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E.1027: The Nonheroic Modernism of Eileen Gray

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Using the lens of recent feminist theory and gender studies, this paper offers a reading of E.1027, Eileen Gray's villa built between 1926 and 1929 in collaboration with Jean Badovici. Because her architecture emanated from a critical relationship to certain leaders of the European avant-garde, Gray was both assailed by her peers and neglected in historical accounts of modernism. Adopting and working within the framework of certain modern spatial devices, such as Le Corbusier's "five points of a new architecture," Gray sought to overcome the reductive dehumanizing qualities associated with abstraction by prioritizing the subjective qualities of experience. The article analyzes Gray's critical engagement with modern movement principles at E.1027 in light of both her early involvement in furniture design and her coeval collaboration in Badovici's Vézelay houses. It concludes with an examination of the events surrounding the murals Le Corbusier painted on the walls of E.1027 in 1938–39 and his subsequent efforts to control the villa's fate.

ALTHOUGH THE VARIOUS POLEMICS that constitute the modern movement often achieved their primary architectural embodiment in private houses built for an intellectual elite, the Villa E.1027 has only recently undergone scrutiny for its significant contribution to the modernist debates.¹ The product of a

Research for this article was supported by grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, the William F. Milton Fund of Harvard University, and the University of Florida School of Architecture. I am indebted to Prunella Clough, who generously provided access to Eileen Gray's sketchbooks and furnishings in her collection and granted permission to reproduce the illustrations accompanying this article. Mary MacLeod, Wilfried Wang, and Sarah Whiting provided valuable criticism of an earlier draft.

1. Prominent examples include the Schröder House in Utrecht by Truus Schröder and Gerrit Rietveld (1924), the Villa Stein in Garches by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret (1927), and the Tugendhat House in Brno by Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe (1931), all published by Jean Badovici in *L'Architecture Vivante* (1923–33). Joseph Rykwert initiated the critical reevaluation of Gray's architecture in a series of articles dating from 1968; see Joseph Rykwert, "Un Omaggio a Eileen Gray: Pioniera del Design," *Domus* 469 (1968): 22–33. Renewed interest in Gray's architecture during her lifetime led, after her death, to books by J. Stewart Johnson, *Eileen Gray: Designer 1879–1976* (New York and London, 1979); Brigitte Loye, *Eileen Gray 1879–1976: Architecture Design* (Paris, 1984); Peter Adam, *Eileen Gray Architect/Designer* (New York, 1987); and Stefan Hecker and Christian Müller, *Eileen Gray* (Barcelona, 1993), as well as special issues of *9H*, no. 8 (1989) and *Archithese* 21, no. 4 (1991). Bringing to light valuable information about Gray's architectural production, these publications have initiated more probing discussions of her critical contribution to modern movement tenets. See especially Jean-Paul

collaboration between Eileen Gray, an Irish designer of lavish interiors and furnishings, and Jean Badovici, a Rumanian architect and editor of the influential French periodical, *L'Architecture Vivante* (1923–33), the villa was completed in 1929 on a restricted site in Roquebrune overlooking the Mediterranean (Fig. 1). Following its initial publication in Badovici's magazine, however, E.1027 fell into relative obscurity, rarely mentioned in early histories of the modern movement.² Gray articulated two principles that may account for this critical oversight: her resistance both to theory and to the object qualities frequently associated with modernism. While these ideas may seem unrelated, both assume an attitude of detachment from any physical grounding in the experience of the world.

For Gray the house was not an object to be apprehended through visual detachment, but a flexible structure given life by its occupants, as she argued in a description of E.1027, published in the special issue of *L'Architecture Vivante* devoted to the villa: "External architecture seems to have absorbed avant-garde architects at the expense of the interior. As if a house should be conceived for the pleasure of the eye more than for the well-being of its inhabitants."³ Linking her critique of the object with her antitheoretical stance, she concluded: "Theory is not sufficient for life and does not answer to all its requirements."⁴ While resisting the lure of architectural theory, Gray recognized the

Rayon, "L'Étoile du Nord et l'Étoile du Sud," in *De Stijl et l'Architecture en France*, ed. Yve-Alain Bois and Bruno Reichlin (Liège, [1985]), 121–38; M. Marc Dessauce, "Eileen Gray, villa E1027: une contribution à l'histoire de l'architecture organique en France," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1988): 233–44; Yehuda Safran, "La Pelle," *9H*, no. 8 (1989): 154–63.

2. In addition to a special issue of *L'Architecture Vivante* (Winter 1929) devoted to E.1027, "Maison en Bord de Mer," excerpts of which were published as "La maison minimum," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 1, no. 1 (1930): inset following p. 64, Sigfried Giedion discussed the window treatment in "L'Architecture contemporaine dans les pays méridionaux," *Cahiers d'Arts* 8 (1931): 102–3; and Alberto Sartoris included five plates of Gray's architecture in *Gli Elementi dell'Architettura Funzionale* (Milan, 1932), 168–71.

3. Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, "Description" [of E.1027], *L'Architecture Vivante* (Winter 1929): 23.

4. Ibid. Craig Owens observes: "It is not always theory *per se* that women repudiate, nor simply . . . the priority men have granted to it, its rigid opposition to practical experience. Rather what they challenge is the distance it maintains between itself and its objects—a distance which objectifies and masters." Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others:

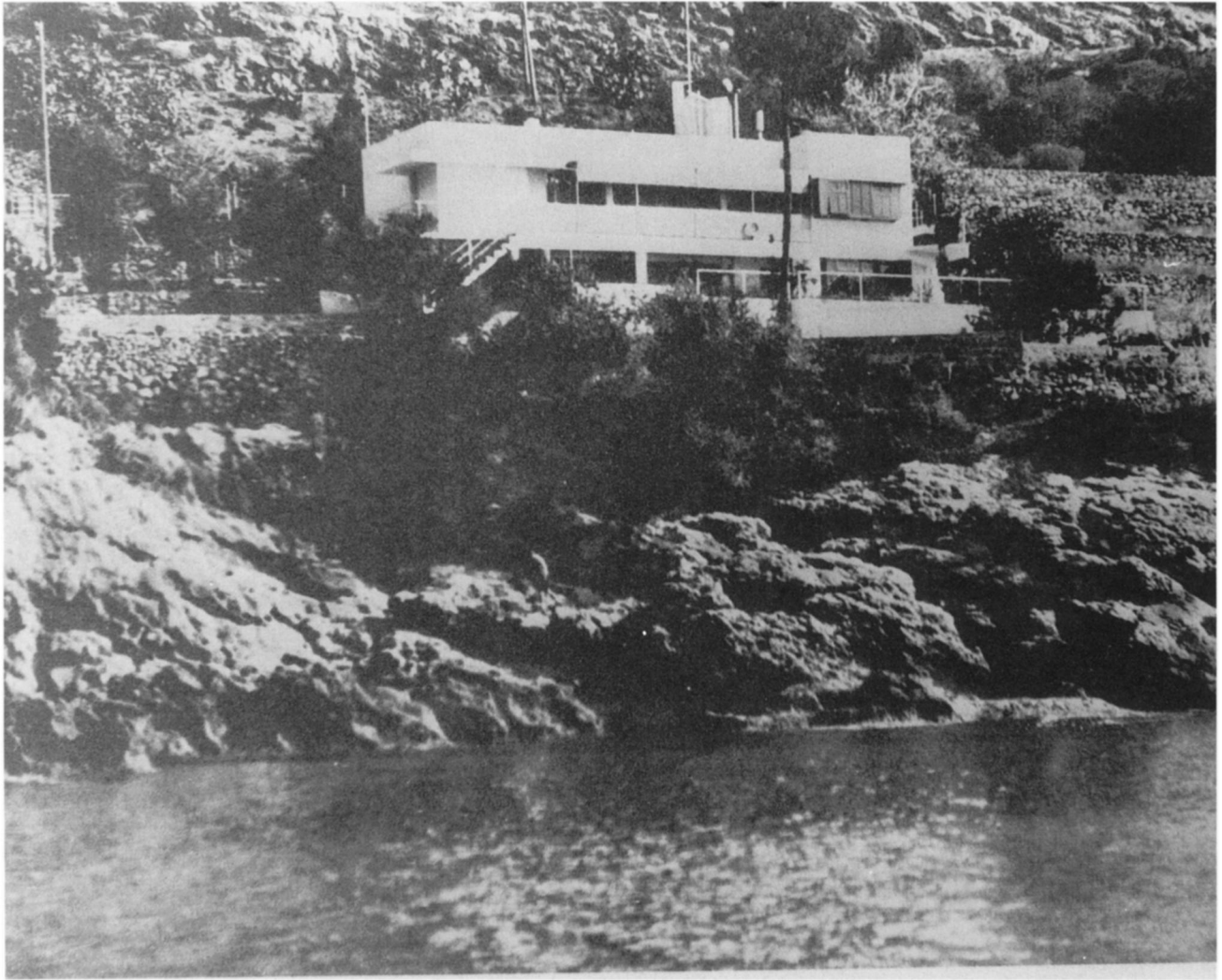


Fig. 1. Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, E.1027, Roquebrune/Cap Martin, 1926–29. In this seaside villa for Jean Badovici, Gray sought to transcend any dehumanizing qualities associated with abstraction by prioritizing qualitative aspects of experience. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

need to transcend the intuitive limits of her work and ground it in the intellect—in a fertile combination of the sensual and the commonsensical.

Gray, known in Paris during the 1910s and 1920s as a designer of lacquered screens and furniture, started to experiment directly with architectural design only in 1926, when she began a six-year collaboration with Badovici, leading to her independent architectural practice. The simplicity of means by which she conveyed an impression of extravagance brought Gray's early interiors to the notice of the European avant-garde. She was initially taken by the sensuality of lacquer, the mystery of its surface, and the craft of its production. Her increasing preoccupation with architecture ultimately prompted her to expand the material and technical range of her designs, as she experimented with new combinations of

synthetic and natural materials (using chrome, tubular steel, or Bakelite, together with cork, slate, or exotic woods, for example), merging hand craftsmanship with aspects of machine production.

Seeking a broader clientèle, in 1922 Gray opened a decorating shop, *Jean Désert*, where she displayed her own designs along with the artistic production of certain of her peers.⁵ At the same time she began to seek greater exposure for her work, exhibiting several items of furniture at the *Salon d'Automne* of 1922 alongside architectural projects by Le Corbusier (*Maison Citrohan*; *Ville Contemporaine*) and Rob. Mallet-Stevens (*Aéro-Club Pavilion*). For the *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs* exhibition of 1923 she contributed an entire room (Fig. 2).

This installation, although more theatrical than architectural, initiated an important theme in her work. Through a combination of material sensuality and formal austerity, Gray began to

Feminists and Postmodernism," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash., 1983), 63.

5. Jean Badovici assisted Gray with her façade for this shop in the fashionable rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré.



Fig. 2. Eileen Gray, “Boudoir de Monte Carlo,” 1922–23. Displayed at the XIV Salon des Artistes Decorateurs (1923), Gray’s bedroom/boudoir elaborated upon the potential for a single room to take on aspects of an entire lived milieu. (*L’Architecture Vivante*)

elaborate upon the capacity of a single room to take on aspects of an entire lived milieu. She subordinated the object qualities of her furnishings to the ambiance of the whole, which she directed toward enhancing the room’s experiential character as lived and felt rather than conceptualized. As Elisabeth de Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont Tonnerre remarked in the first article devoted to Gray’s lacquer work: “She seeks to create interiors that conform to our existence, to the proportions of our rooms and to the aspirations of our sensibility.”⁶ While publishing this installation in *L’Architecture Vivante* as “Room, 1922,” Gray titled her exhibit “Boudoir de Monte Carlo,” citing a site of leisure escape as a commentary on modern conditions of dwelling.⁷ Although

6. E. de Clermont Tonnerre, “Les lacques d’Eileen Gray,” *Feuillets d’Art* 3 (1922): 147–48; published in English as “The Laqueur [sic] work of Miss Eileen Gray,” *The Living Arts* 3 (1922): 147–48. The Duchess de Clermont Tonnerre was one of Marcel Proust’s models for the Duchesse de Guermantes in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (from 1913).

7. *L’Architecture Vivante* (Winter 1924): pl. 36.

such recourse to a gendered space was unusual for Gray, her installation manifested the elusive sensual qualities found in Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières’s eighteenth-century description of the first domestic space devoted exclusively to female use: “The boudoir is regarded as the abode of sensual pleasure; here [the woman] seems to reflect on her plans or yield to her inclinations . . . This delightful lair must produce only sweet emotions, impart serenity to the spirit, pleasure in every way.”⁸

8. “Le Boudoir est regardé comme le séjour de la volupté. C’est là que [la femme] semble méditer ses projets, ou se livrer à ses penchants . . . Cette retraite délicieuse ne doit occasionner que des émotions douces, porter la sérénité dans l’âme, la volupté dans tous les sens.” Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *Le génie de l’architecture et l’analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (1780). For an alternate translation, see *The Genius of Architecture; or the Analogy of that Art with our Sensations*, trans. David Britt (Santa Monica, 1992), 115–16. The boudoir is the female counterpart of the male cabinet or study, which Le Camus de Mézières described in more straightforward terms: “This cabinet is sacred to the Master’s tranquility and to his work, and no one may enter.” *Ibid.*, 132.

While satisfying the French affinity for luxurious interiors, Gray's boudoir manifested an eccentric novelty—particularly in its light fixtures—that prompted several local critics to regard her contribution with a certain disdain.⁹ Although her installation drew favorable attention from Parisian architects and designers, the most consistent appreciation for her work of this period came from Holland, where the admiration of architects Jan Wils and J. J. P. Oud led to a special issue of *Wendingen* devoted to her early interiors.

Badovici contributed an introductory essay, in which he strove to place her ideas within a modernist polemic. In words that seem to reflect his own aspirations and those of his architectural contemporaries more than Gray's own, Badovici analyzed her work as an embodiment of the new civilization and spirit, "an architecture which expresses the strong will of modern man."¹⁰ In a further elaboration that seems to emanate more directly from Gray, he extended the modern myth of expressive honesty to the inner soul of man: "Contemporary man's life mixes dreams and reality, fuses them in the rhythm of a dance of lines. Violent vibrations and peaceful chants join in a dance of ideal arabesques. Furniture, wall hangings, the general mood seem to be like the components of a soul, the soul of its inhabitant, whose outer form corresponds to its inner rhythm."¹¹

Other critics betrayed a similar desire to evaluate Gray's early furnishings in terms associated with avant-garde artistic practices. Louis Vauxcelles equated her "simple, straight-forward and functional" forms with cubism, for example, while Albert Boeken used De Stijl terminology to analyze her lacquer work, praising its "immaterial, almost geometrical . . . pureness of character" embodying the "force . . . of elementary contrasts."¹² Reflecting the authors' stylistic biases more than any inherent qualities of the work, such external criteria accentuate the distance between Gray's intentions and those of her avant-garde contemporaries. Moreover, the interiors depicted in this issue, particularly the apartment for Madame Mathieu-Lévy (1918–24), remain rela-

tively limited emanations of Gray's personal vision, directed primarily toward accentuating her client's individuality rather than the more general human qualities that characterize her later work.

In his introductory comments in *Wendingen*, however, Jan Wils recognized the capacity of these interiors to expand upon the evolving categories of the modern. "There was no question of logical reasoning or deep contemplation of the hows and whys," he argued. "This furniture is the result of a dream; a dream which can only be experienced when one is in close contact with the furniture itself. Free of every tradition, taken from an inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual luxuries and desires, the treasures pile up, always different, just as the will of the creator brought them together in subtle distinction."¹³

Through direct confrontation with the discipline of architecture, Gray began to transcend issues of personal expression and embrace the polemical intentions that Badovici ascribed to her work. Indeed, Badovici encouraged Gray to take up architectural design, a challenge that brought her work a new rigor and broadened its conceptual base. The early issues of *L'Architecture Vivante* were her textbooks, providing important sources for her initial probings into architecture. She began with an experimental project, a house based on Adolf Loos's Villa Moissi (1923).¹⁴ Inserting a circular stair borrowed from Auguste Perret, she transformed Loos's design into a form more indebted to Le Corbusier.¹⁵ In her second hypothetical project, a House for an Engineer (1926), Gray pursued a more independent route. Employing selected components of Le Corbusier's Maison Citrohan—pilotis, strip windows, and free plan—in a critical manner, she was inspired by Théo Van Doesburg's "sixteen points toward a plastic architecture" to reject the singular closed volumes and typological formal constructs of Le Corbusier's early theoretical projects in favor of a dynamic balance of elements, capable of mediating the opposition between interior and exterior.¹⁶

By 1926 Gray was also immersed in construction, renovating several private houses in Vézelay with Badovici, a process that facilitated her rapid transformation from furniture designer to architect. In these renovations, Badovici sought to advance modern movement principles, subsequently describing his Vézelay houses, along with that at Rocquebrune, as "inscribed in the promotional cycle of the avant-garde epoch."¹⁷ Illuminating

9. Reviews of Gray's boudoir in French art journals of 1923 are replete with adjectives such as "unsettling," "abnormal," "regrettable," "disquieting," and "maddening," scattered among faint words of praise. Adam, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 134–38. Gabriel Mourey argued: "Mais en laissant volontairement de côté la 'chambre à coucher-boudoir pour Monte-Carlo' de Madame Eileen Gray, tentative sur laquelle, respectueux malgré tout de toutes les tendances et quelque antipathie qui puissent m'inspirer celles qui s'y manifestent, je préfère ne pas me prononcer." Gabriel Mourey, "Le XIVe Salon des Artistes Décorateurs," *L'Amour de l'Art* 4 (1923): 561–62.

10. "L'Art d'Eileen Gray par Jean Badovici Architecte," *Wendingen* 6, no. 6 (1924): 12.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Louis Vauxcelles was art critic for *Le Gil Blas*. The tear sheets in Gray's archive including these comments on her work are from an unidentified publication. Arnold Boeken sent Gray a partial English translation of his article on the Salon d'Automne, largely devoted to Gray's work and published in the Amsterdam newspaper *Bouwkundig Weekblad* (14 July 1923); English trans. in Gray archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

13. Jan Wils, "Meubelen en interiors," *Wendingen* 6, no. 6 (1924): 3; trans. in Adam, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 163–64.

14. Adolf Loos, "L'Architecture et le Style Moderne," *L'Architecture Vivante* (Winter 1923): 31 and pl. 50; Loos exhibited his model of the Villa Moissi at the Salon d'Automne of 1923.

15. A. and G. Perret, *Petit Hôtel Particulier*, Rue Nansouty, Paris, *L'Architecture Vivante* (Spring 1924): pls. 6–10.

16. Théo Van Doesburg, "L'Évolution de L'Architecture Moderne en Hollande," *L'Architecture Vivante* (Fall 1925): 14–20.

17. "Je désirerais voir passer dans l'édition '25 années U.A.M.' les maisons de Rocquebrune, Cap Martin (1926) et également celles de Vézelay, qui s'inscrivent dans le cycle des promotions de l'époque

aspects of Gray's working relationship with Badovici, these renovations have greater significance as evidence of Gray's early construction experience than as noteworthy modern buildings.

Unlike her House for an Engineer, in which Gray explored variations on Le Corbusier's spatial formulas, each of the Vézelay interiors incorporated formal devices borrowed directly from his Maison Citrohan: a double-height living room overlooked by a mezzanine, accessed by a narrow ship's stair and lined with pipe railings. Badovici may have mandated such adherence to Corbusian forms to fulfill his avant-garde objectives. Despite numerous plan drawings in Gray's hand attesting to her participation in the overall planning of Badovici's Maison Renaudin (1926–32), Badovici house (1927), and artist's housing (1927–32), she directed her efforts primarily toward the projects' interior elaborations. By assuming responsibility for the façade of his own house, Badovici facilitated Gray's shift from furniture design to architecture, enabling her to generate an architecture from the life of the interior and to invest her furnishings with their full space-making potential.¹⁸

Gray's first significant contribution to avant-garde artistic practices was Badovici's house at Rocquebrune, which she and Badovici began planning late in 1926. The name E.1027—a cypher for the authors' intertwined initials—reflected the collaborative nature of the undertaking.¹⁹ Gray bought the land and spent over two years at the site, taking prime responsibility for both design and construction, while Badovici visited frequently to assist in technical matters. He held patents on the sliding windows, for example, in both the USA and France. Moreover, Badovici played a crucial role in the project's conceptualization, particularly in its fealty to the ideas of Le Corbusier. Badovici suggested that the main living level be raised on pilotis and the spiral stair extended to the roof, its form derived from Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third Internationale (1919–20).²⁰ Nevertheless, Badovici delegated much of the design responsibility to Gray, enabling her to build upon her nascent critique of Corbusian principles, evident in her House for an Engineer.

Like her coeval project, the design of E.1027 makes explicit reference to Le Corbusier's "five points of a new architecture: pilotis; roof garden; free plan; strip windows; free façade."²¹

While fulfilling Badovici's avant-garde objectives, such reliance on Corbusian formulas served as a corollary to Gray's own creative act. Adopting and working within the framework of particular modernist spatial devices, she sought to transcend the dehumanizing qualities associated with abstraction by prioritizing the subjective qualities of experience. Reacting against the modern movement's formulaic aspects, she argued: "Formulas are nothing, life is everything. And life is simultaneously mind and heart."²² Rather than reject such formulas, Gray sought to challenge their limits and "push them to the point where they reestablish contact with life, . . . to make some reality penetrate their abstraction."²³

In contrast to the urban preoccupations that informed Le Corbusier's early purist villas, Gray generated her domestic architecture from within the private domain of dwelling. She conceived of the house from the interior outward, from a reconsideration of the modern individual's need for an interior life and a place of retreat, a direction seemingly at odds with modern movement predilections for transparency and spatial continuity. "The interior plan should not be the incidental result of the façade," she argued in reaction to certain of Le Corbusier's built works; "it should live a complete, harmonious, and logical life."²⁴ She sought a more integrated conception, an interior that "as in Gothic times [was] a homogeneous whole built for man, to the human scale, and balanced in all its parts."²⁵

On an exhibition placard associated with E.1027, Gray articulated her objectives: "House envisaged from a social point of view: minimum of space, maximum of comfort."²⁶ Toward this end she initiated certain ordering principles that she later developed in her own houses in Castellar and Saint-Tropez: orientation of the main living space to southern exposure and view and of the bedrooms to the rising sun; segregation of private areas from public zones of the house; and isolation of service spaces (Fig. 3). The spatial hierarchy of E.1027 reflects Badovici's penchant for entertaining: an open living/dining room capable of accommodating extra guests and a discrete zone for sleeping and work on the main level; an independent kitchen adjoining an outdoor cooking space near the main entry; a guest room and minimal maid's quarters on the lower level (Fig. 4).

d'avant-garde." Badovici letter to Monsieur Poirier, secretary to UAM, 1 September 1955; cited by Loye, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 86.

18. Gray's plans for the Badovici house indicate extensive built-in furnishings that were never realized, according to the interior photographs that Le Corbusier published in *La Ville Radieuse* (Paris, 1933), 53–55. Gray sanctioned attribution of the Vézelay houses to Badovici, fostering the impression that E.1027 was her first built work.

19. 10=J, 2=B, 7=G, thus E.1027=EJBG.

20. Adam, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 191; see Jean Badovici, "Le Mouvement Constructif Russe," *L'Architecture Vivante* (Spring 1926): 11. Tatlin's monument was displayed at the Parisian Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes of 1925.

21. Although Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret first published their "Five points of a new architecture" in Alfred Roth's catalogue of their

buildings for the Stuttgart Weissenhofsiedlung, (1928), Le Corbusier published an earlier version of this argument, including a sixth point ("suppression of the cornice"), entitled "Où en est l'architecture?" in *L'Architecture Vivante* (Fall 1927): 12–28. Le Corbusier formulated his sixth point in reaction to Auguste Perret's more traditional use of reinforced concrete.

22. Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, "De l'Éclecticisme au Doute," *L'Architecture Vivante* (Winter 1929): 19.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Gray and Badovici, "Description" (see n. 3), 25.

25. Gray and Badovici, "Description," 28.

26. Gray archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gray displayed her photographs of E.1027 at the first exhibition of the Union des Artistes Modernes (1930).

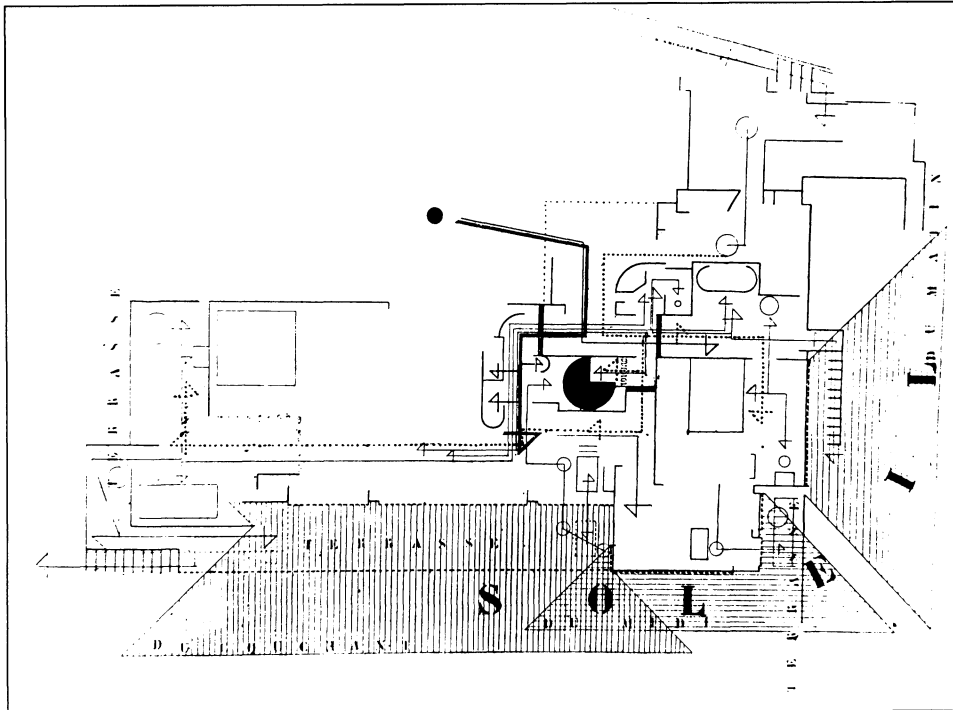


Fig. 3. E.1027, plan diagram. Distinguishing between circulation routes of owner and housekeeper, Gray's diagram analyzes human motion and stasis in relation to the daily transit of the sun. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

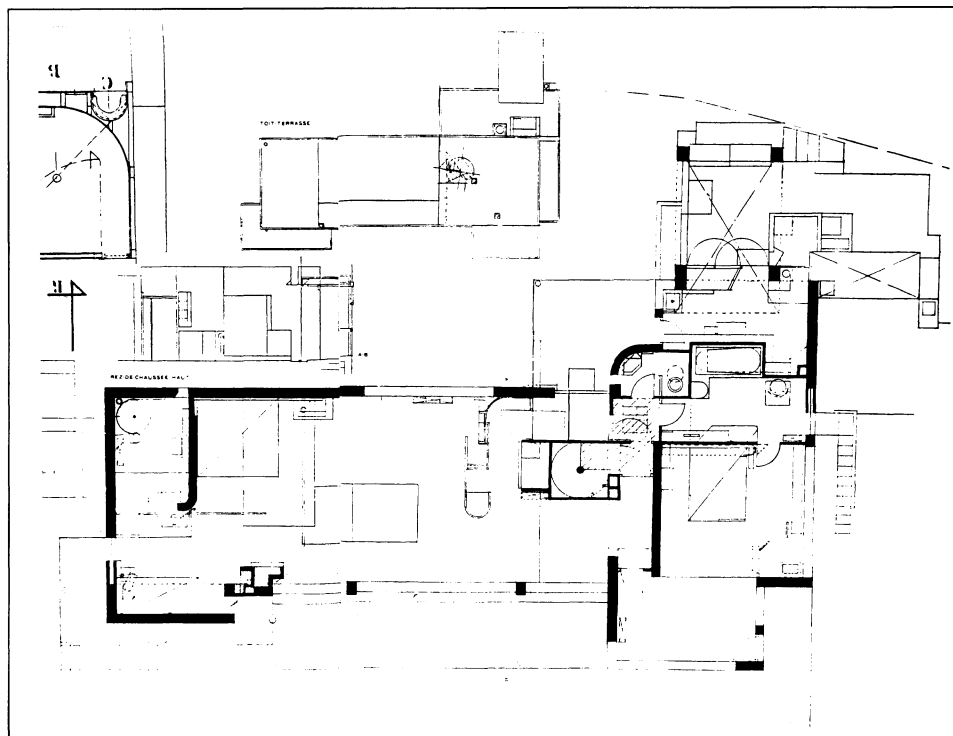


Fig. 4. E.1027, plan of main level. The villa includes a generous living/dining room capable of accommodating overnight guests, a private bedroom/study, and an independent kitchen and outdoor cooking area on the main level. A small guest room and maid's quarters are on the floor below. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

Gray facilitated multiple uses for each space by integrating architecture and furnishings. She conceived of the living room opening onto a narrow balcony as a loggia, equipped with screen-like vertical windows capable of opening fully to sun and view (Fig. 5). A partition incorporating shelves, coat rack, and umbrella stand blocks any immediate view of the space upon

entry, while a sleeping alcove and adjoining bath/dressing room off the far corner of the room and a dining alcove near the stair contribute to the room's plurality of use, evoking the spirit of her "Boudoir de Monte Carlo." As the salon overlooked the harbor of Monte Carlo, Gray invoked a more remote locale by incorporating a nautical chart of the Caribbean in her design. Affixed to the

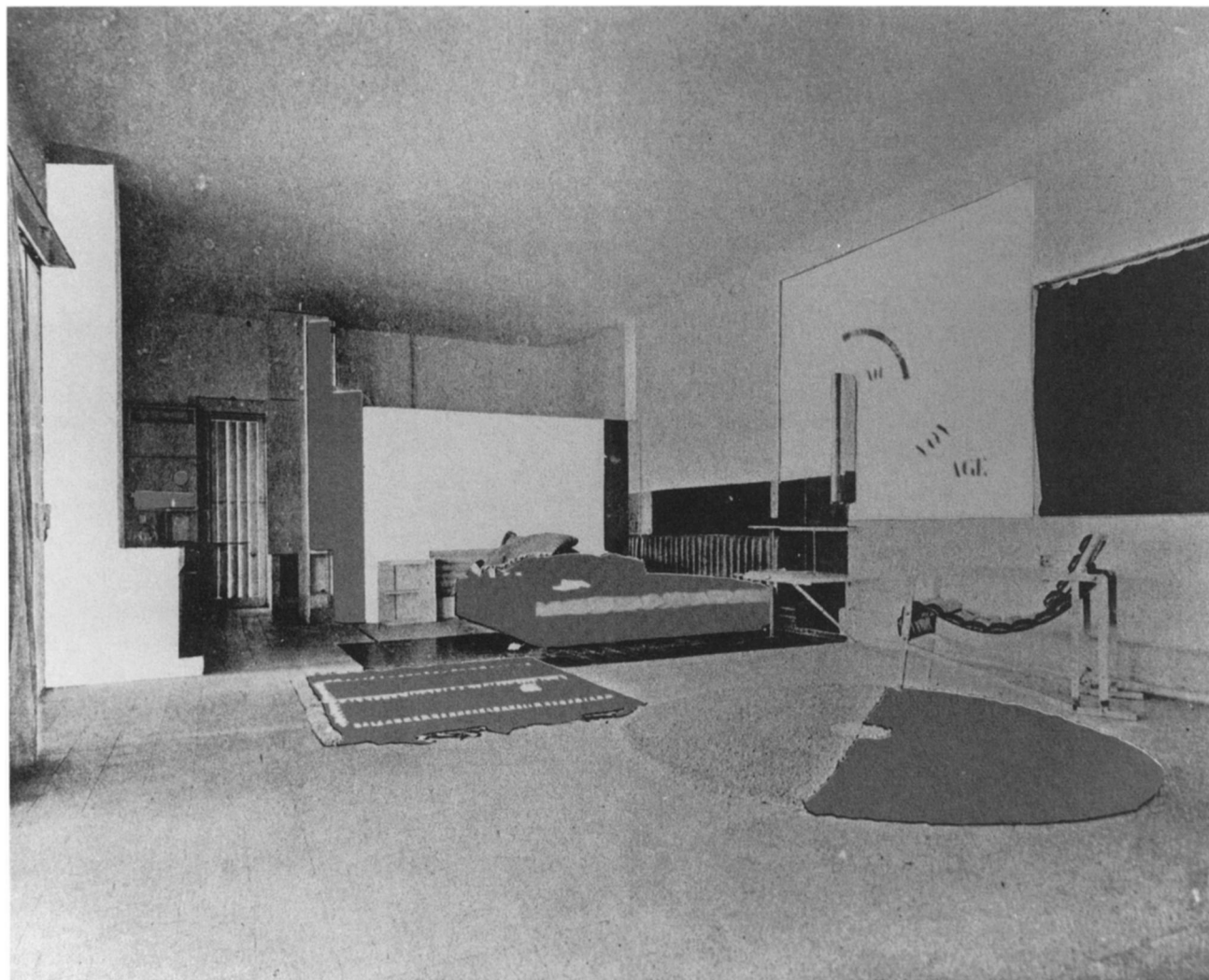


Fig. 5. E.1027, salon. Gray integrated architecture, furnishings, and painting by appending built-in furnishings to a map of the Caribbean while overlaying carpets atop the blue-and-white tiled floor. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

wall by a light fixture and folding shelves, this collage exemplified an important principle for Gray: the inseparability of painting and architecture—a view she shared with the early adherents of De Stijl. Overlaid with the inscriptions “*invitation au voyage*,” “*beaux temps*,” and “*vas-y-totor*,” the mural lures the imagination by drawing upon the limited temporality of modern conditions of dwelling.²⁷

Gray extended such multiplicity of purpose to the private enclave of bedroom/study, where she differentiated areas for working, sleeping, and dressing, modifying floor tiles and ceiling heights to enhance such distinctions of use (Fig. 6). In contrast to the bright and open work space overlooking the sea, she created a more protective domain for sleeping by articulating the furnishings as extensions of the walls. Providing a headboard that

incorporated storage compartments, reading lights, electrical switches, and an extending table top, she developed closet and clothes cupboards as built-in equipment and extended a shallow aluminum storage cabinet from the wall to create a dressing alcove.

To convey her intentions Gray adopted an eighteenth-century drawing technique, representing a room as four sectional elevations “folded out” from the plan (Fig. 7). Architects associated with De Stijl had revived this type of drawing as part of their renewed emphasis on domestic interiors. A prominent example was Théo van Doesburg’s Flower Room for the Villa de Noailles (1924–25), a villa in Hyères designed by Rob. Mallet-Stevens, for which Gray provided several rugs and items of furniture.²⁸ This

27. “*Invitation au voyage*” is a prose poem by Charles Baudelaire, published in *Paris Spleen* (1869), trans. Louise Varèse (New York, 1970); “*Vas-y-totor*” was the name Gray gave her automobile.

28. Théo Van Doesburg also used this graphic technique in color studies for a University Hall (1922), published in *L'Architecture Vivante* (Autumn 1925): pl. 11. Gray was first exposed to De Stijl when she participated in an exhibition of French artists in Amsterdam in 1922.

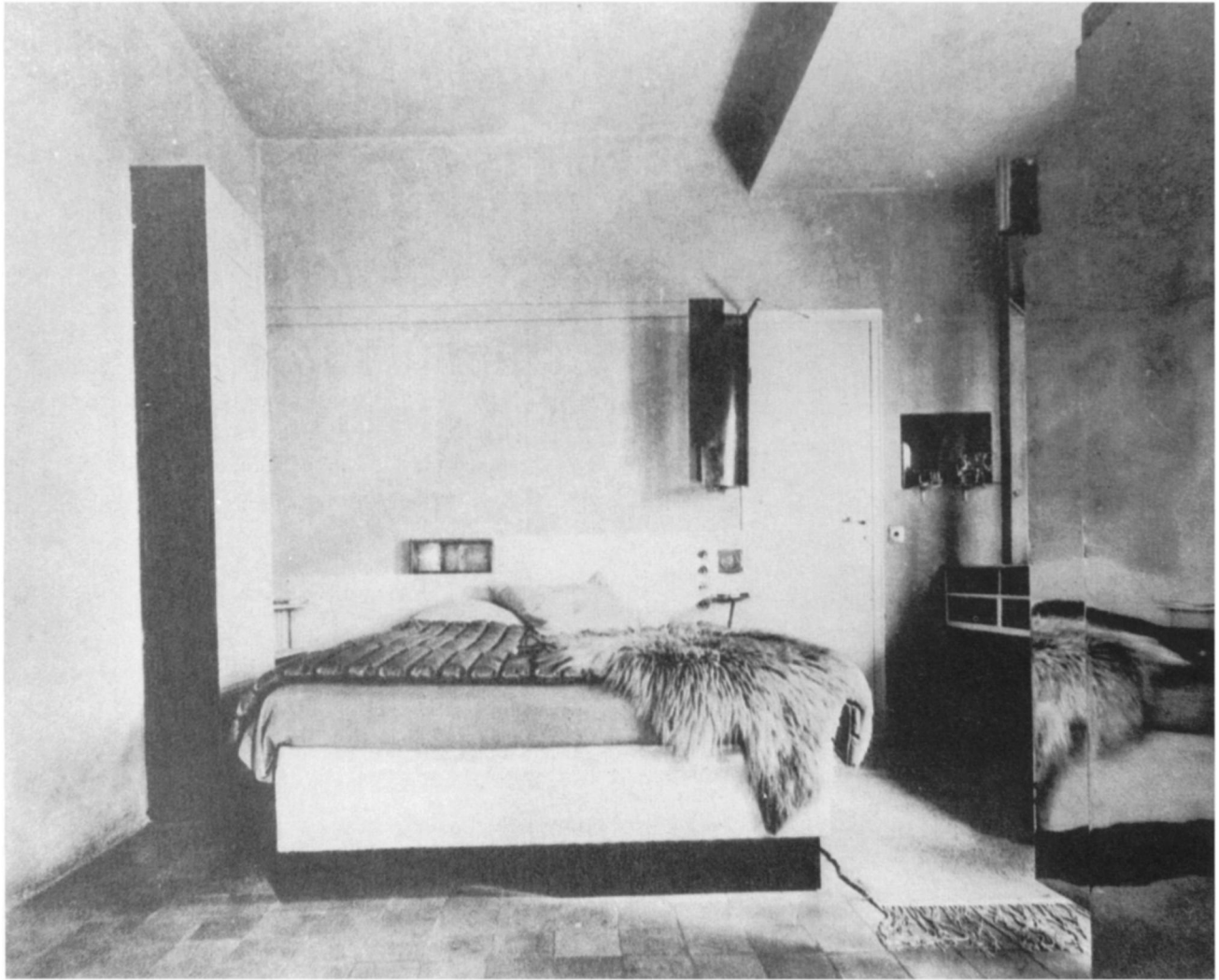


Fig. 6. E.1027, bedroom/study. Gray created a protected domain for sleeping by treating storage cabinets and bed as extensions of the wall and suspending a mosquito netting overhead; satin and fur bed throws enhance the sensuality of the ensemble. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

drawing technique, prevalent in eighteenth-century representations of domestic interiors, stresses the prominence of social activities and proclivities.²⁹ Owing to the drawing's tendency to isolate a single room from the spatial sequence, Gray used it to emphasize the functional multiplicity associated with the modern spatial conception. Each room takes on attributes of an entire dwelling. This type of drawing articulates the principle of a total concept of design wherein wall and window, furnishings, floor and carpeting contribute equally to the creation of a microcosm, a complete and private milieu. The technique underscores Gray's conception of the furniture as a series of extrusions from the wall, stressing the interdependence of the elements and their imperviousness to reduction as independent objects. This breakdown of boundaries between architecture and furnishings corresponds to

29. Robin Evans, "The Developed Surface: An enquiry into the brief life of an eighteenth century drawing technique," *9H*, no. 8 (1989): 120–47. Many of the following points derive from Evans's argument.

the disintegration of the room as a distinct spatial entity, endowing the ambiguities of modern spatial delimitation with a new dimension.

Although the original demise of this drawing type was associated with an increased reliance on mobile furniture, signaling a new liberty for the bodily occupation of the room, Gray paradoxically revived the graphic technique as part of her effort to liberate modern furnishings in both their symbolic significance and their use. Toward this end she also produced a second furniture type, which she termed "*le style camping*."³⁰ This was flexible as well as

30. Discussing the influence of light camp furniture on modern furniture design, Sigfried Giedion overlooked Gray, citing Marcel Breuer, Gerrit Rietveld, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto, among others. Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization takes Command* (New York, 1948), 469–510. Although Giedion illustrated an article on Mediterranean architecture with exterior photographs of E.1027, it is unlikely that he visited the Rocquebrune villa. Giedion, "*L'Architecture contemporaine*" (see n. 2), 102–5.

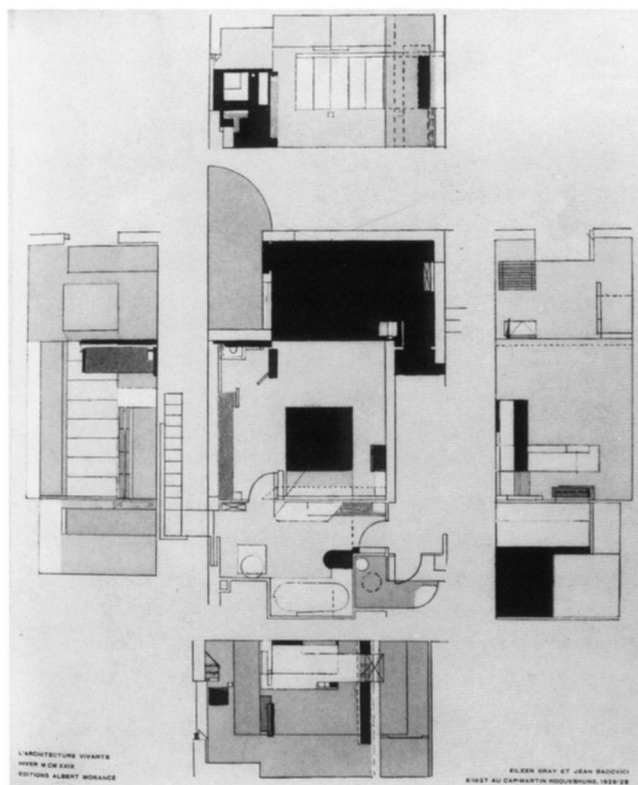


Fig. 7. E.1027, bedroom/study, plan and sections. This eighteenth-century drawing technique, revived by De Stijl architects, expresses a total concept of design wherein wall and window, furnishings, floor, and carpeting contribute equally to a complete and private milieu. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

light and portable, capable of transformation into different configurations to accommodate a range of activities: a table that served as a desk, dining surface, or coffee table, for example. She isolated such pieces, no longer dependent on their architectural milieu, in drawings that used the same graphic device of elevations rotated about a plan to elaborate their constructional details.

Both the interior and exterior of E.1027 are characterized by a new interdependence of the parts. Architectural components and furnishings are rarely perceived as bounded or distinct; rather, their presence is understood in relation to adjoining elements. Gray's fascination with opacity and indecipherability led her to focus on the surface of elements, their colors, textures, and reflective qualities, rather than their profile, modeling, or placement in a legible space. She never isolated the individual element or made it represent the totality of the ensemble. The result is a richly realized totality of space.

Gray's elaboration of the domestic interior and its objects expanded upon a theme germane to early-twentieth-century architectural and cultural commentary. The layering of her forms, such that one element seemingly merges into another, recalls Walter Benjamin's analysis of the bourgeois dwelling: "The interior was not only the private citizen's universe, it was also his

casing. . . Coverings and antimacassars, boxes and casings, were devised in abundance, in which the traces of everyday objects were moulded."³¹ As Adolf Loos had speculated: "Every piece of furniture, every thing, every object had a story to tell, a family history."³² Benjamin echoed this sentiment: "The collector was the true inhabitant of the interior. He made the glorification of things his concern."³³

In place of the sentimental objects of the bourgeois interior, Gray merged furnishings and architecture to afford the occupant a protected realm of affective identification. Her design eschews the singular, closed, and imposing patriarchal order of the traditional interior.³⁴ Rather, it embodies a renewed and revitalized sense of ritual, liberating the occupants from attachments to things or to familial bonds. The mirror replaces the family portrait, while the map of the Caribbean substitutes for the mantelpiece clock, traditional assurance of permanence and renewal. Such freedom extends only to the owner and his guests, as the layout of E.1027 provides for a servant, whose minimal territories Gray carefully segregated from those of the other occupants.

In his related critique of the bourgeois dwelling—the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau (1925)—Le Corbusier both accommodated servants and included conventional gendered spaces: a study (equipped with a large globe) off the dining room and a boudoir off the master bedroom. To eliminate any associations of gender from comparable spaces in E.1027, Gray inverted their relative positions, placing a bed/alcove off the living room and a study off the master bedroom.

While treating E.1027 as a site of selective liberation for its bourgeois occupants, Gray provided them a concomitant sense of anchorage by drawing upon their bodily presence. Her elaboration of the strip window manifests the potential for these apparently dialectical qualities to coexist (Fig. 8).

The strip window was a primary element in Le Corbusier's domestic ensemble, "a tool in a far-reaching strategy aimed at putting the traditional habitation in a critical position, not only with regard to its form but also to its use and significance."³⁵ In

31. Walter Benjamin, "Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century," trans. Ben Brewster, *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 169.

32. Adolf Loos, "Interiors in the Rotonda" (1898), in *Spoken into the Void*, trans. Jane Newman and John Smith (Cambridge and London, 1982), 24.

33. Benjamin, "Paris" (see n. 31), 169.

34. While the bourgeois interior is often associated with the female, its objects and their placement usually reinforce the male power structure. See Jean Baudrillard, *Le système des objets* (Paris, 1968), 21; Laura Mulvey, "Melodrama Inside and Outside the Home," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989), 69; Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York, 1992), 326–89.

35. Bruno Reichlin, "'Une petite maison' on Lake Lemman: the Perret-Le Corbusier controversy," *Lotus* 60 (1988): 63. "C'est une innovation constructive, conçue pour le rôle possible d'une fenêtre: devenir l'élément, l'acteur primordial de la maison." Le Corbusier, *Une Petite Maison 1923* (Zurich, 1956), 34–35.

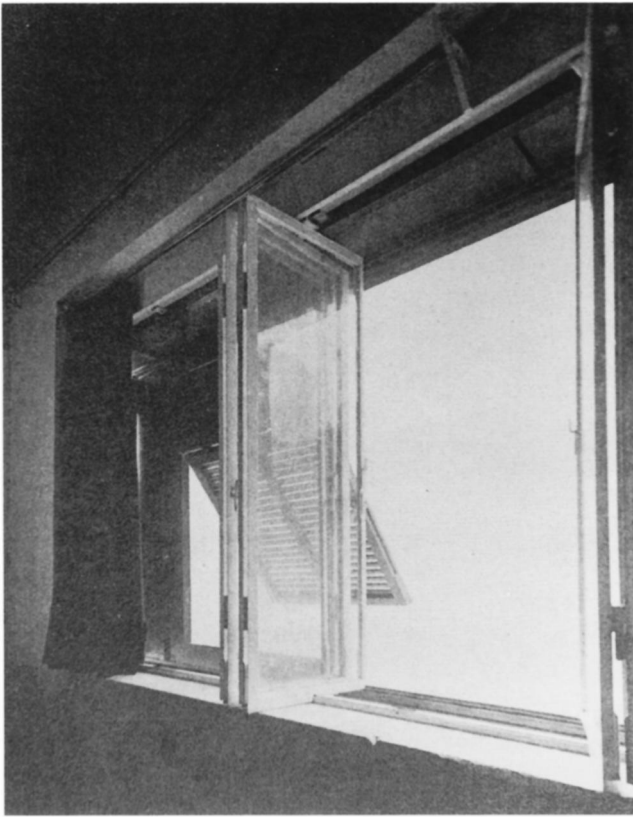


Fig. 8. E.1027, window detail. A vernacular Niçoise shutter adapted to the strip window enabled the occupant to manipulate outward views and penetration of the sun's rays, admitting natural ventilation while protecting internal privacy. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

contrast to Le Corbusier's sharp delineation of the strip window, Gray articulated hers as a layered membrane. Its outer zone of sliding shutters with horizontally pivoting louvers contribute to the privacy of the interior while controlling outward views, penetration of the sun's rays, and ventilation.³⁶ At the same time, its vertical panes of glass are analogous to the human body, suggesting the possibility of embracing modern movement principles without suffering the loss of anthropomorphic reference inherent to traditional windows. These panes and the doors opening onto the terrace pivot and slide, much like draperies, to facilitate an uninterrupted expanse; the interior can thus open directly to garden and sea.³⁷

36. Gray derived her shutters from a traditional Niçoise form. Le Corbusier's understanding of the modern window was not so singular. In *Vers Une Architecture* (1923), he argued: "There are windows in sleeping-cars which close hermetically or can be opened at will; there are the great windows of modern cafés which close hermetically or can be entirely opened by means of a handle which causes them to disappear below ground; there are the windows in dining cars which have little louvers opening to admit air 'a little, much, or not at all,' there is modern plate glass which has replaced bottle-glass and small panes; there are roll shutters which can be lowered gradually and will keep out the light at will according to the spacing of their slats." Le Corbusier, *Towards A New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York, [1927]), 120.

37. Badovici's patents for these window mechanisms, as well as for his

Auguste Perret saw the strip window as a transgression of values deeply rooted in the culture and life of the interior. In a well-known dispute with Le Corbusier, Perret argued: "The horizontal window is not a window. A window is a man"; to Pierre Jeanneret's assertion that the eye looks horizontally he retorted, "I detest panoramas."³⁸ The vertical window enables us to understand a complete space; it affords a fragmented view capable of linking foreground, midground, and background. The strip window manipulates our spatial vision; by blocking the middle ground from view, it offers a direct juxtaposition of interior and landscape without the mediating factor of the context. Eliminating the perspectival view, the strip window presents a picture of nature, satisfying the postulate of objectivity so dear to the modern movement.³⁹

Gray's strip window merges two seemingly disparate objectives: opening the private recesses of the interior to the outer world while affording the body a sense of protection. It addresses body and panorama simultaneously, affording the inhabitant a new freedom. She could thus fulfill the premise of the modern dwelling as a volume reaching for light, while preserving the sanctity of the private life of the interior, by making its degree of exposure to the outer world a matter of choice.

Le Corbusier's use of mathematical ordering principles—the geometric grids that govern his plans and regulating lines that fix proportional relationships in his façades—similarly contrasts with Gray's methods, which lack the quality of an order imposed from without and instead originate from the notion of the experienced body. For example, Gray derived her column spacing from internal spatial priorities rather than from numerical notions of order (Fig. 4). The intercolumniation is widest at the center of the salon, where she provided for the greatest flexibility of use and maximum exposure to the out-of-doors, whereas the narrower bays to either side accommodate more intimate spaces for dining and sleeping. On the lower level, moreover, she shifted the position of one column relative to that above to shield the maid's window from view. Rather than manifest a particular structural ideology, reinforced concrete construction enabled Gray to qualify spatial differences through structural means. "The thing constructed is more important than the way it is constructed, and the process is subordinate to the plan, *not the plan to the process*. It is not a matter of only constructing beautiful arrangements of lines, but above all, *dwellings for people*."⁴⁰ By emphasizing the experienced body, with its dream of meaning-laden imbrication of the viewer and the viewed in the flesh of the world, Gray challenged the Cartesian privileging of internal vision at the cost of the actual senses.

lifeboat design and escape system for ships, reflect his persistent interest in the technical aspects of design.

38. Le Corbusier, "Etude d'une fenêtre moderne," in *Almanach d'Architecture Moderne* (Paris, 1926), 96.

39. Reichlin, "Une petite maison" (see n. 35), 65.

40. Gray and Badovici, "Description" (see n. 3), 23.

She invoked the senses directly and indirectly in her forms: the warmth of the tile flooring underfoot that radiates heat from the sun; an invocation of the aural in the cork tea table that muffles sound. Where Le Corbusier used curved forms to represent contact with the body (in the bath of the Villa Savoye, for example), Gray relied on choice of materials to express degrees of bodily contact, from chromium handrails to fur bed throws.⁴¹ Furthermore, her furniture invokes analogies with the mechanics of the body: in the flexibility of the table that extends to meet the occupant of the bed (Fig. 9), the drawers that pivot horizontally, or the hinged mirror that affords oblique views of the head.

In those areas of the house where contact with the body is most intimate—the bedroom and bathroom—Gray strove to heighten bodily awareness. The profusion of shimmering materials in the bathroom, for instance, includes tiled walls, folding mirrors, porcelain sinks and a polished aluminum tub enclosure, whose cool surfaces provided a soothing respite from the relentless Mediterranean sun (Fig. 10). Such material palpability invokes a sense of the erotic: the house is marked by the experience of a sexed body. “The poverty of modern architecture,” Gray wrote during the nineteen forties in an explicit challenge to Le Corbusier, “stems from the atrophy of sensuality. Everything is dominated by reason in order to create amazement without proper research. The art of the engineer is not enough if it is not guided by the primitive needs of men. Reason without instinct. We must mistrust merely pictorial elements if they are not assimilated by instinct.”⁴²

She extended her critique of Corbusian principles to issues of technology and modernism. Deriving his theory of the house as a *machine à habiter* from issues of mass production, Le Corbusier appropriated aesthetic forms of machines for their symbolic value while using products of mechanical reproduction as emblems of efficiency. Just as the spirit of freedom inherent in aviation reinforced the visual parallels he drew between airplane struts and the columnar grid of the free plan, the ocean liners that later inspired his Unité apartment blocks also operated as symbols of autonomous communal forms.

Gray transcended such symbolic and literal appropriations of machine imagery by subsuming technological references within her more experiential approach. She was inspired by the efficacy of nautical forms, their embodiment of service to the human body. Thus, taut sailcloth membranes supported on the porch’s metal railings afford seasonal protection from the sun (Fig. 8),

41. Elaine Scarry observes that the subject’s bodily consciousness is augmented by the object’s visual disintegration: “If the objects in the external field . . . begin to appear distorted or blurred, . . . she will cease to experience vision only as objectified interior content and will begin to become more self-conscious of the event of ‘seeing’ itself: she no longer experiences the images of [objects] without also experiencing her own body.” Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford, 1987), 165.

42. Adam, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 216.

while deck chairs expose the body to its warming rays; built-in headboards enveloping her beds house storage for cushions, books, and hot water bottle, while supporting reading lights, electric outlets and switches, and an extending tabletop (Fig. 9). All operate in service to the supine figure.⁴³

In his editorial description of the Schröder House (1924), Badovici noted a related technological source of inspiration, no doubt influential for E.1027: “The composition of the interiors can be modified according to need by means of sliding partitions, and the furnishings, reduced to the essential, take their inspiration from the cars of the wagon-lits.”⁴⁴ Such a concept of total design usually results in the imposition of an architectural will on the occupant. In contrast to the more polemical affirmation of the total work of art in the work of Gerrit Rietveld and Truus Schröder, Gray derived her sense of design from the enabling powers of architecture vis-à-vis the human body. Incorporating mobility at the scale of the occupant rather than the room, Gray rendered the subject an active agent in her environment, forcefully shaping the space to receive her, more a participant than a mere occupant. Movement was essential to this idea, particularly the reciprocity between an active body and a field of experience.

To convey the generative importance of the bodily occupation of space, Gray devised a plan diagram depicting internal circulation routes in relationship to the sun’s daily path, using hatched lines to represent the solar impact on the building envelope (Fig. 3). She differentiated the occupants’ circulation paths (solid lines) from those of the housekeeper (dotted lines), the former originating in the approach to the house and the latter in the circular service stair (depicted in solid black).⁴⁵ As these two routes often overlapped, she indicated specific privacy thresholds—the internal bathroom and bedroom doors—as heavy solid lines. By focusing on issues of human locomotion and stasis in relation to

43. A similar concern for the human occupant motivated certain earlier furniture designs, as Le Corbusier noted: “Morris chairs with a movable stand for the book you are reading, a place for your coffee cup, an extending footrest, a back that raises and lowers with a handle to achieve the very best positions for everything from a nap to work, hygienically, comfortably, correctly.” Le Corbusier, “Des Yeux qui ne voient pas . . . II: Les avions,” *L’Esprit Nouveau* 9 (1921): 984. He included the Morris chair in perspectives of his Monol house interior published in *Vers Une Architecture*, arguing: “Chairs are made to sit in. There are . . . adjustable chairs with a movable reading-desk, a shelf for your coffee cup, an extending foot-rest, a back that raises and lowers with a handle, and gives you the very best position either for work or a nap, in a healthy, comfortable and right way.” Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (see n. 36), 117–19.

44. Jean Badovici, “Maison à Utrecht (Pays Bas), par T. Schröder et G. Rietveld,” *L’Architecture Vivante* (Fall 1925): 29.

45. Comparing the efficiency of modern apartment plans to traditional layouts, Bruno Taut inverted these graphic conventions in *Die Neue Wohnung: die frau als schöpferin* (Leipzig, 1926); Frederick W. Taylor’s time/motion studies inspired this type of movement diagram, frequently adopted by Gray’s architectural contemporaries.

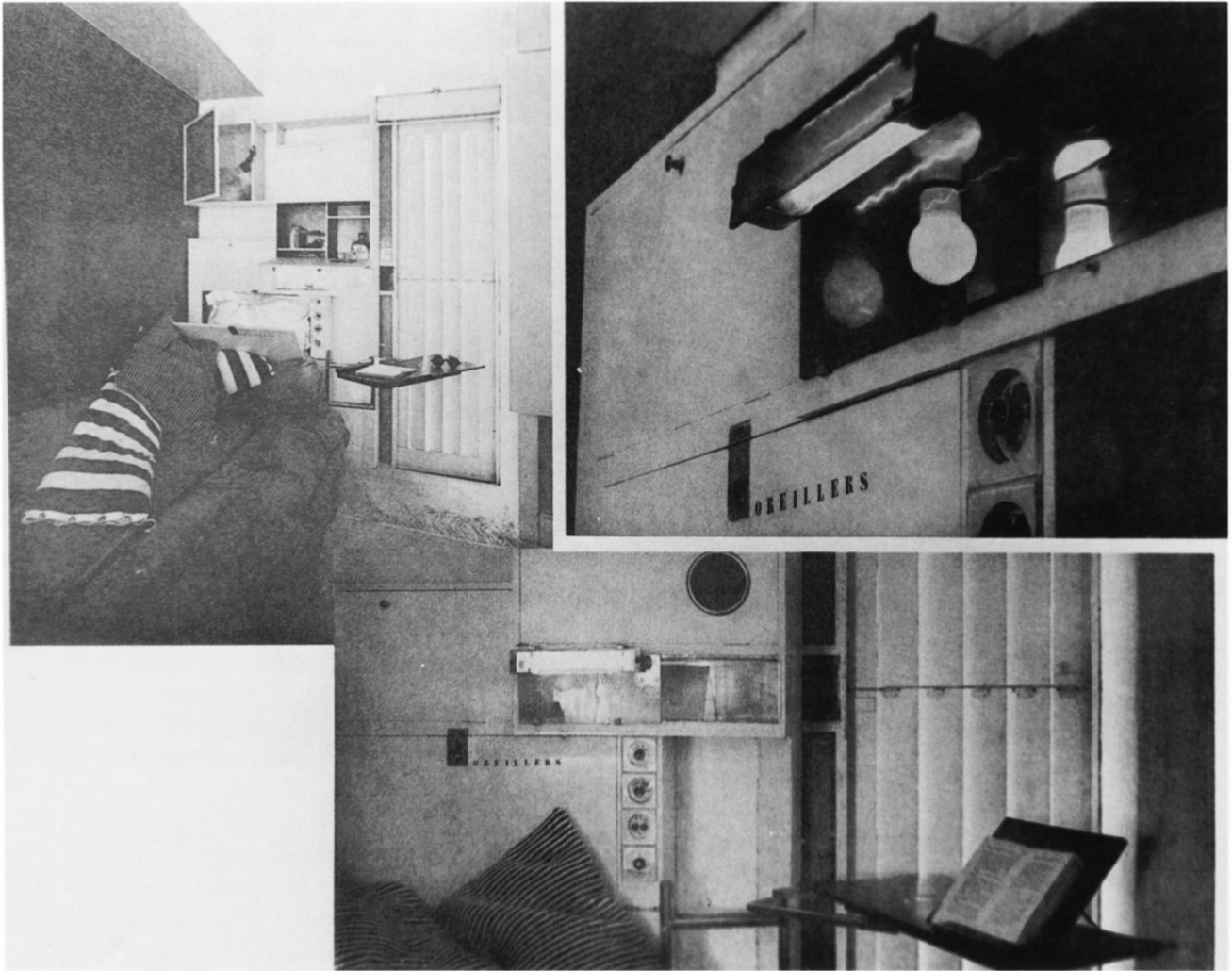


Fig. 9. E.1027, bed alcove. Inspired by railroad cars of the *wagons-lits*, the headboard houses storage for cushions, books, and hot water bottle, while supporting reading lights, electric switches, and an extending tabletop. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

the daily transit of the sun, Gray's plan diagram suggests the possibility for an architecture of leisure to reawaken a natural—that is to say *non-numerical*—understanding of time. Countering the time-motion studies of Frederick W. Taylor, with their singular stress on efficiency, Gray's choreographic approach emphasizes qualitative aspects of the bodily occupation of space.⁴⁶

Inferring relationships among furniture, movement, and the human body, Gray's choreographic concept drew inspiration from Serge de Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, simultaneously engaging dance, music, and decor.⁴⁷ This aspect of her architecture also has broader analogies in early-twentieth-century theories of

46. Gray was familiar with Margarete Schütte-Lihosky's application of Taylor's time/motion studies in her "Frankfurt kitchen," displayed in Lily Reich's exhibition of furniture, fittings, and technical installations at the Stuttgart Weissenhofsiedlung (1927). Gray's sketch plan of a kitchen designed by the Russian constructivists Mikhail Barshch, Mosei Ginsberg, and Vyacheslav Vladimirov (1928–29), includes motion efficiency analyses inspired by Taylor's diagrams.

47. Loye, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 71.

stage design, particularly Adolf Appia's staging principles, devised in collaboration with Jacques Dalcroze to engage the human body in rhythmic motion.⁴⁸ At the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in Paris, Jacques Copeau promulgated Appia's notion that because the body in motion required obstacles to enhance self-expression, the stage set should facilitate points of mutual contact, a principle that applies equally to Gray's furnishings and her architecture.

Gray's concept of choreography also bears comparison with Le Corbusier's concept of the *promenade architecturale*. Rather than rely primarily on visual means to control the spatial sequence by providing a succession of objective goals revealed to the moving spectator (an iterative process that was inherently picturesque), she engaged all of the senses to enhance the occupant's conscious-

48. The musician and composer Albert Jeanneret (brother of Le Corbusier) taught the Dalcroze method in Paris, advertising his *Ecole de Rhythmique et de Solfège Jaques-Dalcroze* [sic] in *L'Esprit Nouveau* 11/12, 13 (1921–22).



Fig. 10. E.1027, bathroom. By focusing on the surface of elements, their color, texture, and reflective qualities, Gray enhanced sensual awareness in the most intimate parts of the house. (*L'Architecture Vivante*)

ness of bodily immersion in a sequence of experiences.⁴⁹ Intertwining the visible with what is out of sight, she manipulated vision to different ends. In notes she later wrote on entering a house, Gray commented on “the desire to penetrate a transition which still keeps the mystery of the object one is going to see, which keeps the pleasure in suspense.”⁵⁰ The admonitions she inscribed with Corbusian stencils on the walls of E.1027—“*entrez lentement*” in the entrance hall and “*défense de rire*” behind the entry partition—provided the only distance, however wittily. Le Corbusier’s

49. “More than the other senses the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains the distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, hearing, has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality.” Luce Irigaray, interview in M.-F. Hans and G. Lapouge, eds., *Les femmes, la pornographie, l’erotisme* (Paris, 1978), 50; cited in Owens, “Discourse of Others” (see n. 4), 70.

50. Adam, *Eileen Gray* (1987), 217.

suggestion that she remove this divider, inhibiting the entry view of the main salon, is a revealing indicator of their differences.⁵¹ Gray sought to transcend the reductive nature of the total view. Affording limited glimpses of the salon between the partition coatrack and its stand for depositing umbrellas, she called upon the imagination to draw one into the experience while kinesthetically engaging the body in rituals of entry.

Gray’s interest in the potential for modern architecture to reinvigorate the rituals of daily life is central to her functionalist critique. To differentiate her concept of function from that of her peers, Gray prioritized qualitative aspects of habitation over quantitative criteria. “The art of the engineer is not sufficient, unless it is guided by human needs,” she argued in response to Le Corbusier’s well-known maxim: “A house is not a machine to live in. It is the shell of man, his extension, his release, his spiritual emanation. Not only its visual harmony but its entire organization, all the terms of the work, combine to render it human in the most profound sense.”⁵²

Theory is intrinsic to Gray’s work. Our failure to recognize her architecture as theoretical indicates a disinclination to examine any work of architecture unaided by the crutch of external commentary. The latter type of theory, intended to guide the reader toward a possible interpretation, remains embedded in operations of power over the object. Indeed, the Greek notion of *theoria* is rooted in vision (to look on, view, contemplate) and grounded in a technological appropriation of the world dependent on the spectatorial split between subject and object.

While Gray’s indifference to hierarchy or analogical resemblances savors the particular and resists the tendency to categorize, the four houses and two apartments that she built for Badovici and herself transcend autobiography to explore issues of architecture as a temporary support for the rootless condition of modern life. In her dialogue with Badovici, Gray articulated her thoughts about the prototypical dimension of architecture:

I think that most people are mistaken in the meaning that they have agreed to give this word “type.” For them “type” is synonymous with a creation that is simplified in the extreme and destined to be reproduced in series. But I understand otherwise. *For me a maison type is only a house whose construction has been carried out according to the best and least costly technical procedures, and whose architecture attains the maximum of perfection for a given situation; that is to say, it is like a model not to be infinitely reproduced, but that will inspire the construction of other houses in the same spirit.*⁵³

Much like the imaginary country that Charles Baudelaire conjured up in his prose poem, “*L’invitation au voyage*” (1869), an

51. “Je vous conseille de dévisser dans la salle cette guimbarde en contreplaqué qui ne fait qu’un pseudo et illusoire pendant à celle de la salle de bains. Votre pièce se transformera et l’entrée en sera tout autre.” Le Corbusier letter to Jean Badovici, 5 September 1949; Fondation Le Corbusier.

52. Adam, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 309.

53. Gray and Badovici, “De L’Éclectisme au Doute” (see n. 22), 21.

inspiration for Gray's mural in the E.1027 salon, one could say of her architecture, "it is there we must go to breathe, to dream, and to prolong the hours in an infinity of sensations."⁵⁴ The spirit of her work draws further inspiration from Baudelaire:

All the furniture is . . . armed with locks and secrets like all civilized souls. Mirrors, metals, fabrics, pottery, and works of the goldsmith's art play a symphony for the eye, and every corner, every crack, every drawer and curtain's fold breathes forth a curious perfume, a perfume of Sumatra whispering *come back*, which is the soul of the abode.⁵⁵

Postscript

Between 1937 and 1939 Le Corbusier painted a series of murals on the walls of E.1027. In light of Badovici's role in soliciting these pictorial interventions and the subsequent deflection of critical attention from the villa's architecture to its murals, Le Corbusier's efforts to control the villa's fate merit reexamination.⁵⁶

In 1935 Le Corbusier painted his first mural in the living room of Badovici's Vézelay house, prompted by Fernand Léger's mural in the adjoining courtyard of the previous year. On the basis of these interventions, Badovici claimed that he, Léger, and Le Corbusier rediscovered the great pictorial tradition of spatial painting, as "assembled before the courtyard wall . . . an idea occurred to us all: THAT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF WALLS BY PAINTING, crowning, above all, the architecture to come."⁵⁷

As with the Vézelay murals, Badovici not only sanctioned but encouraged Le Corbusier's pictorial intervention at E.1027. His eagerness to comply with Corbusian polemics may have led Badovici to ignore any incongruities between this pictorial dissolution of the wall and Gray's more constructive integration of architecture and the decorative arts. However contrary to Gray's architectural intentions, the Rocquebrune murals brought Badovici considerable pleasure, as he recounted to Le Corbusier after surveying the limited damage his house sustained under the Italian bombardment: "Your frescoes more luminous and beautiful than ever. Intact. The contented always have little need to express their joy too vocally. . . ."⁵⁸

Le Corbusier's obsession with obtaining complete photographic documentation of the murals after the armistice prompted

54. Charles Baudelaire, "L'invitation au voyage" (see n. 27), 32.

55. Ibid.

56. Stanislas von Moos, "Le Corbusier as Painter," *Oppositions* 19/20 (1980): 88–105; Beatriz Colomina, "War on Architecture," *Assemblage* 20 (1993): 28–29.

57. Jean Badovici, "Peinture Murale ou Peinture Spatiale," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 8, no. 3 (1937): 75; see Madeleine Goisot, "Sur l'origine des fresques de la maison Badovici," *Les Amis de Vézelay*, no. 30 (1991): 21–23.

58. "Vos fresques plus lumineuses et plus belles que jamais. Intactes. Les heureuses ont toujours un peu besoin de crier leur joie trop focale [sic]." Badovici letter to Le Corbusier, 2 July 1941; Fondation Le Corbusier.

a protracted correspondence with Badovici, who provided only the few closely cropped images that Le Corbusier published in the second special issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (1948) devoted to his work. In anticipation of this impending publication, Le Corbusier urgently requested further images of the murals, both in isolation and in their architectural contexts.⁵⁹ The additional photographs were never forthcoming.

While Gray considered Le Corbusier's pictorial interventions at E.1027 an "act of vandalism," his published remarks about the murals' role in the architecture constituted a further provocation:⁶⁰

The walls chosen to receive nine large paintings were the most colorless and insignificant. In this way the beautiful walls have remained and the indifferent ones have become interesting. . . . This villa that I animated with my paintings was very beautiful, white on the interior, and it could have managed without my talents. One must recognize above all that the proprietor and I had witnessed the nourishment and development of a spatial phenomenon—a colored ambiance and spiritual (or lyrical) atmosphere—as, little by little, the paintings emerged under the brush. An immense transformation. A spiritual value introduced throughout.⁶¹

Apparently aware of the controversy his paintings aroused, Le Corbusier concluded:

It is not for me to decide whether this value is, here, pleasing or the contrary. When one opens one's doors to an artist, one gives him speech. When he speaks, one listens. . . . Hence the great risk one runs in having his walls painted.⁶²

Spurred by Gray, Badovici issued a sharp rebuttal to Le Corbusier's published comments:

What a narrow prison you have built for me over a number of years, particularly this year through your vanity. On the contrary, my attitude toward you has been nothing but joyful and full of happy trust—seven volumes of the heroic era of *L'Architecture Vivante*. My hut [baraque] served [you] as a testing ground by sacrificing the profound direction of an attitude that formally banished painting. As

59. Le Corbusier letter to Badovici, 23 March 1948, private collection; Le Corbusier letters to Badovici, 5 September 1949, 10 September 1949 (including sketches of preferred views), 1 January 1950; Fondation Le Corbusier.

60. Peter Adam argues: "It was rape. A fellow architect, a man she admired, had without consent defaced her design." Adam, *Eileen Gray* (see n. 1), 311. See also Peter Adam, "Eileen Gray and Le Corbusier," *9H*, no. 8 (1989): 150–53.

61. Le Corbusier, "Unité," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 19, special issue on Le Corbusier (1948): 53–55. Le Corbusier's remarks in his *Oeuvre Complète 1938–46* were more insulting: "They [the murals] are not painted on the best walls of the villa. On the contrary, they burst out from dull, sad walls 'where nothing is happening.' The result: Meaningful paintings on indifferent walls and all the fine white walls are preserved." Le Corbusier, "The murals of Le Corbusier," *Oeuvre Complète 1938–46* (Zurich, 1946), 158.

62. Le Corbusier, "Unité" (see n. 61), 55.

purely functional architecture, that was its strength for such a long time: 1925.⁶³ And you have denied its absolute character with such harshness in your writings, disseminating them through your world-wide authority. You lack any generosity toward me. A correction from you seems necessary; if not, I will be forced to do it myself, thus to reestablish the original spirit of the house by the sea.⁶⁴

This unexpected barrage only increased Le Corbusier's anxiety that Badovici carry out the photography "before eliminating the murals," and he retorted with a personal attack of his own: "Perhaps I misunderstand the underlying sense of your thoughts, as, even though you have lived in Paris for thirty years, you have not yet been able to make others comprehend your writing."⁶⁵ This last comment reveals not only the viciousness of Le Corbusier's attack, but also his apparent blindness to the thrust of Gray's architectural thoughts, conveyed clearly and eloquently in numerous dialogues with Badovici.⁶⁶ Estranged from his mentor by this bitter exchange, Badovici died intestate in 1956, leaving the villa's fate uncertain.

Badovici's death only augmented Le Corbusier's proprietary interest in E.1027. His interference took architectural form in 1957 with the construction of a hostel he designed directly overlooking the villa on the property of Robert Rubutato, who in

63. Badovici had a propensity for adjusting dates to promote the avant-garde status of his work. He dated the façade drawing for his house in Vézelay to 1924, three years before he purchased the property in August 1927. See, M. Blumenthal, "Jean Badovici 1893–1956," *Technique et Architecture* 16, no. 4 (1956): 24.

64. Jean Badovici letter to Le Corbusier, 30 December 1949; Fondation Le Corbusier.

65. Le Corbusier letter to Jean Badovici, 1 January 1950; Fondation Le Corbusier.

66. Badovici used dialogue form in *Intérieurs Français* (Paris, 1925); idem, *La Maison d'Aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1925); idem, "La Maison d'Aujourd'hui," *Cahiers d'Art* 1 (1926); idem, "Utilitarian Architecture," *L'Architecture Vivante* (1926); and idem, "De l'Eclecticisme au Doute," *L'Architecture Vivante* (1929), in which he cited Gray as coauthor; all were published by Albert Morancé.

1950 had ceded Le Corbusier the land on which to build his own *cabanon*. Elevated on pilotis, Le Corbusier's intrusive two-story hostel not only destroyed the visual isolation of E.1027 but also operated, together with his *cabanon* and work hut, to situate Badovici's villa within a Corbusian frame.

Between 1958 and 1960 Le Corbusier actively sought "to find a solution for the purchase of the Badovici house" by soliciting potential buyers from Switzerland, explaining to Willy Boesiger that "some have thought of making a museum out of the house."⁶⁷ His concern was clearly for the murals and their preservation rather than the fate of the house itself. In 1960 he contacted Madame Schelbert, sending her photographs of E.1027, and that summer she purchased the villa. In December of the following year he sought permission to retouch certain paintings. In 1964 Jean Petit suggested that Le Corbusier seek the assistance of André Malraux in preserving the E.1027 murals, arguing "Madame Schelbert is well, but the house could change hands."⁶⁸ Here the archival correspondence ends.

Now called "La Maison Blanche," E.1027 has sadly deteriorated, having been left upon Madame Schelbert's death to her Swiss doctor, who removed Gray's remaining furniture, including her built-in equipment. After Le Corbusier died of a heart attack in the sea in front of E.1027, the Rocquebrune/Cap Martin footpath was designated "Promenade Le Corbusier." Despite renewed interest in the work of Eileen Gray, few visitors to Le Corbusier's minimal abode are aware of either the presence of the neighboring building or its significant challenge to modern movement tenets.

67. Le Corbusier letter to Willy Boesiger (Zurich), 7 August 1958; Fondation Le Corbusier.

68. Jean Petit memorandum to Le Corbusier, 28 June 1964; Fondation Le Corbusier. As Minister of State in charge of Cultural Affairs (1959–69), André Malraux engaged Le Corbusier to build the Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture in Firminy (1961–65) and delivered Le Corbusier's funeral oration.