A PLACE OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

Tempe à Pailla (1931-1935) in Castellar by Eileen Gray

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ABSTRACT: Petite Maison dans les Environs de Castellar: this is how Eileen Gray (1878-1976), a designer active in early 20th-century France, entitled in her cahiers the architecture she built between 1931 and 1935. The villa, later named Tempe à Pailla, is an opportunity to deepen her research on that intense dialog between interior and exterior, between domestic space and natural environment, already experimented with Jean Badovici (1893-1956) in the villa E1027 (1926-1929) in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin.

According to Eileen Gray's definition, a house is not a machine à habiter but 'the shell of man, his extension, his release, his spiritual emanation.' The theme of spatial flexibility is approached through the design of mechanical moving components that rotate or slide, unfold, and contract, thanks to the possibilities of new materials, in a mechanical ballet that expands the narrow dimension of a maison minimum into a dwelling with a greater width. These solutions are intended to negate the facade as a frontier line between the architectural space and the close surroundings; any hierarchical relationship between furniture, interiors, architecture, and site is denied. The kinaesthetic aspect in Tempe à Pailla is absolute, since the house lives of the relationship between the movement of architectural components and the experiential dimension of the human body in domestic space, all in relation to the surrounding natural environment. This article aims to demonstrate how Eileen Gray's innovative theoretical framework, exemplified by villa Tempe à Pailla, offers valuable lessons for addressing contemporary challenges. In this context, it highlights the design solutions adopted by the architect to ensure the well-being of inhabitants, even within minimal spaces, emphasizing the importance of transitional spaces between built and natural environments, thereby expanding the notion of the interior. At the same time, it becomes an opportunity to explore how a renewed relationship with nature can offer meaningful insights for contemporary architectural practices, which now more than ever require particular attention to environmental issues.

KEYWORDS: Eileen Gray, Modern Movement, maison minimum, modern interior, spatial flexibility

INTRODUCTION: When Eileen Gray (Enniscorthy, 1878-Paris, 1976) initiated her first architectural endeavor—the construction of the *E1027* villa in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin (1926-1929)—she already had an established career in Paris as an artiste décorateur and ensemblier but lacked formal architectural training. It was Jean Badovici (1893-1956), an architectural critic and the director of the magazine *L'Architecture Vivante*, who recognized her potential and introduced her to the architectural milieu. In 1924, he articulated in the Dutch publication *Wendingen*: "If she possessed a more confident and precise knowledge of architecture and relied a bit less on her creative instinct, she might well be the most expressive artist of our time" (Badovici, 1924, p. 12).

Villa *E1027* achieved immediate and widespread success. Upon its completion in 1929, Badovici published a dedicated issue in *L'Architecture Vivante* titled "*E. 1027. Maison en bord de mer*" [E. 1027. House by the sea]. This special issue opens with a dialog titled "*De l'éclectisme au doute*" [From Eclecticism to Doubt] in which Gray, for the first and only time, outlines the principles that have influenced and will continue to shape her architectural ethos (Gray & Badovici, 1929). She progressively presents her critical perspective on essential themes related to modernity, closely intertwined with the discussion on dwelling, which played a central role in the architectural debates of that time and holds true to this day.

In the opening of the dialog, the issue of architecture based on "rigid and cold calculations" is raised, challenging whether humans, who are "more than mere intellect," can derive satisfaction from dwellings designed under such premises. Gray acknowledges the need to break free from outdated architectural norms but warns against succumbing to "this state of intellectual coldness" that has been achieved, closely aligned with the stringent principles of modern mechanization. This recurring theme resonates in her definition of dwelling:

> A house is not a machine for living in. It is the essence of humanity, an extension, a release, a spiritual emanation. Not only its visual harmony but its entire organization, all the elements of the work, combine to make it profoundly human (Adam & Gray, 2000, p. 309).

Gray highlights a sense of futuristic excess and argues that avant-garde architects have become excessively enamored with mechanization, where their 'excessive intellectualism stifles the wonder of life,' resulting in architecture devoid of soul. Instead, she believes it is imperative to challenge this definition, rediscover humanity, and, in doing so, redefine an enriched "pathos of modern life" (Gray et al., 2015, p.100).

In architectural terms, Gray criticizes the Avant-garde for prioritizing exterior aesthetics over interior spaces, suggesting that houses should not be primarily designed for visual appeal but rather for the well-being of their inhabitants: "Architecture is not about constructing beautiful ensembles of lines, but above all constructing *habitations for humans*." According to Gray, internal spatial arrangements should not be subordinate to exterior aesthetics; instead, they should dictate them: "The interior plan should not be the accidental consequence of the facade; it should live its complex life, harmonious and logical" (Gray et al., 2015, p. 103). Working simultaneously in plan and section, Gray offers a highly personalized interpretation of typically modern motifs: the facade not only becomes a consequence of the plan—there are no regulating lines (Rayon, 2015, p. 114)—but it also relinquishes its traditional role of simply enveloping the plan.

It is at this transient nature junction—the threshold—that the encounter between two worlds materializes: the intimate realm of inhabited space and the external environment; an encounter that Gray is capable of managing according to the needs of the inhabitants, transforming the perimeter boundaries from impassable fronts into layered thresholds. While Le Corbusier in 1929 still advocates for thin exterior walls cut by ribbon windows or window walls with mechanically conditioned spaces (Le Corbusier & Benton, 2015), Gray diverges by layering her architecture with a facade stratification that actively interacts with the interior and the external environment through specific architectural components positioned at the threshold. These components dynamically respond to the needs of human habitation, thus contributing to a nuanced and adaptable living environment.

This unique sensitivity in the treatment of facades—sites of kinematic interaction between architectural interiors, natural environment, and human beings—characterizes the bulk of Gray's prolific oeuvre, which encompasses an extensive portfolio of over forty projects. However, she only realized three architectural works. Alongside the renowned *E.1027*, Gray designed the Villa *Tempe à Pailla* in Castellar (1931-1935) and the Villa *Lou Pérou* in Saint-Tropez (1954-1961).[1]

This paper concentrates on Eileen Gray's second villa, *Tempe à Pailla*, and delves into the kinematic systems that serve as primary tools for translating her design ethos into practice, imbuing her spatial representations with qualities emblematic of 'an extension, a release, and a spiritual emanation' of human existence.

In particular, with reference to the existing literature for a general framework of the villa (Hecker et al., 1996; Goff, 2015; Pitiot et al., 2017; Adam & Gray, 2019; Goff & Constant, 2020; Bonini, 2023), this study focuses on architectural components situated at the threshold between interior and exterior spaces. The intent is to emphasize how Gray, through purely architectural solutions, manages to create architectural spaces that thrive on a fruitful balance between the private and the public, between the built and the natural environment.

THE ROLE OF THE THRESHOLD IN VILLA *TEMPE À PAILLA* IN CASTELLAR (1931-1935)

The collection of photographs and drawings accompanied by written notes contained within the portfolios that Gray began creating in 1956 is an extremely valuable legacy [FIGURE 01]. This is because, at the time of the villa *Tempe à Pailla*'s construction or in the years that followed, no written documentation or publications existed regarding her second architectural realization. The first article about the house would only appear in the pages of the *Perspecta* magazine in 1971 (Rykwert, 1971).

'*Petit Maison dans les Environs de Castellar*' is the title found on the first page of the dedicated *cahier*. It is only with its completion that the house is renamed *Tempe à Pailla*. The choice of the name is inspired by a Provencal proverb: "Avec du temps et de la paille, les nèfles mûrissent" [With time and straw, the medlars ripen] (Constant, 2020), which is a metaphor for the time required for the maturation of ideas. On the same page, the dating ranges from 1931 to 1935, though the villa's history traces back
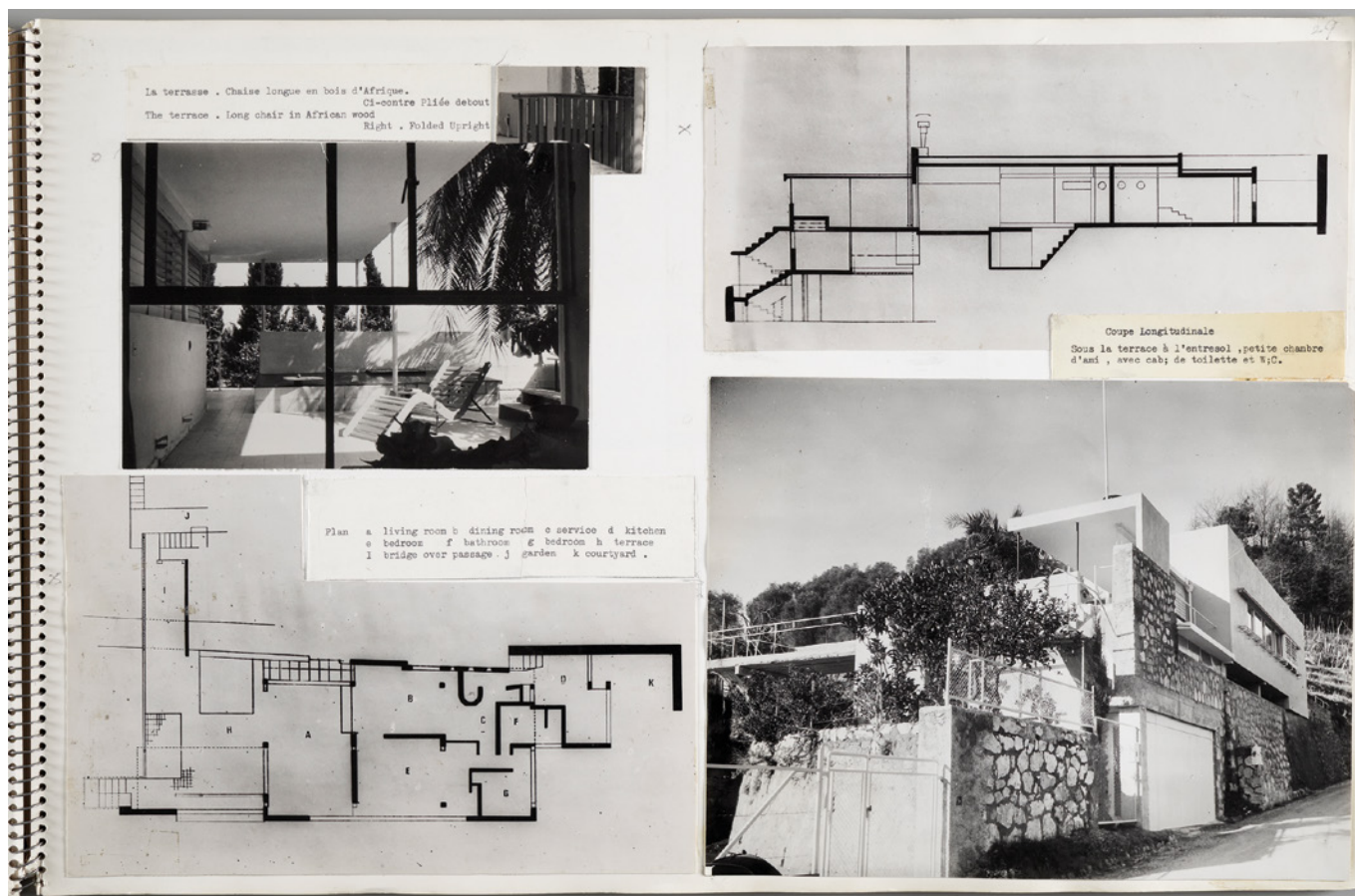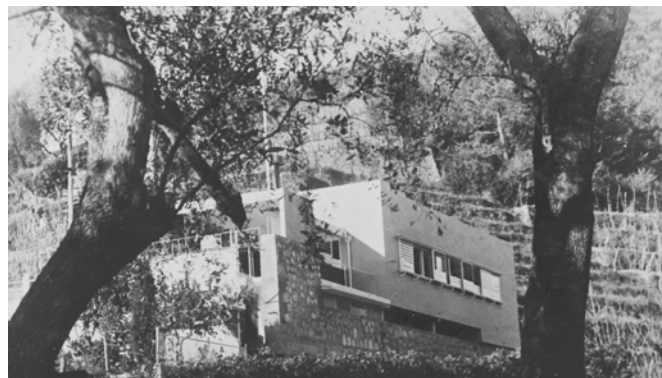
01   Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). Page from Eileen Gray's portfolio: Floor plan, with the interior spatial distribution, longitudinal section showing the different room heights, and the photographs with a focus on the threshold between the covered outdoor terrace and the living room. © National Museum of Ireland, 1956.

to 1926-1928, when Gray acquired five parcels of land in Castellar, a small village in the Côte d'Azur hinterland between Monte Carlo and Menton (Goff, 2015).

The site is a challenging piece of land, situated beneath a ridge, along a steep and windy mountain road. The overall plan highlights a long and narrow area adjacent to a drivable road on the east side and bisected by a pedestrian path; these are the two physical boundaries that delineate the perimeter upon which the future villa will stand.

In the project drawings, the architecture is depicted in a comprehensive horizontal section that lacks details. Through longitudinal development on the eastern front, guided by the plan notes included in the portfolio, one can envision the spatial division on the main floor. Progressing from south to north, along the front facing the road, there is the terrace, followed by the living room, the main bedroom, and the guest room, each varying in height. The section on the opposite front, situated on the western side along the pedestrian path, accommodates the main entrance, the dining room, service areas, and the kitchen with a small outdoor courtyard.

The architectural program that Gray delineates for the villa is fundamental: it is a *maison minimum* (Badovici & Gray, 1930) conceived to become a personal retreat, capable of ensuring, when needed, the utmost level of privacy.[2] This elucidates several design choices employed, commencing with the treatment of the facade oriented

02   Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). View from the street in the 1950s. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1955.

towards the road. The front comprises two levels: the lower level, almost entirely opaque, preserves the existing stone structure[3]: the upper level hosts the new construction, characterized by a mixed structure, white plastered in the typically modern manner, horizontally divided by a single window, which integrates a complex system of independent sliding shutters [FIGURE 02].

Of importance to this research are the two principles that govern the design of the internal spaces: a specific floor plan of the main level reflects the study of room distribution and movement flows within the house, considering not only the views towards the outside but also the path of the sun [FIGURE 03]. On the drawing, it is possible to read the path of the sun as it rises from the mountains (*lever*), reaches its zenith towards the city and the sea at noon,
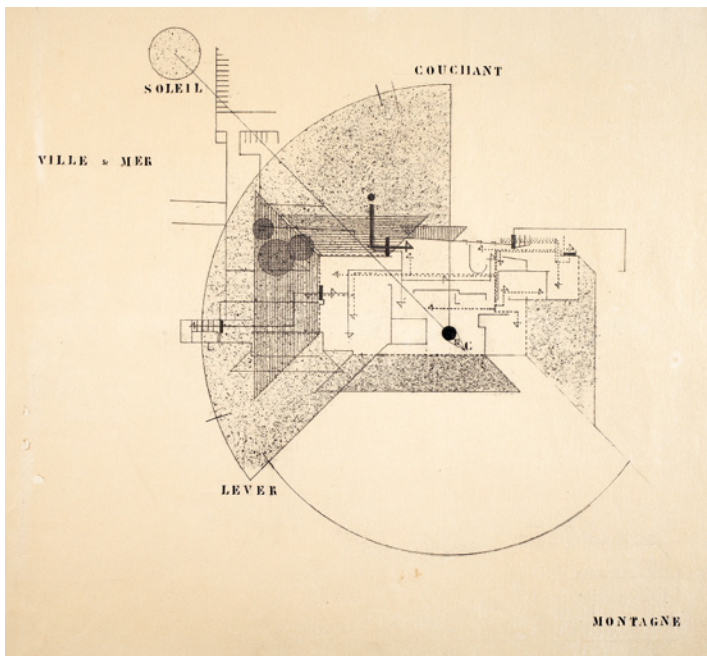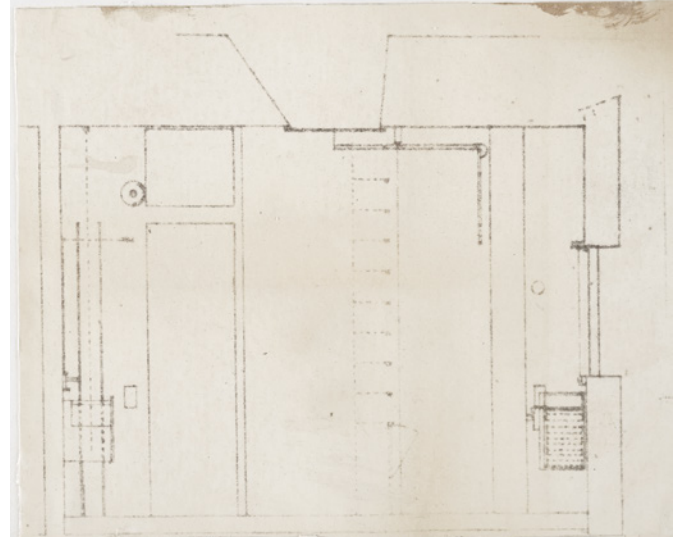
03 Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). Solar Diagram. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1932.

and then sets (*couchant*) in the west. As typical of temperate climates, the living room and terrace benefit from the solar arc between east and south; bedrooms face northeast; the dining room and study area are situated to the west, with service areas facing northwest.

Examining the planimetric diagram, it is evident how Gray precisely centered the solar arc on a specific point, represented in the drawing by a large black circle, graphically depicting a circular opening located in the ceiling. This opening is positioned exactly halfway between the area of the room occupied by the bed and the space designated for the dressing room. The glazed portion is situated on the outer edge, of greater dimension, while the internal shading system, a thin metal disc removable via a manual mechanical arm, is on the inner edge. The ceiling opening is designed by excavating the covering slab to facilitate the entry of sunlight and the presence of natural light throughout the day, effectively transforming the room into a kind of sundial that harmonizes the rhythm of domestic life with that of nature [FIGURE 04]. According to Gray, "light is the subtle, constantly changing medium that envelops and vivifies all our activities at all times and in all seasons" (Wilson, 1995, p. 18).

Thus, the diagram reveals a multifaceted purpose extending beyond spatial distribution. It delineates four distinct zones framed by dashed lines surrounding the windows of the bedroom, living room, study, and dining room, with lateral demarcations set at a forty-five-degree angle. This delineation serves to illustrate the dynamic interplay of light intensity across different spaces. Moreover, the tailored nature of the diagram for the villa underscores Gray's approach to facade composition. Each opening is meticulously designed to achieve thermal and luminous equilibrium throughout the day, while also considering the

04 Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). Movable metal disk in the ceiling of the bedroom. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1955.

varying degrees of privacy (Bonini & Morbiducci, 2024). In contrast to Avant-garde theories prioritizing exterior aesthetics, Gray first works on the floor plan and then composes the design of the facades, taking into account these two fundamental principles. Thus, the facades exhibit variations generated by the study of different kinematic components—windows and shading systems—capable of creating a different relationship between interior and exterior, between private and public spaces, depending on the needs and the will of the inhabitants. Consider, for example, the living room where each of the three perimeter walls is treated uniquely: in each instance, Gray explores kinematic solutions employing varying degrees of stratification.

On the northeast side overlooking the driveway, there are two sliding windows that occupy half of the internal facade. The second half accommodates a sliding opaque panel that can slide to overlap with the glazed frame. On the external side, the wooden shutter system of the bedroom continues: sliding on an independent, slightly protruding track, they can fold laterally towards the terrace or filter light and air through adjustable horizontal slats [FIGURE 05].

On the south side, facing the terrace, the facade is entirely glazed, interrupted only by the column of the fireplace, positioned at the center. All fixtures are enclosed within white-finished metal frames. On either side of the opening,

05 Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). External shutter system of the main facade to the northeast. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1955.

06 Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). Pivoting panels in the upper part of the living room facing southwest. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1955.
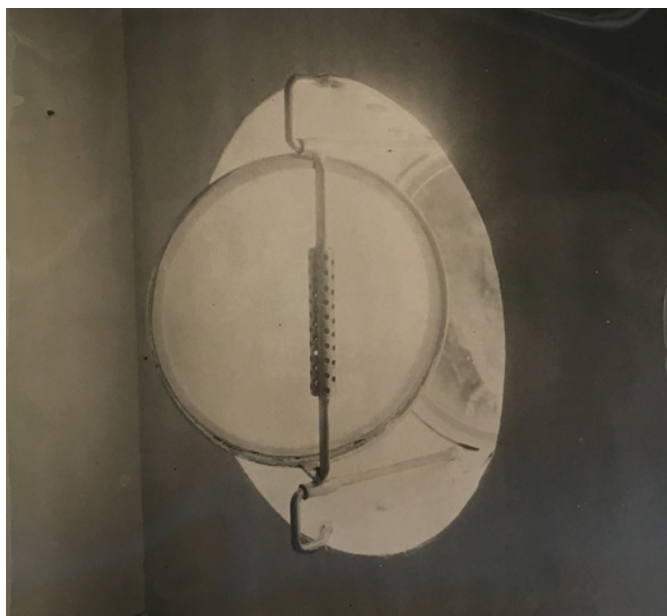

07 Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). External shutters of the south-facing terrace. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1955.

there is space for a housing unit for foldable panels, which serve as an internal shading system; alternatively, a guide on the top side of the fixtures accommodates curtains. As for the exterior, there are no shutters or other shading systems; the terrace itself, equipped with a canopy, and the shade of the surrounding trees filter the exterior light.

On the third and final side, the southwest-facing one, the glazed portion is confined to the upper part of the wall, which is replaced by semi-opaque glass. There is no external shading system but rather a sophisticated internal device consisting of eleven panels. These screens rotate in unison, being connected by a horizontal frame on which each of them is hinged through the manipulation of vertical handles anchored to the two panels at the ends. When closed, the panels, working in continuity with the wall, create a seamless barrier; when opened, natural light filters inside, illuminating the interior and ensuring the appropriate level of privacy despite the adjacent pedestrian passage [FIGURE 06].

The deployment of shutter systems is discernible at various junctions within the house. Beyond the east facade, they are also integrated into the lower floor to the south and on the main floor to the north, specifically in the service room. Notably, their implementation exhibits remarkable originality on the south-facing terrace [FIGURE 07]. While visually aligned with the unique system encompassing the bedroom and living room, the shutter extends further southwards, protruding into the space. Positioned slightly recessed from the facade, it rests atop a low wall and is suspended, affixed to the canopy partially covering the terrace. The mechanized shutter system facilitates the terrace's integration into the transitional space between the dwelling and the surrounding panorama; thus, the terrace assumes the character of an open-air chamber, deliberately appointed with interior-like tiling and ambiance. Upon closure, the sliding shutters shield the eastern exposure, while their retraction behind the stair landing wall seamlessly integrates nature with the spatial ensemble.

At the southwest side entrances, laundry room, and pantry, there are three small circular openings with sliding and rotating discs resembling portholes. These openings have different diameters on the exterior and interior, creating a funnel-like effect. The opaque glass disc, framed in metal, can be moved using a handle and slides along horizontal tubes. This mechanism allows the disc to adjust its position and rotation, controlling light and air flow. When closed, it admits only light through the opaque glass. Rotating the disc allows a small amount of air to enter while sliding it inward increases both light and air flow. When parallel to the facade, it hides the interior space from view, but when rotated, it permits direct sunlight to enter without the opaque glass [FIGURE 08].

Villa Tempe à Pailla in Castellar (1931–1935). Moveable circular window with opaque glass disc in the southwest facade. © National Museum of Ireland, ca. 1955.

In *Tempe à Pailla*, Gray deepens her research on two of the main themes addressed in her architecture: "the problem of windows" and "the oft [sic] neglected, though crucial problem of shutters: a window without shutters is an eye without brows" (Gray et al., 2015, p. 104). In the villa, Gray masterfully controls the transition between the interior and exterior spaces with innovative architectural elements, integrating the external natural environment into the overall design. Positioned on the interior or exterior edge, sliding and adjustable or fixed and swiveling, these kinematic components transform the perimeter boundaries from impenetrable fronts into layered thresholds, places of infinite possibilities for interaction between interior spaces, human beings, and the external natural environment.

POETIC EVOLUTIONS OF MECHANICAL MARVELS

This analysis of Villa *Tempe à Pailla* reveals Gray's adeptness in designing structures that seamlessly integrate natural elements, such as light and wind, alongside the human presence, both physically and spiritually. In this sense, Gray's approach not only accentuates functionality but also underscores her innovative vision, which prioritizes the symbiotic relationship between the constructed environment and its inhabitants.

Eileen Gray assimilates and transcends the modern architectural vocabulary, with a particular focus on crafting spaces that synchronize with the rhythm of human existence. This phenomenon is most evident in the dynamic configurations that emerge at the intersections of interior and exterior spaces, as well as between public and private realms, which both show convergence as well as divergence of space. Gray refrains from abolishing boundaries; instead, she redefines them, infusing *elasticity* into her architecture. The floor plan of the house evolves into the nucleus of a potentially boundless space, where architectural elements glide, shift, expand, and contract in a sort of mechanical ballet, flexibly adapting to spatial requirements before returning to their original configurations.

The kinematic components emerge as indispensable instruments for delineating the transitional spaces as tangible, three-dimensional kinematic thresholds. No longer confined to mere passageways, they acquire an inherent spatial quality of exchange and connection. It is through the daily choreography of these architectural components that Gray orchestrates a mise-en-scène, a spectacle of light and shadow, solids and voids, fostering varying degrees of transparency and permeability. Each kinematic component, evolving into a tangible architectural threshold, transcends mere functionality, transforming into a form of expressive art. The distinguishing feature of these components lies not in their isolated mechanisms but in their potential for 'interactive kinematic engagement.' For this very reason, these are architectural solutions rather than mechanical ones.

Although the kinematic components devised by Gray within *Tempe à Pailla* are indeed products of technology, they do not conform to standardized models or adhere to a specific furnishing paradigm. Gray's sensitivity to the issue of standardization is, once again, unique: "If one is not careful, standardization and rationalization […] will end up producing buildings that are even more soulless and lacking individuality than those we have seen until now" (Gray et al., 2015, p. 102).

The realm of technology is not foreign to Gray; Jean Paul Rayon observes how "In this field, she knew as much as the majority of her architect colleagues and was certainly as capable as they to consult with technicians and engineers" (Rayon, 2015, p. 115). At the same time, Badovici, as early as 1924, described Gray's design thinking as follows: "She knows […] that the formidable influence of technology has transformed pure sensibilities" (Badovici, 1924, p. 12).

A closer look at the definition and detail achieved by the components that constitute her design approach reveals in Gray a particular interest in the new spatial possibilities resulting from the discovery and diffusion of new materials or manufacturing methods, which she embraces with enthusiasm. At the same time, Gray is aware that: "Technology is not everything, it is only a means. We must build for the human being, so that they find in architecture the joy of feeling themselves, like in a whole that extends and completes them" (Gray et al., 2015, p. 102).

Thus, Gray employs her technical acumen and her compositional prowess in the pursuit of a spatiality that, to echo the sentiments of Badovici, "affords the artist infinite possibilities" (Badovici & Gray, 1924, p. 27).

At this point, it is interesting to return to Gray's definition of habitation, which was introduced at the beginning of this contribution. In 1923, Le Corbusier stated:

"Architecture is beyond utility. Architecture is plastic" (Le Corbusier, 1927, p. 14). In his conception, the architect, by organizing the forms, must evoke plastic emotions, where an aesthetic, visual, sculptural definition becomes the protagonist. The *machine à habiter*, then, in its quality as a functioning mechanism, belongs to the world of engineering; what makes it architecture, at least in this purist phase, is "learned game, correct, and magnificent, of forms assembled in the light" (Le Corbusier, 2017, p. 16). Gray's architectures do not arise to be contemplated as volumes assembled under light; they find their reason as extensions, releases, spiritual emanations of man:

> Even as lyricism can be expressed in the play of volumes, in the light of the day, the interior should still respond to man's needs, and the demands and needs of individual life making a place for repose and privacy.
> (Gray et al., 2015, p. 103).

The two poetics do not differ so much in the ascetic functionalism criticized in Le Corbusier—rather a victim of labels due to a misinterpretation of his *machine à habiter* definition (Benton, 2022)—but in the different architectural conventions that lead to different research. A formalism linked to "beautiful ensembles of lines" for Le Corbusier—which leaves the question of utility to engineers (Le Corbusier, 1927, p. 24) —and a pragmatism that places the spatial quality of dwellings for people at the center for Gray.

In these terms, it would not be surprising to find in *Tempe à Pailla* a greater functional imprint compared to any purist Le Corbusier villa from the 1920s. If this were the case, it would be a functionalism that we must, however, necessarily distinguish from its generic—and often negative—connotation; a functionalism mediated by Gray's sensitivity in seeking the well-being of the inhabitants, an emotional functionalism that, in its being an oxymoron, combining material and spiritual reality, makes possible what she herself defines as "art of living."

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE AND CONCLUSION

The result of this study aims to highlight how Gray takes a critical stance towards the Avant-garde doctrines, adopting a pragmatic and non-dogmatic approach to the stylistic elements of the Modern Movement. Within the realm of modern spatial devices, Gray engages with the themes posed by her contemporaries—which are still highly relevant today—integrating and successfully reshaping them within her design philosophy.

Her approach aligns with what Colin St John Wilson (Wilson, 1995) or Kenneth Frampton (Frampton, 2021) would term as characteristic of 'another modern movement.' Gray embodies a "non-heroic modernism" (Constant, 1994) whose objective, as inferred from these brief notes, is to construct an architecture of relationship focused on the art of inhabiting domestic space, distancing itself from the risk of a dehumanizing abstraction process.

> "Formulas are worth nothing; life is everything"
> Gray states, "I wish to develop these formulas and push them to the point where they reestablish contact with life; enrich them, penetrate their abstraction with reality"
> (Gray et al., 2015, p. 101).

Upon closer examination, the themes explored by Gray within her design philosophy to implement an "architecture of relationship" and to "reestablish contact with life" resonate with issues that remain central to contemporary practice. Consider, for example, the role that transitional spaces have played between the private and public spheres or between the built and natural environments, as well as the spatial organization of small-scale homes during recent global emergencies.

Gray's exploration of the fluidity between interior and exterior spaces challenges the rigid dichotomy that often exists in architectural literature. Her design solutions dissolve traditional boundaries, fostering a layered interaction between built forms and nature. This nuanced understanding is particularly vital in times of crisis, where access to open spaces, natural light, and air is critical for well-being. Gray's approach to kinematic architecture, through the dynamic movement of architectural components, creates spaces that breathe and adapt to their environment, ensuring that homes do not become isolating cells but rather fluid, adaptable ecosystems.

At the same time, Gray's approach exemplifies how the natural environment can be not merely a backdrop but an integral part of the interior experience. Her work in *Tempe à Pailla*, with its sensitive orientation to light and wind, reimagines the home as a living entity in dialog with its surroundings. This rethinking of the relationship between humans and nature suggests that our interior spaces should adapt to natural rhythms, optimizing environmental resources for the well-being of inhabitants.

By refocusing attention on the essential qualities of architecture and the relationships that these qualities have always been called to weave with the environmental specificities of their locations, kinematic elements can become a tangible moment of encounter between architecture and nature, not eluding the undeniable and contrasting dualism, but rather making it more productive than ever.

Thus, Eileen Gray's architectural philosophy urges us to move beyond a narrow interpretation of the term "interior." Gray fully embraces the concept of "interior qualities" as

encompassing all characteristics related to the overall spatial experience, expanding the limited dimension of a *maison minimum* into a dwelling with a broader scope: a place of infinite possibilities, which comes to life through the ever-changing relationship between components, understood as architectural mechanisms of transformation; environments, realms in which to experience spatial elasticity; and interactions, moments of encounter between architectural space, nature, and human beings—a connection of crucial importance for our way of living, both in contemporary and future contexts.[4]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENDNOTES

1   *Tempe à Pailla*, located at 187 Route de Castellar in Menton, is protected by classification by the Jan. 22, 1990 ordinance. Lou Pérou, located along the Chemin des Bastidettes near Saint-Tropez, has been profoundly revised over the years: no trace remains of Gray's intervention.

2   The theme of the *maison minimum* is explored by Gray in a way similar to her renovation work on Rue Chateaubriand in Paris (1929-1931), titled 'Une seule pièce organisée en habitation,' realized for Jean Badovici (see V&A Archive AAD/1980/9/240).

3   At the time of purchase, the area had a rural house with three old cisterns. Notably, the V&A Archive holds a drawing of a small house designed on a cistern, similar in structure and access to Tempe à Pailla. This drawing, the Maison de Weekend sur Cisterne (AAD/1980/9/206/1), dates from 1933-37.

4   This contribution is based on the doctoral research conducted by the author at the Department of Architecture and Design of the University of Genoa, Italy. The research led to a thesis entitled 'A Kinematics of the Threshold. Technique and modernity in the poetics of Eileen Gray', discussed in May 2023.