E.1027 Layered Atmospheres: Color, Materials, Fitted and Loose Furniture

Course Description and Syllabus
“The poverty of modern architecture stems from the atrophy of sensuality. Everything is dominated by reason in order to create amazement without proper research. We must mistrust pictorial elements if they are not assimilated by instinct. It is not a matter of simply constructing beautiful ensembles of lines, but above all, dwellings for great people.”

Eileen Gray
INTRODUCTION

In its comprehensive coverage of the various design fields, the vacation home called E.1027, designed by Eileen Gray with the assistance of Jean Badovici (credited as a co-author), can be considered as one of the most important contributions to modern architecture. The seminar addresses all these design fields and contributes to the knowledge of the building’s constituent elements and thus to a better synthetic understanding of their effects in the characterization of the building's spaces and forms, colors and materials. Besides encouraging students of this Fall 2017 seminar to select other items of for further in-depth research, the principal goal of the seminar is the construction of specific pieces of fitted and loose furniture by the for the exhibition of the reconstructed master bedroom of E.1027 due to open on 23 October during the 2017 Fall semester.

Since 2008 the building has been subject to various efforts at its stabilization, maintenance and restitution with varying degrees of success. The seminar addresses the different preservation approaches, their merits and problems. It is the expressed intention of the Association Cap Moderne, the semi-official institution in charge of guaranteeing access to the site (which comprises E.1027, Thomas Rebutato’s Bar L’Étoile du Mer with Les Unités de Camping, and Le
Corbusier’s Cabanon), to restitute E.1027’s as far as possible so as to allow visitors to understand the building’s unique qualities.

At the School of Architecture, we will be reconstructing the master bedroom as evidence of the research conducted by a series of seminars (Fall 2015 and 2016). This reconstruction will then be part of the documentation that will be included in the forthcoming O’Neil Ford Monograph No. 7: E. 1027.
Views of master bedroom, photographs by Eileen Gray, 1929
Eileen Gray, plan and internal elevations of master bedroom, ink on paper, ca. 1926, National Museum of Ireland
Views of salon, photographs by Eileen Gray, 1929
Eileen Gray, plan and internal elevations of salon, ink on paper, ca. 1926, National Museum of Ireland

This seminar continues the research on color, materials, fitted and loose furniture items for the upper floor of E.1027. Some of the items in the master bedroom have been researched to the point at which the specific full-scale construction can take place. Others, such as the textiles require further research before they can be specified in terms of their probable constitution and their production. In addition to these, some items in the corridor—known as the bar—and in the salon or main living room will be subject to the seminar’s research topics.

The final product of the seminar will be the construction of a number of the fitted and loose pieces of furniture as well as the textiles. The aim is to have these pieces installed in E.1027 in 2017. Prior to this, there could be the possibility of exhibiting these pieces at the School.
HISTORIC CONTEXT

In the first years of its existence, E.1027 had an inspirational impact on all those who had been fortunate enough to stay in it or who came for a visit. Looking at the black and white images today, and thus jaded by contemporary excesses in design, most contemporary viewers of these monochrome photographs would fail to understand the building’s draw. Perhaps the extended interchange between Jean Badovici, Eileen Gray and Le Corbusier gives an indication of its dense design quality. Le Corbusier painted some 8 murals on the walls of E.1027, much to Eileen Gray’s dismay. One can interpret these murals as an expression of Le Corbusier’s attempt to appropriate the building. If the act of mural painting itself does not convince dispassionate onlookers of Le Corbusier’s attempt at appropriation, then perhaps the subsequent publication of photographs of these murals in his Œuvre Complète 1938-1946 without mentioning the name of the architects as well as his successful efforts to having the house bought by one of his many admirers, who believed for most of her life that E.1027 was Le Corbusier’s design; not to mention the Cabanon that Le Corbusier had built a few yards away from E.1027, will convince the dispassionate onlooker to gradually understand that this must have been an interesting design in the eyes of one of the celebrated figures in modern architecture. The seminar will seek to understand the sensuous and intellectual qualities of E.1027.

Today, E.1027 is partially renovated but incomplete, lacking many important details such as the correct paint colors on the walls and ceilings, the different materials covering the various surfaces and the pieces of fitted and loose furniture. Its aura is largely absent. The seminar intends to uncover this aura so as to allow contributions to be made for its gradual restitution over the course of the next years.
EILEEN GRAY, JEAN BADOVICI AND E.1027

From 1926 to 1929 Eileen Gray, together with Jean Badovici, designed and built the small vacation house directly on the the Côte d’Azur, the French Mediterranean coast, at Roquebrune-Cap Martin. At the time of construction, the Mediterranean coast had yet to become the popular summer vacation destination that it is today. To be sure, it had for some time already been the preserve for the British upper and upper-middle class tourists, hence the many names of hotels with references to British royalty, even to the extent of the city of Nice naming the coastal street Promenade des Anglais. Eileen Gray (1878-1976) was an Anglo-Irish artists, designer and architect from one of these British upper class families and for the longest part of her long life, her own family ties to nobility was the cause of her personal revolt. One form of expression of this revolt was the design and construction of a vacation house away from Paris, the capital of France, where she lived during the colder months of the year. She was taken by the rough immediacy of the Côte d’Azur, attracted to the different life that was possible in distant and virtual seclusion. This overall setting gave rise to one of the most extraordinary comprehensive creations, a total work of art, that E.1027 represents. The house is Eileen Gray’s first complete design for a landscaped garden, house, set of interior rooms, fitted and loose furniture, window systems, hardware, color and material scheme. Jean Badovici played a minor role in the design, most importantly encouraging Gray to design and build the house in the first place (not without a large portion of self-interest) as well as having an input in a few core issues, such as the idea of a helical staircase.

E.1027 is a numeronym in which the letter "E" stands for Eileen, the numbers "10" and "2" stand for the letters "J" and "B" respectively, initials for Jean Badovici, and finally the number "7" for the letter "G". It is thus that Jean Badovici is embraced by Eileen Gray. Badovici was the editor of the French avant-garde architectural journal L’Architecture Vivante, publishing all the important modernist architectural projects of the period. Through her friendship with Badovici, Gray worked unofficially on the journal and therefore was aware of the published work. She had kept many copies of the journal in her library. At that time Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici were lovers. Gray bought two properties in the area, building a house on each site, one for Jean Badovici and one for herself. Her name does not appear in the land registry for the site at
Roquebrune-Cap Martin, instead, the property and thus the house was in Badovici’s name. E.1027 is therefore Gray’s gift to her lover. In 1932 Gray moved to her second house at Castellar, called Tempe à Pailla, meaning “the time to harvest”. With this second house, in many ways an even more compact building than E.1027, she essentialized a number of qualities and elements, nonetheless here too demonstrating her creative ingenuity from the overall configurational composition to the design of loose furniture.

The history of this house is a complex one, involving senses of betrayal; of intrusion; of death and murder; of envy; of rivalries; of incompetence and sloppiness in construction and reconstruction; and currently, of some sense of hope. It is the perfect plot for an almost unbelievable movie, a quality that was recently recognized by an Irish film director Mary McGuickan, who produced a fictionalized account entitled The Price of Desire (2015). And the history of the house has not reached it end yet. There continues to be a strong and influential Le Corbusian faction that is able to determine the future of the murals, for example. This has a lasting impact on the atmosphere of E.1027.

Over the last decades of the 20th century, E.1027 was gradually stripped of its original loose and fitted furniture. The last owner of the house – Dr. Heinz Peter Kägi – auctioned off most of the loose furniture and some of the fitted furniture through Sotheby’s, ostensibly to fund the building’s renovation costs. Through theft additional pieces of fitted furniture were lost. A few years ago, the building was cosmetically restored; however, the missing pieces of fitted furniture were not returned to the interiors at that time. Some of these were added last year, however, in some cases, with major differences to the original versions. The fragmentary nature of E.1027 prevents it from being shown in its full richness in conception and detailing as well as in its spatial complexity.
SUMMARY

The focus of the seminar is to study the building to

1 produce the design, specification and construction documents necessary to enable members of the seminar to produce the fitted and loose furniture as well as the textiles of E.1027.

2 construct 3D models and Photoshop renderings to represent the colors of the original wall and ceiling surfaces, the choice of materials as well as the artificial lighting system to enable the reestablishment of the original spatial atmosphere.

The purpose of all of these studies to contribute to the completion of E.1027 as well as to produce documents (line drawings and photoshop renderings) for the O’Neil Ford Monograph No. 7 on E.1027, to be published in Spring 2018.
OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

Current client, architect, advisors

The Association Cap Moderne is the client organization; its chairman is Michael Likierman (Menton). The architect Claudia Devaux (Paris) is in charge of the restoration works to the landscape and building. A Scientific Committee, that includes Mary McLeod (Columbia University, New York), Jean-Louis Cohen (New York University), Arthur Rüegg (Zurich, formerly ETH Zurich) and Wilfried Wang (UT Austin/Berlin), is advising the client organization regarding the restoration and completion of the building.

Extant Data

A number of surveys have been undertaken of the building before its deterioration, the first by Jean-Paul Rayon, the second by Stefan Hecker and Christian Müller and the third by Renaud Barrès. We have access to the second survey in form of scans of the original, some of which are difficult to decipher. The other two surveys are not available.

Since Fall 2015, extensive research into individual pieces has been undertaken with a set of drawings that now need to be completed in terms of dimensions and specifications. Other pieces, that have not been subject to the same research, will now be reviewed.

Research to date

Besides the research undertaken by the members of the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 seminars, there is also extensive research undertaken by the office of Hoidn Wang Partner, Berlin.

To date, some reconstruction research has been undertaken. Hence the main task for the seminar is to study the intentions behind the design, the design of every element and its realization based on the given documents (drawings in the Victoria & Albert Museum Archive, drawings in the Eileen Gray Archive in the National Museum of Ireland, the Hecker/Müller survey, Peter Adam’s biography on Eileen Gray, furniture collections in the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Pompidou Centre in Paris as well as other publications and images).
Required research

Prior to any reconstruction proposals, the seminar will seek to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the design intentions behind E.1027. We will seek to understand the role played by each part and the different perceived wholes. Further topics of study include:

- the architecture of the time;
- the construction methods and materials of the time;
- the relation between the different activities in the house and the way that they have been accommodated;
- how spaces are separated on the one hand and how spatial continuities are established in a variety of instances;
- and what role each moving part is playing.

From doors, windows and drawers, some moveable parts are conventional, others are innovative (horizontal and vertical sliding-folding windows, rotating drawers, side-tables, screens, oculus screens, etc.).

Required synthesis

Based on completed research, the seminar will select items in E.1027 that require further research in order to prepare a series of documents, drawings and specifications. The following items have been researched and documented:

1. bed (with mattress and 2 pillows) (HWP)
2. headboard with light fitting (HWP)
3. adjustable reading table (HWP)
4. mosquito cabling (partially extant) (Amy Witte and HWP)
5. two shelves between headboard and wardrobe (HWP)
6. wardrobe (HWP)
7. small mirror with shelves on two brackets (HWP)
8. wall-mounted drawers (HWP)
9. chest with corrugated metal front (HWP)
10. wainscot to waste basket and pipework (incomplete)
11 waste basket
12 metal cladding panels to underside of hand washbasin
13 2 small shelves (HWP)
14 shelf beneath mirror (HWP)
15 bracket for light objects – CHOSES LÈGERES (HWP)
16 Castellar mirror (in production by Aram Design)
17 vertical mirror with bevelled edges
18 surface mounted lamp (in production by Aram Design)
19 bar/bathroom stool (in production by Aram Design)
20 coiffeuse with aluminum cladding (HWP)
21 Aixia chair (in production by Aram Design)
22 drafting table (Olekunle Oni, HWP and Cory Olson)
23 wall-mounted filing cabinet (Izabella Dennis and HWP)
24 suspended ceiling lamp (Viviana Andrade, Warbuch and HWP)
25 carpet
26 curtain facing southeast
27 curtain facing south
28 bed linen
29 duvet and duvet cover
30 long fur sheep’s pelt (Amy Witte)

For each of the incomplete items, a set of schematic and detailed drawings needs to be prepared. A specification will be added to define materials and assembly processes. These documents will serve those craftsmen who will be producing these items.

Schedule, Construction and Logistics

While each item needs to be carefully reconsidered and reconstructed, the ideal of the seminar is to produce a number of these pieces with a view to installing them in situ. However, given the complexity of some these items, it is not expected that all items of the master bedroom will be reconstructed. The emphasis is on precision and certainty rather than speed and effect.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.0 Biography of Eileen Gray
1.2 Caroline Constant Eileen Gray, London 2000
1.3 Jennifer Goff Eileen Gray, Her Work and Her World, Dublin 2015

2.0 Monograph on E.1027

2.0 Eileen Gray's Architecture and Design
2.2 Stefan Hecker & Christian F. Müller Eileen Gray: Obras y Proyectos/Works and Projects, Barcelona 1993
2.3 Philippe Garner Eileen Gray: Designer and Architect, Cologne 1993
2.4 Caroline Constant, Wilfried Wang Eileen Gray: An Architecture for all Senses, Tübingen 1996
2.5 Roberto Polo Eileen Gray: Œuvres sur papier/Works on Paper, Paris 2007

3.0 Essays
3.1 Joseph Rykwert "Eileen Gray: Two Houses and an Interior", in Perspecta 13/14, pp. 66-73, New Haven 1971
3.3 Peter Adam "Eileen Gray and Le Corbusier", in 9H No. 8, pp. 150-153, London 1989
3.4 Yehuda Safran "La Pelle, in 9H No. 8, pp. 154-163, London 1989
SEMINAR SCHEDULE

31 Aug 17  Seminar 1: Introduction and overview to the seminar
            The genesis of E.1027
            Mark Macek: Woodworking

12 Sep 17  Seminar 2: preparing the ground, selecting an object,
            reviewing drawings and details, selecting materials

14 Sep 17  Seminar 3: Detailed production drawings, production schedule

19 Sep 17  Seminar 4: Discussing details and construction processes

21 Sep 17  Seminar 5: Completing preparations for reconstruction

03 Oct 17  Seminar 6: Cut lists, assembly

05 Oct 17  Seminar 7: Assembly

10 Oct 17  Seminar 8: Assembly

12 Oct 17  Seminar 9: Assembly

23 Oct 17  Exhibition opening, lecture

24 Oct 17  Seminar 10: Documentation, photography

26 Oct 17  Seminar 11: Discussion of end of semester papers, draft descriptions

31 Oct 17  Seminar 12: Documentation: lighting and color studies

02 Nov 17  Seminar 13: Final presentations 1

07 Nov 17  Seminar 14: Final presentations 2

09 Nov 17  Seminar 15: Final presentations 3

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GRADING POLICY

There are five components to the grade:

1. Research 25%
2. Synthesis 25%
3. Final documentation 25%
4. Regular attendance and participation in the seminar 25%

Grade Descriptions

A/A- : excellent work
Project surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, verbal and visual ability, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class.

B+/B/B- : good work
Project is thorough, well researched, diligently pursued, and successfully executed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. Demonstrates potential for excellence.

C+/C/C- : required work
Project meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication or rigor. (Note: C- does not meet the minimum grade to be counted toward the student’s degree.)

D+/D/D- : poor work
Basic skills including graphic skills, model-making skills, verbal clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required design skill and knowledge base.

F: unacceptable work
Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned with excessive unexcused absences.
X: excused incomplete

Given only for legitimate reasons of illness or family emergency. Incomplete assignments are not a cause for assigning this grade. An incomplete is assigned after consultation with the Associate Deans’ offices. Incomplete coursework must be completed prior to the beginning of the following semester.

ALL GRADES ARE SUBJECT TO DEDUCTIONS FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, LATE WORK AND LATE ARRIVALS.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Participation is expected. Students with three (3) unexcused absences may be dropped from the course without further notice. The minimum penalty for more than three unexcused absences is a full letter drop in your final grade for the course. Please contact the instructor prior to class if you expect to be late or miss class. Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. You must notify each of your instructors as far in advance as possible prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

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Academic Dishonesty

UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html)

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- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the
first week of class.

- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)