by male architects. Though, to think that women architects disappeared from the history book, offices and archives can be misleading. What if they did not disappear, what if they were erased?

CHAPTER THREE

Five Events of 'Rediscovery'

Fig. 18 **Gouache and collage on paper - Untitled, ca 1940**, made by Eileen Gray



THE PUBLICATION OF JOSEPH RYKWERT'S ARTICLE, 1968

In the 1960's Eileen Gray, who was in her eighties, was completely forgotten in the architectural- and design world. Though, a few events during the late 1960's and early 1970's led to her rediscovery.

"It is odd how no-one has paid homage to Eileen Gray for thirty years [...] it is difficult to understand how this brilliant and sensitive accomplishment could have been so neglected".⁸⁰

JOSEPH RYKWERT, 1968

Joseph Rykwert, Professor Emeritus of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, architectural historian and critic,⁸¹ was one of the first to publicly rediscover Eileen Gray through his article, *A tribute to Eileen Gray, design pioneer*, published in *Domus* in 1968. The article has been digitised in recent years and is now available on *Domus'* website where they describe it as Rykwert's 'homage to Eileen Gray'. In the article, Rykwert gives the reader a brief introduction to the life and work of an architect that very few had heard of at this time. Beginning with her early years as a student at the Slade School in London, Rykwert continues with her move to Paris in 1902 where her focus shifted, first from paintings to lacquer works and furniture and then later, to architecture. Rykwert writes about her first public exhibition with, *the Union des Artistes Modernes*, in 1922, which gave her recognition as a designer and led to the opening of her shop [Editor's note: Jean Désert], where she would both sell her furniture but also take commissions for interior projects. Rykwert mentions Le Corbusier and Jean Badovici as important figures for her entry into architecture and says that it is unfortunate that only two of her architectural works were ever realised

[Editor's note: Actually three of her buildings were realised]. He describes the architectural qualities in her work as "highly individual and sophisticated essays in a formal language"⁸² and stresses that her design approach was something completely new. Though, he acknowledges that her second building, the house at Castellar [Editor's note: Villa Tempe à Pailla] never gained the same recognition as E.1027, even though it featured a refinement of her architectural language. In the end of his article Rykwert draws attention to the 'frescoes in the house' that Le Corbusier painted, and Rykwert declares that "their publication was perhaps the last occasion on which Eileen Gray's work was publicly seen."⁸³ [Editor's note: The publication Rykwert refers to was in the *Oeuvre Complète* and in the *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*⁸⁴] Rykwert concludes that, "[t]his melancholy anecdote has only the value of pointing to a historical context."⁸⁵ And stresses that,⁸⁶

"what she has done up to date must not be taken as just a historical document; it will remain as an example of a remarkably humane and sensitive artist who has had the courage and the force to break new ground."⁸⁷

THE EXHIBITION IN THE HEINZ GALLERY OF THE RIBA, 1971

"It never crossed her mind that people would be interested in her but I thought that she had been forgotten: such a limited number of people knew about her then. As a result I determined to mount an exhibition of her work at the Heinz Gallery in London, in 1972."⁸⁸

ALAN IRVINE

Another example of the rediscovery of Eileen Gray is the exhibition in the RIBA's (Royal Institute of British Architects) Heinz Gallery, curated by Alan Irvine in 1972.⁸⁹ In an interview for *The Irish Times* in October 2005, Alan Irvine and Zeev Aram talk about their first encounter with Eileen Gray and the revival of her career. Irvine, architect and designer of cultural exhibition and museum galleries, graduated in London in 1947. In the interview he talks about his interest in collecting architectural material (often related to Le Corbusier) and that he one day found an article in a publication called, *L'Architecture Vivant*, edited by Jean Badovici. It was the first time he read about Eileen and her building E.1027. Irvine says in the interview that,⁹⁰

"[w]e all knew about Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius and I wondered who this woman was, listed along with them."⁹¹

When Irvine found out that Eileen lived in Paris, in the same apartment she had been living in since 1907, he wrote to her. And shortly after this he travelled to Paris to meet her in person, and says that he "got to know her very well."⁹² This was in 1970 and Eileen, who was 92 years old lived a rather isolated life in her apartment on Rue Bonaparte, surrounded by the furniture she had designed throughout her life.

During one of their meetings Irvine photographed Eileen in her Paris home, picturing her sitting in a steel tube chair in front of her big lacquer panel.⁹³ Irvine describes her as creative and experimental but also modest and shy. She was selective with whom she invited into her life but once she and Irvine had got to know each other they could "talk for hours" about their common interest in architecture and design.⁹⁴

Irvine thought that it was about time that Eileen Gray gained recognition for her work, and wanted to arrange an exhibition showing her furniture and interior decoration projects. In the interview with *The Irish Times* he says that,⁹⁵

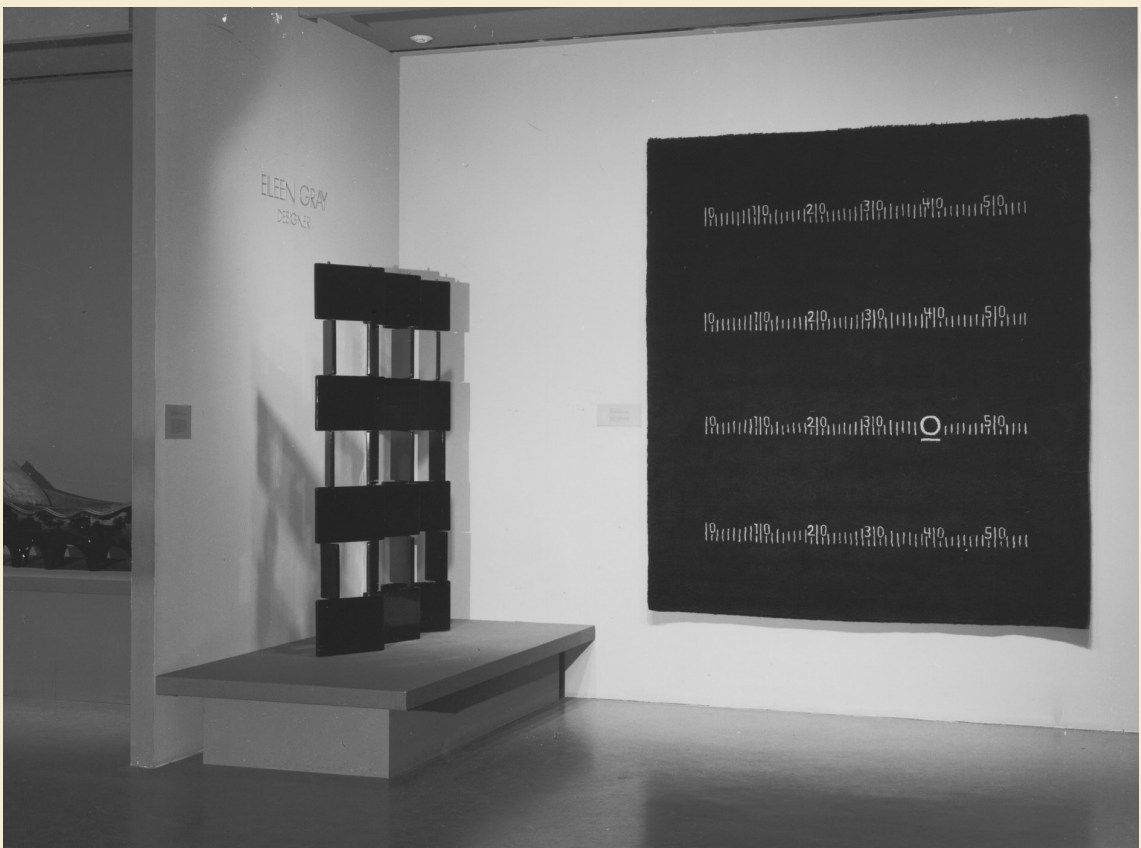
"I had a real job persuading her to let me exhibit her work [but eventually] she agreed to lend me material and examples of her furniture."⁹⁶

In 1972, forty-two years after Eileen's last show in Paris,⁹⁷ the exhibition at the Heinz Gallery at 21 Portman Square in London opened.⁹⁸

Opposite Page/

Fig. 19 **Exhibition at the Heinz Gallery of the RIBA 1971**, photographed by Edgar Hyman

Fig. 20 **Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York**, curated by J. Stewart Johnson



GETTING THE FURNITURE INTO PRODUCTION, 1970's

"I did sense that she was somewhat disappointed, but not in a sort of a big way - 'I'm a great person and nobody thinks of my name', but disappointed that she was forgotten. And yet, she knew - I mean J.J.P. Oud invited her to Holland and then they made a whole issue of her work and Rietveld said that she was one of the greatest and still the world just passed by. She was disappointed with a small 'd'. Without the content, that's the way life is, she had her wonderful years, she had wonderful fame, she had a wonderful working life - with ups and downs, and that's that."⁹⁹

ZEEV ARAM

Zeev Aram, owner of the Aram Store in London, nowadays licensed to the reproduction of Eileen Gray's design, met journalist Alyn Griffiths from Dezeen in September 2013 to talk about his relation to Eileen and the launch of a new website celebrating the architect.

Aram says that he read about Eileen for the first time when he was in college, but at that time "she was just part of the milieu of art deco artists and designers."¹⁰⁰ Many years later, Aram read about her again, this time in Joseph Rykwert's article in *Domus* magazine from 1968. When the exhibition at the Heinz Gallery was coming up, Aram, who was a friend of Alan Irvine, was invited to see the show. Aram remembered that Irvine told him that the show was going to be small but interesting.

At this point, Irvine had already talked to Eileen about the possibilities to take her furniture into production again, and was presumably happy when Aram showed a big interest in her work.¹⁰¹ Shortly after the London exhibition Aram got to meet Eileen through her niece Prunella Clough, and

in the interview with *The Irish Times*, he says,¹⁰²

"I'd known Prunella for a while and she used to come to the gallery for tea: it became quite a tradition. So, one day she brought Eileen with her."¹⁰³

Eileen was surprised when Aram asked for her permission to produce her furniture, but eventually she agreed upon it. Before this Eileen had only worked with small scale manufacturers in Paris, where all furniture where produced in limited editions, often as one-off pieces. When Aram and Eileen began working together, Aram described it as her *rebirth* and remembered that she told him, "Up until now nothing has happened."¹⁰⁴

They continued working together until Eileen's death in 1976, and by then she had let him have the world license to exclusively continue the production of her work. When Griffiths, from Dezeen, asked if this was important to Aram, he answered,¹⁰⁵

"It's very important, not because it makes me recognised and makes me important, it's important because I think we still haven't quite finished but we are getting there. [...] and now you are interviewing me not because she's an anonymous person, but because she's an important design person."¹⁰⁶

THE ART DECO FURNITURE AUCTION, HÔTEL DROUOT, 1972

"It is not true, as has often been said, that Doucet discovered Eileen Gray, but the purchase of her work by a distinguished collector certainly helped to launch her career."¹⁰⁷

PETER ADAM

In 1912, Jaques Doucet, the famous Parisian dress designer and art collector, had sold his large collection of eighteen-century furniture, objects, paintings, and drawings to give room for a new collection of furniture and art. In 1913, at the *VII Salon de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs*, he saw Eileen Gray's lacquer panel, *Le Magicien*, for the first time, and the same year he purchased, *Le Destin*, a four panel screen in red and blue lacquer. After that, Doucet acquired several of Eileen's most influential early designs, the Lotus table and the *bilboquet* table and a big wardrobe, all made in the lacquer technique. Doucet's fascination for Eileen's work and the fact that her pieces would belong to his well-renowned Art Deco collection, became important for the continuation of her career.¹⁰⁸

"Eileen always refused to sign her work - a mixture of pride and modesty; even her drawings do not bear her signature. But the *Le Destin* screen sold to Doucet is one of the rare pieces bearing her name. This unusual concession was almost certainly made at the client's insistence."¹⁰⁹

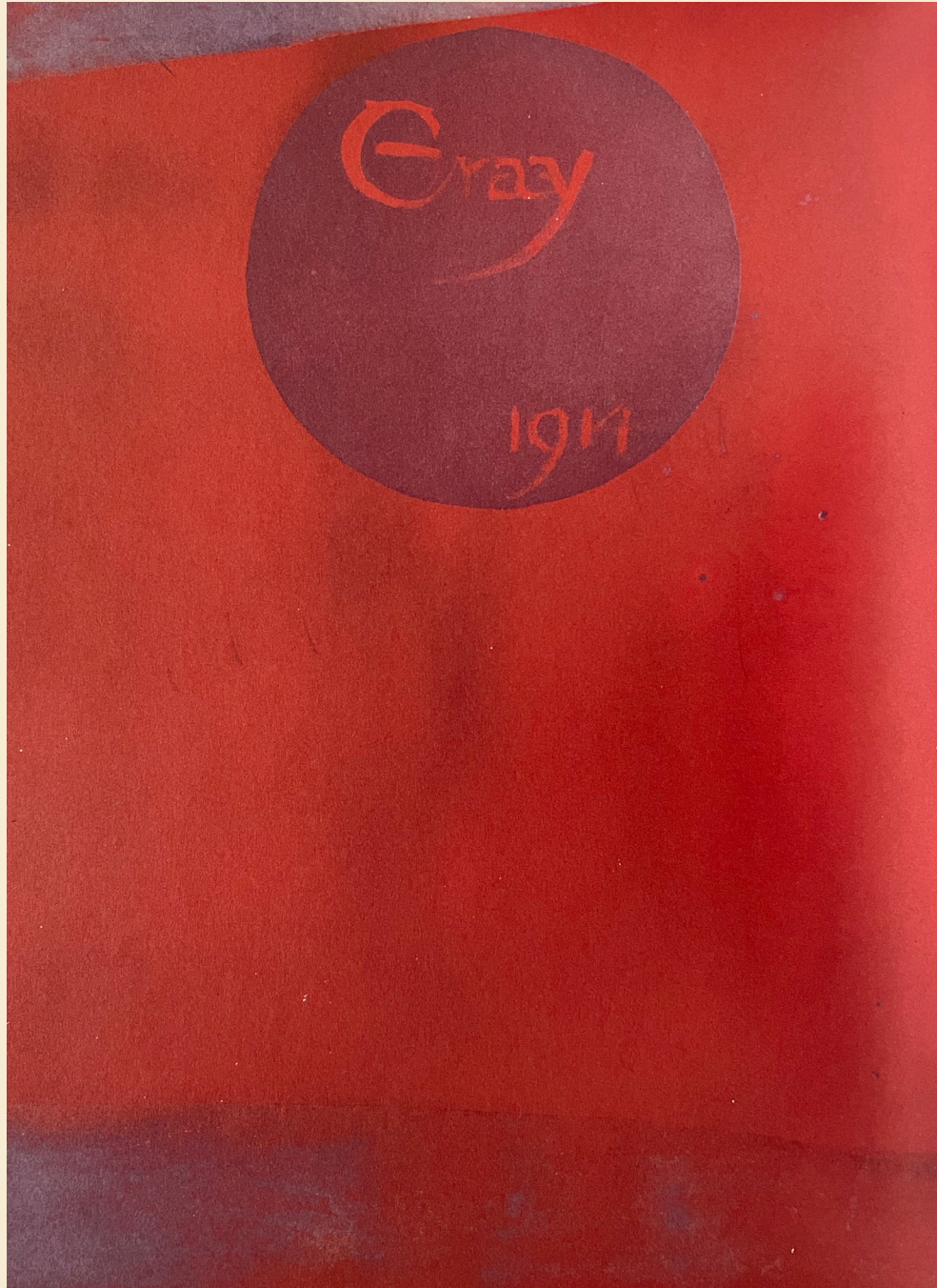
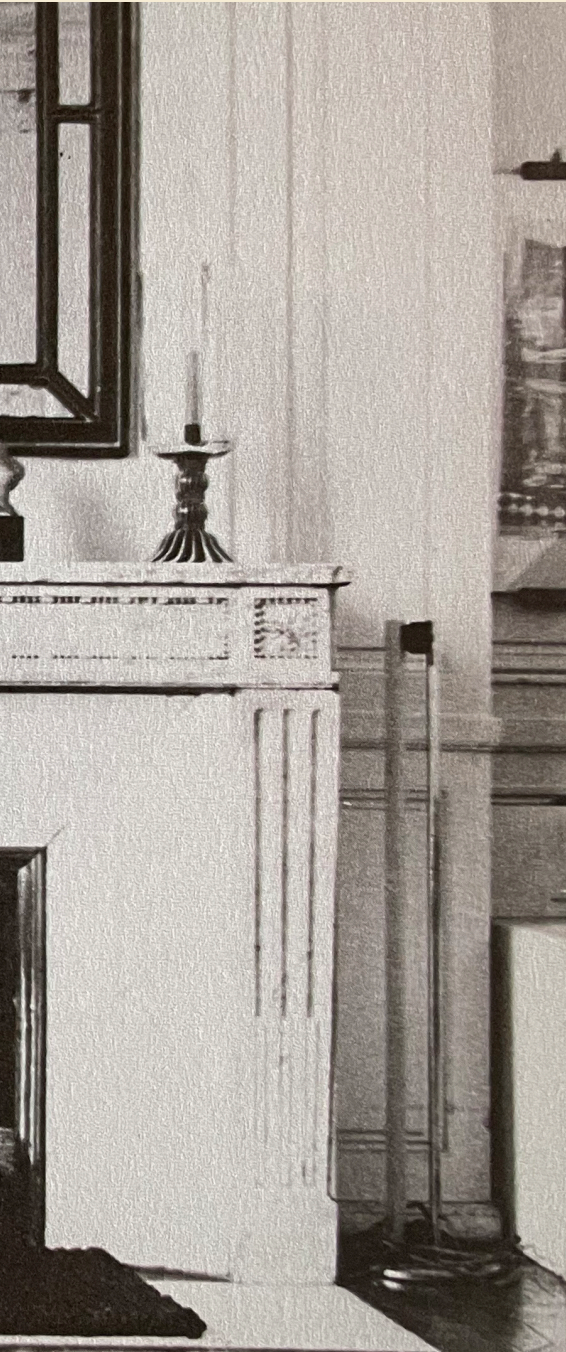
PETER ADAM

Forty years after Jaques Doucet's death, on November 8, 1972 his collection of Art Deco furniture was sold at the Paris auction house of the Hôtel Drouot. One of the objects listed was the lacquer panel titled, 'Gray (Eileen). *Le Destin* 4-panel

screen in lacquer decorated with figures in green and silver on a red background.' The price of over 170,000 francs suddenly made the newspaper interested in the designer, the ninety-four year old Eileen Gray. *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *The Times* in London and the *International Herald Tribune* all wrote about her. Both collectors and art historians suddenly showed an interest in her work, making her 'fashionable again' as Adam puts it.¹¹⁰ The rediscovery was followed by new exhibitions, in Paris, London, Los Angeles, Brussels, Vienna and New York, and Adam declares that,¹¹¹

"[t]he search for the mysterious Eileen Gray began."¹¹²





THE FIRST BOOK ABOUT EILEEN GRAY, 1979

"When Eileen Gray was in her nineties, a younger generation of designers, architects, and, by now, historians, began to take a fresh interest in her work and to seek her out. Although essentially shy, she responded to their interest, showing them her work and, with their encouragement, putting some of her most original designs - which had been too advanced for general acceptance when conceived - into production."¹¹³

J. STEWART JOHNSON, MoMA 1979

J Stewart Johnson, at the time Curator of Design at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, met Eileen in 1971.¹¹⁴ He had travelled to Paris to collect material for a book "that was to compare and contrast the art deco and modernist styles" and was advised by a friend of his to meet Eileen Gray.¹¹⁵

Eileen was at the time experiencing the rediscovery of her work and was "very busy, very excited" and her "enthusiasm and interest were extra ordinarily youthful."¹¹⁶ In 1979 J. Stewart Johnson published the book, *Eileen Gray, designer*, followed by the exhibitions of her work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The book became the first one to use Eileen Gray as 'the principal source' with some help from her niece Prunella Clough, who would fill in when Eileen's memory betrayed her.¹¹⁷

The book, like the biography, presents Eileen's life and career in a chronological order. Beginning with her youth, growing up on the Irish countryside, in the family's house at Enniscorthy, the move to London in 1898 to study drawing at London's Slade School, her growing interest in lacquer techniques, and then the move to Paris in 1902. The book examines her most extensive interior

design commission for the famous modiste Madame Mathieu Levy in her apartment at rue de Lota in 1919, continuing with the opening of her gallery Jean Désert in 1922. The second half of the book concentrates on her architectural work, both the realised projects such as the villa E.1027, the apartment in the rue Chateaubriand, and the villa Tempe a Pailla, but also the unrealised projects like the Engineer's House and the House for Two Sculptors. The book also contains a rich collection of photographs of her furniture and designs, interiors and exteriors of her architectural work, architectural drawings, models and sketches.¹¹⁸

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Fig. 21 Eileen Gray in her Rue Bonaparte apartment 1971,
photographed by Alan Irvine

Fig. 22 Eileen's signature on le Destin screen, one of the rare pieces she ever signed

CONCLUSION

The five events of rediscovery discussed in this chapter is not to be seen as the only way in which Eileen and her work have been rediscovered, but rather to give a sense of *what* the very first rediscovery looked like and by *whom* it was made.

When Eileen was rediscovered, it happened through a male, and mostly, heterosexual gaze. Joseph Rykwert, Alan Irvine, J. Stewart Johnson and Zeev Aram are recognised as the men who were the key figures of the rediscovery of Eileen Gray. But they could possibly also have played key roles in rejecting the queer traces in her life and by that mean silencing her queer desires and values, and what those meant for the development of her career.

Neither Rykwert, Irvine, Aram or Johnson ever mentioned the influence Eileen's female business partners, lovers and friends had on her work. They wanted to claim Eileen's place in the modernist architectural movement, where they thought she belonged. Today we know that Eileen did not, as few of us do, fit into just one narrative or movement, but in the 1960's and 70's her work and architectural language were, nevertheless viewed and evaluated from solely one perspective - the modernist.

The same year as Rykwert's article was published Eileen turned ninety years old. We must take into consideration that the late rediscovery affected how people wrote about her, what people wrote about and how Eileen herself wanted to be rediscovered, but also remembered. Rykwert, Irvine, Johnson and Aram all met Eileen late in her life, though they talked about her as she was a close friend they had known for decades. I have read the articles and books they wrote and published as well as the interviews they

gave about Eileen Gray. In all cases they seem honestly surprised that she had been neglected and forgotten for so many years. Irvine, Johnson and Aram wonders if her disappearance from the public could have been a result of her shyness. Irvine says that,¹¹⁹

"although she was shy she was a good talker with certain people and once we became friends we would talk for hours, often about design and architecture."¹²⁰

In the end of his book Johnson discusses Eileen's rediscovery and the big interest "a younger generation of designers, architects, and, by now, historians," began to show her work and he says, "Although essentially shy, she responded to their interest."¹²¹ And in the interview with Dezeen Aram describes her as, "Descriptive wise, she was a frail little lady [...] She was very shy but at the same time she knew exactly what's what."¹²²

The rediscovery of Eileen Gray portrayed a shy and modest old lady in the end of her career. Though, for the ones that were her closest friends, she never disappeared. She remained in her apartment on Rue Bonaparte all her life and she continued to design, create and build. Though, Rykwert, Irvine, Johnson and Aram's encounter with Eileen and the way they would portrait her in articles, books and interviews have somehow defined her entire person, it has become *a truth*. I have never thought of Eileen as *shy* before but rather as the opposite, someone bold, brave and confident. The shyness, though, better suits the role women have been assigned for centuries.

The Mechanisms behind the Invisibility of Eileen Gray

Fig. 23 **Gouache and collage on paper - Untitled, ca 1960**, attributed to Eileen Gray and Prunella Clough



INTRODUCTION

For someone to be rediscovered means that the person, at some point and to some extent, disappeared. In the case of Eileen Gray, it seems to have happened quite rapidly after Le Corbusier's intrusion in E.1027, when he covered her walls with his murals. Adam declares that after this event, and the discussion between Badovici and Le Corbusier that followed, "Eileen's name disappeared increasingly from texts whenever E.1027 was mentioned."³¹⁴ At this point we can imagine that the conflict between Eileen and this respected modernist male architect made her situation, as a self-taught queer woman architect, even more vulnerable.

In the beginning of the 1990's, Eileen's work was rediscovered again, by a new generation of scholars, where Beatriz Colomina and Caroline Constant would critically analyse Eileen's architectural work and her place in the modernist movement. Colomina's article from 1993, *War on Architecture*, and Constant's article from 1994, *E.1027: The Nonheroic Modernism of Eileen Gray*, would influence other scholars to approach Eileen's work from feminist and queer perspectives.³¹⁵ In recent years scholars, such as Jasmine Rault and Katarina Bonnevier have continued the work Colomina and Constant initiated. Rault and Bonnevier's feminist and queer analyses of Eileen Gray have added complexity and depth to her work, and provided us with new understandings of the many ways it can be interpreted.

When Eileen Gray was rediscovered in the late 1960's and early 1970's, she was rediscovered as a modernist architect and designer, and her work was seen as a solely modernist contribution. Though, Eileen had

not been part of the established modernist architectural community, she had formed her own community together with her female friends, lovers and partners. The research by Rault and Bonnevier, show the connections between Eileen's way of living and loving and the development of her aesthetics. It also points at the layers of invisibility that surrounded, and still surrounds, her life. In terms of the rediscovery of Eileen Gray, Rault argues that Eileen did not fit into a solely modernist architectural movement, and if we, as researchers continue to view her work from a modernist perspective, we risk losing essential parts, the queer desires and values, in her work. I have continuously returned to Rault and Bonnevier's research to be inspired and to get clear-sighted analyses.

When Eileen was rediscovered, her disappearance from the public was just briefly mentioned, but not analysed. The men behind her rediscovery, did not pay attention to why so little of her personal memorabilia had survived and been archived, why her memory and legacy had not been preserved and why she was not really present in her own architectural work. In this chapter I have identified three of the mechanisms that led to the invisibility of Eileen Gray: Archival Research, Presence and Preservation and, Heteronormative Architectural Heritage. These mechanisms are all related to places and situations where Eileen has been, or still is, invisible. The queerness in Eileen's work and life is the common thread through all of them.

01. ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

The first mechanism discusses the problematic situations feminist historians have identified when it comes to finding women's voices in (male-dominated) archives. I will extend the problematisation of archival research of women to the difficulties of finding queer stories in a normative straight environment.

THE SILENCING OF WOMEN'S VOICES IN ARCHIVES

In the article, *Silence in Noisy Archives: Reflections on Judith Allen's 'Evidence and Silence - Feminism and the Limits of History' (1986) in the Era of Mass Digitisation*, Kathryn M. Hunter analyses the "complexities of archival silences and feminist approaches to such lacunae" in the digital era. The discussion about "the silencing of women's voices and experiences in archives" have been ongoing since the 1970's and the concerns feminist historians formulated fifty years ago is still relevant today. About her own role as a researcher, she writes,¹²³

As historians, we must guard against becoming more sceptical about silences and less so about the constitution of 'evidence'. We must continue to write and teach about what *may* not be known, and *why* it remains unknown.¹²⁴

M. Hunter builds her arguments around four general *point(s) of silencing*.¹²⁵ The first point discusses the "active and transitive process of silencing" which calls for attention to "the selective process at all levels of historical production" and the awareness of that a larger historical material is not equal to "the production of *better* history." The second point of silencing concerns "the assembly of facts/sources/mentions into archives." M. Hunter stresses that the

digitisation of material can also lead to the silencing of women's voices since the process of digitisation depends on "prioritisation and active archive-making" which in itself can work as a silencing force. The third point of silencing brought up by M. Hunter is the matter of inclusion and that the ones "who gets included in the story is a very powerful process of silencing others." She describes how feminist historians "have long struggled with the blurred line between interpretation and imagination" and discusses how the imagination of historic details can affect how we interpret the story itself. The fourth and last point deals with the issue of historical actors that "choose to be silent in the records" and somehow, silencing themselves.¹²⁶

M. Hunter returns to the feminist historian Judith Allen and the questions she raised in the 1970's regarding "areas of life that were secret - notably sexuality - but the circumstances of some women's lives in the past meant their presence in the records was intentionally small."¹²⁷ In the conclusion M. Hunter problematise digitisation of archives and stresses that the "digitised sources are seductive", while the digitisation can increase the accessibility of certain records "it has not transformed the nature of the sources we are searching" and because of that we must keep searching for the women

who have been erased from archives as well as the ones who, by various reasons, did not want to be visible in the archives.¹²⁸

Eileen Gray's biographies are all based on the architect's own words, the conversations she have had, the letters she have sent, and the material she left behind when she died.¹²⁹ The biography has been influential and an important contribution in making Eileen Gray's life story accessible, in a time when very few knew about her. Though, in terms of understanding Eileen Gray, little has been said about her biographer, Peter Adam.

In the paper, *Architectural Affections: On Some Modes of Conversation in Architecture*, Naomi Stead explores the historical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee in an architectural context. She discusses "how questions of identity and gender bear upon what is said and what can be said, by whom and in what way in the performance and performativity of the interview."¹³⁰ And in the introduction to the book, *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research*, Janina Gosseye summarises Stead's arguments from her paper as,¹³¹

"rather than solely looking at whose voices are heard in modern architectural historiography, we should also consider who is writing these stories."¹³²

And stresses that,¹³³

"[t]o know who is speaking of buildings, who is telling the story, and from which point of view can be just as important as the story itself."¹³⁴

Encouraged by Gosseye's words, to understand *who is telling the story*, I felt a need to better get to know the person who has been telling Eileen Gray's life story - her biographer, Peter Adam.

Peter was born as Klaus-Peter in 1929 in Berlin as a child of a Jewish father and a

Protestant mother which, under Nazi racial laws, classified him as a 'Mischling' or 'half-Jew', which made him live under constant threat. When the war was over Adam began to study acting at the Free University in Berlin and in 1959 he moved to Britain where he, about ten years later in 1968, would join the BBC. Here, he worked as a director, and produced more than a hundred documentaries on art and culture.

In the obituary, written by Nigel Williams for *The Guardian* shortly after Adam's death in 2019, not only his career as a famous filmmaker is celebrated, but also his sense for fashion. Williams describes Adam as a person "gifted with unfailing optimism and an incurable sense of fun" and that his documentaries not only told the story of a celebrity but of the person behind the fame.¹³⁵ Williams continues with Adam's immaculate sense for fashion,¹³⁶

"Peter walked the corridors of Kensington House in his bottle-green three-piece suits, flamboyant ties and general air of having just stepped off the catwalk of a fashion parade: this endeared him to just about everybody he met."¹³⁷

After Adam retired from the BBC he shared his time between Britain and France and in 2013 Peter Adam and his partner since many years, the actor Facundo Bo, married each other in Saint Tropez, at the age of eighty-four and seventy years old.¹³⁸ It was the same year as same-sex marriages were legalised in France.¹³⁹

Peter Adam met Eileen in 1960, she was eighty-two years old and, as he describes it in her biography, "totally forgotten." Their friendship would last until her death, sixteen years later in 1976.¹⁴⁰ In the biography Adam writes that Eileen to him was "foremost a friend, not a public person." They spent a lot of time together in Paris, in London and in the South of France, and their friendship

dealt with what most friendships do, the small and big things that happens in life. Questions such as “her thoughts on the Bauhaus,” and other things he later wanted to have asked, was never put to her and remained unanswered.¹⁴¹

I feel embarrassed that I have never thought of Adam as a queer person before, and that I probably would never had explored it further if it was not for Gosseye’s convincing introduction in *Speaking of Buildings*. However, understanding Adam’s background and position as a gay man sheds a new light to the biography and might, if we listen to Gosseye and Stead, become a way of also understanding Eileen and her invisibility.

Though, I am not the only one who have misinterpreted Adam’s intentions with his biographies. Rault writes, “However, try as he might, Adam does not fully succeed in making of Gray’s life story a heterosexual narrative line.”¹⁴² Rault refers to the difference of opinions about the importance of what Adam describes as Eileen’s “most intimate friends” but rejects since they had “little bearing” on her work, while Rault describes them as “the female colleagues, clients, friends and lovers who defined the development of her career.”¹⁴³ Their different perspectives point at the complexity of finding and defining the queer in Eileen’s life and work. And I am not sure that Adam wanted to make “Gray’s life story a heterosexual narrative line.”

Even if Adam’s sexuality does not tell us much about his understandings of Eileen’s own struggles, it does say something about his position in society at this time. Going back to M. Hunter, we might allow ourselves to *imagine* what Peter Adam’s move to Britain and his meeting with the queer community there could have looked like. We can, for example imagine him, a stylish 30 year old in the 1960’s, going to gay night clubs and being part of the queer community, but we can also imagine him seeing the brutality and violence queer people were exposed

to. And that he, in the 1980’s and 90’s experienced the loss of friends in the AIDS epidemic. Adam was most likely very aware of what one could risk by ‘coming out of the closet’ and therefore we might ask ourselves whether his attempt to leave out details of Eileen’s private life was, at the time, rather a way of protecting than silencing?

LOOKING FOR QUEER WOMEN IN STRAIGHT ARCHIVES

In 2011, Jasmine Rault, published her book, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity: Staying In*. The title of Rault's book stems from her demonstration that Eileen Gray's design "depended on staying in rather than coming out."¹⁴⁴ In the conclusion of the book Rault discusses what can be called "the study of the impossible objects" where she refers to the difficulties she felt analysing the queerness and sexuality of a person who did not seem to care about it herself. Rault writes,

"However, the impossibility of objects in a study of Gray's work and sexuality is exacerbated by the actual lack of objects of study - few surviving and accessible works; no recorded declarations of sexual identity; no unequivocal archival "evidence" of sexual desires, practices or relationships - and the related sense that Gray would have resisted the objects upon which this research is based. That is, like many of the artists, writers and designers associated with the cultural field of sapphic modernity, Gray seems to have rejected the logic that would make of sexuality an object of study. The challenge, then, has been to show how sexuality matters to understanding the architectural and design work of someone for whom sexuality did not seem to matter."¹⁴⁵

While M. Hunter claims that historians should not put their effort in the search for 'evidence' but rather discuss the factors behind the silences, Rault tries both to find the 'evidence' and to speculate about why they have been overlooked.¹⁴⁶

A couple of years ago I began to research a love story that, until then, had been rejected as nothing else than the similar rumours as Adam talks about. It was the love story between Karin Gerle (1885-1954) and Anna Schenström (1884-1969) taking place in the beginning of the twentieth century in a small village on the Swedish West Coast. Both women came from wealthy families and met as teenagers, they became close friends and

eventually, a couple. When Karin was in her mid-thirties, she inherited the Gerlemansion, her family house, and spent every summer, throughout her life, in the house in company with Anna. The two women were both teachers and run their own school for housemaids in Uppsala, Sweden.

As I began to research the women, I discovered a few difficulties. First, it was the lack of 'evidence' that both M. Hunter and Rault discuss in their research. Everyone I talked to in the village said that it was *possible* that Karin and Anna could have had an intimate relationship, but no one could tell for sure since there was no 'evidence' of it. The rumours that had been growing around the two women had turned them into mysterious figures, similar to the mystery that surrounded Eileen Gray.

One fascinating story that has been circulating around Karin and Anna concerns the two women's bedrooms. Karin and Anna had two separate bedrooms on the upper floor in their summer residence, the rooms were located next to each other, each one equipped with a single bed. Though, the rooms were connected with a hidden door in the wall. Today, one can feel the contours of the opening under the wallpaper. Karin and Anna travelled a lot, they sent each other letters from all around the world and many photo albums have survived from their life. They never married anyone, nor did they get any children. There are several evidences of an intimate relationship between the two women, but maybe not of that sort people are used to.

Another difficult aspect that I came across in researching Karin and Anna was the limitations of the archive. Karin and Anna had a lot of friends and they enjoyed arranging garden parties in the summer evenings, but unlike Eileen Gray, they did not move in the circle of other lesbians. The archive I have used searching for Karin and

Anna is, *Riksarkivet*, or, *the National Archives*, which serves as "the official archive for the Swedish government and for supervising the management of the archives of Sweden's public authorities."¹⁴⁷ Several holdings have been digitised, like the parish registers, and I used the Archive's website to search for more information about the two women.¹⁴⁸ According to the information from the registers, Karin and Anna, were living together in Uppsala for forty years and moved eight times during that period of time. They are, together with their house maids, referred to as *members of the household*, and since none of them married a man they are both listed as *unmarried* living in a *one person household*. The archive, in its present state works as a silencing force to the non-heterosexual relationships it contains. It is clear that the archives in themselves can be limiting and that the struggles to find queer people in straight archives, remains.

Eileen Gray's life story might seem far away from the one about Karin Gerle and Anna Schenström, but they have a lot in common. When researching the life story of Eileen Gray, I have realised that I am again looking for evidence, a verification of queer desires and relationships. And I wonder, is there such thing as a verification? For Karin and Anna we already have the evidence, thick folders of photographs, letters, birthday cards, see-you-soon-cards and miss-you-cards, sent from countries all over Europe. Despite that, I was looking for more, and in the National Archives it was stated in black and white that Karin and Anna lived together all their lives. For Eileen Gray it has been different, the lack of personal photographs and letters - the lack of evidence of a queer life, have made researchers as Rault, Bonnevier and myself to look beyond the existing material and to explore the silence and invisibility surrounding Eileen's life.

In the 1970's The Lesbian Herstory Archive was founded in New York as a reaction towards the realisation that the

history reflecting the lives and experiences of lesbians was "disappearing as quickly as it was being made."¹⁴⁹ At first, the collection was kept in Joan Nestle's, one of the founders', Upper West Side Manhattan apartment on 92nd St. Fifteen years later the collection had grown so big it did no longer fit into the apartment. In 1993 the doors opened to the new collection, located in a building in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where it is still to be found today. The archive's mission, to collect, preserve and make visible the lives and activities of lesbians is as important today as it was fifty years ago.¹⁵⁰ In 1984, followed by a lesbian studies conference, the initiative, *the Lesbian History Group*, was formed. On their website they talk about the background of the group and state that, before its establishment,¹⁵¹

"the history of lesbianism had largely been ignored by feminist and mainstream historians."¹⁵²

In 1989 the Lesbian History Group published their book, *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985*. In the introduction they address the importance of claiming our space as lesbians, in archives, in books and in the history. They state that,¹⁵³

"knowledge of our history gives us a context in which to place ourselves in the world and a basis for our efforts to change things."¹⁵⁴

Further they stress that learning about the history of lesbians might both strengthen lesbians of today but also helps to increase the visibility of queer historic people.¹⁵⁵

EILEEN GRAY IN THE ARCHIVES

In 1956, at the age of seventy-five Eileen began to assemble parts of her work into two portfolios, which today belongs to the National Museum of Ireland. The portfolios contain black-and-white photographs, sketches, architectural plans, elevations, and cross sections. All the material is arranged chronologically accompanied by typewritten labels.¹⁵⁶ In October 2020 Bard Graduate Center Gallery in New York exhibited Eileen Gray's work for the first time in the US since 1979.^{157,158} Bard Graduate Center developed a website to showcase digitised material from the exhibition. Besides the possibility to experience the show as it was curated, one could also study a reproduction of one of the two portfolios. The Center writes that the portfolios show how Eileen gave,¹⁵⁹

"equal attention to the lacquered furniture and interiors she designed in the 1910s and 1920s as she does to her architectural work, chronicling built projects alongside unrealized projects that include residential structures, social projects, and urban plans."¹⁶⁰

Further they reflect upon her choice not to include a few of her most well-known designs, as well as her paintings and photographs, and if the reason could be because she considered them "private and separate from her career as an architect and designer."¹⁶¹

Eileen was selective with what she left behind and in her biography one can read that she, in the end of her life, destroyed most of her personal letters and photographs. Adam describes it as an example of,¹⁶²

"the discretion she had manifested all her personal life [which] prevented her from leaving any traces, except in her work."¹⁶³

Adam does not question why she felt a need to destroy the material, nor does he speculate in what the material contained that made

its preservation impossible. Further, Adam writes that he has,¹⁶⁴

"purposely refrained from probing too deeply into the private lives of those who were at times her most intimate friends."¹⁶⁵

He considers it her right to her privacy to keep certain things to herself and that this however had 'little bearing' on her work. Adam declares that the biography was written "to dispel much of the rumor, the numerous errors and speculations" that was circulating around her name, without going further into detail what kind of rumours he is referring to.¹⁶⁶ He also states that "Eileen Gray would not have approved of this book" and that she never had any interest of writing her own biography since "she shied away from any personal revelations."¹⁶⁷

Rault has a more critical approach to what Adam describes as the discretion in Eileen's life, and she stresses that the difficulties scholars have had to understand the importance of sexuality in terms of her creativity stems from the lack of sources and archival information. Eileen published only one text about her work, and numerous notes and architectural and design plans were destroyed by retreating German forces after World War II, while much of her personal papers were destroyed by herself. Further Rault stresses that the archives do not contain much information about either Eileen's personal, or professional life.¹⁶⁸

When Eileen died most of her archive was given to Peter Adam while smaller parts of her archive was acquired by museums.¹⁶⁹ From Johnson's book and Adam's biography it seems that they were both involved in assembling the memorabilia left after Eileen. Adam writes,¹⁷⁰

"When we gathered her belongings after her death, I found scraps of papers, photographs, some torn-out pages of

an old address book, the sales ledger of her shop, some work notes, quite a few architectural drawings, and much of the remnant paraphernalia of her personal life."¹⁷¹

Johnson describes how Prunella, after Eileen Gray's death in 1976, "brought the scrapbooks, chronologies, and all of her other papers to London" to be used for both his book and the exhibition he was setting up.¹⁷² When going through the material together with Prunella, Johnson claims that the material they found did not "constituted anything like a full archive" even though it was "far more than I expected to find," he says.¹⁷³ In his book he describes the process of organising what was left after Eileen Gray,¹⁷⁴

which her work was reviewed, her collection of lacquering tools as well as her own copy of the side table she made for E.1027.¹⁷⁶ I am eager to see if any of the material have been digitised and visit the Museum's website. But even though the Museum hosts a permanent Eileen Gray exhibition, the collection they acquired twenty years ago is not given much attention.¹⁷⁷

"As she and I went through what at first appeared to be a meagre and haphazard assortment of papers, we discovered that it, in fact, contained biographical material of great value: a day book and lists of customers for Jean Desert, the gallery Eileen Gray maintained from 1922 to 1930; a notebook in her hand with instructions for preparing lacquer; a correspondence with a craftsman named Inagaki, who performed a variety of tasks for her over the years; miscellaneous bills from firms that produced work or supplied materials for her; a group of old press cuttings, indicating critical reaction to her early work; and, finally, a small group of letters she had saved that had been written to her when she was discovered by the Dutch de Stijl architects."¹⁷⁵

Today the remains of Eileen's work belong to a handful of archives as well as to private collectors. The most comprehensive archival collection of her legacy belongs to the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin. In an article published in the Irish Times one can read that the collection was purchased from Peter Adam in year 2000 for £900,000. The collection consists of both personal objects, such as a dressing gown with monogram, the Poiret dress and her make-up. But it also contains carpets, chairs, tables, lacquered screens, frosted glass lanterns, prototypes, photographs, contemporary magazines in

CONCLUSION

M. Hunter's four points of silencing help us to understand the mechanisms behind the invisibility of women in archives. The fact that the history presented to us is just a small piece of a larger story, and that archives are built up by people who have prioritised some material and left out others, the fact that inclusion also means exclusion and that some historical actors have silenced themselves, are mechanisms that can all be applicable on the invisibility of Eileen Gray.

The biography by Peter Adam has been important and influential since it is one of few books where Eileen herself has been the primary source of information. The biography is, by no means, complete but give a sense of the work she produced and the person she was. The friendship between Peter Adam and Eileen Gray shine through every page and as a reader one understands that this book is written as if *she* where to read it. Though, she never got the chance, the book was published eleven years after her death. The fact that Eileen's queer life is not given much room in her biography might be a result of both Eileen's will and Adam's willingness to please and protect her. Adam did not refuse to write about her non-heterosexual relationships - the queerness in the biography is visible, though not obvious. Returning to M. Hunter's four points of silencing, we can ask ourselves whether Eileen's queer life was silenced by herself or whether it was silenced by others.

After Eileen's death another moment of silencing occurred which concerned to what extent her heritage would be archived and to what extent it would be digitised. This can be connected to the second point of silencing that M. Hunter discuss in her paper which concerns the assembly of material for an archive and the selection of material to be digitised. M. Hunter reminds us of the fact that archives are the product of people's selection and the result of these individual's

decision making. Archive material that is digitised is a matter of prioritisation, which means that when chosen parts of a collection are digitised that mean that other parts are not. In the situation of Eileen Gray, the archived material that has been digitised seems to concern her working life rather than her private life. The material that both Johnson, Adam and Frank McDonald (the Irish Times) refer to, like her day book, her private photographs and letters, Damia's records, her monogrammed dressing gown, and her make-up - the things that tell something about her private life do not seem to have been digitised. And, as M. Hunter stresses, digitised archives "are not neutral or objective, nor are they complete."³¹⁶

In the end of her life Eileen had experienced the rise, the fall and the rediscovery of her architectural- and design career. She went from being absolutely unknown to be seen as "one of the most influential 20th Century designers and architects."³¹⁷ The sudden rediscovery and the big interest in her work and personal life might have been part of the reason why she felt a need to take control over the legacy of her work and what she wanted to leave behind. To Eileen it was of great importance *how* she would be remembered and for *what*. She wanted to be remembered for her work, and not her personal life.

When Eileen, in the end of her life, burned her personal letters and photographs, she also decided to silence parts of her history and heritage. The absence of queer traces in Eileen's archives tell us about the silencing of queer voices in straight archives.

02. PRESENCE AND PRESERVATION

Reading Rault, Bonnevier and Adam have made me reflect upon the presence and preservation of Eileen's legacy – why her presence in her architectural work is not very visible, and why her legacy has not been preserved. The second mechanism, presented in this part, is a shift from the tangible preservation of the material collected in archives, to the intangible preservation of someone's existence. I will explore the visibility of Eileen Gray in two of her most famous architectural work, and I will follow in the steps of artist Sarah Browne's search for Eileen in Paris.

“FROM MARGIN TO MARGIN (LOOKING FOR EILEEN)”

“As of now there is no marked grave for her and no place named after her (e.g her place of work or where she lived on Rue Bonaparte or the location of her shop, Jean Desert, on Rue Faubourg Saint-Honoré). The idea is to create some kind of space for her memory, it's that simple.”¹⁷⁸

SARAH BROWNE

In 2009 Irish artist Sarah Browne was commissioned to produce an artwork for the Daimler Art Collection in Berlin for the exhibition, *Minimalism and Applied II*.¹⁷⁹ Browne had previously made an artwork for the Irish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009, a hand-knotted carpet produced in Ireland by Donegal Carpets. The artwork referred to Eileen Gray's rug designs and was exhibited accompanied by the piece, *Letter to Eileen Gray*. When the project was finished it turned out that the women who had been re-employed by Browne to weave her carpet had been the same women who had produced the carpets for Eileen Gray.¹⁸⁰

For the Daimler Collection, Browne continued to research Eileen Gray by exploring the visibility of her presence. Browne's initial idea was to film inside

E.1027 during its restoration, though due to insurance issues she could not get the permission to proceed with the filming. And from that moment the focus shifted, from the tangible aspects to the intangible aspects of remembrance, from the preservation of the building to the preservation of the memory. Browne was interested in both how Eileen's legacy was preserved but also honoured.

Browne began to look for traces in Paris, the city Eileen lived and worked in for most of her life. She searched for the things that would make the memory of Eileen vivid, evidence of her existence. Browne imagined that the physical places that had been important to Eileen Gray would be marked in some way, with signs or plaquettes telling where she lived, where she opened her gallery, where she worked and where she was buried. Though, the buildings and places that, in different ways, referred to Eileen's life were not marked, neither was the grave at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris where Eileen was buried in 1976.

The invisibility of Eileen Gray added to the 'mystique' that surrounded her and became the point of departure in Browne's continuation of the project. When Browne

investigated the case with the grave further, she found out that the plot at Père Lachaise Cemetery had not been renewed after 1998, before that Peter Adam and Prunella Clough had taken care of the grave. Browne began to explore the possibilities to re-lease Eileen's graveside as a way to honour her memory. But the artist encountered difficulties since the remains of Eileen's body, at some point, had been moved from the Père Lachaise Cemetery to a communal grave in Thiais Cemetery in Paris' suburbs. And that it was impossible to re-instate the plot for her grave at the original cemetery due to lack of space. Browne went to the Thiais Cemetery and wrote about the visit in her final letter to Eileen,¹⁸¹

"I didn't manage to find the *jardin du souvenir* inside in the end [...] and it seems nobody really knows where 'you' are. A shame, since you are certainly not the well-kept secret you were a while ago [...] and I have met a number pf people who I'm certain would like to visit and pay their respects."¹⁸²

In the letter Browne also expresses her

apology to Eileen, hoping that her process of looking for her "would not have been an irritation."¹⁸³

The finished artwork, *From Margin to Margin (Looking for Eileen)*, follows Browne's attempt to contribute to her visibility. The book contains letters from the artist to Eileen, mail correspondence between the artist and people involved in the legacy of Eileen Gray, black and white photos and a map of Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.¹⁸⁴ The mint green book cover is the same colour as the guest bedroom in E.1027.¹⁸⁵

In her artist book Browne invites us to feel her frustration, nothing goes as planned in her project and she is afraid that her work will not contribute to the visibility of Eileen in the way she has hoped. Browne wonders why Eileen has made it so difficult for us to 'find' her. Maybe she did not want to be found, maybe it was her 'will to disappear', Browne speculates. And yes, maybe it was.

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Fig. 24 **From Margin to Margin (Looking for Eileen)**, Daimler Art Collection



THE EILEEN GRAY MEMORIAL IN PARIS & THE GRAHAM SUTHERLAND MEMORIAL IN MENTON

A decade has passed since Sarah Browne exhibited her artistic research on Eileen Gray at the Daimler Art Collection, and I want to know how things have changed since then. Is the memory and legacy of Eileen Gray more visible today? My question takes me to Paris and the Eileen Gray Memorial, further to Eileen's second building *Tempe à Pailla* in Menton, and lastly to Roquebrune-Cap-Martin and the Cap Moderne Association in the South of France.

When Sarah Browne was looking for Eileen in 2009, she could not find any traces from the architect in her own neighbourhoods, but in 2016 this is about to change. It is a Wednesday in the beginning of September and dozens of people have gathered in the courtyard at Rue Bonaparte 21. The grapevines are climbing on the white plaster facade and the big trees are shadowing the sunny courtyard. On an easel stands the iconic photograph of Eileen Gray taken by Berenice Abbott in the 1920's, and around it, flowers in green, white and orange. People have come to pay their homage to Eileen Gray, who lived in the building for nearly seventy years. Ireland's Ambassador, Geraldine Byrne Nason, uncovers the marble plaque with the text, 'Eileen Gray, Irish architect and designer, 1878-1976, lived in this building from 1907 until 1976.' And she reads a letter from Peter Adam to give the audience a detailed picture of what Eileen Gray's second floor apartment looked like when she lived there. The plaque, mounted on the stone wall, outside the courtyard is visible for everyone passing by, it is a reminder of Eileen's contributions, and a wish for her memory to be preserved. Patrick Klugman, from Paris town hall says after the ceremony that,

"people will walk down this street and stop and realise how the creative forces

that interacted here resisted the passage of time."¹⁸⁶

In Menton at 187 route de Castellar, stands Eileen's second building, and the first villa she designed for herself. Villa *Tempe à Pailla* was completed in 1932 and was the home for Eileen Gray, her housekeeper Louise Dany and the stray dog Domino before the Second World War.¹⁸⁷ In 1954 the villa was acquired by the English painter Graham Sutherland (1903-1980) who would live there for the rest of his life. Since 1990 the villa has been registered as an historical monument and since 2001 it has been labeled *XXth heritage* by the French *Ministry of Culture*.

One year after Sutherland's death, a memorial to honour the painter was placed by the gates to the entrance of the building. A circular shaped plaque with the text, "Ici a Vecu et Travaille G. Sutherland O.M, Peintre Graveur, 1903-1980, Citoyen d'Honneur De Menton, Ses Amis Fideles a Sa Memories 17.2.1981."¹⁸⁸ On a much smaller plaque on the stone wall one can read, *Tempe À Pailla*¹⁸⁹, but nowhere is Eileen Gray mentioned.

E.1027 AND LE CABANON IN ROQUEBRUNE-CAP-MARTIN

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Eileen travelled to Hyères in the south of France. She immediately fell in love with the Mediterranean landscape and she would later spend many years of her life in the area stretching from Saint-Tropez to Italy.¹⁹⁰ In the 1920's Eileen was looking for the perfect spot to build on, and she had been told about a place along the coast line between Menton and Nice, Roquebrune, fifty metres above the sea. The barren cliffs, turquoise sea and gnarled trees would become the fund for for her first building,¹⁹¹ which she designed for herself and her partner, Jean Badovici.¹⁹² In 1926 the construction of the villa began and three years later E.1027 was overlooking the sparkling sea.

The building invites the visitor to experience its architecture in a playful yet thoughtful way. The boundaries between inside and outside is not really defined which add another dimension to the spatial experience. The garden and the terrace almost become an extension of the building itself. Gray wanted to create a space that could be mysterious in a sense and surprising the visitor by doing something unexpected.¹⁹³

Shortly after E.1027 was completed Gray separated from Badovici and she left E.1027. Le Corbusier was a frequent visitor of the villa and a close friend to Badovici and he really admired the building. Between the years 1938 and 1939, with the permission from Badovici, Le Corbusier painted several murals covering the walls of E.1027.¹⁹⁴ In the biography Adam describes how Le Corbusier "stripped naked and proceeded to paint the stark white walls with eight sexually charged murals." Gray called this, "an act of vandalism."¹⁹⁵ And Adam writes that, "It was a rape. A fellow architect, a man she admired had without her consent defaced her design."¹⁹⁶ And, "after that she could never bring herself to stay in the house."¹⁹⁷

In recent years the act has been described as "an example of misogyny in architecture" and questions have been raised regarding the role of the murals in E.1027. Some people even believe that the murals have been incitement for the building's preservation.¹⁹⁸ After the vandalism Gray was excluded by the design establishment and her work was not rediscovered until the late 1960's. Even though Gray never returned to E.1027, Le Corbusier did, and he even designed a small house, the Cabanon, not far from Gray's E.1027. At Unesco's website the Cabanon is described as "an archetypal minimum cell based on ergonomic and functionalist approaches".¹⁹⁹

After Badovici's death in 1956, the design of E.1027 was credited Badovici himself. Le Corbusier encouraged the discrediting since he wanted to preserve his murals. In the 1990's the villa was squatted, and the walls sprayed with graffiti. Not until 1999 it was purchased by the Commune of Roquebrune Cap Martin with support from the French government, at this point E.1027 was declared a historic monument.²⁰⁰ The site is nowadays also protected by France's coastal protection agency, the Conservatoire du Littoral.²⁰¹

During 2006 and 2010, the villa was restored, a process that has been criticised for its lack of quality. The murals by Le Corbusier was also preserved, which has been seen as a controversial decision.²⁰² Since 2014, E.1027 and the Cabanon, have been managed by the charitable body, the Cap Moderne Association. The Association organised a fundraising for the restoration of the buildings and the site itself. The money covered half of the cost, the other half was funded by the French State and Regional authorities.

On Cap Moderne Association's website one can take a virtual tour at the site and inside the buildings, it certainly makes

the area alive, giving depth and texture to the images I have only painted for myself. Though, the first thing that strikes me is the appearance of the murals - it is impossible not to see them. I realise how different I experience them in this virtual format compared to looking at photographs of them. They are big, covering parts of entire walls, some are more abstract while others portray naked women. The murals inside and outside the villa that remains today have all been restored but the mural "in the living room has been cached to preserve the integrity of Eileen Gray's vision," according to the Association.²⁰³ The second thing that strikes me during the virtual tour, is how empty the villa looks, there is nothing on the shelves in the kitchen or in the bathroom, no personal traces of human life and activity. It feels more like the museum it is today than the home it used to be. I imagined the place to appear as an extension of Eileen herself, but now it feels more like the shell of her past.

Even though Eileen's, E.1027, was finally protected, one can still speculate what role the murals by Le Corbusier played

in the preservation of E.1027. The strong visibility of Le Corbusier in Cap Martin gives us a hint of his influence in the area. *The promenade of Le Corbusier*, originally the 'Customs Path' created during the revolution in 1791, stretches between Saintes Maries de la Mer and Menton. In the beginning of the promenade, close to the Cabanon is a bust in bronze of Le Corbusier and from that angle, both E.1027 and the Cabanon are visible.²⁰⁴

In the 1960's Le Corbusier set up the 'Fondation Le Corbusier', to secure the preservation of his work while much of Eileen Gray's work was destroyed during the war.^{205,206} Le Corbusier was buried in the grave he had designed himself in Roquebrune, Eileen's grave does no longer exist. Jasmine Rault writes,

"The fact that Le Corbusier has become central to the story of E.1027, to the story of Gray's elision from the history books, the neglect of her work and her recent rediscovery becomes particularly compelling when we consider that Gray conceived of E.1027 as an engaged critique of Le Corbusier's architectural and design principles."²⁰⁷

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Fig. 25 **Mural on the facade of E.1027**, painted by Le Corbusier



CONCLUSION

Browne speculates about the reasons behind the invisibility of Eileen Gray, and wonders why Eileen made it so difficult for us to 'find' her, and maybe, as Browne says, it was Eileen's 'will to disappear'. And yes, perhaps she wanted parts of her life do disappear, or at least to remain invisible. Though, I do not think we should accept the wish for disappearance without acknowledging its reasons. Eileen's work was never foreseen in an architecture office, because she never worked in one. She never entered the role as a mother, or a wife and her legacy was never overshadowed by a husband. She seemed to have had a big freedom, but the freedom had a price which she paid with her silence.

I have only been to Paris once and that was before I knew anything about Eileen Gray. I type 'Rue Bonaparte 21' in the search box in Google Maps and choose the street view. The big emerald green wooden doors that lead in to the courtyard are wide open and the plaque in light pink marble look quite modest, from where I am standing. I walk around in the area with the computer keys. Eileen's apartment is now an office for the real estate agency, Jean-Louis Thouard Immobilier, blue signs with their logo have been mounted on the facade and above the windows. Only the memorial sign tells something about the past, and I wonder what the apartment looks like today and what the real estate agency knows about the earlier tenant.

The history of famous (and not so famous) men is present in cities all over the world, streets have been named after them, statues have been erected to honour them and signs have been mounted on buildings to remember them. Even though Eileen is no longer 'the well-kept secret', as Browne formulated it, the preservation of her memory proceeds in a remarkably slow pace. It took forty years for the memorial on her apartment to come up. Her grave remains

unmarked in the cemetery in the Paris' suburbs. People who pass by Tempe à Pailla will know that it was the home of Graham Sutherland for twenty-six years but possibly not whom designed it. The intangible aspects of preservation, the ones concerning Eileen's presence, memory and legacy, are still today not very visible, neither in Paris nor in Menton or Roquebrune-Cap-Martin.

The legacy of Le Corbusier is far more visible than the legacy of Eileen Gray at their common site. In fact Le Corbusier's work is visible even *inside* Eileen's building. Eileen was silenced by the man who said he admired her work,²⁰⁸ she was made invisible by this male architect who dictated the rules, and still today her work is overshadowed by this same man. I wonder when the time will come where we walk along the Roquebrune coastline on *the promenade of Eileen Gray*, and in front of her villa we slow down, imagine the life inside the building a century ago, turn our faces to the sea and sunset and next to us, is the statue of her. Both Eileen Gray and Le Corbusier wanted to be in control over their own legacy. Eileen, by not leaving traces and erasing those who existed, Le Corbusier, by leaving his traces, even where they were not appreciated.

03. HETERONORMATIVE HERITAGE

Queer stories have always existed, but their visibility have shifted from time to time. Our homes have been the places for realisation of queer desires and values, the places where we have felt safe and protected, loved and accepted. The homes have sometimes provided evidence of non-normative relationships, other times the discreteness that have surrounded queer homes have not left evidence at all. The third mechanism will further analyse how Eileen has been made invisible through the heteronormative interpretations of her architectural work – how the queerness in E.1027 has been overlooked and rejected by the Cap Moderne Association.

QUEER HERITAGE AND THE NATIONAL TRUST

The National Trust, the largest heritage body in the UK,²⁰⁹ holds several sites connected to the life of LGBTQ people. Despite that, only a few of these have been interpreted as queer heritage sites. Though, in 2017, National Trust, initiated the programme, *Prejudice and Pride*, to increase the visibility of queer heritage, an initiative that would become both welcomed, questioned and criticised. A year later, in 2018, the heritage body, together with University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) published an extensive research in queer heritage – the book, *Prejudice and Pride: LGBTQ heritage and its contemporary implications*.²¹⁰

One of the articles published in the book, *Bringing Queer Home*, written by Matt Smith and Richard Sandell, addressed the complexities and challenges we might encounter when searching for and writing about queer lives and their homes, and the responsibility we have in making those lives and homes visible and part of our shared queer heritage. The authors stress that the ignorance and suppression that have affected

queer lives historically, remains a threat towards queer heritage *if* museums, galleries and heritage organisations continue to be silent. This would be, "not only unethical but increasingly untenable in the twenty-first century," they say.²¹¹

Even though societies are making progressions towards a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ people, heritage organisations have been less progressive in interpreting and telling about queer lives. Smith and Sandell introduce queer heritage, by describing the possibilities of applying the term 'queer' onto historic non heteronormative figures. In the academic and cultural context, the use of 'queer' aims to broaden the understanding of sexualities and genders. 'Lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual' or 'transgender' – terms that today are established and commonly used are, from a historical perspective, rather new. What the term 'lesbian' means today is most likely not equal to what relationships between women were recognised as, during the nineteenth century. 'Queer' can therefore be useful in order to describe people's non normative sexualities in a time when other words were

not available.²¹²

As historic queer lives did not fit into the normative way of living, and the fact that these people were discriminated against, seen as criminals and got forced medical treatment, often resulted in that their life stories were kept secret. Records telling about historic queer lives are therefore rare.²¹³ Though, in historic houses traces of queer lives can still be visible.²¹⁴ Smith and Sandell stress that these places, today, have the potential to make the life stories of queer people vivid and visible and to "give contemporary queer lives an anchor in the past."²¹⁵

Smith and Sandell claim that making historic queer lives visible should not be considered an additional way of analysing, but as an essential part of understanding the history of the building. Further, they claim that the staff of historic houses should not have the possibility to exclude queer histories but instead understand that these histories are crucial for the understanding of the place.²¹⁶ Smith and Sandell points out that it is "something particularly cruel about silencing queer histories in historic houses."²¹⁷ Both because these histories are not very common but also since the homes of queer people often represented safe places where they could fully live out their dreams and desires. Silencing these stories today means suppressing them, once again.²¹⁸

Though, the process of queering historic houses proceed in a slow phase, which can be explained by curators being less interested in or even feeling uncomfortable with queer heritage, or the difficulties to find 'evidence' of a historic queer life. The evidence, commonly associated with heterosexual relationships, such as marriage, does not exist for historic non-heterosexual relationships. Besides, the evidence that once existed, like personal papers, have often been destroyed or hidden - by the queer people themselves or by their families. Smith and Sandell stress that the evidence we are looking for of a non-heterosexual relationship is often much

higher than the evidence of a heterosexual relationship - we tend to think of people as heterosexual until the opposite is proven.²¹⁹

Queer desires have been expressed differently from time to time, and the evidence of queer lives have changed throughout history. Objects that today are linked to queer lives were most likely not thought of as queer when produced, why the connections between *objects and places* that concern queer lives have often been overlooked.²²⁰ Smith and Sandell argue that when someone's queer history is addressed and talked about in an open way it invites the visitors and the staff to be part of the discussion. But, if queer histories remain ignored, those lives are, again, silenced.

In the conclusion, Smith and Sandell say that, in contrast to museums and galleries, the historic homes of queer people often have a unique possibility to tell a more personal and intimate story of the person(s) who lived there. When queer histories are uncovered also the resistance towards these stories are made visible, a lot of work remains when many stories are waiting to be told.²²¹

THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Despina Stratigakos, Jasmine Rault and Diana Souhami write about lesbianism during the Modernist Movement. Stratigakos describes in her book, *Where are the Women Architects?* how the influential male architectural critic, Karl Scheffler, claimed that women who entered a design profession risked to end up in prostitution or lesbianism, and stressed that he had seen a dramatic increase of lesbianism among women artists.²²²

In her book, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity: Staying In*, Rault analyses how Sapphic modernity influenced women artists and designers, among them Eileen Gray, during the last century.²²³ In the chapter, *Decadent perversions and healthy bodies in modern architecture*, Rault writes, ²²⁴

"For early twentieth-century women, the task of making lesbianism visible was also the task of creating an imaginative space for such an identity."²²⁵

Further, Rault reflects upon how the sapphic designers and architects' use of decadence "seem to have been part of a larger effort to produce new space for modern lesbian subjects."²²⁶

In the book, *No Modernism Without Lesbians*, Souhami analyses lesbians' role in the development of the Modernist Movement. Paris, during the twentieth century, had become a haven for lesbians. Here they could live and love more freely, and publish their literary work without censorship laws (which was the case in Britain and America at this time). Though, things were about to change.²²⁷ Rault and Souhami describe the aftermath of trial against Oscar Wilde in 1895, as the starting point for the debate around homosexuality's influence on architecture.^{228,229} Rault describes how the 'decadent', 'mysterious', 'romantic' and 'sensual' aesthetics that had been associated with male homosexuality in general, and

with Oscar Wilde in particular, were now seen as a threat against masculinity.²³⁰

France, after the World War I, adopted a more conservative framework, both socially and politically, with a traditional view on cultural values and gender roles.²³¹ One feared that the influence of male homosexuality would have devastating effects also on the French society, and Rault describes how leading male architects of the Modernist Movement, such as Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier argued for designing buildings that was *healthy* and *hygienic*.

In 1908 Loos published his canonical essay, in which he stated that architectural ornamentation was entangled with unhealthy behaviours and perverse sexual preferences, as homosexuality.²³² Le Corbusier followed Loos' aversion towards ornamentation and unhealthy male desires, and in his collection of essays from 1925 he stressed that, "this taste for decorating everything around one is a false taste, an abominable little perversion."²³³ Le Corbusier claimed that the white paint and the white walls was the "healthy, clean and decent" way of living.²³⁴

Eileen Gray, was not interested in adopting the ideas of the male modernist architects and her aesthetics were nothing like white walls, clean or decent. Inspired by other women artists of that period like Romaine Brooks, Eileen used 'dark muted colours' in combination with 'rich, luxurious, sensual materials - lacquer, fur, velour, soft wools and leathers'.²³⁵ Rault writes,

"The fact that Le Corbusier has become central to the story of E.1027, to the story of Gray's elision from the history books, the neglect of her work and her recent rediscovery becomes particularly compelling when we consider that Gray conceived of E.1027 as an engaged critique of Le Corbusier's architectural and design principles."²³⁶

QUEER DESIRES AND SAPPHIC MODERNITY

"For lesbians themselves, the need for lesbian history is self-evident. Every social group needs access to its own history. Knowledge of our past gives us cultural roots and a heritage with models and experiences to learn from and emulate, or to choose not to follow. Lesbians have been deprived of virtually all knowledge of our past. This is deliberate since it keeps us invisible, isolated and powerless."²³⁷

LESBIAN HISTORY GROUP

My first acquaintance with Eileen Gray was through Katarina Bonnevier's thesis *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture*. In an interview with Bonnevier in the Swedish daily newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet*, following the publication of her thesis, Bonnevier describes that for her, queer is about finding another approach than the heteronormative. She says, "It is a certain way of looking, it is about trying to see what is often overlooked."²³⁸

Before reading Bonnevier's analysis I had never thought of architecture or space as queer bodily experiences. My own understanding of architecture and space was limited to the building or the room itself, its spatial organisation, materiality, purpose and intended use, and I had never pushed these limits. In fact, I did not have the language to do so. Bonnevier's queer explorations and interpretations of E.1027 have influenced my own readings of Eileen's work, her analysis has been both refreshing and revolutionary. In her article, *A queer analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027*, published in 2005, Bonnevier writes,²³⁹

"I still have a need for heroines in architecture. And I have a crush on Eileen Gray. This nonconformist architect and designer awakes my desires and dreams, like a triumphant mirror sending sparkles to my own everyday life and professional practice in the male dominated and heteronormative regime of architecture"²⁴⁰

Bonnevier became my heroine as much as Eileen Gray and she strengthened my belief that Eileen and her architectural work, before Bonnevier's queer study of it, had been misinterpreted and misunderstood because of the dominant heteronormative readings of her work.

Jasmine Rault, unlike Bonnevier, is more careful to apply queer theories on Eileen's architectural work and design. In the introduction to Rault's book she refers to Bonnevier's article, *A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027*, and states that it,²⁴¹

"tends too quickly to read contemporary queer theory into Gray's architecture [...] thereby obscuring the importantly different ways that gender and sexuality would have mattered to Gray and 'the circle of lesbians in Paris' at the time".²⁴²

I understand the criticism that Rault points at - that contemporary queer theory can result in limiting the understanding of Eileen's work, and I agree with Rault, that there is a "need for new historic feminist analysis of Gray's work."²⁴³

Rault has, in contrast to Bonnevier, analysed Eileen's architectural work and design from a *non-heterosexual* or *sapphic/lesbian* perspective. She does so by examining the intersections between the 'European architectural modernity' and the 'sapphic modernity' to explore domestic space in relation to "the creation, circulation and contestation of sexuality during the early part of the twentieth century."²⁴⁴ Rault argues for the link between the,²⁴⁵

"development of Gray's aesthetic and the female colleagues, clients, friends and lovers who defined the development of her career."²⁴⁶

THE QUEER HERITAGE AT CAP MODERNE

When Eileen began to construct E.1027 she did not think of the building as part of a larger site - no other buildings existed at the time and the villa was constructed in an isolated area. The only neighbours were the sea and large areas of olive and lemon trees. The house was built as a refuge and for the ability to live a discreet life. Though, when the villa, after a major restoration, opened for guided tours in 2016, around ten thousand people come to Roquebrune Cap Martin each which, according to Adam, has turned E.1027 into "a thriving tourist attraction."²⁴⁷ The villa in Roquebrune Cap Martin is the only one of Eileen's three buildings that is not privately owned, and is also the only one open for public visits. Except for Eileen Gray's E.1027, the site in Roquebrune Cap Martin also contains Le Corbusier's The Cabanon, the Etoile de Mer seaside pub, the holiday cottages (also designed by Le Corbusier) as well as an administration building - the first one you see when visiting the site.²⁴⁸

Since 2014 E.1027 has been managed by the Cap Moderne Association, which has done a major effort for the survival, restoration and future protection of E.1027, and the preservation of Eileen Gray's legacy in Roquebrune Cap Martin.²⁴⁹ On their website they describe their mission in three points:

- ensure protection and maintenance of the site, its buildings and the art works contained therein
- provide project management for the restoration work required for the rehabilitation of the site
- arrange access to the site, visits by the public and cultural events in conditions compatible with the need to preserve its ecology, landscape and heritage.²⁵⁰

Further, the Association writes that the Cap Moderne site "contains two jewels of

Modern architecture, Eileen Gray's E.1027 seaside Villa and Le Corbusier's Cabanon."²⁵¹ The Association thereby draws a parallel between two buildings that do not have any clear connection but the obvious one - their location, and I believe that the choice to represent several of the buildings on the site has led to misinterpretations of Eileen Gray and her architectural work. The website also contains texts about Eileen Gray, Le Corbusier and Thomas Rebutato (the owner of the restaurant the Etoile de Mer). Each text is written like a timeline, focusing on specific years, which I assume the Association considers to be the most important ones. In the text about Eileen Gray one can also read about her partner for a few years, Jean Badovici. But Badovici has also been provided with his own text, below the one about Eileen.²⁵²

The Association describes the design of E.1027 as a collaboration between Eileen and Badovici, even though his role and influence have never been clarified, and the fact that Badovici is the only one of Eileen's partners mentioned is misleading. Nowhere is to read about her relationships with women such as Jessie Gavin, Damia, and Gaby Bloch, or that she spent her entire life with her housekeeper Louise Dany. Neither is Eileen's involvement in the lesbian community in Paris mentioned or her female friends, lovers and partners' influence on her work. Along with Le Corbusier, Jean Badovici and Thomas Rebutato the Cap Moderne Association places Eileen Gray and E.1027 in a heteronormative framework. When reading the mission of Cap Moderne it is obvious that queer interpretations of the site have never been part of that. The choice, not to interpret the building as a queer home indicates that this aspect of the site is not important.²⁵³

Another problematic aspect of the Association's interpretation of Eileen and

E.1027 concerns their approach to the murals by Le Corbusier. The Association writes,²⁵⁴

"Long after Eileen Gray left the villa in 1932, Le Corbusier spent a few weeks there in 1937, 1938 and 1939. In April 1938, encouraged by Jean Badovici, he painted two murals in the villa, and returned the following year to paint another five."²⁵⁵

They continue, "According to her biographers, Eileen Gray didn't think much of these paintings."²⁵⁶ The biographer they refer to must be Peter Adam, the only one who wrote her biographies. Regarding the murals Adam writes,²⁵⁷

"A fellow architect, a man Eileen admired, had without her consent defaced her design. After that she could never bring herself to stay in the house."²⁵⁸

In 2016 Sandra Gering, founder of the New York-based sister organisation, *Friends of E.1027*, attended the panel discussion, *Eileen Gray: Why Now?* at New York School of Interior Design. The conversations revolved around what one can call, *the rediscovery of Eileen Gray*. The panellists included, besides Gering, Jennifer Goff, curator at the National Museum of Ireland, Cloé Pitiot, curator at Centre Pompidou in Paris and Adriana Friedman, Director at DeLorenzo Gallery. In the end of the discussion a large photograph of Le Corbusier laying in a bed in E.1027 with one of his murals in the background, was displayed. Moderator Daniella Ohad asked Gering what would happen to Le Corbusier's murals and Gering said that "it is an issue" and that "Eileen was very upset about it."²⁵⁹ She continued to elaborate on the reason behind the murals, saying that it could have been because of jealousy and that he "became sort of like a dog, peeing on some territory, and did these murals." Gering concluded and said,²⁶⁰

"It is our plan to have the house exactly as she left it in 1929...we're hoping to be able to remove them [Editor's note: the

murals]."²⁶¹

Despite this, only one mural was removed, and the plan to make the villa look like it did when Eileen left it in the late 1920's was never accomplished.²⁶² So, even today the history of E.1027 is told in relation to Le Corbusier and the Cabanon, entangled with the murals he did without her permission.

When discussing queer heritage, we might think that there are objects, places or buildings that, in themselves, are queer. Katarina Bonnevier has, for example, identified elements in E.1027 that she perceives as queer. The decadent interior design, that were associated with male homosexuality during the twentieth century, can be understood as another example of how queer people adopted a style, that would later be recognised as queer. Other researchers would instead argue that it is not the building or the object that is queer but *how* and by *whom* it is used.

At the online event, *the Queer Salon*, hosted by Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam which I attended in February this year, the discussion about defining queer space was brought up. One of the people in the audience concluded the discussion with the words,²⁶³

"Could you maybe say that queer space then relates to the way space is experienced by queer individuals, and what narratives this produces. Rather than the intentional design of space as queer."²⁶⁴

This way of understanding queer space can also be applied to the understanding of queer heritage. That queer heritage tells us about the life, experiences, dreams and desires of queer people who lived in a certain place.

CONCLUSION

We must continuously ask ourselves, whose story we are telling, and who is telling the story. The invisibility of queer lives should not be explained by the 'lack of evidence,' instead we need to expand our understanding of 'evidence' and why so often queer histories happen to lack these. Smith and Sandell state that the evidence of queer relationships that once existed, often have been destroyed or hidden, and their research encourages us to reconsider the 'evidence'.

Eileen's architectural work was different from her male colleagues,' and did not fit into the same modernist movement as Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier. Eileen's aesthetics - the decadent and luxurious, can today be seen as an expression for making her queer and non-heterosexual desires visible, and as a criticism towards the limitations of the modernist movement. Architects as Loos and Le Corbusier wanted their architecture to encourage its inhabitants to live a healthy life between its clean white walls. According to these male architects, Eileen's architectural language could result in unhealthy homes and criminal (homoerotic) desires.

While Rault concentrates on *studying* the 'impossible objects' where she searches for connections between Eileen's architecture and design and the development of sapphic modernity at the time, Bonnevier focuses on *finding* and *describing* what is queer in E.1027 and collects evidence that strengthen her theories. Bonnevier makes visible what many other researchers' have not been looking at - the queerness in Eileen's architecture. Rault on the other hand does not exclude queerness in Eileen's work but her research is broadening the question on sexuality rather than limiting it to the question on queerness.

It is unclear whether the Cap Moderne Association has, as Smith and Sandell put it, *omitted* or *silenced* the queer narrative. Though, if E.1027 would have been presented

as queer heritage I believe that could have created a deeper understanding of Eileen's architectural language as well as her life experiences as a non-heterosexual woman during the last century. If the queerness in Eileen's architectural work would have been acknowledged by the Cap Moderne Association and the Friends of E.1027, and made visible to the visitors of the villa, that would have indicated that the queer aspects were considered important. That would possibly have opened up for discussions and new interpretations of her work and personal life, where her own experiences were central. It is therefore problematic that the Roquebrune Cap Martin site and the woman that once lived there, is viewed with an entirely heteronormative gaze.

For whatever reason Eileen's life story has been revised, I believe it is a threat against the visibility of Eileen Gray and the understanding of her architectural work. It must be questioned why the organisation, that has been fighting for the preservation of E.1027, has ignored and suppressed the building's potential as queer heritage and shamelessly diminished all traces of a queer history. Though, the visibility of the queerness in Eileen's work and life, should not depend on the Association's ignorance or disinterest in the subject.

Eileen's wish not to leave personal memories behind was a common way for queers to hide away, but maybe also to be in control of their heritage. Even though the villa has been preserved and is today a listed building, the traces of her life have been more difficult to preserve. Though, the possibilities for new interpretations of the site are many, it is time for new voices to tell the story of Eileen Gray and E.1027.

Opposite Page/

Fig. 26 **The spiral staircase in E.1027,**
that leads up to the roof



CHAPTER FIVE

The Visibility of Eileen Gray

Fig. 27 **Collage**, made by Eileen Gray



UNESCO AND THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

I began to research the World Heritage List during a course in Heritage Politics and Identity at Uppsala University in 2019. The discovery, that the list solely preserves and protect the architectural work by male architects, was both frustrating and difficult to accept. I have in this chapter continued my research where I left off in 2019 by analysing what role the List could play for the visibility of Eileen Gray, and the visibility of queer heritage.

"WHERE ARE THE WOMEN ARCHITECTS ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST?"

In January 2019 I moved to Gotland (the Swedish island situated in the Baltic Sea) to study Cultural Heritage at Uppsala University's faculty. During one of the last courses I took, *Heritage Politics and Identity*, we were supposed to make a 'Scientific Poster' and I decided to look further into the World Heritage List, and to analyse the List from a gender perspective. The project got the title, *Where are the Women Architects on the World Heritage List?*

Since there was no summary of the architects listed, I manually searched for the architects by typing their names in the search box at the Unesco World Heritage List's website. Male architects as Antoni Gaudí (7),²⁶⁵ Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer (1),²⁶⁶ Thomas Jefferson (2),²⁶⁷ Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz (1),²⁶⁸ Andrea Palladio (47),²⁶⁹ Henry van de Velde, Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Wassily Kandinsky (7),²⁷⁰ Fritz Schupp and Martin Kemmer (1),²⁷¹ Walter Gropius (1),²⁷² Thomas Rietveld (1),²⁷³ Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe (1),²⁷⁴ Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1),²⁷⁵ Luis Barragán (1),²⁷⁶ Oscar Niemeyer (1),²⁷⁷ Le Corbusier (17)²⁷⁸ and Frank Lloyd Wright (8)²⁷⁹ had all got their architectural work listed. All together they have contributed

with about ninety-seven buildings and sites to the World Heritage List.

The contributions by women architects though would become much more difficult to find. I started to search for the ones that, according to Nicky Rackard's article in *Arch Daily* were "The 10 Most Overlooked Women in Architecture History" - Sophia Hayden, Marion Mahony Griffin, Eileen Gray, Lilly Reich, Charlotte Perriand, Jane Drew, Lina Bo Bardi, Anne Tyng, Norma Merrick Sklarek and Denise Scott Brown.²⁸⁰ Rackard describes how these women and their contributions to the built environment have been overshadowed by their male colleagues and partners. I had imagined that at least a few of the mentioned architects would be represented on the World Heritage List but the more names I searched for the less hopeful I felt. It would turn out that none of their works had been inscribed.

I concluded my report with the following words, "I have come to the conclusion that there are no women architects represented on the World Heritage List. Male architects are celebrated for their contribution to the modernist movement while their female colleagues have been erased from the architecture history."²⁸¹

A BACKGROUND TO WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION AND THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

In the 1970's, due to "changing social and economic conditions" around the world, international experts, politicians and governmental representatives expressed their concern about the threat of cultural heritage and natural heritage.²⁸² As a result, the World Heritage Convention was created in 1972 with its purpose to "safeguard global heritage sites for future generations".²⁸³ Until this day, 194 countries, so called *State Parties*, are connected to the *World Heritage Convention*,²⁸⁴ which makes it "the most universally recognized international legal instrument in heritage conservation."²⁸⁵ The State Parties "agree to identify and nominate properties on their national territory to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List."²⁸⁶ During the nomination process, the State Parties are also asked to provide the Convention with information on "how a property is protected" and to draw up a "management plan for its upkeep" for the nominated properties.²⁸⁷ When a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List the responsibility for its protection lies with the State Party, who is also "encouraged to report periodically on their condition."²⁸⁸ According to Unesco, being a State Party is prestigious and "having sites inscribed on the World Heritage List often serves as a catalyst to raising awareness for heritage preservation."²⁸⁹ State Parties may also apply for funding through the World Heritage Fund, money that can help to identify, preserve and promote listed sites.²⁹⁰

The ability to nominate sites are reserved only for countries that have signed the World Heritage Convention. The nomination process consists of five steps in which four different instances, the *International Council on Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS), the *International Union for Conservation of Nature* (IUCN) and the *International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and*

Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) evaluate the sites from given criteria. When the nomination and evaluation process is completed it is the intergovernmental *World Heritage Committee* that makes the final decision.²⁹¹

The inscribed sites and buildings on the World Heritage List "must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria."²⁹² The criteria reflect the different areas that could need protection, architecture, cultural traditions, human interaction with the environment, natural phenomena and natural beauty, to mention a few. The very first selection criteria says, "to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius."²⁹³ How the word 'universal' should be interpreted and understood has been discussed for years. In the 1977's *Operational Guidelines for the World Heritage Committee*, the Committee stated that the phrase "requires comment".²⁹⁴ Further they wrote "Some properties may not be recognized by all people, everywhere, to be of great importance and significance. Opinions may vary from one culture or period to another and the term "universal" must therefore be interpreted as referring to a property which is highly representative of the culture of which it forms part."²⁹⁵

A GENDER APPROACH TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Four times a year, since June 1996 Unesco has published *World Heritage*, a publication from the World Heritage Centre "featuring in-depth articles on cultural and natural World Heritage sites."²⁹⁶ Issue 78 was published in February 2016 and became the first number to have a gender equality approach.²⁹⁷ In the article, *World Heritage and Gender*, the authors refer to the study, *Men as Cultural Ideals: Cultural Values Moderate Gender Stereotype Content*, and write "A recent study gives evidence that men are believed to possess more of the characteristics that are culturally valued, whatever those characteristics are, than women."²⁹⁸ The authors continue, "What this might mean for World Heritage needs to be researched."²⁹⁹ In 1979 the French architect and ICOMOS president at the time, Michel Parent, wrote in his report for Unesco, "Many great men - especially great conquerers - have left their mark on a series of different places. We should, I think, avoid letting the List become a sort of competitive Honours Board for the famous men of different countries."³⁰⁰

All nominations to the World Heritage List undergo "intensive technical evaluation" by IUCN and ICOMOS and their technical experts.³⁰¹ In 2005 and 2010 two reports on the gender imbalance in IUCN and ICOMOS were published. The first report showed that 33 of the 34 evaluators in IUCN were men during the period 2001 and 2004 and that "it is hard to avoid the impression that evaluators belong to an exclusive club."³⁰² According to the authors of the article in the *World Heritage* publication "IUCUN has taken steps to ensure a better participation of women in field missions."³⁰³ The second report, from 2010, showed that men stood for 70% of the experts in ICOMOS between 2006 and 2009. As a way to achieve gender balance among the experts in ICOMOS "the World Heritage Unit of the ICOMOS

International Secretariat will be requested to keep statistics on the gender of experts selected each year so that this can be more specifically monitored."³⁰⁴

Mechtild Rössler, Director of the Unesco World Heritage Centre and the Heritage Division, has in her article, *Gendered World Heritage? A review of the implementation of the Unesco World Heritage Convention (1972)*, studied a selection of listed sites from a gender perspective. Rössler looks back at the early days of the World Heritage Convention from 1972 and describes that "no consideration was given to the role of women and men in heritage preservation and hardly any references can be found in early nomination dossiers, state of conservation reports or World Heritage Committee discussions."³⁰⁵ Since the Convention was approved it has been discussed "on the divisions and use of space by men and women" within different fields.³⁰⁶ Rössler stresses that "Nearly all heritage sites are 'gendered'."³⁰⁷ She gives examples from religious buildings and monuments where men and women can have separate entrances or places. Likewise, "in some sacred natural spaces of indigenous communities" where men and women can have separate spaces for their rituals.³⁰⁸ Rössler concludes that, "A review of a number of case studies reveals that very few sites on the World Heritage List are directly related to the history and lives of women, such as the Flemish Béguinages. Many sites on the List are linked to famous architects, builders and planners, most of them men."³⁰⁹

CLAIMING EILEEN'S SPACE ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

C ap Moderne Association states on their website that, "The site contains two jewels of Modern architecture, Eileen Gray's E1027 seaside Villa and Le Corbusier's Cabanon, both listed Historic Monuments, and a Unesco World heritage site."³¹⁰ Though, Eileen's name does not appear on Unesco's website. Neither her villa nor the site that the Association refers to is mentioned anywhere. In an e-mail to the Association, I ask about where they have got the information that also E.1027 is a World Heritage site. They response quickly and apologise for the confusion and thank me for pointing it out, and say that it is only the Cabanon which is a listed building. In this last part of the chapter, I will argue that an inscription of Eileen Gray's E.1027 on the List could operate as a way to secure, both her legacy and her architectures' visibility in today's architectural landscape.

Mechtild Rössler, Director of the Unesco World Heritage Centre and the Heritage Division, is well-versed in the gender imbalance on the World Heritage List. Her research clearly shows that the history of women and their contributions to the built environment are underrepresented on the List. I want to know what Unesco does in order to increase the viability of women on the list and I send an e-mail to Rössler. In the e-mail I give a short background to the thesis and summarise its aim - to analyse the underlying reasons for the invisibility of the Irish architect Eileen Gray and to explore whether an inscription on the List could help to increase her visibility. Further I write that Rössler's research, has strengthen my belief that the work by women architects have not been implemented on the List to the same extent as their male colleagues and

business partners. I state my five questions, they concern representation and statistics, questions about the future of the List and the reasons for its imbalance. Lastly I wrote, "What do you think the gender imbalance between female and male architects on the List could result in, if nothing is done to change the current situation?" Rössler never responded.

It is important to acknowledge that the World Heritage Convention, the most influential legal instrument for heritage preservation, has not managed to preserve the heritage that reflects the lives and work of women. What signals do that send to the World? That women's lives and work are less important, less interesting and less valuable than men's? That the incitements for preserving, protecting and listing the work of women are fewer than for men? When the architectural contributions by women architects are regarded less important, we risk to lose their contributions to the built environment, but we also risk to lose their life stories, their struggles, their believes, and their achievements.

Eileen Gray's villa E.1027 has been listed as an Historic Monument in France since 1999. France became a State Party to the World Heritage Convention in 1975 and has today 45 properties inscribed on the List, seventeen of these are the work by Le Corbusier. Unesco claims that the prestigious recognition it means for an architect and their work to be inscribed on the list "often helps raise awareness among citizens and governments for heritage preservation. Greater awareness leads to a general rise in the level of the protection and conservation given to heritage properties. A country may also receive financial assistance and expert advice from

the World Heritage Committee to support activities for the preservation of its sites.”³¹¹ The World Heritage List is today a well-established concept for the preservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage around the world. The inscribed sites’ future preservation is secured, and the inscription helps to raise awareness of the site’s value.³¹²

I do believe that the List could work as a mechanism for visibility and preservation for also the work by women architects. But for this to happen we need to acknowledge the invisibility of women architects at the List, identify the reason(s) for their invisibility and formulate solutions for achieving a better gender balance on the List.

If E.1027 were to be inscribed on the World Heritage List its architectural qualities would be acknowledged by an international body with a high credibility. The inscription would enable Eileen Gray and her work equal to the contributions of the male architects represented, her work would gain a wider recognition in the architecture and design world, her legacy would be protected and preserved, and her memory would be safeguarded for future generations to come. The fact that Eileen was a queer woman architect running her own business in a time when women were barely allowed to enter the profession makes her contribution even more distinctive.

Current Page/

Fig. 28 **View of the arrival path to E.1027**, with the magnificent view over the Mediterranean sea



CONCLUSION

When I began to research the World Heritage List in 2019, I did not know much about the institution behind the List or the inscribed sites and buildings. I was not prepared to discover that not a single woman architect was represented on the List. As I was typing their names in the search box at Unesco's website the result continued to appear as a, 'zero,' saying that none of the women I searched for had got their work listed. Since then, my relationship to the List has been complex. On the one hand, the List enables protection, preservation and appreciation of our world's shared heritage. On the other hand, the List's lack of representation has affected the visibility of women architects and has reproduced the image of the architect as the male genius. The invisibility of women architects on the List, might also affect how their work is protected, preserved and appreciated, now and in the future. So, is not the List just another mechanism behind the invisibility of women architects? The List, in its present state, does indeed make women's contributions to the built environment invisible. Though, on a List that claims to protect the world's cultural and natural heritage, also the work by women architects *must* be included.

The establishment of the World Heritage Convention in 1972 was the result of a collective concern about the world's cultural and natural heritage, and an agreement between the State Parties to take action. With its 194 connected countries the Convention is today recognised as the most important international legal instrument for heritage preservation. Even though the gender imbalance at the World Heritage List has been known for more than 40 years,

when Parent first addressed the issue in his report for Unesco, little seems to have changed. Rössler's gender studies of the List, published in 2014, did again acknowledge the lack of women's representation. She described how the listed sites rarely reflected the history and lives of women and that the listed buildings were mostly the work by men. Another aspect of the gender imbalance can be found among the selection criteria, the first one says, "[t]o represent a masterpiece of human creative genius."³³ The use of 'genius' has historically, according to Stratigakos' research (brought up earlier in the thesis), been understood as someone *bold, independent, tough, and vigor*, which, in the Western culture, is seen as typical masculine traits. Also, Álvarez and Gómez' research, briefly presented in this chapter, elaborate on the Architectural world's search for *starchitects*. A third aspect of gender imbalance at the World Heritage List refers to the nomination process and the evaluators at IUCN and ICOMOS. The two reports, published in 2005 and 2010, presented statistics on the representation of male and female experts in the panels, where an overwhelming majority were men.

Sophia Hayden, Marion Mahony Griffin, Eileen Gray, Lilly Reich, Charlotte Perriand, Jane Drew, Lina Bo Bardi, Anne Tyng, Norma Merrick Sklarek and Denise Scott Brown are in Rackard's article referred to as ten *overlooked* women architects. None of them have got their architectural work represented on the List, but six of them have either worked for or collaborated with several of the male architects listed, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies Van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Oscar Niemeyer. Though, on Unesco's website these women are nowhere referred

to as influential partners or collaborators, their names have been removed and their contributions have been overshadowed by male architects. The implementation of the work by male architects have been at the expense of the visibility of women architects. The List has grown to become a powerful institution within the field of heritage conservation. However, not until the day when the inscriptions by male and female architects are more equally distributed, the list will represent our world's shared heritage. In the 1970's when the concern about the world's cultural and natural heritage led to the formation of the World Heritage Convention, a new alarming concern should be growing today. We are in a stage where we risk losing the heritage that reflects the history and lives of women, the heritage designed, built and constructed by women. If we lose the heritage that tells the life stories of women, we lose their voices, their thoughts, their beliefs, their dreams, their struggles, we lose their homes and their work. We lose queer women's heritage, non-binary women's heritage, lesbian women's heritage and straight women's heritage.

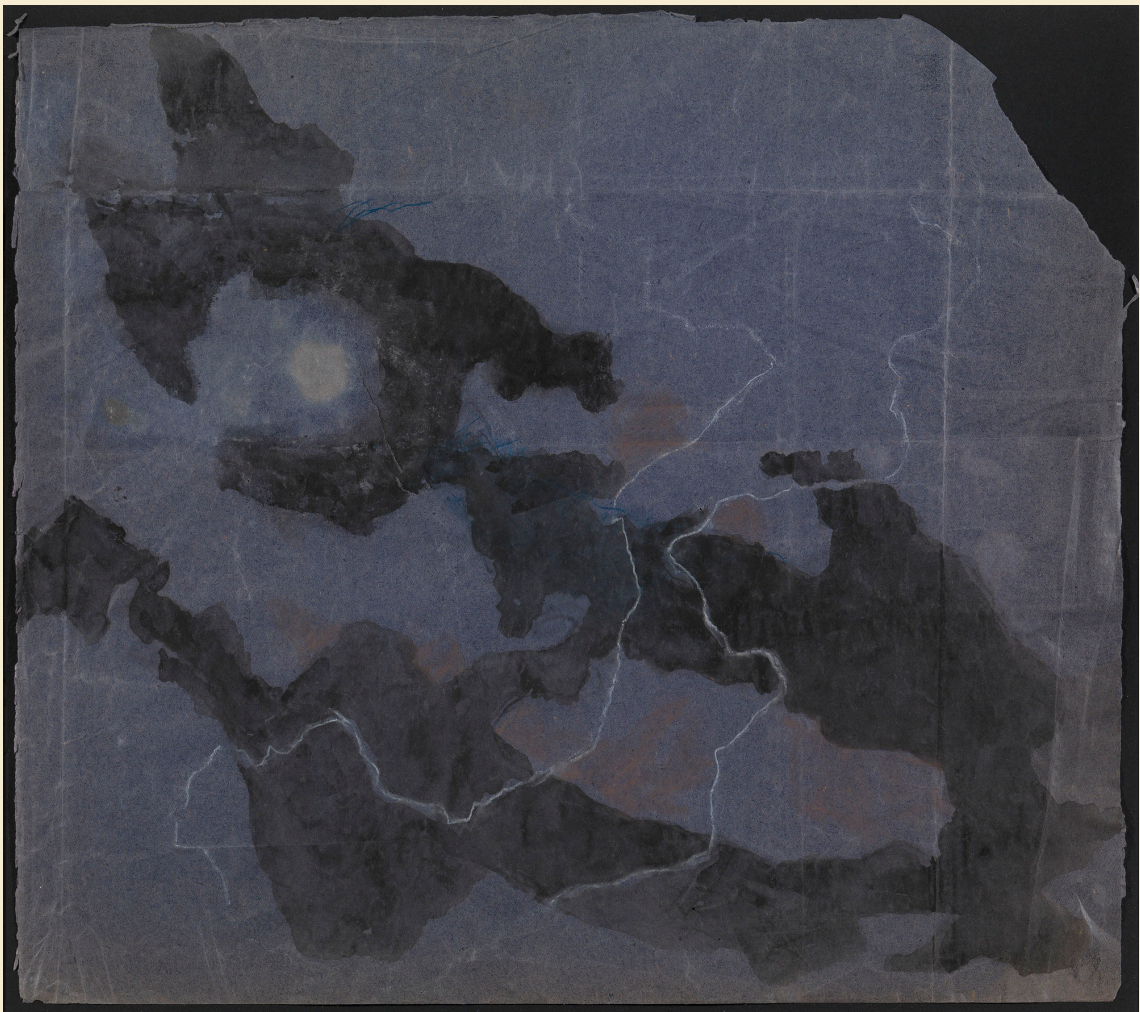
Unesco could play a major role for the sake of Eileen's visibility and the sake of queer heritage's visibility. The missing pieces in the heritage that Unesco and the World Heritage List represent are the ones concerning women, and especially queer women. If a large heritage body, like Unesco, would acknowledge queer women's invisibility on the List it could have a major impact on the State Parties nominations of sites and buildings, and influence other heritage bodies to follow. The National Trust is a good example of how queer heritage can be approached, discussed and highlighted by a heritage organisation. To inscribe Eileen Gray's E.1027 on the List would mean including other stories and perspectives to a list that have been dominated by the lives of heterosexual men. Though, an inscription must be executed in a responsible and humble way, the knowledge about queer heritage

and the invisibility of women architects must increase among Unesco, the World Heritage Convention, the State Parties and the evaluators at IUCN and ICOMOS. Also, the representation between male and female experts within Unesco and among the evaluators at IUCN and ICOMOS must be improved. We need to reconsider the meaning of 'outstanding universal value' for the nominated architectural work, *by* whom it is designed and *for* whom it is designed. We must continue to reflect upon what architectural qualities that are premiered and what qualities that are overlooked, and why this is. Further, the selection criteria should be reviewed, and attention paid to the use of gendered vocabulary, such as 'genius'. Then, I believe that an inscription of E.1027, would increase the visibility of queer heritage and of Eileen Gray in a progressive yet sustainable way.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Fig. 29 **Map**, made by Eileen Gray



REMEMBRANCE AND VISIBILITY

This project has made me reflect upon my own heritage as a queer person, what I have inherited and what I will leave behind. It has made me reflect upon the queers that have fought for our existence before us and the queers that will continue the fight after us. But most of all the project has made me reflect upon the invisibility and silence that still surround queer lives.

Eileen's relationships with women have been referred to as something in the periphery, as its best, but most often those relationships have been rejected, and considered nothing else than 'rumours' and 'speculations.' The queerness in Eileen's life has become the common thread through the layers of invisibility, where male architectural critics have struggled to interpret Eileen's aesthetics and to place her work in a modernist context. Eileen's work was rather a critical reaction towards the values of the modernist movement, than part of the movement itself. Her architectural language tells the story of another way of living, and loving, than the modernist movement and Le Corbusier advocated.

Even though, male heterosexual critics have had hard times to fully understand Eileen's work, queer women have not. The group of women that came to be Eileen's closest friends, her lovers and partners, her collaborators and working partners all understood, loved and related to her work. Eileen's aesthetics contained elements of decadence and luxury with dark muted colours, that were synonymous with non-heterosexuality in the beginning of the twentieth century. Today, it can be understood as a symbol for creating rooms for queer desires.

The rediscovery of Eileen Gray was

performed through a male, heterosexual gaze on Eileen's world and work. Something that feminist scholars have claimed has limited the understanding of Eileen's architectural language and aesthetics and has resulted in misinterpretations of her work.

The invisibility of Eileen Gray, researched through the three mechanisms: *Archival Research*, *Presence and Preservation* and *Heteronormative Architectural Heritage*, show how the queerness, or rather the ignorance of it, is the common thread through her invisibility. The invisibility of Eileen Gray in archives and in her work say something about the time she lived in, but also *how* she wanted to be remembered and *what* she wanted to be remembered for.

There is one man, and one specific event that recurs when talking about the invisibility of Eileen Gray - the impact of Le Corbusier and the murals. Le Corbusier's vandalism of E.1027 affected her career and played a significant role for her sudden disappearance from the public. Le Corbusier considered the new architectural movement capable of curing perverse (homosexual) desires. And Despina Stratigakos, Jasmine Rault and Diana Souhami's describe in their researches how the life for queers in Paris, in the beginning of the twentieth century, was getting difficult. The architectural movement, did most likely, changed the way queer people expressed themselves and lived their lives, but also what memories, photographs and letters concerning their private lives they would keep and save.

The invisibility of Eileen's life recurs in the analysis of what she left behind, or rather, what she decided not to leave behind - the many photographs and letters, the personal aspects of her life. Parts that feminist scholars have considered crucial to

fully understand her work. The traces of a queer life might be difficult to find, if we keep searching for evidence that, in most cases does not exist. We must therefore extend our search fields and the meaning of 'evidence', especially when it comes to finding queer lives in normative straight environments.

I really enjoyed reading Sarah Browne's artistic work, *From Margin to Margin (Looking for Eileen)*, in which she traces the presence of Eileen Gray in Paris. The format is amazing, a story that, literally folds out, just like the story of Eileen. Browne's work inspired me to continue the search for Eileen, where I wondered whether Eileen was more visible today. I began in Paris and discovered that the memorial outside her apartment does exist now, the grave though, does still not exist. The continuation of my search brought me to two of her buildings, Tempe à Pailla and E.1027. Outside Tempe à Pailla hangs a memorial of Graham Sutherland, the man who later purchased the villa from Eileen, but nowhere is it said that the villa was designed by Eileen Gray. In E.1027 Le Corbusier is still visible and present through his murals, and along the coastline in front of E.1027 goes the *Promenade Le Corbusier*. Le Corbusier, who both vandalised her villa and credited it to Eileen's partner Jean Badovici, made sure Eileen's name would disappear whenever E.1027 was mentioned. The fact that Eileen rarely signed her work has added to the mystique that surrounded her, but it has also made her work possible for others to claim.

Matt Smith and Richard Sandell examine the struggles scholars have identified when it comes to making queer lives visible in historic buildings. Besides the fact that queer stories are often well hidden and difficult to find, the ones that have been made visible have got their trustworthy questioned and its evidences regarded too weak. Historic queer life stories have even been considered harmful to the person's reputation if revealed. Smith and Sandell

state that the resistance towards making historic queer lives public have come from both visitors of historic sites and buildings, the press and heritage bodies. Though, their research encourages us to keep searching for queer heritage and to make those hidden lives visible.

In my research I have analysed whether E.1027 is regarded a queer heritage or not. I have used The Cap Moderne Association, the body that manages E.1027, to showcase how they have approached the villa and Eileen Gray, what they have included and what they have left out. The Association has completely disregarded the buildings potential as a representation of queer architectural heritage. Instead, they have placed Eileen in a heteronormative context together with Jean Badovici, Le Corbusier and Thomas Rebutato, this is maybe the most distinct example of how the identity of a queer woman architect, in recent years, has been made invisible.

The World Heritage List, in its present state does rather perform as an erasure of women's contributions to the built environment than making their work visible, celebrated, preserved and protected. The missing pieces in the heritage that Unesco and the World Heritage List represent are the ones concerning women, and especially queer women. It is time to act for change. I strongly believe that it is necessary to reconsider what architectural qualities expert panels are looking at when evaluating sites and buildings for the World Heritage List. We need to broaden the understanding of valuable heritage, what that looks like, by whom it has been designed and for whom it has been designed. For an institution to claim that their purpose is to protect the world's shared heritage, this must be shown in the selection of heritage sites and buildings they have decided to protect. Queer heritage and women's heritage should be part of our world's shared heritage.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE THESIS

Throughout the project there is one implication I have kept coming back to - for whom I have been doing this and for whom it matters. The invisibility of Eileen Gray is part of a bigger architectural question that concerns the invisibility of queer people, and other marginalised groups in society. It is a discussion about the memories that never were to be collected in archives. It is a discussion about how someone's legacy can be preserved if her presence is not visible. And it is a discussion about queer homes that seldom are interpreted as queer.

I have done this project for myself and for other queer architecture students, to make the struggle finding our places in an architecture school more bearable. I have done this project to challenge the image of the architect, because when highlighting marginalised groups, as queer women, within a profession that is seen as homogeneous, we can broaden the picture of the architect, historically and present, and when one marginalised group is made visible others will follow. I have done this project to fill some of the missing gaps in the architecture history, because the history I was taught, was not a representation of the reality.

I hope that this project can contribute to the queer community, to the fights we have fought and the fights we continue to fight. For making our history and heritage, that repeatedly have been ignored, oppressed and rejected, visible. I hope that this project will be a reminder of how easily someone's queer heritage can be made invisible and silenced, and that we need to carefully collect, preserve and protect our experiences as queer people. I hope that this project can contribute to a more inclusive and nuanced architecture history, it is crucial that the

writing of history will contain the stories that, up until now has been made invisible.

In the beginning of this project, I was convinced that I had to write about Eileen in an objective way, to view her from a distance and to leave myself out of the picture. But I know now that that is very difficult and maybe also pointless. Because what is then my contribution? To write about Eileen in a way she would have allowed, is that really the way forward? Will that bring us closer to the core of her design and architecture? Will that bring us closer to her? My strength as a researcher also lays in my queer experiences of being a lesbian women architect in a straight minded profession. I would never say that I can understand what Eileen has been going through as a non-heterosexual woman architect because her experiences are very different from the ones I bear with me. Though, I can say that the connection I feel to her helps me to understand her invisibility.

OUTRO

'Finding' Eileen Gray

Fig. 30 **Petrified Wood**, ca. 1950's, photographed by Eileen Gray



HOW TO TRACE SOMEONE WHO DID NOT LEAVE TRACES

When we, as researchers and admirers, have been looking for Eileen I believe many of us struggle with the conception of how our research could affect or even harm her reputation and the ability to preserve her work and her legacy. We are not really sure about what we are allowed to share in a public format and what we should keep to ourselves. I trace these doubts in Rault's feminist analysis, in Adam's biography, in Bonnevier's queer analysis and in Browne's artistic work. We are careful about how we formulate our statements, we address the lack of evidence, we claim that everyone should have their right to a private life that remains private, we confess that we have fallen in love and we say that we are afraid to make her disappointed.

In every life story there are things we prefer to keep to ourselves, in other life stories there are things we need to hide, or even erase. Paris, in the beginning of the twentieth century was a haven for queers, and your home for more than seventy years. Even though your design left a lasting legacy in the homes of collectors, your own legacy has been less visible. The few traces you left have forced us, as researchers, to find other ways of writing about you and interpreting your work. In my research I wanted to make the layers of your invisibility, visible.

Many are the times when I have recalled the situation in our architecture history class in 2013, where your name never appeared. I have wondered why my teacher was so reluctant to include your work among the ones of all those male architects. Before

I heard about you, Eileen, I did not know the name of a single woman architect. You had, like other women, been invisible in architecture history books, in architecture history courses, in archives and in your own work. In my work with the thesis, the aspect of remembrance and visibility has been important. I wanted to understand the mechanisms behind your invisibility, and to do that I needed to understand what your rediscovery had looked like, by whom and how it was made.

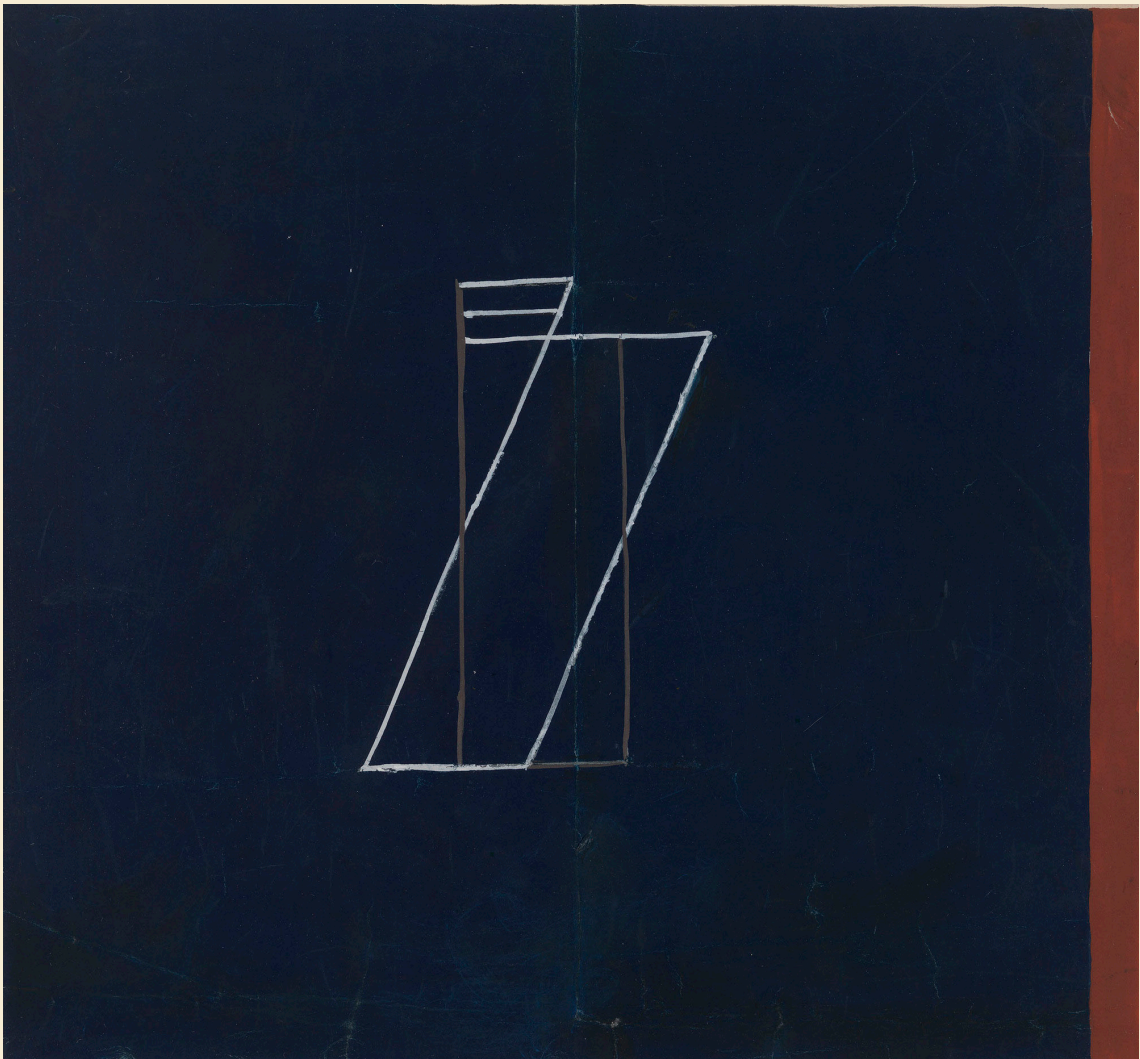
I do not think I will ever fully understand who you were, what your struggles looked like, what the resistance towards people like you, people like me, looked like a century ago. I am grateful for the traces you did leave behind and how theses fragments, piece by piece, have slowly been put together. Today I see you more clearly, and I am thankful that you have invited us into your world. To see how you expressed the longing for a different life in your architectural language, and to be able to understand this language is magic. Your architectural work and your view on architecture and design has influenced my own understanding of architecture as something bigger than I was taught in school. Architecture can create space for desires, dreams and queer existences. When we view your architectural work from a queer perspective, the resistance towards the strict values that the Modernist movement stood for, suddenly appears, and your aesthetics become a symbol for queer desires and values. You became the role model I had been longing for - a heroine in the male dominated world of architecture and design.

You wanted to be remembered solely for your work,
I want to remember your entire person.

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Fig. 31 **Untitled, ca. 1920's**, made by Eileen Gray



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Fig. 4

Fig. 5

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Fig. 6

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

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