



Enigmatic Feminism at Eileen Gray's Villa Tempe a Pailla

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Abstract

This paper will address the complex interplay of female biographic content and the production of enigmatic architecture, focusing on the life and work of the early modernist architect, Eileen Gray. Gray manifested a new kind of femininity in the architecture world of the 20th century. Her work was extraordinarily avant-garde for the time, and she left a significant mark on both modernity in its 20th-century form, and an ongoing impact on the discourse of 21st-century feminism in architecture. Whilst most attention has previously focused on Gray's house, 'E-1027'— the site of her fraught engagement with Le Corbusier (the so-called 'father' of architecture) — this research will scrutinise the home she designed, built, and occupied after leaving E-1027. This home, 'Tempe à Pailla', is far less known and located eight kilometres away in Menton near the French-Italian border. This paper will investigate the characteristics of both Gray's biography and the house and will explore the fluid openings of both. In order to negotiate the interplay between biographic and architectural materialities, Luce Irigaray's concept of the 'mucous of the carnal' is engaged.

Keywords: Feminist Studies, Femme Invisibility, Gender and Politics, Gender Equality