Living Between the Lines: How Japanese Crafts Taught Frank Lloyd Wright, Adolf Loos, and Eileen Gray to See Modern Domestic Space

Regina Nabil Emmer

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Regina Nabil Emmer
Candidate

Art and Art History
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Christopher Curtis Mead, Chairperson

Dr. Susanne Anderson-Riedel, Chairperson

Dr. Olivia Lumpkin

Dr. Ken Tadashi Oshima
LIVING BETWEEN THE LINES:
HOW JAPANESE CRAFTS TAUGHT FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, ADOLF LOOS, AND EILEEN GRAY TO SEE MODERN DOMESTIC SPACE

By

Regina Nabil Emmer

M.A., Professional Studies, Towson University, 2011
M.A., Art History, The University of New Mexico, 2013

DISSERTATION

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Requirements for the Degree of

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Art History

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DEDICATION

To the unseen work that occurs in the domestic realm.
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by

Regina Nabil Emmer

M.A., PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, TOWSON UNIVERSITY, 2011
PH.D., ART HISTORY, THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2022

ABSTRACT

Histories of European and U.S. modernism conventionally accept that Enlightenment rational thought set modern architecture’s terms and criteria in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Rationalism privileges visual and material properties; distinguishes between art, architecture, and craft; and identifies space with the structure that frames it. It normalized the view that buildings stand fixed, independent of our interaction with them, and perpetuates assumptions about what physically defines domestic space. Consequently, Japan’s significance for modern domestic space in Europe and the U.S. has been interpreted as structurally evident. Simultaneously, the architecture of European and U.S. modernists who did not think like rationalists has remained elusive. This dissertation revisits the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Adolf Loos, and Eileen Gray from a phenomenological perspective—a perspective grounded in the spatial and temporal continuity of lived experience. Phenomenological analysis reveals that Japanese craft practices fundamentally shaped these modernists’ approaches to architecture in ways that have been mutually obscured by rationalism.
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INTRODUCTION: THE GENESIS OF THE PROBLEM

“Someday,” Roland Barthes observed in *Empire of Signs* (1970), “we must write the history of our own obscurity—manifest the density of our narcissism, tally down through the centuries…the ideological recuperations…which consist in always acclimating our incognizance of Asia.”¹ Barthes was reflecting upon a problem of fundamental blindness that he recognized when he visited Japan as a Frenchman who could neither speak nor read the language. Consistent with the larger implications of his statement, histories of architectural modernism have tended to overlook, oversimplify, or misapprehend the extent to which Japanese craft practices shaped the development of modern domestic space in Europe and the United States. This is because histories of architectural modernism have tended to overlook, oversimplify, or misapprehend the work of European and U.S. architects who did not adhere to the structure of rational thought upon which the discipline of architectural history was founded.

Far from obsolete, rationalism was inherent to the Enlightenment philosophical tradition that industrializing societies adopted, to varying degrees, with modernization and remains intrinsic to modern academic training. Deeply informed by the ideas of the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes, it assumes that there are fixed, *a priori* truths—universal truths that precede and order experience—and seeks evidence that reifies our own predetermined hypotheses. Relying upon the dialectical synthesis of opposites to propel linear progress, rationalism formed the basis for a broad paradigm that pits the self as agent against an objectified other to be discovered and civilized. Viewing the East in a generalized way that reflects an equally generalized set of Western ideals and interests, it aims to

level differences to that which can be objectively translated and catalogued and established a framework of formal concerns and stylistic taxonomies that discriminate between art, architecture, and craft. Privileging that which can be physically grasped, visually verified, and taken to have a fixed location in space, a rationalist perspective conflates space with the structure that frames it. It gives little credence to non-binary practices and perspectives grounded in the spatial and temporal continuity—and ephemerality—of lived experience.

Typifying the problem, Japan’s contributions to modernism in Europe and the United States have often been associated with the work of figures like Bruno Taut, a German-born architect who read Japanese architecture from what is often assumed to be the dominant rational perspective.² In *Houses and People of Japan* (first published in 1937 as *Das japanische Haus und sein Leben*), Taut claimed to have discovered the key to modern architecture’s progress while living in Japan between 1933 and 1936: “This is pure architecture,” he argued, “and is not constructed for pictorial effect. It can be enjoyed only by the senses which respond to good proportions.”³ Taut was referring, specifically, to Ise Jingû, a Shintô shrine complex whose cypress wood structures are, as a rule, ritually dismantled and rebuilt, on alternating adjacent lots, every twenty years to forms codified in the late seventh century CE. Visitors are typically prohibited from the inner precincts formed by their tall wooden fences and are usually afforded little more than a glimpse of their stylized pitched and thatched roofs (Fig. 1). Likening Ise to the Athenian Parthenon, Taut argued that it was an ideal modernist prototype because it supported his theory that good form results from pure

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function. Interpreting Japanese architecture in terms of this form/function dialectic, he went on to trace the refined functional aesthetic exemplified by Ise to its full development in the Katsura Detached Palace (1615-1633), a seventeenth century imperial retreat (Fig. 2). Clarifying his definition of function, he explained:

> I have stated on former occasions that the most important basis for the further development of modern architecture lies in function. My sentence, “all that works well looks well,” has been misunderstood, and at times misinterpreted as referring only to utilitarian necessities and actual functions. In Katsura I found in an ancient building the absolute proof of my theory, which I regarded as a valid base for modern architecture.⁴

Approaching Japan with a clearly defined picture of what he was to find there, Taut read Japanese models as objects that reflected, and whose meaning and value were determined by, visual and material interests: while he claimed to be interested in function, Katsura worked well because it was a highly formalized example of Japanese architecture that he could champion as “absolutely modern” in contrast to the “barbaric and ostentatious” shrines at Nikko (Fig. 3).⁵ Equating modernism with a universal stylistic ideal, he hierarchically ordered and reconciled opposites—form and function, good taste and bad—to support a preconceived linear argument for the “absolute” lessons that traditional Japanese architecture held for modernists.⁶

Taken at face value, Taut’s universalizing interpretation of Japan’s relevance for modern architecture raises a series of questions that frame this dissertation: Have generalized notions of discovery, linear progress, and dialectical synthesis precluded seeing Japan’s more fundamental significance for particular architects in Europe and the U.S.? Has our understanding of modernism remained limited by a historical tendency to reify the invented constructs of East and West—intellectually, geographically, and otherwise? Has the continued assumption of a dominant

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⁴ Ibid., 291.
⁵ Ibid., 299.
⁶ Ibid., 291.
perspective that pits self against other and architecture against art and craft hindered our ability to meaningfully consider individual and cultural perspectives that were much more complex and non-binary? To what extent has history invented and reinvented the notion of a dominant perspective? Have histories of modernism created and perpetuated a space of fundamental blindness across contexts by ignoring perspectives that did not adhere to the presumably dominant structure of rational thought? How do we define terms like “aesthetics,” “form,” “function,” “structure,” “space,” and “time,” and do we privilege one interpretation of such terms over others?

This dissertation revisits the work of three architects who were critical of rationalism and whose approaches to modern domestic space were fundamentally shaped by Japanese craft practices: Frank Lloyd Wright, who worked mainly in the United States, Adolf Loos, who worked mainly in Austria-Hungary, and Eileen Gray, who worked mainly in France. The lessons that Japan introduced to these architects as they were formulating their critical approaches to modern domestic space are considered through case studies of Wright’s Martin House (Buffalo, NY, ca. 1903-06), which was the most substantial residential commission of Wright’s early independent career; Loos’ Villa Müller (Prague, Czech Republic, ca. 1928-31), which Loos saw as the best expression of the spatial planning approach that became known as the “Raumplan” (“Space-plan”) after the Villa Müller was built; and Gray’s E1027 (Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France, ca. 1926-29), which was her first fully executed architectural work.

Wright, Loos, and Gray are of particular interest for expanding our understanding of the relationship between Japanese craft practices and modern domestic space in Europe and the U.S., first, because they all mediated positions of relative autonomy in the contexts in which they worked. None of the three completed
a formal architectural education and they all intuitively rejected clear-cut distinctions between art, architecture, and craft as they learned to practice architecture directly and concretely, through the lens of their own experiences and abilities.

Wright, a dropout from the University of Wisconsin’s engineering program, was an experimental draftsman who rethought the familiar conventions of Chicago balloon frame carpentry, which relied on the use of machine-made two-by-fours that were nailed together to erect a rectilinear frame of load-bearing walls. Loos, also a dropout, from the Technical University of Brno, began to practice architecture in the Austro-Hungarian capital of Vienna after becoming a chartered stone mason while living in the U.S. between 1893 and 1896. Gray, who first pursued the visual arts training that was accessible to her as a woman of privilege, enrolled at London’s Slade School in 1900 before transferring, in 1902, to Paris’ l'Académie Colarossi and again, in 1903, to l'Académie Julian. In Paris, she began to practice architecture as she trained in urushi—which might be translated as “the way of lacquer”—with the Japanese master Sugawara Seizô between 1906 and 1930.

As the existing scholarship has established, these three architects were also all in close contact with Japan as they were formulating their approaches to modern domestic space. This is most clear in the case of Wright, who was an avid collector of Japanese prints and who visited Japan multiple times: first in 1905; again in 1913, when he secured the commission to design the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo; and for extended periods between 1916 and 1922 as that commission was executed. Demonstrating that Wright’s awareness of Japan began to develop well before he visited, Kevin Nute’s instructive study, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The role of traditional Japanese art and architecture in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993); for general timeline of Wright’s contact with Japan, see “Summary of Events,” pp. 184-186.
traditional Japanese art and architecture in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright (1993), has shown that the late nineteenth century U.S. itself provided a rich context for exposure to Japan. Nute cites affinities between Japanese prints and architectural models and Wright’s drawings and houses—such as geometrically abstracted organic patterns, cross-axial plans, broad exterior profiles, hipped roofs, and wide overhanging eaves—that speak to Wright’s early interest in Japanese sources.\textsuperscript{8}

Though Japan’s relevance for Loos, who was as much an outspoken cultural critic as an architect, has received less attention, there are exceptional studies that have considered how he, too, engaged with Japanese sources. In a 1974 article, the Czech art historian and University of Brno professor, Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, traced an unrealized early 1930s design that came to be known as Loos’ “Last House” to the late architect’s interest in “the tradition of light Japanese wood houses.”\textsuperscript{9} More recently, a room in the Villa Müller that was designed to accommodate the client’s collection of Japanese prints has been variably identified, in catalogues compiled since the completion of the villa’s restoration in 2000, as the home’s “Japanese room” or “summer dining room” and has been cited as an exceptional interior in which Japanese art entered Loos’ work late in his career.\textsuperscript{10}

Studies on Gray, who had, by the 1920s, become an established furniture and interior designer in Paris and who collaborated with Sugawara and other Japanese craftsmen to open and operate the gallery “Jean Désert” (1922-1930), have reiterated insights from Caroline Constant’s \textit{Eileen Gray} (2007). In that text, Constant explains

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Zdeněk Kudělka, “Činnost Adolfa Loose V Československu,” \textit{Sborník Prací Filozofické Fakulty Brněnské Univerzity Studia Minora Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis} F 18, 1974; 20. Note: In this same article, Kudělka cites the interior of the apartment for Leo Brummel in Pilsen (1929/30) as another example that demonstrates “Loos’ ‘Japanese’ orientation” (see p. 11 of Kudělka’s article).
the process of lacquer work and argues that Gray’s experience with this highly tactile medium contributed to her interest in the physical and sensual aspects of modern domestic objects and furnishings.\textsuperscript{11}

While such studies have shed significant light on each architect’s exposure to and interest in Japan, there remain gaps in our understanding of Japan’s deeper significance for their architecture. As Neil Levine argues in \textit{The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright} (1996), Wright was unique in approaching architecture as a spatially and temporally driven condition of experience, rather than as a medium that could be structurally, visually, or stylistically apprehended. While Levine astutely analyzes Wright’s work from a temporal and experiential perspective, arguing that Wright sought “to suggest by the static forms of a building the sense of duration one might experience in an instant of time,” this defining quality of Wright’s approach to domestic space has not yet been connected to his interest in Japan.\textsuperscript{12}

Loos was unique in turning attention inward to concentrate on the unfolding of a home’s interior spaces in a context where, as Loos’ pupil and collaborator Heinrich Kulka argued in \textit{Adolf Loos: Das Werk des Architekten} (1931), “die wichtigste Sorge der Architekten [war] die Bildung der Fassade und die Anordnung der Pfeiler im Innern” (“the most important concern of architects was the forming of the façade and the ordering of the supports on the interior”).\textsuperscript{13} While Japan has been examined as a source of anomalous visual and structural influences that Loos adopted late in his career, it has yet to be considered as a possible source of more sustained and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Heinrich Kulka, ed., \textit{Adolf Loos: Das Werk des Architekten} (Wien: Anton Schroll, 1931), 13. (Author’s Translation)
\end{itemize}
substantive lessons that could have informed his spatial planning approach and cultural critiques beginning in the late nineteenth century.

Studies on Gray have not yet considered how the lessons that she embodied through the painstaking medium and practice of urushi could have directly extended to shape her distinctive approach to modern architecture, which at once engaged and subverted mainstream modernist theories. This owes in part to the fact that, as a woman, Gray’s architecture was itself not acknowledged in histories of modernism until the late twentieth century, when feminist scholarship revived interest in her work. Since then, her work as an architect has been analyzed as having been informed, most directly, by the theories and work of European male contemporaries, in ways that were separate from her work as a lacquer artist. This owes in equal parts to the fact that there is no physical evidence to suggest that Gray ever visited Japan or consciously emulated Japanese models in her architecture, and to the fact there has been limited scholarship connecting the intricacies of Sugawara’s own life and training with the lessons that he imparted to Gray.

This dissertation reflects upon the gaps in the existing scholarship and considers the less visible ways that Japan shaped each architect’s approach to modern domestic space. In a 1900 draft of the essay that he later published, in a revised form,

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14 Caroline Constant discusses Gray’s engagement with both contemporary cultural sources and the work and theories of other modernists in detail in her comprehensive study, *Eileen Gray*.
15 Constant explains that, following E1027’s completion, it “fell into relative obscurity, rarely mentioned in histories of the Modern Movement” (Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 93). Constant further explains that Gray, too, was largely excluded from histories of architectural modernism and her role in E1027’s design was variably underacknowledged and wholly unacknowledged; as a work of architecture, the villa was attributed exclusively either to Badovici or Le Corbusier, while Gray, when rarely mentioned, was credited as collaborating on the designs of the villa’s furniture (Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 12, 127). Peter Adam’s *Eileen Gray: A Biography*, first published in 1987 and in a revised edition as *Eileen Gray: A Biography, Revised Edition* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), played a key role in reviving interest in Gray’s work.
as “The Japanese Print,” Wright argued that Japanese prints were instructive “for the architect, particularly,” because “we remain...outside in the realm of the literal—the objective.” Early in his career, Loos critiqued his contemporaries for their objectification and appropriation of Japanese models, arguing in his 1898 article “Die Möbel aus dem Jahre 1898” (“Furniture from the Year 1898”), “[e]in japanischer paravent und einige dazugehörige nippes machen ein zimmer noch nicht japanisch” ( “[a] Japanese paravent and a few related knick-knacks do not yet make a room Japanese” ) [sic; See Footnote]. Gray persisted in pursuing rigorous, lifelong study of urushi—which was then practiced almost exclusively by Japanese men—at a moment when traditional Japanese lacquer was, as Jennifer Goff points out in Eileen Gray: Her Work and Her World (2015), being translated into a widely accessible ‘feminine’ pursuit and becoming a decorative arts fashion throughout Europe.

As these few points suggest, none of these three architects viewed Japanese sources as isolated works of art or as formal models to be outwardly imitated: it was precisely that sort of detachment of subject from object—or self from other—of which they were all critical in a broader sense. While the intricacies varied across the contexts in which they worked, industrialization had coincided with the rise of a new middle class and introduced a self-consciousness surrounding distinctions—between subject and object, individual and collective, private life and public identity—that had up to that point been ambiguous. Until the rise of a middle class that was aware of

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18 Adolf Loos, “Die Möbel aus dem Jahre 1898,” originally published in Die Neue Freie Presse and republished in Franz Glück, ed., Adolf Loos: Sämtliche Schriften, B. I (Wien: Herold, 1962), 128. Note: Although nouns are normally capitalized in German, Loos chose not to capitalize nouns in many of his writings as originally published; this is reflected where appropriate in Loos’ writings as republished in Sämtliche Schriften and as they are cited throughout this dissertation.
20 This draws partly upon interpretation of Jürgen Habermas’ The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, translated by Thomas Burger
its own economic, social, and political power, common individuals had been characterized by the things they made or the services they provided.

As industrialization made it possible to efficiently mass produce the things inherent to daily life, those things were becoming detached, however, from the people who made, used and sold them, who were themselves becoming consumed by industrial production. Domestic objects were becoming standardized, as were the daily activities of people who had previously made a living by crafting things for themselves and their communities. Factory production and the division and specialization of labor precluded individual expression as people formerly skilled in handcrafts became factory workers trained to fulfill a single, repetitive function. The sense of direct and concrete human engagement intrinsic to craft practices was being lost as the machine replaced the human hand. The mundane works—houses, furnishings, clothing, utensils—that had been inseparable from, and natural expressions of, human activity were now designed by artists, designers, architects, and engineers, many of whom catered more to responding to the new capabilities of modern industry than to consideration for human use and needs. Wealth increasingly concentrated among industrialists and merchants who, both because of and despite their growing social and economic prosperity, were equally becoming controlled by industrial production; many frenzied to establish and display identity by consuming objects outside themselves.

For all the intricacies and stratification that emerged among the middle class, there was a shared grounding in at least one common reality: what the modern middle class individual needed most was space and time to cultivate an interior life. As

Dolores Hayden argues in *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*, (1981), until the late twentieth century, histories of modernism tended to oversimplify this reality by reducing the redefinition of modern domestic space to a single truth. Some believed, as Hayden explains, that the new needs of modern domestic space could be fulfilled by simply separating the private domestic sphere from the spaces of public activity and business. As Hayden demonstrates, with specific respect to the United States, such notions did not account for the redefinition of domestic labor as women increasingly went to work outside the home while remaining bound to the expectation that they fulfill traditionally prescribed gender roles within it. She further argues that, while feminist histories that began to address such intricacies in the late twentieth century focused primarily on the efforts of “feminists [who] campaigned for political or social change with philosophical or moral arguments,” through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were simultaneously “three generations of material feminists” who worked to reform U.S. domestic space directly and concretely.21 Hayden’s history deals specifically with “the material feminists,” who…concentrated on economic and spatial issues as the basis of material life…They challenged two characteristics of industrial capitalism: the physical separation of household space from public space, and the economic separation of the domestic economy from the political economy. In order to overcome patterns of urban space and domestic space that isolated women and made their domestic work invisible, they developed new forms of neighborhood organizations,…as well as new building types,…[and] pushed architects and urban planners to reconsider the effects of design on family life.22

Hayden’s text demonstrates that the concrete living activities that redefined modern domestic space in the U.S. mediated the private and public realms and individual and social concerns in ways that previous histories had often overlooked. Across contexts,

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22 Ibid.
those concrete living activities had continued, into the late twentieth century, to be rendered largely invisible by a structure of dialectical thought that privileged the publicly visible realms of politics, media, and business. As Beatriz Colomina demonstrates in *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (1996), this owes in part to the fact that the redefinition of modern domestic space was equally characterized by a blurring of the lines between living reality and public images.23

Colomina takes as a case study the activities of the Swiss-French theorist and architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier.24 Operating with a broader eye toward using print and photography to promote his own ideal vision of a universal modern architecture, Le Corbusier became highly influential with his 1923 manifesto, *Vers une architecture (Towards an Architecture).*25 In that text, he theorized that modern domestic space could be harnessed to adhere to an ideal structural form that would function optimally across all contexts, from the level of the individual habitation to the modern city. His primary thesis, which he then extended to both other building types and urban planning, was that an ideal functional house type could be perfected through standardization in a way comparable to modern machines and the temples of Greek antiquity.26 That these structures were not meant for human living was irrelevant to Le Corbusier because his ideal of pure function was really an ideal of pure form: equating space with the structure that frames it, his ideal functional house type synthesized the models of the classical past with the

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24 Ibid. Note: Colomina also takes Adolf Loos as a case study.
25 Le Corbusier’s text was translated into English with the title *Towards a New Architecture.*
materials, technologies and engineering capabilities of the modern industrial present. Rectilinear with unadorned white walls inside and out, it was to be built of reinforced concrete, raised on load bearing *pilotis*, lined with ribbon windows, and topped with a roof garden. Outfitted with industrially produced furnishings that were rationally based on the ideal proportions of the human body, it was purportedly an optimally functional “machine for living in” that could be transplanted to every environment and whose forms would produce the same effect on every individual. Le Corbusier realized his ideal several years later in the Villa Savoye, which, built between 1928 and 1931, is a perfect prototype of the house he had envisioned; as Colomina demonstrates, the house is not really fit for living in, but rather, is best known from photographs that outwardly capture its clean, straight lines, effect of visual transparency, and regular geometric forms projecting in space (Fig. 4).

While Le Corbusier became highly convincing in promoting his vision of a universal modernist aesthetic, there were simultaneously well-known architects and designers who were cultivating highly particular designs for individual patrons as they concentrated, specifically, on the realm of domestic space. Wright, Loos, and Gray are three cases in point. Wright and Loos both collaborated closely with the upper-middle-class patrons whose commissions allowed them to develop their approaches, and Gray had become a respected designer of domestic interiors for elite Parisian patrons by the early 1920s, at the height of her training with Sugawara. Beyond this, while they all engaged print and visual media to promote their perspectives, they all became best known for domestic commissions in their contemporary contexts because they were more interested in the inhabitants’ lived experience of domestic space than

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27 Ibid., 95.
in preconceived ideals about what a structure should look like or how it should function; they all recognized the need to design the home with consideration for the perspectives of multiple individuals interacting simultaneously. They all developed sustained interests in Japanese culture because it introduced lessons of variable relevance for rethinking the modern middle-class dwelling in response to the living realities of the modern industrial present.

When Japan began to industrialize, with the 1868 restoration of imperial power under Emperor Meiji (r. 1867-1912), it preserved, into the present, pre-industrial craft practices that were being lost in these architects’ own domestic contexts. Japan was emerging from the Edo period (conventionally dated 1603-1868)—a period of nearly two and a half centuries of relative isolation initiated by the Tokugawa Shogunate, a military dictatorship that had consolidated power between the fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries.29 Under the shogunate, pre-industrial Japan had: evolved as a prosperous and complex feudal society based on the rice and sake trades; given rise to the equivalent of an urban middle class and systems of domestic architecture that combined residential and commercial functions; and developed a vibrant domestic culture grounded in handcraft practices that sustained the needs of a growing population. Because Japan’s pre-industrial culture remained very much alive when Japan was reopened to Europe and the U.S. in the late nineteenth century, Japan introduced lessons that were relevant for seeing how handcraft practices could meaningfully evolve to accommodate the changing needs and realities of modern life.

29 The nineteenth-century Japanese interpreter Shizuki Tadao later described this period using the term *sakoku*, which is usually translated as referring to an isolationist or “closed country” policy. As Tashiro Kazui points out in “Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined,” both the intricacies and meanings of this neologism and the reality of Japan’s contact with foreign nations during this period are more complex than has often been assumed. See: Tashiro Kazui, “Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined,” translated by Susan Downing Videen, pp. 283-306 in *The Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2* (Summer, 1982) (The Society for Japanese Studies).
European and U.S. scholars who had been invited to Japan to help build modern academic and professional structures were integral to the process of introducing these lessons to Europe and the U.S. In *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (1886), the American biologist Edward Morse, for example, published a meticulous study of Japanese domestic architecture that he had conducted while living in Japan between 1877 and 1883.\(^3\) Invited there to serve as the Chair of Zoology at Tokyo Imperial University, Morse had become interested in Japanese domestic architecture because he saw that it offered useful solutions to a series of problems that were not being addressed in his own domestic context.

Reflecting his proclivities as a scientist who specialized in the study of brachiopods—marine animals that grow from larvae to develop hinged shells that sustain and shelter them within their environment—, Morse examined the Japanese home as a living social environment that developed and functioned both independently and within a larger community.\(^3\) Promoting, in particular, the instructive merits of Japanese carpentry, his text outlined the intricacies of the *kiwari* system, a Japanese method of proportional wooden construction that was used throughout pre-industrial Japan. At once highly systematic and highly adaptable, the *kiwari* system had developed to accommodate the use of both hand-cut, regionally standardized building members and a system of spatial planning based on the standardized *tatami* mat—woven rice-straw mats that line the floors of a traditional Japanese home and describe its plan. As a co-integrated structural and spatial system, it could be adapted to meet the needs of any patron and accommodate any living environment. It relies on interior supporting pillars, which negate the need for load-

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\(^3\) Ibid.; for overview of Morse’s interpretation of the Japanese home, see the “Introduction” to his text.
bearing walls and facilitate an open-planning approach in which units of living space—measured in terms of tatami—determine the placement of structural elements. The structural form of a house need not adhere to a rectilinear frame, or to any particular shape, because the kiwari system employs unadorned, hand-crafted wooden building members that are meticulously finished and joined without the use of nails.

Japanese carpentry fascinated Morse because he came from a U.S. context in which the typical middle-class house remained confined to a rectilinear plan. This plan was prescribed by both Chicago balloon frame carpentry and the absorbed conventions of Victorian formality, which centered on upholding the ideal social structure of a traditional nuclear family. Outwardly, houses that were built of the same common industrial materials according to the same rigid planning conventions were distinguished from one another by the addition of factory-produced paints and mass-produced ornamental details that were meant to impress this invented American familial ideal. Morse saw the Japanese approach to domestic architecture as instructive because it offered infinite potential for variation within uniformity and was grounded in a carpentry practice that was as logical as it was flexible, beautiful, and engaging. Because Japanese houses were expressions of living reality in every sense—from the immediate regional conditions and environment, to the needs, roles and pursuits of individual inhabitants, to the care and workmanship of the carpenters who built them—identity, he explained, emerged and evolved on its own, negating the need to fabricate it. For Morse, this was a defining difference between the Japanese

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33 Morse explained, for example, that Japanese houses were outwardly “unsubstantial in appearance,” yet meticulously appointed on the interior to complement changing seasonal conditions, accommodate individual needs, pursuits, and tastes, and fulfill fluidly occurring functions (Morse, Japanese Homes, 6). For more detailed discussion of Morse’s text, see Chapters One and Two of this dissertation.
approach to domestic architecture and the prevailing U.S. approach: grounded in craft, the Japanese approach collapsed distinctions between form and function, structure and space, exterior and interior, individual and community, and planning and building. It valued the living use and reality of space over autonomous exterior appearances or fixed material appointments.

While Morse’s critical reflections on modern domestic space and Japan’s lessons for it were directed, primarily, at the U.S., his text became widely known, and was interpreted to varying ends, throughout both Europe and the U.S. because it had broader relevance. As Taut, for example, noted in the Foreword to *Houses and People of Japan*, Morse’s text was, along with a series of others by U.S., European, and Japanese authors, among those “on which [he] ha[d] drawn for the completion of [his] impressions.” As this suggests, there was an expansive body of literature that introduced Japanese craft practices and cultural traditions to European and U.S. audiences as those traditions were being defined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Coinciding with Morse’s text, others reflected pointedly aesthetic interests.

These interests are exemplified by the work of counterparts like the English architect Josiah Conder, who extracted and promoted fundamentally different lessons from Japanese models as he interpreted them from the very perspective that Morse critiqued. Hired as professor of architecture at the Imperial College of Engineering, which was established in 1872 by the Meiji Ministry of Technology, Conder lived in

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34 Taut, *Houses and People of Japan*, 2. As Taut explained, “As to the literature on which I have drawn for the completion of my impressions, I would call special attention, apart from the well-known books, to the translations of Japanese classics, and to the earlier works about Japan.” These included, for example, “‘History of Japan’ by F.O. Adams (1874), ‘Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings’ by Edward S. Morse (1886), ‘Archiv zur Beschreibung Japans’ by Wilhelm von Siebold...and some others more recently published such as: ‘Japan, a Short Cultural History’ by G.B. Sansom, ‘Das Japanische Wohnhaus’ by Tetsuro Yoshida,...and ‘Japanese Architecture’ by Prof. Hideto Kishida.”
Japan between 1877 and 1920, in that time publishing numerous English-language articles and books on Japanese architecture, *ikebana* (floral arrangement), and gardens.\(^{35}\) His article “Domestic Architecture in Japan,” published in both the *Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects* and *American Architect and Building News* in 1887, typifies a simultaneously growing interest among European and U.S. architects and designers in the formal, stylistic qualities of Japanese houses.\(^{36}\) In that article, Conder established a typology of Japanese domestic architecture, which he read in a way that reflected a predilection for monumentality and a growing preoccupation across modern industrial societies with displaying social identity. Outlining a formal taxonomy of Japanese residences, he emphasized the use of ornamental details to distinguish between middle- and upper-class houses, feudal manors, and military and imperial palaces.

As Conder’s text indicates, ideals comparable to those seen in the U.S. had taken shape across European societies—across contexts, many turn-of-the-century architects concerned themselves with outwardly fashioning identity. While scholars like Conder projected this concern onto Japan by interpreting it through a modern European aesthetic lens, others romanticized Japan as they attempted to objectively grasp its fundamental differences. In *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts* (1905), the American architect Ralph Adams Cram critiqued aesthetic interpretations like Conder’s, arguing that they failed to correctly understand traditional Japanese architecture and culture. Invoking contemporary discourse on the “grammar” and “vocabulary” of architecture, he contended, “there is something


between Europe and Asia besides a difference of tongues…There is an utter antagonism of ideals and methods.”

Aligning aesthetics with the formal comparison of opposites, Cram maintained that aesthetic interpretations of Japanese architecture were “unjust and superficial,” often making only “casual reference to its fantastic quality or a patronizing tribute to the excellence of some of its carved decoration.”

Japanese architecture, he argued, was in a class all its own as

…a style developed from the exigencies of wooden construction, and here it stands alone as the most perfect mode in wood the world has known. As such it must be judged, and not from the narrow canons of the West that presuppose masonry as the only building material…it is the architecture of Buddhism, and it must be read in the light of this mystic and wonderful system. Finally, it is the art of the Orient, taking form and nature from Eastern civilization, vitalized by the “Soul of the East,” the artistic manifestation of the religion of meditation, of spiritual enlightenment, of release from illusion. It is separated from the art of the Western religion of action, of elaborate ethical systems, of practicality, by the diameter of being.

Foreshadowing Taut, Cram assumed a mission to discover the unique modernity of Japanese traditions that would have otherwise been relegated to a lost and exotic past.

He went on to argue that Japan had developed its own style of building that was as “great” as “Greek, Medieval, and Early Renaissance architecture” and that was comparably characterized “by almost infinite refinements of line and proportion.”

Together, Morse’s pragmatic, Conder’s aesthetic, and Cram’s romantic interpretations of Japan’s building traditions and culture demonstrate that there were multiple ways that one might have seen Japan as introducing lessons of relevance for modern domestic architecture. As much as these interpretations variably conflicted and overlapped with one another, they had all been strongly informed by the activities

37 Ralph Adams Cram, Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts (NY, NY: Baker & Taylor/Charleston, SC: Nabu Press), 17. In making this point, Cram refers, not only to language in a literal sense, but also to differences in the grammar and vocabulary of architecture, which Westerners had in fact tried to “master” in systematic studies of the details, styles and ornament of Japanese architecture. Cram’s argument is that, without understanding the underlying cultural ideals and philosophical perspectives informing Japanese architecture, it would be impossible to really comprehend its significance.

38 Ibid., 25.

39 Ibid., 29.

40 Ibid., 82-83; Cram compares the Hōō-dō of the Byōdō-in, for example, to the Athenian Parthenon.
of the Japanese-born scholar Okakura Kakuzō, who played a key role in defining Japan’s craft-based, artistic, and architectural traditions—distinctions that had not existed in pre-Meiji Japan—relative to those of Europe and the U.S. after the Restoration.

In many ways a self-fashioned representative of Japanese culture, Okakura was a curator, writer, and member of the Meiji Imperial Fine Arts Commission who worked in close collaboration with European and U.S. counterparts to introduce Japanese culture to their domestic contexts. He helped to curate exhibits for the numerous international exhibitions in which Meiji Japan participated around the turn of the century, including the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. He published exhibition catalogues and texts in both English—which he fluently read, wrote, and spoke—and French. Working closely with the American art historian Ernest Fenollosa, he helped to found the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts (Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkô), whose students produced and maintained the works that were sent abroad to represent a newly modernizing Japan. Across these activities, Okakura promoted arguments that he summarized in his 1906 The Book of Tea, in which he argued that pre-industrial Japan had developed a distinctive, co-integrated domestic culture that was exemplary for modern industrial society.

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41 Note: the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair has also historically been called the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition.
42 These included Ideals of the East (1883), The Awakening of Japan (1904), and a series of articles in which Okakura introduced the ideas that he developed in his best-known work, The Book of Tea (1906). He also wrote the visitors’ catalogue for the Hō-ō-den, a model of traditional Japanese domestic architecture that was erected for the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair (See: The Hō-ō-den: An Illustrated Description of the Buildings Erected by the Japanese Government at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Jackson Park, Chicago (Tokyo: K. Ogawa, 1893)), and was a key contributor to an extensive history of Japanese art and architecture that was published to coincide with the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle (See: Mataitci Foukoutci [sic; French transcription of Fukuchi Mataichi] and Yoshio Ki, eds. (for la Commission Impériale du Japon à l’Exposition Universelle de Paris), Histoire de l’art du Japon, translated by E. Tronquis (Paris: Maurice de Brunoff, 1900)).
43 Nute, Wright and Japan, 24. A further discussion of Fenollosa and his activities is given in Chapter One of this dissertation.
Okakura attributed this distinctive culture to the Japanese tea ceremony, which he interpreted as having concretized Taoist aesthetic ideals and preserved a preliterate animistic worldview in a Zen-like practice. He argued that the tea ceremony had evolved and persisted to instill qualities of refinement and an appreciation for the beauty of simplicity that extended to shape every aspect of Japanese domestic life. He argued that these qualities were exemplified by the tearoom, which according to Okakura, was the archetype of the traditional Japanese dwelling. Promoting the tearoom as being equally relevant for modern domestic space, he explained that it was built to a fixed form—4 \( \frac{1}{2} \) tatami mats, or about 10 feet by 10 feet square—that had been determined by the structure’s fixed function as a space dedicated to the practice of the tea ceremony. At once a work of art, craft, and architecture, it was a simple structure, built of standardized components and mundane materials, that evoked ephemerality:

The size of the orthodox tea-room, which is four mats and a half, or ten feet square, is determined by a passage in the Sutra of Vikramaditya. In that interesting work, Vikramaditya welcomes the Saint Manjushri and eighty-four thousand disciples of Buddha in a room of this size,—an allegory based on the theory of the non-existence of space to the truly enlightened…

In the tea-room fugitiveness is suggested in the thatched roof, frailty in the slender pillars, lightness in the bamboo support, apparent carelessness in the use of commonplace materials. The eternal is to be found only in the spirit which, embodied in these simple surroundings, beautifies them with the subtle light of its refinement.\(^{44}\)

Okakura went on to explain that the tearoom was meticulously, fluidly, and sparsely appointed to complement each practice of the tea ceremony, the living practice that defined it. Each component was of equal significance because it contributed to a

\(^{44}\) Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008 reprint), 43-44, 48-49. Notes: Okakura’s name was modified to “Kakuzo Okakura” for this publication. Also, this citation refers to the reference copy of Okakura’s text that is used throughout this dissertation. The text was first published in 1906 by Fox Duffield & Company, New York. The Charles Tuttle edition is a beautifully crafted work that I strongly recommend to anyone interested in reading *The Book of Tea* (Rutland, VT & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956/1980).
multi-sensory aesthetic experience that only manifested in time and that was, therefore, inexplicable, invaluable, and irreproducible.

In light of such arguments, some developed a particular interest in the tea ceremony and the tearoom. As Ken Tadashi Oshima argues in *International Architecture in Interwar Japan: Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku* (2009), around the turn of the century, Josef Hoffman and other members of the Vienna Secession, for example, reinterpreted “the coordinated environment of a teahouse through the concept of a ‘total work of art’ (*Gesamtkunstwerk*),” in which furnishings and artworks were integrated into the design of an architectural whole. This, in turn, led to an “awakened…interest in the Japanese tea ceremony” among Japanese architects like Horiguchi Sutemi. “Only after seeing European architecture that evoked Japanese principles,” Oshima argues, “did [Horiguchi] reevaluate his own culture…He now came to perceive the teahouse and tea ceremony not as fixed traditions from the past but rather as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.” As this suggests, contrary to the critique of “orientalism” that Edward Said posited, with specific regard to the Middle East, in his 1978 text of the same name, Okakura encouraged the appropriation of traditional Japanese culture. That appropriation was intrinsic to the more complex motives behind his deliberately cultivated acts of cultural translation.

As Japan was rapidly industrializing, Okakura, acting as a representative of traditional Japanese culture, needed a way to show Japan itself that what was already there remained equally valuable in the modern industrial present. What better way to

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46 Ibid., 53.
47 Ibid., 54.
48 As Okamoto Yoshiko argues in “Okakura Kakuzo’s Cultural Appeal in America,” Okakura’s activities and writings were aimed at countering the idea that Japan’s emergence as a modern nation was the exclusive and direct result of Western influences; rather, Okakura argued throughout his writings that Japan’s development as a modern nation began in the late Edo Period (4-5). Also see Nute, *Wright and Japan*, 24.
do this than through the lens of Europe and the U.S.? As Okakura had, on one hand, intended, his activities helped provoke Japanese architects themselves to reflect upon the living relevance of Japan’s pre-industrial craft practices for their own modern culture.

At the same time, as the new structure of modern industrial life was producing, among many, a longing for an idealized pre-modern past, Okakura’s activities helped to propel a wider demand for Japanese products. This allowed Japan to quickly become competitive in an international market without needing to adopt industrial production part and parcel. Japan was able to assimilate industrial production to existing handcraft practices as fit because it was the ideal of traditional Japanese aesthetics—not a particular set of materials or mode of production—that the common European or U.S. consumer came to demand.

Okakura’s activities were equally aimed at establishing a modern history of Japanese traditions to parallel and complement the historical traditions of Europe and the U.S. He emphasized the tearoom, specifically, as the archetypal Japanese dwelling because it provided a useful analog to the prototypical “primitive hut” that Marc-Antoine Laugier argued, in his 1753 *Essai Sur L'Architecture* (*Essay on Architecture*), formed the first man-made human shelter and, therefore, the origins of all architectural practice.\(^{49}\) While some architects and designers, like members of the Vienna Secession, reinterpreted the tearoom to rethink their own traditions, others, like Conder, therefore simultaneously read it as a literal structural prototype that reflected the historical traditions that had been defined and absorbed with the profession of architecture in Europe and the U.S.\(^{50}\)

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49 First published in 1753 as *Essai Sur L'Architecture*, Laugier’s text was published in English in 1755 as *Essay on Architecture*.

Others reflected, through the lens of Japan, upon that which lacked in their own domestic contexts. This is the key to understanding Japan’s significance for Wright, Loos, and Gray: from the perspective of someone who was not bound by academic ideals about what defined architecture and who was interested in both craft practice itself and the lived experience of space, it was possible to see that a model like the tearoom was really no more or less the archetypal Japanese dwelling than anything else. The tearoom introduced just one of innumerable ways of seeing that Japan preserved an understanding of craft—and, thereby, structure—that was intuitively modern because synonymous with the concrete act of building and dwelling in space in time.

This understanding was demonstrated by structures like the Hô-ô-den (Phoenix Pavilion), a model of Japanese domestic architecture that was prefabricated in Japan and rebuilt by Japanese craftsmen for the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Intrinsic to the history of Japanese art that Okakura was curating in collaboration with scholars like Fenollosa, it was exemplified by the Edo Period woodblock prints that were being circulated among European and U.S. collectors. Equally fundamental to the artistic training and academic curriculum that Okakura helped to define and implement, it was demonstrated by the modern works that were being produced by students at the Tôkyô Bijutsu Gakkô and exhibited abroad. Necessarily, it was expressed by Japanese craft practitioners, who were fundamental to the evolution and dissemination of practices that, prior to modernization, had not been delineated into the separate categories of art, architecture, and craft.

Through such sources, Japan was simultaneously demonstrating that any meaningful work—from a print that engages us to a lacquered screen made with one’s own hands—is fundamentally a dwelling: a space that we actively craft in interaction
with our surroundings in time. From such a perspective, it becomes possible to see that structure—or objectively fixed material—does not autonomously fix and define space because all structures are themselves inhabited living spaces; they always and only materialize with interior experience. Equally, it becomes possible to see that living space has no fixed form or boundaries; living space materializes, dissolves, and shifts with each individual’s activities, experiences, and perceptions. From a craft-based perspective, it becomes possible to see, in other words, that all spaces—and structures—are domestic spaces because they always and only manifest with the temporal activity of dwelling.

As elusive as this way of understanding domestic space might seem, the ways in which Wright, Loos, and Gray might have arrived at it through their engagement with various Japanese sources remain equally elusive for reasons that are consistent with Hayden’s critique of the assumed irrelevance—and, therefore, invisibility—of the domestic realm. For one, the canonic metanarratives that first defined architectural modernism—from Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* (1932), to Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (1941), to Nikolaus Pevsner's *An Outline of European Architecture* (1943)—variably simplified and ignored these particular architects’ approaches to modern domestic space to make their work adhere to universalizing structural ideals. Broadly aligning modernism with industrialization and the “functionalist” aesthetic promoted by figures like Taut and Le Corbusier, these histories typically portrayed Wright, as Hitchcock and Johnson argued in *The International Style*, as a “Romantic individualis[t]” who was among the “artistic
ancestors” of modernism, despite the fact that he practiced until his death in 1959.\textsuperscript{51} Loos was largely reduced to interpretations of his 1913 essay “Ornament and Crime” and portrayed as a radical visionary who promoted a utilitarian style that helped pave the way for the theories of functionalism that followed. These histories wholly omitted the work of Gray and other women.

At the same time, Japanese architecture was examined as either exclusively modern—so far as it could be seen as reflecting influences that were directly absorbed from the industrialized nations of Europe and the U.S.—or romanticized, like Japanese art, as exemplifying exotic cultural traditions that had been cultivated in an isolated past. That Japan’s contributions to modern architecture in Europe and the U.S. could equally reside in very present craft practices that were being cultivated in the shared realm of modern domestic space was, again consistent with Hayden’s critique, largely overlooked. This problem persisted into the late twentieth century for reasons that, as Barthes recognized when he visited Japan, had less to do with conscious agency than with true blind ignorance: it was a deeper problem inherent to the rationalist perspective that structured the modern disciplines of both architecture and history.

Rationalism had assumed a tradition of objectifying space that derived from the Euclidean geometry of Greek antiquity. Devised by the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid, Euclidean geometry abstracted the length, width, and breadth of three-dimensional space into a two-dimensional plane of x, y, z coordinates. This introduced a logical system by which to approximate the appearance of objects in real space by plotting fixed points on a flat surface. As Europe’s feudal societies began to

transform, around the thirteenth century, Euclidean geometry became of interest because it appealed to a developing popular notion that faith should be acquired through individual human logic and reason.

Supported by the patronage of the Catholic church, absolute monarchs who relied upon its doctrines to justify claims to divinely ordained authority, and wealthy mercantile families such as the Medici of Florence, Euclidean geometry was adopted to help define the visual arts and architecture as elevated pursuits distinct from the common crafts. This coincided with a network of developments that occurred between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries and that are often associated with the Scientific Revolution. These developments gave rise to a Renaissance tradition of representation that centered on the objectification of space as something that could be logically understood if viewed as having a fixed physical presence independent of time.

Applying Euclidean principles, Renaissance artists and architects refined a system of linear perspective that made it possible to mimic the appearance of space and objects in it by structuring a picture plane around lines of convergence—lines that proceed along a symmetrical central axis to meet at a single vanishing point. Though linear perspective did not account for the binocularity of actual human vision, it created the illusion that scenes in space could be captured from a single, ideal viewpoint: it provided a way to convincingly render three-dimensional depth, such that the flat, two-dimensional surface of a painting or blueprint evoked the sense of a transparent window on the world. In this way, Renaissance perspective adopted Euclidean geometry to abstract space as something that, like a painting or blueprint, itself had a fixed physical existence outside the rational human subject and that could be objectively viewed, understood, and controlled through sight alone.
Because this mode of representation centered on creating the illusion of a transparent window on the world, it also aimed to remove evidence of the reality that any work reflects the highly particular viewpoint of the individual creator. This ideal of objective representation was modernized by Descartes to become embedded in the structure of modern academic disciplines as they were defined with the Enlightenment. This is most apparent in the Cartesian coordinate system that formed the basis for modern mathematics: Cartesian coordinates allow us to represent, through an abstract system of signs, presumably absolute principles deduced from nature by plotting fixed points in space along an infinite continuum of points in time. In ways less obvious, the logic behind the Cartesian coordinate system became inherent to continental European philosophy to perpetuate a worldview that assumed binary oppositions between subject and object, thinking and feeling, form and function, structure and space, and space and time.52

The Cartesian coordinate system represented theories that Descartes had devised to rationally explain the nature of existence and human experience. Seeking to understand the origins and workings of a universe whose logic had been called into question during the Enlightenment, he posited that the universe consists of two separate realms composed of two fundamentally different substances: the *res cogitans*—the realm of thought, which is composed of an imperceptible substance that can extend infinitely into imagined time because it has no measurable physical extension in space,—and the *res extensa*—the physical realm, which is composed of all things that extend in space and that can be measured as objective forms with definite length, breadth, and depth.53 Relying upon this dichotomy between the realm

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53 Ibid. Note: Descartes posited the existence of these two separate realms in *Principia Philosophiae (Les Principes de la Philosophie/Principles of Philosophy)* (1644).
of thought and the measurable physical realm, Descartes argued that the human subject could, through rational thought, deduce objective truths from a world that was viewed as separate from the self. This notion is epitomized by Descartes’ proposition, introduced in *Discours de la méthode (Discourse on the Method)* (1637), “je pense, donc je suis” (“I think therefore I am.”)\(^{54}\) Better known in its Latin translation, “*cogito ergo sum*,” this proposition advanced the modern *a priori* assumption that reason precedes embodied experience: for Descartes, the ability to logically grasp something outside himself verified his own physical existence. At the same time, Descartes’ worldview effectively reduced experience to sight alone: it privileged that which could be viewed as having a fixed physical form and generated the notion that space has a universally fixed physical presence independent of time.

In the eighteenth-century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant expanded Descartes’ logic to posit that all objects in the material world have an inherent, pre-determined ideal reality that remains constant independent of our experience of them. Proposing a theory of the “*Ding-an-sich*”—the “thing in itself”—Kant argued that we, in fact, cannot ever *know* this reality, we can only understand how things appear, as mediated by our perceptions.\(^{55}\) This propelled the notion that objects in space remain autonomous and fixed, irrespective of a subject’s functional engagement with them.

Intensifying the assumed Cartesian split between subject and object, Kant’s ideas reinforced the notion of a distinction between absolute, intangible truth and the material world of experience while privileging the former as the only true knowledge. In the nineteenth century, the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel applied Descartes’ notion of universally present space and Kant’s notion of objective,

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\(^{54}\) René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (1637), Part IV.

\(^{55}\) Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena* (1783), §52.
inherent truth to objectify time. Positing a chronological structure for understanding time, he argued that it unfolds according to a universal ideal blueprint in which the ongoing reconciliation of diametric opposites propels linear progress: assuming that we can define all things and feelings relative to what we know they are not, he theorized that the ongoing synthesis of theses—accepted absolute truths—and antitheses—propositions that fundamentally oppose those truths—produces new absolute truths, or theses, and drives universal progress in a linear temporal sequence.\(^5^6\)

This formed the basis for the belief that progress must be propelled by consequential developments that follow linearly from fixed points in the past. In his 1915 *Course in General Linguistics*, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure applied this structural logic to the study of language.\(^5^7\) Positing what was, in effect, a theory of chronological development, Saussure argued that language could be studied in two ways: diachronically—by analyzing its casual, incidental evolution over time, or synchronically—by analyzing it as a static, cohesive system that produces self-evident meaning at a given moment.\(^5^8\) He illustrated the distinction between these two temporal structures using the metaphor of a chess game, explaining that a spectator who knows the underlying rules of the game is as capable of understanding the consequential developments that have occurred by observing the game at a given moment as a spectator who has followed the game’s entire progression up to that point.\(^5^9\)

Though Saussure argued that it was useful to apply some combination of


\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
diachronic and synchronic analysis in the study of language, he maintained that these
two separate systems could not be used to gain insight into one another.\textsuperscript{60} He
concluded that synchronic analysis was the superior mode, arguing, in effect, that it
was more important to understand the inherent logic of structure than to consider the
fleeting occurrences that had no permanent bearing on it.\textsuperscript{61}

As much as Saussure’s binary notion of temporal development ignored the
fact that any structure is always itself evolving and, thereby, \textit{being constructed} in the
present, modernist historians adopted it and applied it to architectural history. Most
clearly, in \textit{Space, Time and Architecture} (1941), the Czech-born critic and historian
Sigfried Giedion argued that history is composed of both constituent and transitory
facts. Likening transitory facts to diachronic development, he defined these as fleeting
trends or styles akin to “a fireworks display”: they were exceptional occurrences that
“lack[ed] the stuff of permanence” and that therefore had no bearing on the
underlying structure—or rules—of architecture.\textsuperscript{62} Constituent facts, by contrast, were
akin to synchronic developments: Giedion defined these as tendencies that recur
throughout history to compose the underlying structure—or rules—of architecture;
they were principles that persisted over time to produce \textit{“new tradition[s]”} and propel
progress that could be traced through the present.\textsuperscript{63} Arguing, “it is the business of the
historian to distinguish…short-lived novelties from genuinely new trends,” Giedion
privileged constituent over transitory facts.\textsuperscript{64} Equating both types of “facts” with
material developments, he relied upon the dialectical synthesis of opposites—for
example, form and function, exterior and interior, and rational geometric and organic

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 18.
form—to construct a history in which he proceeded to argue that modern science had introduced the tools to produce optimally-functional forms of architecture that should be universally adopted from the level of the individual habitation to the modern city.

That Giedion privileged “the stuff of permanence” to propel his argument is curious because his central thesis was that the “new conception” of “space-time” was generating new “ways of perceiving space” and becoming, even more curiously, a new constituent fact.65 “Space in modern physics,” he argued, “is conceived of as relative to a moving point of reference, not as the absolute and static entity of the baroque system of Newton.”66 This claim invoked the theories of the non-dialectical relativity—and simultaneity—of space-time that Albert Einstein had posited in the early twentieth century, when he rejected the Cartesian separation between space and time to argue that all space and matter is impermanent because continually shifting in time. Attempting to impress his fluency in modern physics, Giedion argued that this “new conception of space” had simultaneously been worked out by Cubist painters:

The cubists did not seek to reproduce the appearance of objects from one vantage point; they went round them, tried to lay hold of their internal constitution. They sought to extend the scale of feeling, just as contemporary science extends its descriptions to cover new levels of material phenomena.

Cubism breaks with Renaissance perspective. It views objects relatively: that is, from several points of view, none of which has exclusive authority…Thus, to the three dimensions of the Renaissance which have held good as constituent facts for so many centuries, there is added a fourth one—time.67

Giedion went on to argue, “[t]he presentation of objects from several points of view introduces a principle which is intimately bound up with modern life—simultaneity.”68 He interpreted this principle relative to architecture by conducting a

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65 Ibid., 430, 436.
66 Ibid., 436.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
series of formal analyses in which he likened modern buildings to Cubist paintings that collapsed multiple planes and perspectives into a single visual composition.69

Giedion’s purely formal interpretation of space-time relativity and clear bias for European material innovation make clear that he failed to grasp the significance of Einstein’s physics. Underscoring this failure, he premised his narrative on the Cartesian assumption that a universal world space had been ordered at a fixed point in time—“at the dawn of history,” with the “setting of volumes in boundless space.”70

The clear contradictions inherent to Giedion’s history reflect, on one hand, lessons that had been instilled by his teacher, the Swiss-German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, who, paralleling Saussure, had applied Hegelian dialectics to pioneer the formal study of art and architecture in the early twentieth century. They also reflect ideas that had been instilled by earlier narratives that had helped to construct and define a history of architectural modernism.

Giedion was drawing, in part, on The International Style: Architecture since 1922, which had been published to coincide with the Museum of Modern Art’s first exhibition of architecture in 1932. In The International Style, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, an American architectural historian, and Philip Johnson, the American architect who had co-curated the exhibition, posited that modernism was defined by a universal aesthetic that “exist[ed] throughout the world,” and that was “unified and inclusive, not fragmentary and contradictory like so much of the production of the first generation of modern architects.”71 Equating this universal aesthetic—“the international style”—with the use of unadorned industrial building materials and technologies, they explained that it was based on expressing the logic of pure

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69 Ibid., 437-443.
70 Ibid., xlvii.
71 Hitchcock and Johnson, The International Style, 19.
structural form by applying six key principles: “emphasis upon volume—space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity;” skeletal frame construction, which allows for “regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance;” “dependence on intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, fine proportions, rather than applied ornament;” ribbon windows; “the articulation of visible supports;” and “the flat roof.” They argued that these principles “ha[d] become evident and definable only gradually as different innovators throughout the world ha[d] successfully carried out parallel experiments.” They concluded that, as those “parallel experiments” demonstrated, the principles of “the international style” could be adopted across contexts and adapted to buildings of varying function. “Architecture,” they reasoned, “is always a set of actual monuments, not a vague corpus of theory.”

Like Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*, *The International Style* both invoked Einstein’s theories and extended back to earlier texts, including Giedion’s own 1928 *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* (*Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete*). In that text, Giedion had promoted the theories of a universal modernism that Le Corbusier had introduced in 1923 with *Vers une Architecture*. *The International Style* synthesized a functionally-driven argument that Giedion had first presented in *Bauen in Frankreich* with a

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72 Ibid., 13, 251. Note: the authors identify principles five and six in a later Appendix to the 1932 text.
73 Ibid., 20-21.
74 Ibid., 21.
75 Deeply impressed by Le Corbusier’s theories, Giedion had begun collaborating with him to realize his vision in the 1920s: in 1928, Giedion helped to found the Congrès internationaux d'architecture modern, or CIAM, which convened until 1953, and published *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* (later published in English as *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete*). In 1938, at the urging of the German modernist Walter Gropius, Giedion moved to the United States, where he continued to promote Le Corbusier’s theories and work with the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures that he delivered at Harvard in 1938-39. Those lectures formed the basis for *Space, Time and Architecture*, first published in 1941.
formally-driven antithesis that Hitchcock had posited in *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (1929).

In *Modern Architecture*, Hitchcock argued that modernism was defined by the formal—or structural—reconciliation of the handcraftsmanship of the past with the engineering capabilities of modern industry. Paraphrasing, but not citing, Wright’s 1901 essay “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” he contended, “the hand of the craftsman was destined eventually to give way to the machine as a more exact tool. But until well into the twentieth century the Modern technical point of view was always tempered either by conscious reminiscence or by direct inheritance from the past.”

Equating the American contribution to modernism with the Chicago School skyscraper, Hitchcock interpreted Wright—and the Japanese “orientalism” that he argued “undoubtedly weaken[ed]” Wright’s “intellectual and logical command” of architecture—as romantic relics of the past. Through a simple act of synthesis, Wright became the logical predecessor to the Chicago School and the skyscraper, and Japan disappeared from Hitchcock’s history of modernism.

While such interpretations had no grounding in reality, historians like Nikolaus Pevsner took them as concrete fact as they formulated narratives aimed at promoting their own ideal visions of modernism. In *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (1936), Pevsner, a German-born transplant to England, dialectically located modernism’s origins in nineteenth century Britain. He posited that the industrial designs introduced at the 1851 Great Exhibition provoked the antithetical response of William Morris and the English Arts

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76 Ibid. 227.
78 Note: Originally published as *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, Pevsner’s text was later published as *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1936/2005).
and Crafts Movement, which took a tentative stance on industrial production and promoted a return to the material, technical, and social integrity of pre-industrial craft practices. Echoing Hitchcock’s argument that modernism was defined by a synthesis of art and industry, Pevsner traced a line through Art Nouveau to the German Bauhaus at Dessau, arguing that the genuine style of modernism had been achieved in 1914, when Walter Gropius reconciled handcraft tradition with the new possibilities of machine production.

Though Pevsner had his own bias for reconciling the achievements of his native Germany and adopted home of England, it is significant that he effectively reiterated Hitchcock’s interpretations of both Wright and Japan. While Pevsner included Wright’s 1901 “manifesto on The Art and Craft of the Machine” in his chronological summary of modernist theories—noting, “Wright’s position in 1901 was almost identical with that of the most advanced thinkers on the future of art and architecture today”—he contended that “this theory remained isolated in America for a long time” and had no practical effect until the First World War. After mentioning that Wright “had begun to revolutionize the private house,” he quickly proceeded to argue that Wright’s key contribution to modernism was the Larkin office building (Buffalo, NY, 1904), which marked a pivot toward the formal restraint exhibited by modern European commercial buildings and works like Loos’ Steiner House (Vienna, 1910). Though Pevsner drew no connection between Wright and Japan, he, like Hitchcock, also portrayed Japan as a fleeting and, ultimately, inconsequential visual

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80 Ibid., 38.
81 Pevsner’s text was revised and republished by the Museum of Modern Art in 1949; in the “Foreword to the Second Edition” (December 1948), Pevsner thanked “Philip Johnson, Edgar Kaufman, Jr, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Alfred H. Barr” for their “suggestions as to what should be altered and added.”
82 Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design, 31-32.
83 Ibid., 186, 192-93, 201.
influence: he contended that qualities like the “lightness,” “flatness of surfaces,” and “high degree of stylization” exhibited by Japanese prints helped to inspire the opposed tendencies of Impressionist painting and Art Nouveau design.84

Pevsner included Wright, Loos, and Japan in his history because other historians had, but he failed to consider the actual relevance of any of them with regard to the interrelated issues of craft and industry that propelled his own argument. Keeping pace with histories like Giedion’s Space, Time, and Architecture, Pevsner expanded that argument in An Outline of European Architecture (1943), in which he effectively added a seven-chapter prologue to his history of modernism that traced its origins to Greek antiquity.

Meant to be, as its title suggests, a comprehensive metanarrative of modernism’s development, An Outline of European Architecture proceeds through the European Middle Ages to the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods that Pevsner argues laid the foundations for the Enlightenment and, by extension, “the Modern Movement.”85 The central “issue” of the text, as Pevsner clarified in a Foreword that he updated in 1960, “is Western architecture as an expression of Western civilization, described historically in its growth from the ninth through the twentieth century.”86 Responding, like Giedion, to a new interest in the concept of “space,” Pevsner now incorporates the term—absent from his earlier history—into the text, arguing:

What distinguishes architecture from painting and sculpture is its spatial quality…Thus the history of architecture is primarily a history of man shaping space…Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building.87

84 Ibid., 150-51.
86 Ibid., 11.
87 Ibid., 15.
Consistent with his definition of architecture as the fixed structure that frames space, Pevsner further distinguishes architecture as a rational artform elevated above the simple act of building: “the term architecture,” he goes on to contend, “applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.” While this was meant to counter Giedion’s cold, functionalist view of modernism by positing an antithesis of modernism as the logical formal expression of human needs and spirit, Pevsner defaulted to the same core assumptions that had persisted across space and time to structure the canonic histories of modernism. Equating architecture exclusively with material structures, he assumed that the human subject—god-like and autonomous—had introduced order by fixing things in space. Implicitly taking Laugier’s primitive hut as the ultimate architectural prototype, he traced architecture’s origins to a structural model of domestic architecture—to the shelter that man had created by extracting and ordering objects found, outside himself, in nature. Abstracting the lived reality of human experience, he assumed that it was possible to rationally understand the qualities of compositional beauty and arrangement and the reactions that these qualities produce in a detached observer, arguing, “aesthetic sensations may be caused by a building in three different ways.”

Historians like Giedion, Hitchcock, Johnson, and Pevsner demonstrate how we have, on one hand, already written “the history of our own obscurity”: because they privileged as inherently rational a structure of thought that assumed objectively fixed truths, a broad paradigm of linear material progress, and diametric oppositions between subject and object, thinking and feeling, form and function, structure and space, and space and time, there was much omitted from the canonic metanarratives.

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
of architectural modernism.\textsuperscript{90} For one, none of these metanarratives ever actually dealt with the subjective reality of space. They ignored perspectives grounded in the phenomenology—or spatial-temporal continuity—of lived experience.

Introduced by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century, the philosophy of phenomenology was a critique of Cartesian rationalism and its limitations that developed to have relevant parallels with Einstein’s scientific theories. It was strongly shaped by Husserl’s pupil, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who is best known for his 1927 work \textit{Being and Time}. In that text, Heidegger applied modern physics to construct an alternative history of continental European philosophy that demonstrated that there was nothing inherently rational—or objective—about rationalism in the first place.

As Heidegger pointed out, Descartes was a Christian monotheist who sought to justify his own faith in god and eternal existence through reason; his distinction between the intangible temporal realm of the \textit{res cogitans} and the three-dimensional spatial realm of \textit{res extensa} reflected his own tension surrounding the inherently contradictory belief that the world of our experience could have both a fixed existence and extend infinitely in space and time.\textsuperscript{91} Descartes resolved this tension by defaulting to what he took as a necessary, absolute truth: that a god of infinite existence had structured universal space according to a perfect, predetermined logic at a fixed point in time.\textsuperscript{92} Descartes reasoned, circularly, that god’s existence and the perfection of his logic could be verified by the rational human subject, who had been created in god’s image and endowed with the ability to efficiently deduce the laws—or truths—that

\textsuperscript{90} Barthes, \textit{Empire of Signs}, 4.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
structure the workings of the universe by transcending their individual sensations and studying the world objectively.

Underscoring the flawed logic inherent to Descartes’ dualistic, monotheistic worldview, Heidegger argued that the entire tradition of Cartesian rational thought had been based, not simply on Descartes’ own religious faith, but more fundamentally, on selective, overly simplified interpretations of the ideas of ancient Greek thinkers, namely Plato and Aristotle, who had formulated their ideas in interaction with the world as they perceived it. Heidegger maintained that, while the ancient Greeks had themselves recognized the limitations of their understanding, consideration for the subjective reality of human experience had been lost in the crusade for objective knowledge during the Middle Ages. For the same reason, the entire tradition of continental European philosophy had, paradoxically, failed to progress beyond the assumptions of medieval theology. Emphasizing that there was more than one way to read ancient Greek philosophy, Heidegger addressed this problem by arguing that we must return to a conception of “being” grounded in “phenomenology”—the understanding that all entities and ideas are phenomena of lived temporal experience and that they are therefore as real and true as any individual’s perceptions of them. Phenomenology thus defies clear definition—as Heidegger explained, it might be literally translated as “to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself…But this expresses nothing other than the maxim…‘To the things themselves!’”

A key component of Heidegger’s philosophy of phenomenology was a return to “the Greek concept of truth,” which he argued had been “thoroughly

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93 Ibid., 1-2. For further discussion see Chapters One and Three.
94 Ibid., 2, 9, 21.
95 Ibid., 32.
96 Ibid.
“In the Greek sense what is ‘true,’ he contended, ‘is αἰσθήσις [aisthēsis], the simple sense perception of something…perception is always true.’”

Heidegger was responding to the modern philosophy of aesthetics, which had been introduced in the eighteenth century and which, as Pevsner’s history suggests, concerned itself primarily with the ability to visually apprehend works of art.

Assuming the fundamental Cartesian split between a thinking, feeling human subject and an inanimate formal object, it was founded on the notion that ontology—theoretical experience—could be logically explained and understood by applying epistemology—theories of knowledge. Heidegger reinterpreted aesthetics to make the point that experience can neither be reduced to vision alone nor rationally explained with theories of knowledge. Each individual’s knowledge—or truth—is itself a multi-sensory aesthetic experience; it unfolds in interaction with the world as we encounter and perceive it from multiple perspectives. Heidegger went on to argue that there are no objectively fixed truths because all reality, existence, and truth manifest and shift with the experience of space in time.

“The being which is inside,” he contended, “and what surrounds it are both present in space.” From this perspective, no space—or structure—can have an objectively fixed physical form because it cannot exist outside the temporal being that defines it. “There is never a three-dimensional multiplicity,” Heidegger elaborated, “of possible positions initially given which is then filled out with objectively present things;” Spaces “are discovered and circumspectly interpreted on the paths and ways of everyday dealings; they are not ascertained and catalogued by the observational

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97 Ibid., 31.
98 Ibid., 31-32.
99 Ibid., 99.
100 Ibid., 90.
measurement of space.”

Seeking an experiential understanding of objects and space as they unfold with our perceptions in time, phenomenology collapses assumed separations between subject and object, thinking and feeling, form and function, structure and space, and space and time by considering how these manifest, always and only, in relation to one another. It negates the notion that the reality, and, therefore, an individual’s understanding of, space is exclusively defined by what is physically present at a given moment because space has no fixed physical presence. Equally, it recognizes that ideas and knowledge themselves unfold and evolve in the process of making and doing things, just as any object becomes real as we engage with it. Valuing *a posteriori* knowledge—knowledge that is gained through experience—, phenomenology rejects the notion that knowledge can be acquired in an objective, linear process because it rejects the idea that there are fixed, universal truths to be grasped in the first place. The only truths are those that manifest with the highly particular phenomenon of *Dasein*—literally, *being there*.

Though phenomenology was being formulated and introduced as architectural modernism was itself being defined, phenomenology was wholly omitted from the canonic narratives of modernism. This might be taken as a logical result of their writers’ engagement in what the architect, critic and historian Manfredo Tafuri identified, in *Theories and Histories of Architecture* (1980), as “operative practice”—the practice of writing histories that aimed to promote contemporary developments or a particular critical agenda. And yet, as much as the canonic histories conflated the interests of particular architects, theorists, and historians, they all claimed—and competed to demonstrate—a common knowledge of Einstein’s physics. The

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101 Ibid., 101.
102 Ibid., 10-11, 101.
collective oversight of phenomenology in these progressive metanarratives of modern architecture reflects a deeper structural limitation inherent to rationalism.

Anthony Vidler shed light on this limitation in *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (2008), in which he expanded upon Tafuri’s critique of “operative practice.” Vidler argues that the canonic histories of modernism were “extremely partial narratives, developing their genealogies from moments in the past that seemed to them starting points that would justify the specific contemporary practices they supported or admired.”

Texts like Giedion’s *Bauen in Frankenreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* (1928) and Taut’s *Modern Architecture* (1929), he elaborates, initiated “the process of assembling the evidence and developing the criteria for ‘modernity,’ while the histories that followed, including “Hitchcock’s *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (1929)…[,] Pevsner’s *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936), and Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*” aimed “to construct more or less coherent narratives of origin and development.” As self-evident as it might seem, modernist historians had learned to rely more upon the assertions and assumptions instilled by existing narratives than upon their own interpretations of things themselves. Well after Einstein introduced his theories of the non-dialectical relativity—and simultaneity—of space-time, the dialectical thesis of fixed material space and linear time on which modernism had been founded therefore persisted. The canonic histories of modernism continued to reify, into the mid-twentieth century, *a priori* arguments that extended back to the early 1920s, and beyond that, to Saussure, Hegel, Kant, Descartes, and medieval theology. Beyond biased, modernist historians were, in this respect, simply

104 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
blind to their own ignorance: they could not see the significance of that which did not adhere to the basic thesis of fixed universal space and linear time that had been assumed, “down through the centuries,” to structure history.\textsuperscript{107}

Phenomenology was not seen as having applicable relevance to history until the late twentieth century, after philosophers and semioticians associated what we now call poststructuralism had engaged it to critique the notions of fixed, inherent meaning, binary opposition, and linear temporal development underlying Saussure’s structural interpretation of language.\textsuperscript{108} As much as poststructuralism might be taken as mediating experiential and structural concerns, phenomenology was intuitive to this critical endeavor because it was, in many ways, a pre-poststructuralist philosophy—it emphasized the need to recognize the fluidity of structures and meanings that are always being shaped by the larger network of experiences and associations that condition our individual perceptions of reality. Applied to history and other disciplines beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, poststructuralism provoked critical reflection upon the clear omissions from the canonic histories of modernism and began to shed light on the depths of rationalism’s inherently flawed logic.

In the late 1980s, feminist scholarship, for example, rediscovered Gray’s unseen work, showing that, despite its relative absence and misattribution in modernist histories, it had deeply impressed, and fluently engaged the theories of, well-known male contemporaries like Le Corbusier.\textsuperscript{109} A 1994 MOMA exhibition

\textsuperscript{107} Barthes, \textit{Empire of Signs}, 4.

\textsuperscript{108} Phenomenology had become digested and absorbed into the tradition of continental European philosophy, largely, by French philosophers who were particularly sensitive to both rationalism’s inherent flaws and the deeply layered implications of Heidegger’s phenomenological critique. Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Gaston Bachelard helped to popularize and extend phenomenology to other disciplines, while thinkers like Barthes applied that critique to formulate theories of language that challenged Saussure’s structural notions of fixed, inherent meaning.

\textsuperscript{109} See note 15. Also see: “Appendix V: A Note Concerning Attribution of E1027,” pp. 246-47 in Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}. Here Constant explains that Le Corbusier repeatedly publicized and fought for the preservation of his murals while deliberately, if tacitly, propelling misconceptions about the villa
rethought Wright, who had variably figured as a romantic grandfather of modernism and logical reformer of the office building: reconciling this tension, it praised both “the inconstant unity [of his] passion” and his ability to “mediat[e] modernization.”

Loos, largely reduced to a utilitarian for whom ornament was crime, was reframed as scholars began, in the 1980s, to reevaluate the lavish interiors of his “Raumplan” houses. In light of such reevaluation, the new accepted view became that Loos believed a house should be dumb on the exterior only to speak on the interior.

Around the same time, Kenneth Frampton responded to the “international style” by positing a thesis of “critical regionalism” in “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” (1983), which examined how local cultures responded to modernism’s universalizing ideals by formulating their own modernisms. This informed texts like David Stewart’s *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868 to the Present* (1987), which traces the development of a Japanese modernism in response to industrialization and the theories of Josiah Conder, Le Corbusier, Bruno Taut, Adolf Loos and others.

While such narratives began to expand our view of architectural modernism, as Keith Eggener argued in “Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism” (2002), to atomize the dominant perspective in an attempt to encompass presumably

and its authorship; he omitted specific references to Gray and E1027 itself, which at times led to assumptions that he was the villa’s architect.


marginalized figures and cultures was in itself not enough. Rather than question modernism’s underlying assumptions, this only reified the invented ideal of the West and projected that ideal onto other centers recreated in its image; it continued to map a series of generalized concerns, ideals, and interests onto specific contexts while still subordinating both particular realities and individual agents to an assumed dominant paradigm.114

On the basis of arguments like that presented in *Houses and People of Japan*, Taut, for one, was variably credited and critiqued for his typically Western discovery, aestheticization, and appropriation of Japanese structures.115 While Japan’s actual significance for Taut and his work warrants further study, Taut alone, as the Japanese architect, theorist, and historian Arata Isozaki argued in *Japan-ness in Architecture* (2006), merited neither credit nor critique for the discovery that he claimed. The Japanese architect Isaburo Ueno had invited Taut to Japan after he fled Nazi Germany and had introduced him to models like Katsura precisely to discover and promote their aesthetic, “or…functionalist,” relevance for modern architects.116 Taut was useful to Ueno as a “world-renowned authority on modern architecture” who could help him promote his own agenda “in resistance to the nationalist tendency” that, Isozaki argues, was “then gaining currency in Japan.”117

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117 Ibid., 10. Note: Taut, who had been collaborating with Japanese modernists since the early as the 1920s, also pointed out, in the Foreword to *Houses and People of Japan*, that his “impressions” of Japan’s relevance for modern domestic architecture had been informed by Hideto Kishida’s *Japanese Architecture*, first published in English in 1935, and Tetsuro Yoshida’s *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*, first published in German the same year (1935).
As this suggests, there were, indeed, Japanese architects who had motives for engaging a rationalist structure of thought as they helped to define and promote what is usually taken as the dominant modernist perspective. Neil Jackson’s *Japan and the West: An Architectural Dialogue* (2019) has demonstrated this by synthesizing the histories of Japanese and Western modernism to trace their dialectical development in relation to one another from the mid-nineteenth through twentieth centuries.¹¹⁸ As Isozaki, however, recognized, Japanese modernists could engage a rationalist structure of thought without being bound by its binary, linear logic because they operated with what he interpreted as a fundamentally different understanding of structure itself.

Isozaki shed light on this understanding of structure in *MA: Space-Time in Japan*, a 1979 catalogue composed to coincide with a 1978 exhibition for the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York. Interpreting Japanese culture for French and American audiences, he argued, “[the] coincidental conceptualization of time and space is perhaps the most important element that distinguishes Japan’s artistic expression from that of the West.”¹¹⁹ “While in the West,” he elaborated,

…the space-time concept gave rise to absolutely fixed images of a homogeneous and infinite continuum, as presented by Descartes, in Japan space and time were never fully separated but were conceived as correlative and omnipresent. In a chaotic, mixed condition, space could not be perceived independently of the element of time. Likewise, time was not abstracted as a regulated, homogeneous flow, but rather was believed to exist only in relation to movements or spaces.¹²⁰

Isozaki emphasized this non-binary worldview—which, described in such terms, is itself an invention of history—as fundamental for understanding Japanese culture

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¹²⁰ Ibid.
because it subverts the Cartesian assumption that structures have an independent material reality and that they contain, define, and fix space in time. From a Japanese perspective, as Isozaki interpreted it, “space was perceived as identical with the events or phenomena occurring in it; that is space was recognized only in its relation to time-flow.”\textsuperscript{121} This way of understanding the world, he argued, had evolved to have “great influence on the later development of the visualization of space.”\textsuperscript{122}

Updating the arguments of predecessors like Okakura, Isozaki traced this worldview to Buddhism, which had been introduced to Japan from China in the sixth century CE, and, more fundamentally, Shintô, an indigenous religion that was codified in the seventh century CE. While monotheistic doctrines had been secularized and absorbed into European Enlightenment thought, Buddhism and Shintô had evolved to complement one another through practices grounded in recognizing the necessary coexistence of opposites, the ephemerality of existence, and the fleeting nature of perception and reality. Isozaki suggested that, in the process, they had preserved a preliterate animistic understanding of all space and entities as manifestations of living activity: outwardly perceptible forms had not come to be viewed as static objects placed in space by a single, preexisting god, but continued to be understood as living manifestations of the kami—“...Japanese gods,” in Isozaki’s translation—that activate space through the temporal act of dwelling.\textsuperscript{123} “Even solid objects,” he explained, “were thought to contain voids capable of receiving the kami that descend at certain moments to fill such spaces with the spiritual force (ki) of the soul (kami)...”\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
Isozaki interpreted Japanese perspectives in this way to communicate to his audience that, from a Japanese perspective, structure as such is non-existent; it has no independently fixed, inherent reality because what we might call “structures” are themselves seen as spaces that materialize with living activity and experience that occur in time. This perception might be seen as being exemplified by practices like the ritual rebuilding of the Ise shrines, which, Isozaki argued in *Japan-ness in Architecture*, “takes place in secrecy—we sense its occurrence from without but cannot verify it.”125 This practice might be seen as preserving the site through living activity, rather than through independently viewed and valued material objects, while physically demonstrating that no structure has a fixed form—structures always and only take shape with the intangible and yet wholly concrete phenomena of temporal activity and perception that create space itself. At the same time, it acts as a continual reminder that space has no clear origin because something unseen was always there before: For Isozaki, “Ise [was] a mechanism whose origin itself must be somehow fabricated, for there is no origin as such…the very veiling of the origin—absent in any strict sense—engenders the seduction.”126

Isozaki argued that practices like the rebuilding of Ise exemplified how Japanese spatial and temporal perspectives had informed a non-linear understanding of history and an elusive conception of culture: “the repetition of relocation and rebuilding,” he explained, “repels the blind progress of history in order to preserve an identity over time.”127 He went on to contend that modernism’s own internal logic had blinded it to “the crux of Japan-ness,” which “is not this or that particular image,

125 Isozaki, *Japan-ness*, 130.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., 146.
symbol, or sign, but rather the very mechanism of constructing a fiction around the zero sign, thus producing an ahistorical nonplace.”

Isozaki invoked poststructuralism to make the point that Japanese culture could not only mean anything, but could also be anything and anywhere because it is a temporal and performative phenomenon; it has, not only no inherent reality or meaning, but also no fixed form or location in space. For this reason, Isozaki, who identified with phenomenology in his own work, emphasized the need to revisit Japanese modernism from a phenomenological perspective, explaining.

Therefore, I struck out to define the phenomenological moment by overturning the ordinary view that space is exactly localizable while time is mere occasion...At this juncture, my conception of time had begun to deviate wildly from the convention of space/time based upon modern science, as portrayed by the modernist architectural historian Sigfried Giedion and other midcentury critics. Architectural space can only be experienced through corporeal sentience.

From a phenomenological perspective, it becomes possible to see that, while there were Japanese modernists who engaged rationalism, Japanese modernism was not exclusively defined by it: Japanese modernism was simultaneously, and more fundamentally, being defined across the innumerable spaces of living activity that history has overlooked and whose own realities remain unfixed. Isozaki demonstrated this when he conducted a polysemic reading of the seventeenth century villa of Katsura, which, like Ise, had been constructed and reconstructed as a modernist prototype throughout the twentieth century by Taut, Ueno, Horiguchi Sutemi, Tange

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128 Ibid., 169.
130 Isozaki, *Japan-ness*, 89.
Kenzô, Walter Gropius and others (Figs. 5 & 6).\textsuperscript{131} Reinterpreting this archetype of “Japan-ness” from his own perspective (Fig.7), “Katsura,” he argued,

…remains profoundly embedded in complexity—in terms of cultural genealogy, architectural style, political influence, and class-determined relationships...[it] is indeed charged with contradictory and conflicting codes, all signaling a number of messages. Such is Katsura’s innate ambiguity…it is full of unexpected beauties materializing out of the residue of its diachronic composition.\textsuperscript{132}

Distinct for what Isozaki translated, in various forms, as a fluid understanding of identity, Japanese culture had interested Barthes precisely for this reason: it expressed an understanding of structure that might be seen as dialectical, but non-binary; it demonstrated that multiple opposing truths and realities could logically coexist without seeking a synthesis that privileged one perspective over others. One need only move beyond the attempt to project meaning onto things and instead concentrate on the shifting spaces of perceived difference that intersect to produce meaning for each of us.

Complimenting the way that Barthes reflected upon the depth of the problem through the lens of Japan, Isozaki’s poststructuralist interpretation of “Japan-ness” speaks to the gap at the heart of European and U.S. modernism: we have been unable to see the innumerable realities that defined—and continue to define—our own modern domestic space because we have, in many ways, continued to project an assumed dominant structure of rational thought back upon ourselves. Scholars like Ken Oshima have demonstrated how we might address this problem by decentering the narrative and moving beyond the assumed dominant paradigm that the canonic histories of modernism invented for us.


\textsuperscript{132} Isozaki, \textit{Japan-ness}, 271-272, 286.
In *International Architecture in Interwar Japan*, Oshima challenges the preconception of a physical and intellectual “dichotomy between Japan and the West” by revisiting modernism’s multilateral development in Japan between the world wars through case studies of the Japanese-born modernists Horiguchi Sute and Yamada Mamoru and the Czech-born modernist Antonin Raymond. Rejecting the notion of cultural purity—a notion that derives from historically-assumed Germanic conceptions of culture as something defined by a set of fixed and inherent common characteristics—, he raises “questions about what constitutes a ‘Japanese’ architect and a modern Japanese architecture” and addresses both the intricacies and agency involved in cross-cultural translation. His text demonstrates that national boundaries and individual and cultural perspectives were far more fluid than any overarching narrative of modernism, universalizing view of culture, or single critical agenda would have us believe.

Studies like Oshima’s are instructive for seeing how we might “write the history of our own obscurity” from an alternative perspective: they demonstrate how we might continue to revisit modernism from a perspective that seeks to better understand the complexities of symbiosis, which the Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa defined, in *Each One a Hero: The Philosophy of Symbiosis* (1997), as the coexistence and evolution of multiple agents and realities across space and time. There remains room for analogous case study-based histories in which we move beyond the assumed dominant structure of rational thought to further reflect upon the

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134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
work of modernists in Europe and the U.S. who never fit into the canonic binary framework and who were therefore receptive to ways of seeing beyond it.\footnote{Barthes, \textit{Empire of Signs}, 4.}

This dissertation seeks to expand our understanding of Wright, Loos, and Gray by analyzing their work from a phenomenological perspective, which I take as having mutual relevance. From a phenomenological perspective, it becomes possible to see how and why these three architects, all of whom were themselves critical of rationalism, were receptive to spatial lessons that escaped those who were blinded by their own structural preconceptions.

Wright saw Japanese prints as an instructive study in “stringent simplification by elimination of the insignificant and consequent relative emphasis of the real.”\footnote{Wright, 1900 draft of “The Japanese Print,” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-B, 8.} For him, Japanese prints provided a useful way into seeing that the form of any structure should be organically generated by the living reality that defines it; incorporating shifting perspectives to evoke the way that space unfolds with our perceptions in time, Japanese prints aim, not to create an illusion of real space, but rather, to elicit your active engagement in the process of a scene’s own unfolding reality. Wright saw that the fluid understanding of spatial experience expressed in Japanese prints could be combined with the open-endedness, structural fluidity, and craft principles exemplified by the \textit{kiwari} system. As he argued in “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” which he delivered at Chicago’s Hull House in 1901, he saw Japanese wooden construction as exemplifying how the principles of pre-industrial craft practice could be adapted to industrial materials and techniques, such that the simple beauty of machine-made, standardized components could be cultivated to naturally counter the uniformity of the middle-class house.
Chapter One considers how Wright combined lessons learned from these and other sources before he first visited Japan in 1905 to rethink the experience of a home as it unfolds in time. The Martin House exemplifies this rethinking: designing with consideration for both the individual clients’ needs and local conditions, Wright engaged widely available industrial materials and standardized components while demonstrating that the house need not be viewed as a wood-framed box. Allowing the placement of structural components to instead follow from the living reality that defines a home, he learned to treat the walls of the house like floating, shifting planes that materialize with the space of the home as you move through it in time.

Loos interpreted similar sources in a very different way as he responded to a context where many of his contemporaries were overly preoccupied with outward appearances of distinction. In an imperial capital whose ideals of modern domestic architecture had been molded by the palaces of the monarchy and aristocracy and a broader European predilection for stone masonry, the prevailing view was that the function of a house was to formally fix individual identity. Approached as the byproducts, rather than generators, of structure, plans remained largely uniform and architects gave little consideration to inhabitants’ interior needs and use.

In his October 1898 “Kunstgewerbliche Rundschau” (“Handcrafts Review”), Loos critiqued this approach, arguing, “Der osten bildete das große reservoir, aus dem immer neuer samen in das abendland strömte…uns nur noch Japan übrig blieb” (“The East formed the great reservoir from which always newer seeds flowed into the West…for us, only Japan still remained”).139 Tacitly critiquing a growing tendency to view Japan generally, as yet another source of exotic formal influences, Loos saw that

139 Loos, “Kunstgewerbliche Rundschau,” Die Wage, 1 Oktober 1898; republished in Sämtliche Schriften, B. I, 167-68.
Japan introduced lessons of particular relevance to the Austro-Hungarian context. Interpreting Japanese sources that included prints and architectural models through the lens of his experience with stone masonry, he learned that, if the mundane craft practices of Austria-Hungary’s own medieval past were allowed to evolve in response to the modern industrial present, the modern middle-class individual would be freed to cultivate their own character in the spaces and activities of daily life. Chapter Two considers how the Villa Müller, which Loos designed in collaboration with both the client, the civil engineer František Müller, and Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, who was a construction manager for Müller’s firm, allowed Loos to refine this logic and fully express lessons that he cited as having learned from Japan beginning in the late nineteenth century. The Villa Müller demonstrates that, as Japan’s cultural traditions were becoming integrated into Loos’ own domestic context, he developed an understanding of them that led him to rethink the home’s plan as a network of nested interior spaces that mutually define and enhance one another with use and movement.

While collaboration with sympathetically minded contemporaries complemented, in ways that are fundamental for understanding, each architect’s interpretation of Japan, this was particularly true for Gray. Through her training and collaboration with Sugawara and integration into a community of Japanese craftsmen that had developed in the context of the Paris 1900 Exposition Universelle, Gray developed an embodied understanding of urushi, which is an intrinsically spatial, temporal, and cooperative medium and practice. Shaped as much by the practitioner as by the hand-crafted tools, organic materials, and particular environmental conditions that contribute to a given composition, the process relies upon the volatile, slow-hardening urushi resin, which is sourced from the sap of the urushi (lacquer) tree. In its most basic form, it involves mixing this resin with stones that have been
ground into a fine powder to create a mixture that will be applied, in twenty to thirty thin layers, to a smoothed wood surface covered in silk and rice gum paste.\textsuperscript{140}

The results vary widely in texture and character, and each composition continues to evolve and shift over time as it responds to its user, contents, treatment, and exposure to heat, light, air, and moisture. Both highly responsive to and a formative part of its spatial environment, it elicits complete sensory engagement in temporal experience. In his 1933 essay, “In Praise of Shadows,” the Japanese author Tanizaki Jun’ichirô conjured the effect when he reflected upon the infinite depth evoked by the experience of drinking from an \textit{urushi} soup bowl:

What lies within the darkness one cannot distinguish, but the palm senses the gentle movements of the liquid, vapor rises from within forming droplets on the rim, and the fragrance carried upon the vapor brings a delicate anticipation. What a world of difference there is between this moment and the moment when soup is served Western style, in a pale, shallow bowl. A moment of mystery, it might almost be called, a moment of trance.\textsuperscript{141}

Chapter Three considers how Gray’s \textit{urushi} practice continued to expand and evolve into the 1920s as she designed and built E1027, her first architectural dwelling. Extending lessons that she had long been cultivating through \textit{urushi}, Gray learned to approach the home in a way analogous to a lacquered bowl—as a composition whose space and reality continually layer open to reveal an infinitely shifting sequence of relationships and fleeting temporal experiences.

From a phenomenological perspective, it becomes possible to see that these three architects needed neither visit Japan nor attempt to consciously emulate a Japanese style of architecture for their approaches to modern domestic space to have been profoundly shaped by it: Japan’s significance for these three modernists was much more intuitive. Not bound by notions of linear material progress or assumed

\textsuperscript{140} Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 24.

distinctions between art, architecture, and craft, they all saw the Japanese sources with which they engaged for what they were in themselves, as mediated by their own experiences, interests, and perceptions. Both preceding and paralleling Heidegger’s phenomenological critique of rationalism—a critique that Heidegger himself formulated in interaction with Japanese philosophers through the nineteen-teens and twenties—, Japan introduced each of these architects to a craft-based understanding of domestic space that was intuitively modern and intuitively phenomenological.142

I have chosen these three houses—Wright’s Martin house, Loos’ Villa Müller, and Gray’s E1027—, in part, because they have all been restored and opened to the public, which has afforded the opportunity to develop a phenomenological understanding of each home and its site over multiple visits. As much as my descriptive analyses of these works reflect my own perceptions at particular points in time, I do not claim to provide an objective, comprehensive overview of any of these houses or attempt to leave the reader with a fixed mental image. Similarly, I rely upon my own photographs as much as possible, not so that they be viewed as pure documentary records, but precisely because they have provided a way to continue reinterpreting these homes through the lens of my own experience.143 While acknowledging the extent to which both the text and images of this dissertation project my perceptions and interpretations onto the reader, my intention as the author

142 Heidegger was particularly influenced by his ongoing dialogues with Shûzô Kuki, whose ideas were widely circulated in both France and Germany in the 1920’s. In 1921, Shûzô departed Japan to pursue graduate study in Europe, staying in Nice, France from November 1921 until beginning at Heidelberg University the following October. After traveling to Dresden, Leipzig, Munich, Weimar and Zurich in 1923, Shûzô moved to Paris in the fall of 1924, remaining there until 1927. While in Paris, Shûzô published poetry under various pseudonyms and, in December of 1926, completed his text Iki no honshitsu, translated as The essence of iki. Heidegger’s thinking continued to develop in interaction with Japanese philosophers, particularly his student Hajime Tanabe, through the 1950s. For further discussion, see, e.g., Graham Parkes, ed., Heidegger and Asian Thought (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).

143 The Villa Müller is an exception to this, in part because photography is not permitted while touring the villa.
is not that either be taken as concrete fact or viewed as capturing the reality of experience. Rather, my hope is that you might develop your own sense of the spatial experience of these homes and sites, such that their realities can continue to manifest and evolve differently for each individual.

Equally, each chapter takes a single commission, not as a point of exclusive focus, but as a point of departure for multiple threads of inquiry. In each chapter, I pursue questions and contradictions that emerged as I visited and analyzed these works and sought to better understand the intricacies of each commission and each architect. In each case, I have attempted to develop the thesis in a non-linear fashion that appropriately reflects the reality of each work as I perceive it, the process by which each thesis itself developed and evolved, and the context and content that I found relevant for better understanding these three architects and Japan’s particular significance to them. Because I rely partly upon my own translations of sources that were originally written in German and French, it is important to reiterate the subjective agency and limitations in understanding that inevitably color the interrelated acts of historical documentation, analysis, and interpretation. At the same time, I have tried to avoid viewing any of these architects or their work through a single critical lens, and to instead allow the critical issues addressed and theories applied to develop as germane.

Because my own thinking has continually shifted in the process of researching, writing, revising, and returning, again and again, to each of these chapters, I do not attempt to provide definitive conclusions or answers, or to reconcile the differences and contradictions across them to adhere to a common narrative or single, ‘correct’ line of thought. While I interpret Japan as having been of fundamental significance for each of these architects, I also do not mean to suggest
that Japan alone shaped their work; to the contrary, that they approached architecture from phenomenological perspectives made them receptive, as other scholars have shown, to lessons from many sources. I have attempted to address some of the most significant gaps that I see in the existing scholarship with the hope that these case studies might help to meaningfully bridge those gaps by exposing new ones. I hope that they might help to “manifest the density of our narcissism” by provoking others to further reinterpret—or personally reflect upon—the work of these and other modernists.\footnote{Barthes, \textit{Empire of Signs}, 4.}
Introduction Images

Fig. 1. “Ise Shrine,” photograph published in Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1958) with the caption “In the Foreground Is the Site for It to be Rebuilt after Twenty-One Years,” 140.


Fig. 3. “‘Famous’ Gate at Nikko,” published in Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1958), 159.
Fig. 4. Le Corbusier, *Villa Savoye*, Poissy, France. Image Source: [Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org), accessed 9 April 2022.

Fig. 5. Ise, Main Sanctuary (Naikū), view from northwest. Photograph by Yoshio Watanabe (1953), published in Kenzo Tange & Noboru Kawazoe, *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965), 119.

Fig. 7. Katsura Imperial Villa, “The group of shoins from the pond, with the Old Shoin in the foreground.” Photograph by Yoshiharu Matsumura, published in Arata Isozaki, et. al., Katsura Imperial Villa, edited by Virginia Ponciroli (NY: Phaidon, 2011; first published by Electa, Milan, in 2005), 73.
CHAPTER ONE—
THE MARTIN HOUSE: A LIVING “WORK OF ART”

Let us study for a moment the Japanese dwelling...[T]his humble dwelling is a veritable sermon on our subject...Here you have a...spiritual ideal of natural and hence organic, simplicity...[T]he modern process of standardizing, as we now face it on every side, sterilized by it, prostrate to it, was in Japan known and practiced with artistic perfection by freedom of choice many centuries ago, [and]...the simple offices of daily life [were] raised to the dignity of works of art.145


On 11 August 1906, fifteen months after his first trip to Japan in the spring of 1905, Frank Lloyd Wright sent an essay from his Oak Park studio in Chicago to the Larkin Soap Company executive Darwin D. Martin in Buffalo, New York. “I went to Japan,” Wright wrote, “sufficiently alive to our sins and short comings as a material people.” 146 “The Japanese,” he reflected, “are fitted by nature to become our teachers in many things of the higher life.”147

Wright had visited Japan at the height of his work on the Martin house, which he had begun designing for Darwin Martin and his family in 1903. The largest residential commission of Wright’s early independent career, the house incorporates a pergola, atrium, and stable and unfolds within a 1.5-acre corner lot in Buffalo’s Parkside suburb, where it is part of a larger complex that includes the Delta and George Barton residence, built for Martin’s sister, and gardener’s cottage. As Wright would later argue in An Autobiography, when he went to Japan, “all but tired out after building the Martin house,” he found “but splendid confirmation” of ideas that he had already formulated and refined.148 The essay that Wright shared with Martin as the

146 Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, 11 August 1906, 24–2; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17–December 11, 1906.
147 Ibid.
commission was nearing completion in 1906 identifies spatial, structural, social, and spiritual lessons that Wright had gathered from his study of Japanese crafts beginning in the late nineteenth century and applied in designing this home.

Japanese culture was instructive for Wright because he was critical of the prevailing conventions of domestic architecture in the turn-of-the-century United States, where the typical middle-class house had been shaped by a perspective centered on the autonomous human individual. Privileging the human subject’s ability to understand, order, and control the world through reason, this perspective treated the house as an inanimate material object separate from both its inhabitants and surrounding environment: viewed as a structure defined by the form of its walls and roof, the house’s assumed function was to fix and order interior living space while outwardly asserting individual identity within an established social order. Wright was critical of this approach because it resulted in houses that had no relation to the living environment that defines either a home or a community. He argued that Japanese culture was instructive for U.S. domestic space because all Japanese structures were seen as products of the living reality that generates them:

Their…land and the buildings upon it, their gardens, their manners, their garb, their utensils, their adornment; all are animated by design inspired by their instructive love and sympathy with nature; and this sympathy is as spontaneous to them as their breathing…What makes a study of their civilization of especial value to us is the great fact that…the Japanese…draws his inspiration and derives his power from his apprehension of natural law. He has made a harmonious unit of his land and life to this end.¹⁴⁹

Japan had shown Wright that a house need not be viewed as an autonomous material object that fixes and defines domestic space, but rather, might be seen as an organic structure generated by it. If seen as a structure generated by the living reality that is a home, the house would naturally assume a form that sustained the needs and

¹⁴⁹ Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-6, 24-8; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906.
expressed the character of its inhabitants, such that they, too, might help to generate and sustain an organic, well-functioning social environment.

**The Client**

Wright’s reflections on Japanese domestic space were relevant to Martin because Martin’s own beliefs and experiences had led him to question the prevailing conventions of middle-class domestic architecture in the United States. A hard-working businessman of the upper-middle class, Martin was a prominent member of Buffalo society, bibliophile, avid horticulturalist, and Christian Scientist, who, skeptical “of the mass of theology of the Church,” emphasized the spiritual rather than purely material nature of existence.  

Although a wealthy executive by the time he met Wright, Martin had come from a modest background, growing up on a small family farm in central New York state until the death of his mother in 1871 led to his move to New York City at age 13 to work as a door-to-door salesman for the Larkin soap company. Invited to work as a bookkeeper at the Larkin headquarters in Buffalo in 1879, he lived in a series of tenement and boardinghouses before settling in the suburb of Parkside after his engagement to Isabelle Martin, née Reidpath, in 1887. That year, the Martins purchased a lot, located half a block from the site of what would become the Martin home, on Parkside’s Summit Avenue, and commissioned the architect C.R. Percival to design their first house. The small Queen Anne style structure had shingle-clad exterior walls that extended above a rough stone-masonry foundation, steeply-pitched gable roofs, and an imposing ogival

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152 Ibid., 42.
153 Ibid.
tower that projected above a bay window (Fig. 1). Front stairs led to an enclosed porch and main entrance that opened to the interior, where walls defined rooms of fixed function within a rectilinear plan.

After they were married in 1889, Darwin and Isabelle Martin had moved into their first house to encounter the challenges of negotiating their complex individual needs and roles in the prescribed domestic environment. As Jack Quinan explains in *Frank Lloyd Wright’s Martin House: Architecture as Portraiture* (2004), as “the Martins entertained small groups of family members, friends, and occasionally Darwin’s business associates,”

The adjustment was difficult for Darwin, who was accustomed to being completely self-sufficient and who tended to be as demanding of others as he was of himself. His work habits became a source of friction, as he often carried both lunch and dinner to the office in case he had after-hours work to do, and he sometimes arrived home on the 11:15 p.m. Belt Line Railroad. At home he constantly occupied himself with house-related activities. In his diary he wrote, “Belle had a hard summer trying to adjust to living with an exacting husband.”

The complexities of Martin’s own domestic situation heightened with his promotion to Secretary of the Larkin Company in 1893 and the birth of two children by 1900. After seeing Wright’s work during a September 1902 trip to Oak Park, he became “convinced that [Wright’s] style is simplicity itself,” and in 1903 commissioned the architect to design a home of “taste and beauty” for him and his family.155

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154 Ibid.
155 Darwin Martin, Letter to Mr. Berry, Darwin Martin Papers, Collection M355, Stanford Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 1, “Family Personal Papers, Series Papers, 1883-1915, Letter 3, p. 4. Darwin Martin, Letter to Elbert Hubbard, as quoted in Jack Quinan, *Martin House*, 28. Note: Before commissioning the Martin house, Martin had hired Wright to design a small house for his sister, Delta Barton, in 1903. For the Barton house, Martin requested an adaptation of the J.J. Walser Residence (1901) in Austin, Chicago, which Darwin and Isabel Martin selected during a March 1903 visit to Chicago to together survey Wright’s work. Closely involving themselves in the project, the Martins were, despite friction with the architect, pleased with Wright’s reinterpretation of the earlier design in response to specific needs and site, even as the cost rose from Martin’s intended budget of $4,000 to $12,000. As Quinan explains, much of the friction between clients and architect over the expense, orientation, and design of the Barton house was a result of Wright’s having conceived it relative to the complex as a whole all along. See Quinan, 54, 72-75.
Analysis of the Martin House

The resulting network of living spaces unfolds within an intricately planned seasonal landscape cycle at the intersection of Jewett Parkway and Summit Avenue (Figs. 2 & 3).\textsuperscript{156} Unfurling in a cross-axial plan, the house has no focal point, instead opening out in a dynamic composition of vertically layered and sliding horizontal planes articulated by deep voids (Figs. 4 & 5). Its long, east-west axis runs, offset at a diagonal, along Jewett Parkway, evoking a sense of asymmetrical balance as its hovering forms and broad eaves cantilever out beyond mysterious recesses (Fig. 6). Set on a low stepped base of white concrete, with a rubble masonry foundation, exterior walls and square piers built of industrial red brick are faced with Roman bricks whose long, compressed dimensions and deeply sunken mortar joints heighten the effect of dynamic horizontality. Broad, terracotta-tiled hipped roofs cast deep shadows that layer back to reveal cypress-trimmed art glass windows, generating a fluid profile whose sliding horizontal flow is propelled by a discrete rhythm of verticals. Intersected by a shorter north-south axis that parallels Summit Avenue, the house has no front, no center, and no clearly defined line of approach, instead manifesting as an irregular pattern of solids and voids whose logic is difficult to comprehend when viewed from the exterior (Fig. 2).

Even as you move around the house to confront a deceptively symmetrical view of the east porch, you are unable to immediately see a way into the home: measuring 14,978 square feet and generously set back from the street, the structure evokes continued recession into void rather than a clear progression forward (Fig. 7). One entrance opens along the southwest edge of the Jewett Parkway facade, where an

\textsuperscript{156} The Martin complex was not only the most extensive of Wright’s early residential commissions, but also the highest in budget, the entire complex constructed at a final cost of $173,000.
elevated set of stairs leads from a porte-cochère to an entrance for the reception of clients (Fig. 5). Here, Martin’s business associates, arriving by carriage until the automobile was introduced in the 1920s, would have stepped onto the stairs and approached a wood-framed art glass door. Woven into the door’s clear plate glass, a complex geometric pattern, derived from the wisteria plant, of flowing horizontal lines vertically punctuated by pieces of gold and iridescent colored glass fortifies the dynamic interpenetration of horizontals and verticals, solids and voids, structure and space, interior and exterior communicated by the house’s profile (Fig. 8). You pass through the door into a corridor that opens to a reception room to the right and Martin’s office to the left (Fig. 9). Positioned at the far southwestern edge of the home, the office provided a quiet, secluded space in which Martin could work or meet with clients without disrupting or being disrupted by the activities occurring elsewhere. Overlooking the porte-cochère through art glass windows, it was situated such that Martin could anticipate the arrival of clients, who would have been invited to wait in the reception room upon entering.

A second entrance, positioned further southeast from the porte-cochère on Jewett Parkway, steps back beneath the lower-story eaves, which shelter what you now see is a porch (Figs. 5 & 10). Here, personal guests entered the home into a small vestibule and corridor before confronting a view that extends 180 feet, through another door and along the pergola, toward the conservatory, where a monumental replica of the Nike of Samothrace evokes a perplexing vanishing point, illuminated from above within a frame of foliage (Fig. 11). Your sense of having entered the home is immediately disrupted as you question whether or not you are actually inside of it.
At the same time, low ceilings, conceived to accommodate the heights of Mr. and Mrs. Martin, evoke shelter, warmth and intimacy, as does a monumental hearth that both anchors and subdivides the first-floor interior (Fig. 12). Suggesting a center from which the home’s spaces spiral out, the hearth partitions discrete functional zones while disrupting your visual comprehension of the home’s organizing logic and spatial layout. Interrupting a clear view to the living room, which opens to the right, it provokes you to become immersed in the experience of your immediate surroundings, without concern for the as-yet unencountered.

Upon entering, personal visitors, too, would have been invited to wait in the reception hall, which opens to the left of the entry vestibule and mediates between the office and living room. Here, quadruple clusters of colossal Roman brick-faced piers provide structural support and negate the need for solid walls, articulating the space without framing and rigidly defining it. Lingering here, you appreciate the paradoxical openness of the room as it flows into, and yet somehow remains separate from, the living room beyond the hearth (Fig. 13). Using the pier-clusters to create spaces that house the home’s light fixtures, heating units, bookshelves and storage areas, Wright made practical use of structure while retaining an openness not possible with dividing walls by installing hinged art-glass windows in the upper portions of the interstices between piers (Fig. 14). A meticulous, and at first seemingly minor, detail, each window can be fully or partially opened outward to communicate with the spaces beyond. At the same time, their art glass patterns generate variable effects of light, shadow and color that fluctuate in response to both sunlight and the glow emitted by spherical light fixtures that cantilever beyond the piers in square brass sconces.
Creating an open space in which business clients and personal visitors could be received at the same time without disruption, Wright further subdivided the large reception hall by varying ceiling heights, installing built-in furnishings, and using oak beams to delineate discrete zones. The beams accentuate the asymmetrical pitch of the ceiling, which slants downward toward a large Roman brick-faced fireplace whose pronounced semicircular arch forms an inviting anchor within the expansive space, even as multiple distinct spaces emerge (Figs. 9 & 15). Lined with hinged, wood-framed art glass windows, the outward-facing wall frames a bright spatial counterpart to the space of warmth before the fireplace (Fig. 9). At once reflective and transparent, the windows pronounce the interaction between inside and outside, mediating between them such that the space of the room evokes extension from the porch. Their geometric pattern, known as the “Tree of Life,” was derived from and intended to heighten awareness of the trees enveloping the home (Fig. 16). The design fluctuates with the seasons, quality of light, and position of the sun as pieces of subdued colored glass introduce a fluctuating rhythm of light and shadow and cast changing effects across the room’s surfaces.

A doorway in the reception room’s far northwest corner opens to a lavatory at the left, providing quick access to a space in which to freshen up, as would have been necessary after traveling unpaved roads by carriage (Fig. 17). Beyond the lavatory, the corridor opens to the kitchen, which is also accessible from another entrance off the northwest edge of the porch, providing an easy, direct point of entry and exit for depositing provisions (Fig. 18). Logically integrated at a point of pivot between the reception hall to the south and the dining and living rooms to the east, the kitchen is a bright, open space that was designed to comfortably accommodate the activities of multiple individuals interacting simultaneously (Fig. 19). It has a high vaulted ceiling
that traces the hip of the roof, facilitating the circulation of light and air. Oak beams articulate wall expanses and flow into built-in cupboards and cabinets (Fig. 20). White linoleum-tile covers the floors, while the walls and countertops, which are set above storage drawers, were lined with white Novus sanitary glass that both eased cleaning and enhanced brightness and visibility in a space of high-use.157

At each turn, you encounter an open-ended sequence of movement as the home’s spaces unfold in multiple possible directions. A door along the kitchen’s east wall opens to a low corridor that provides direct access to the garden. Alternatively, you might continue toward the pergola, which runs parallel to the garden along the home’s north-south axis. Obscuring distinctions between inside and outside, you encounter this partially open-air, covered pavilion without certainty of having either exited or entered the home; even as you glimpse the dining room straight ahead, the pergola disrupts clear straightforward procession as it invites you along an alternative path toward the conservatory at its far north end (Fig. 21).

As the sides of the pergola meet to frame a view of the monumental winged Nike, you realize that you have already encountered this space, from another perspective, in the entrance hall. Eleven bays and approximately 100 feet long, the pergola unfolds in an AB rhythm of rectangular piers and framed openings that mediate one another to bring the outside in and the inside out. Oak bands articulate the window-like openings and offset the coolness of their concrete sills while contributing to a delicately balanced interplay between verticals and horizontals and structure and space. Cantilevered to extend several feet beyond the corridor itself, overhanging eaves slope downward, providing shelter from the elements while casting variable patterns of shadow penetrated by light. Moving with and along the

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157 The walls were later painted white when the house was restored.
pergola, you fluctuate between feelings of shelter and openness, finding yourself in direct contact with the site while for the first time becoming paradoxically conscious that you are now deep within the home. As you continue northward, you find that there is no direct point of entry or exit from the pergola into the garden. Expectations already disrupted, you become increasingly aware that you do not yet grasp what lies ahead.

Approaching the conservatory, the Nike that at first suggested a vanishing point becomes, much like yourself, only another shifting center in the spatial environment. A set of stairs, not visible until you near the pergola’s north end, steps down into a vestibule that opens into the conservatory through a wood-framed glass transom door (Fig. 22). Pausing, you see that there is not a single focal point, but rather, multiple components that unfold in relation to one another to create a continually shifting space of infinitely layered depth.

You descend into the vestibule to find that the reality of the conservatory becomes only more unclear. Views into it are obscured by its intricately patterned glass doors, which interact with light entering through skylights overhead to reflect the surrounding space while rendering it always partially opaque (Fig. 23). The Nike momentarily concealed from view, your awareness returns to where you have already been as you contemplate how your perceptions are changing at each point in the present.

Only as you become part of the space does it begin to emerge in all its complexity. Your attention is thrown out and up in multiple directions simultaneously as you move between imposing concrete planter boxes and enveloping foliage; a high-pitched skylight and tall oak windows that invite air and oblique sunlight; broken expanses of exposed concrete and horizontal courses of Roman brick facing. As new
fragments are variably revealed and concealed, you find your perspective continually destabilized and inverted. Recalling the door through which you entered, its singular art glass design, used nowhere else in the home, expands in significance. The composition of pronounced vertical bands, tiered triangular patterns, and subdued green and gold tiles rhythmically abstracts, enhances, and mirrors the reality on either side of the glass (Figs. 23 & 24). Realizing that it is itself part of that reality, you turn toward the statue, which lingers on a concrete fountain, within an interlocking network of oak posts and beams that was conceived to accommodate hanging plants (Fig. 25).

The statue, which has become just one among many points in a continually shifting sequence of perceptions, stands 9 feet 3 inches high on its base and is a full-scale replica of the Nike of Samothrace. Drapery clads the body of the winged figure in response to both her own shifting weight, actively twisted torso, and striding right leg and the shifting nature of the surrounding elements, as garment folds conjure the effect of a forceful wind. Defying fixed canons of proportion, contrapposto and geometric order, the figure suggests, not only dynamic individual movement, but also a moment of fleeting interaction with the larger surrounding environment.

Portrayed in conventional historical narratives as representing the zenith of Hellenistic art and, therefore, the culmination of Classical progress, the Nike of Samothrace is an interesting choice for this space because it challenges, rather than neatly adheres to, the structure of thinking that history’s own internal logic has imposed upon it. Known only in fragmentary form, the statue’s origins are unclear: it remains, to this day, a work whose sculptor, site of display, commemorative intentions, and time and place of creation are indefinite and, therefore, unfixed. Open to constantly shifting realities and infinite possible interpretations, the Nike of
Samothrace was a relevant model for Wright precisely because it defies stylistic classification and fixity in time and space.\textsuperscript{158} It could be read as both a personification of Western progress and as a sphinx who challenged and destabilized that very notion.

In the Martin home, the statue of Nike emerges as a deceptive vanishing point, your comprehension of which is progressively destabilized as you perceive it across distinct spatial moments in a paradoxical labyrinth with no clear path of movement and no defined point of entry or exit. Challenging the expectations of pure visual apprehension as you move through space in time, the statue is a demonstration that perspective is never fixed, but always mutable. As you approach and, finally, become part of the space that it inhabits, it becomes clear that there is no center and nothing there to grasp other than the realization that any structure is as temporal as any space. The assumed vanishing point dissolves into the skylight as it opens above the Nike into a prism-like web of translucent glass panels framed by steel ribs (Fig. 26). An at-once reflective and transparent interpenetration of space and structure, the skylight becomes a lens through which you might see the interdependence between the lived reality of a space and every element that contributes to it.

Moving around the statue, the space disrupts expectation at every turn. Wright inverted the corners of the room by rotating piers so that their sharp edges project into and turn back upon the space itself (Fig. 27). Simultaneously, the broad sides of the piers flow open into windows that direct awareness toward the space beyond. The dynamic effect of a depth that both expands and recedes is heightened by the use of varied materials to create devices that articulate broken wall planes while disrupting boundaries between structural support and spatial definition. Broad, exposed concrete

\textsuperscript{158} Jack Quinan argues that the Nike of Samothrace carried symbolic associations—representing victory in the face of adversity or maternal presence—personal to Darwin Martin. Quinan, \textit{Wright’s Martin House}, 189-190.
planter boxes project toward you to reiterate the inward-turning effect of the rotated corner piers. At the same time, cruciform networks of oak fixtures intersect the piers to heighten the sense of simultaneous intimacy and openness that characterizes the home throughout and, yet, uniquely manifests in this specific environment.

As space unfurls around these devices, movement is again guided in multiple possible directions. Beyond the conservatory to the east, a path leads to the Barton house, while a door at the conservatory’s west side opens into a large carriage house (later turned garage). Turning back toward the south, you reencounter the spaces through which you have entered. Seen now from an alternative perspective, looking through the conservatory and up along the pergola toward the entry hall at its opposite end, you find that your perception and understanding of those spaces continues to shift with your own experience.

Moving back toward the pergola, you confront a mirrored image of the Nike statue reflected in the clear glass door at its south end, inverting the illusory vanishing point that you first encountered from the entry hall (Figs. 11 & 28). Evoking the reality of your own experience, the illusion fades as you move back through the pergola, the reflections of the conservatory collapsing into views that extend through the entry hall and into the landscape beyond (Fig. 29). As the view layers back to bring the outside in, the interior expands to underscore the impossibility of either a fixed reality or vanishing point to be grasped; the reality of these spaces is continually being mediated, not only by your own perceptions, but equally by an always fluctuating larger environment.

Proceeding toward the pergola’s south end, you are also reminded that progress is not linear; it takes a different shape for each individual. Recalling the

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159 Ibid., 13.
alternative path of movement as you exited the kitchen, you turn left through a
doorway into the dining room. Here again, you find yourself in a space that negates
distinctions between space and structure, intimacy and openness, interior and exterior
(Fig. 30). Avoiding rectilinear enclosures, the space unfolds, vertically and
horizontally, within a stepped framework of brick, wood, and glass fixtures that layer
into and intersect with one another (Fig. 31). Wright reiterated this effect in his
designs for the dining room chairs and table, which widens at its ends to extend
toward corner piers that, here again, are rotated to project inward (Fig. 32). Retaining
openness without sparing depth or complexity, storage spaces are built-in along the
north wall and sconces are suspended from piers, the spaces between which
accommodate utilities and additional storage. Lowered oak beams span the distances
between pier clusters to create alcove-like outcroppings along the north and east
walls. This helps to articulate distinct zones around the room’s clear plate glass
windows, which afford shifting views along the pergola to the north and toward
Summit Avenue to the east (Fig. 33).

Forming its own compact space within a larger network of spaces, the dining
room is itself discretely partitioned by two groups of pier clusters crossed by lowered
oak beams—this allows the space to remain distinct and intimate while
simultaneously flowing open southward into the living room, and westward into the
entry corridor (Fig. 34). Though you have already encountered these spaces in oblique
fragments from the entry vestibule and reception hall, your awareness and
understanding of them is reoriented as you approach them now from a new
perspective and in a new sequence of relationships to one another.

A sprawling ceiling articulated by bands of oak guides you toward the living
room, which you learn as you move through it, extends the practice of articulating
space within space (Fig. 35). Glass doors and windows destabilize the sense of confinement evoked by solid exterior walls, while meticulous appointments layer inward to evoke shelter and comfort. Pier clusters, varied ceiling heights, and furnishings act as mediating devices that help to create distinct spaces while allowing them to freely open into both one another and the site. On the other side of the pier cluster that partially partitions the dining room, for example, a portion of the living room opens to the east porch through a band of wood-framed doors (Fig. 36). The space is outfitted with oak furnishings designed by Wright, which include coffee and end tables, a bench designed for use with the room’s Steinway piano, and a couch, all of which seemingly grow from the floor above a deep ochre-colored carpet.

While this space is, on one hand, wholly unique, it is also a logical extension of the larger living environment. Beyond another cluster of supporting piers, it spirals out and again inward to reveal a library, reading, and sitting alcove further to the south (Figs. 35 & 37). In the alcove, an oak table mediates above built-in shelves between high-backed cushioned benches that face outward, toward Summit Avenue to the east, and toward the main entry to the west (Figs. 38 & 39). Bookshelves are built-in beneath the south-wall windows, with additional, climate-controlled shelves installed within the supporting pier clusters that also house lighting fixtures and heating and ventilation units, providing ample space to discretely and efficiently accommodate a large library. Even within this quiet nook, multiple distinct spaces emerge, such that individual inhabitants could cultivate separate activities and interests while remaining integrated with both one another and their surroundings.

Moving through the living room, you become aware that it is not a single, fixed space, but a continuous one in which multiple spaces defined by particular moments of use together generate a unified environment. As Wright wrote to Martin
while designing the house, in 1904, the “[w]hole first floor is living room with subdivisions,” identifying his ideal of a home centered on an open living space that would emerge and shift with the individual activities that constitute a social order.\textsuperscript{160}

In the essay that he sent to Martin in 1906, Wright explained how Japan had informed his rethinking of domestic space as a social unit defined by multiple shifting perspectives rather than by a fixed individual viewpoint.

\textit{Wright’s Critical Perspective on U.S. Domestic Space and Reflections on Japan’s Instructive Relevance for it}

“The unit of Western civilization,” Wright critiqued, “is the individual… we must make ‘the whole thing’ or we are not quite satisfied.”\textsuperscript{161} “The Japanese unit of civilization,” he contrasted, “is the family, using the word in a more strict and complete sense than we conceive it.”\textsuperscript{162} The predominance of the individual in modern U.S. society was a condition, Wright argued, of monotheistic doctrines that privileged notions of human autonomy and faith in ideal \textit{a priori} forms over concrete \textit{a posteriori} experience. “The Christian materialist,” he contended, “worships the personal humanities idealized in the figure of Christ and that is about as far as the Average Western Christianity goes.”\textsuperscript{163} Modern Christianity was grounded on the belief that a single creator had designed, built, and subsequently inhabited—in humanized form—a universe divided between the spiritual realm of heaven and the physical realm of earth. This belief extended back to an ancient Greek worldview that

\textsuperscript{160} Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 17, 1904, 17-1; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers.

\textsuperscript{161} Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-3; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906. This excerpt quotes, verbatim, Wright’s 1900 draft of the essay that became “The Japanese Print;” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-A, 7.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{163} Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-3, 24-5; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906.
had abstracted nature as distinct from the rational human subject in order to harness it; unable to fathom the workings of the universe, many had come to accept the view, strongly promoted as local power and polities were being consolidated around the eighth century BCE, that that which could be viewed as objectively fixed matter could be rationally understood and controlled.¹⁶⁴ This worldview is exemplified by the Greek temple, a structure that, in its various types, centered on the image of a single, humanized deity whose own idealized form was projected onto—and assumed to reflect—a world that came to be viewed as having a perfect, predetermined order. Absorbed to inform monotheism, this worldview formed the basis for a perspective centered on the rational human individual, who was believed to have been created in god’s image and endowed with the ability to control a material world viewed as separate from the self.

According to the Trinitarian doctrines of modern Christianity, god, whose own existence was accepted as infinite, had reconciled the spiritual and physical realms according to a perfect, predetermined logic at a fixed point in time. There was no need to question one’s own relationship to either the spiritual realm or the world that one inhabits because god was believed to have populated the earth with entities formed and hierarchically ordered to function according to his own ideal vision. Man believed that he was superior to all other entities because he had been created in god’s image and endowed with both an eternal spirit and the ability to control the material world through reason: according to the Book of Genesis, Adam realized the earth’s other creatures—or made them real—by understanding and naming them. As Wright intuited, this worldview was problematic because it relied upon a split between the...

individual spirit and objective matter and assumed the human—specifically, male—individual’s autonomy within what was, paradoxically, believed to be a predetermined ideal order. “Western materialism,” Wright argued, had made it difficult to look beyond the individual, explaining, “we, with our theory of democracy express ourselves with the petty fronts of class and caste based upon distinctions in their origin essentially vulgar…With us the individual is paramount entirely.”  

Wright’s critique of “Western materialism” reveals his awareness of the limitations of the individualistic, rationalist worldview that had been absorbed with Enlightenment philosophy to become deeply embedded in modern democratic society. Wright argued that Japanese culture was instructive for modern democratic society because it exemplified the understanding that the human individual cannot fix and control, but rather exists only within, nature’s own unfixed, temporal order. The Japanese, he reflected in the 1906 essay that he sent to Martin, …have developed a habit of life, thought and feeling that has formed for the social state an environment so true to nature that, notwithstanding the fact that it is conventionalized to a degree unequaled even by the Greeks, what is natural and what is artificial in it become a harmonious unit…When they make THINGS for themselves, all are informed with [an]…unerring sense of fitness in function and form; they share the secret of the poise and repose that informs the trees and the flowers.”

For Wright, Japanese culture embodied the understanding that living functions, not a predetermined ideal order, generate the form of any structure, allowing all structures to be seen as organic and unfixed. Informed by nature’s own example, the Japanese, from his perspective, had never viewed nature as objective material fixed and ordered by an autonomous human subject because they understood all entities as necessarily being defined by the temporal nature of existence itself. Wright saw this

165 Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-3; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906.  
166 Ibid.
understanding as having extended to shape an integrated social environment that was instructive for U.S. domestic space because it demonstrated a relevant alternative to an a priori ideal of order that centered on exerting individual autonomy. Demonstrating that there was no need to reconcile differences to adhere to a single, correct viewpoint, Japanese society, he argued, “expresses itself in a decided democracy” whose “achievements, in the mind of the people, [are] not a case of…any individual, but the achievements of…the national unit.”

**Wright’s Early Architectural Training and Exposure to Japan**

Wright was receptive to Japan’s instructive relevance for domestic space because he had learned early on to see beyond the rational, dialectical worldview that had predominantly shaped modern U.S. society. He had been raised Unitarian, which valued faith acquired through personal experience rather than blind acceptance of doctrine. In the nineteenth century United States, Unitarianism was deeply informed by Transcendentalism and Ralph Waldo Emerson’s (1803-1882) 1836 essay *Nature*, which critiqued dialectical thought centered on synthesis. “Time and Space relations vanish as laws are known,” Emerson argued, “Nature is not fixed but fluid.”

Unitarianism introduced Wright to the belief that god is manifest in the unified whole of an unfixed natural world, and to the understanding that human experience is a spiritual-physical condition of, not a fixed state that precedes, nature’s own temporal laws. Challenging the notion of fixed, a priori truths, Unitarianism aligned with and informed the American philosophy of Pragmatism that William James (1842-1910)

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167 Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-3, 24-4; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906. This excerpt quotes, verbatim, Wright’s 1900 draft of the essay that became “The Japanese Print;” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-A, 7.

popularized with his text *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907). Expanding upon ideas introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), James argued that understanding proceeds from lived *a posteriori* experience, rather than from fixed *a priori* truths. As he summarized in *Pragmatism*, “The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process...”\(^{169}\)

Informed by this way of understanding, Wright had learned to design buildings first in practice rather than theory. Never academically trained as an architect, he had secured his first job through his uncle, the prominent Unitarian minister Jenkin Lloyd Jones, in 1885. On Jones’ recommendation, the Chicago-based architect Joseph Lymann Silsbee hired the then-eighteen-year-old Wright to assist with the design of Unity Chapel in Helena Valley, Wisconsin.\(^{170}\) After briefly studying Engineering at the University of Wisconsin between January and December of 1886, Wright dropped out and went to work for Silsbee full time, later noting in *An Autobiography*, “with Silsbee, I…gained considerable light on the practical needs of the American dwelling.”\(^{171}\)

As Wright’s reflections suggest, he had not set out to formulate a critical approach to modern domestic space. Rather, he had learned during his apprenticeship under Silsbee between 1885 and 1888 that the predominant approach to the middle-class house was not the most logical. During that apprenticeship, Silsbee, who was an avid collector of Japanese art, had introduced Wright to Japanese prints as well as to intellectual circles that were promoting the instructive relevance of Japanese art and architecture.


structures and building practices in the U.S.\(^\text{172}\) His interest peaked by the exposure to Japan that he began to gain through Silsbee, Wright had the opportunity to concretely study Japanese domestic architecture as early as 1892-93, when the Hō-ō-den (Phoenix Pavilion) was erected for the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair (Fig. 40).\(^\text{173}\)

*The Hō-ō-den and the kiwari system*

A three-fifths scale model whose plan, wooden construction, and siting were based on the eleventh century Hōō-dō of the Byōdō-in Temple at Uji, near Kyoto, the Hō-ō-den was built on Jackson Park’s Wooded Island, just northeast of Louis Sullivan’s Transportation Building (Fig. 41).\(^\text{174}\) Wright, then apprenticing with the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan, had begun assisting Sullivan in planning the Transportation Building in the fall of 1892.\(^\text{175}\) Though Wright later denied that he had visited “the Japanese building” at 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, explaining “I despised the fair, went there but one afternoon,” he was, more significantly, on site when the construction of the Hō-ō-den began, before the fair’s opening, in December of the previous year.\(^\text{176}\)

In an accompanying visitors’ catalogue that described and pictured the Hō-ō-den’s plan, structures, and interiors, the Japanese-born scholar Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913), who helped to design the Japanese exhibits for the fair, explained that it was “substantially a replica of the [temple] at Uji,” though “smaller in size and modified to adapt it for secular use.”\(^\text{177}\) It had three pavilions—a central hall flanked

\(^\text{172}\) Nute, *Wright and Japan*, 24.
\(^\text{173}\) See Nute, *Wright and Japan*, 49 and “Summary of Events,” 184.
\(^\text{174}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{175}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{177}\) Okakura Kakudzo [sic], *The Hō-ō-den: An Illustrated Description of the Buildings Erected by the Japanese Government at the World’s Columbian Exposition*, Jackson Park, Chicago (Tokyo: K. Ogawa, 1893), 13. Also note that, while the design of the Hō-ō-den building was officially attributed to
by smaller left and right wings—that were joined by covered corridors, with interiors that replicated historical examples of Japanese domestic architecture (Fig. 42). The left wing represented a Middle Heian Period (ca. 868-1068 CE) aristocratic apartment from the Heian (Kyoto) Imperial Palace. The right wing was a reproduction of the tearoom and library from the Ashikaga-era villa of Gin-kaku-ji (Silver Pavilion) (ca. 1479) near Kyoto, built by the Ashikaga shogun Yoshimasa (Fig. 43). The central hall was modeled on a suite of rooms from the Edo period castle of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868) (Figs. 44 & 45).

The pavilions’ interiors displayed paintings, decorative arts, fixtures, and furnishings that applied Japanese principles and practices to modern industrial technology. The works had been made by students at the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts (Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō), which Okakura had helped to found in 1889, amidst national debates over how to prevent the wholesale adoption of Western forms and techniques while defining and preserving Japanese traditions after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Named Director of the school in 1890, Okakura had also overseen the production and selection of the works displayed in the Hō-ō-den, curating an exhibition that constructed a linear history for Japanese art and architecture while demonstrating the relevance of Japanese aesthetic traditions to modern industrial society. In the catalogue, Okakura used the metaphor of a phoenix to describe the Hō-ō-den as a

the Meiji government architect Masamichi Kuru, Okakura was, as Kevin Nute summarizes in Wright and Japan, deeply involved in its conception, planning, and presentation (see Nute, Wright and Japan, 50).

179 See Judith Snodgrass, “Exhibiting Meiji Modernity: Japanese Art at the Columbian Exposition,” pp. 75-100, in East Asian History 31 (2006). Snodgrass argues that the choice of works displayed at the exposition “was a material statement of the ideal espoused by Okakura…Japanese art—the expression of the Japanese spirit—when combined with western technology, would create a higher culture in both East and West” (76).
180 As Director of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, Okakura was, in addition to the Hō-ō-den, largely responsible for planning and directing the other Japanese exhibits at the fair. See Judith Snodgrass, “Exhibiting Meiji Modernity: Japanese Art at the Columbian Exposition,” pp. 75-100, in East Asian History 31 (2006).
“fabulous bird” that had “flown swiftly over the wide Pacific Ocean bringing with it works of art from its native land, which though comparatively insignificant, may, it is hoped, in some degree contribute to the beauty of the World’s Fair.”

Produced by a modernizing Japanese society, the Hô-ô-den was a model of domestic architecture built to demonstrate the relevance of Japanese aesthetic traditions that were becoming inherent to, while being defined by, the shared conditions of modernity.

“The buildings of the Hô-ô-den,” Okakura elaborated, “[were] built of unpainted wood, and the principles of Japanese construction and proportion [were] wholly adopted.” The Hô-ô-den’s three pavilions had been prefabricated in Japan according to the kiwari system, a Japanese craft tradition of proportional wooden construction. Their floor spaces were first marked out with tatami, removable reed or rice-straw mats, which conventionally determine the plan and placement of supporting roof columns in a Japanese house. After tatami were laid, the pavilions were fitted with standardized wooden components—columns, roof trusses, rafters, floor joists—that had been cut by Japanese carpenters from cypress, cedar, and pine and joined in a system of interlocking tenons and mortises. Constructed without nails, the pavilions were easily taken apart and transported to Chicago, where they were rebuilt and finished in clear lacquer by twenty-four Japanese craftsmen.

As a demonstration of the kiwari system, the Hô-ô-den exhibited a method of proportional wooden construction that employed standardized, prefabricated units and that had developed in response to a system of spatial planning. Developed to

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182 Ibid., 40.
184 Nute, Wright and Japan, 197. Also see P.B. Wight, “Japanese Architecture at Chicago,” published in two parts in The Inland Architect and News Record December 1892 and January 1893 and reprinted in Nute, Wright and Japan, 194-197.
accommodate the use of lumber that was hand cut to regionally standardized dimensions, the *kiwari* system applies the *ken*, a variable unit of length equal to the distance between the supporting columns of a Japanese wooden structure, to determine the proportional relationships between building components.\(^{186}\) Initially derived from the center-to-center distance between columns, the *ken* became, by the fifteenth century, a measurement derived from the distance between column edges, as the *kiwari* system adapted to accommodate the dimensions of *tatami* mats.\(^{187}\)

Durable and portable, *tatami* provided insulation and protection from the elements in early earthen-floored structures, and could be easily moved between dwellings or removed for cleaning.\(^{188}\) Flexibly lining a home’s floors, *tatami* denote the home’s usable interior space—for sleeping, eating, sitting—, and rooms accordingly came to be planned and measured by the number of mats of which they were made up: the tearoom reproduced in the Hô-ô-den, for example, measured four-and-a-half mats. As their use became widespread, the mats’ dimensions became standardized at a common measurement of 3 by 6 *shaku* (approximately equivalent to 3 by 6 feet).\(^{189}\) The *ken* adapted to this system of spatial planning based on *tatami*, evolving from a structural measurement of the center-to-center distance between columns to a measurement corresponding to the mats’ standard dimensions and, therefore, to the usable living space between column-edges. By the early seventeenth century, lumber sizes were standardized under the Tokugawa shogunate according to a *ken* unit of 6-*shaku*, allowing specialized craftsmen to produce, rapidly and in large numbers, both the *tatami* and the structural members used across Japanese carpentry.

\(^{187}\) Ibid.
\(^{188}\) Ibid.
\(^{189}\) Ibid.
Applied in the planning and construction of urban dwellings through the Edo Period, the *kiwari* system presented a craft-based approach to domestic architecture in which units of potential living space, denoted by *tatami*, logically generated the form of a structure that was flexibly built using standardized, prefabricated components. In *An Autobiography*, Wright recalled his understanding of this system when he reflected on his first visit to Japan, which he made in February-May of 1905:

…the Japanese house naturally fascinated me and I would spend hours taking it all to pieces and putting it together again. I saw nothing meaningless in the Japanese home…because all *ornament* as we call it, they get out of the way the necessary things are done or by bringing out and polishing the beauty of the simple materials they used in making the building…

The floors of these Japanese homes are all made to live on…

And strangely enough, I found this ancient Japanese dwelling to be a perfect example of the modern standardizing I myself had been working out. The floor mats, removable for cleaning, are all three feet by six feet. The size and shape of all the houses are both determined by these mats. The sliding partitions all occur at the unit lines of the mats. And they all speak of a nine, sixteen or thirty-six mat house, as the case may be.

The simple square, polished wooden posts that support the ceilings and roof all stand at the intersections of the mats. The sliding paper *shoji*, or outside screens that serve in place of windows and enclose the interior room spaces (they are actually the outside walls), all slide back into a recess in the walls. They too are removable.¹⁹⁰

Edward Morse’s Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings (1886)

The spatial, structural, and social lessons that Wright so clearly saw reflected in the Japanese house during his 1905 visit had been, not only exhibited by the Hô-ô-den, but also detailed by the American biologist Edward Morse in *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (1886), which was widely circulated as a trusted resource on Japanese domestic architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁹¹

A scientist who specialized in the study of brachiopods, marine animals that grow from larvae to develop hinged shells that sustain and shelter them, Morse had been appointed Chair of Zoology at Tokyo Imperial University when he became

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increasingly interested in Japanese domestic architecture. He wrote *Japanese Homes* while living in Japan between 1877 and 1883, in that time becoming a friend and collaborator of Okakura. Trained to examine how organic structures developed and functioned in response to marine environments, Morse similarly examined the Japanese dwelling as an expression of social environment, recognizing that “the nature of the [Japanese] house” was a condition of “social life.” Morse was among the scholars whose work Silsbee would have introduced to Wright, who almost certainly would have returned to *Japanese Homes* to supplement his understanding of the Hô-ô-den.

Morse’s text provided “a description of the homes of the middle classes” for an American audience, who, he argued, would benefit from a study of the craftsmanship of Japanese domestic architecture, which allowed a home’s usable interior living space, denoted by *tatami* mats, to flexibly generate its plan and determine the size and placement of standardized, prefabricated structural components. “As the rooms are made in sizes corresponding to the number of mats they are to contain,” he explained,

…the beams, uprights, rafters, flooring-boards, boards for the ceiling, and all strips are to go out in sizes to accommodate these various dimensions. The dimensions of the mats from one end of the Empire to the other are approximately three feet wide and six feet long; and these are fitted compactly on the floor. The architect marks on his plan the number of mats each room is to contain,—this number defining the size of the room; hence the lumber used must be of definite lengths, and the carpenter is sure to find these at the lumber yard.

Morse’s text illustrated that a carpenter skilled in the *kiwari* system could efficiently construct houses of variable plan and size in response to individual use and needs, without the need for confinement within a fixed, predetermined border. “Japanese

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195 Ibid., 26.
carpenters,” he argued, “are superior to [the] American [carpenter]…who has nailed up a few boxes.”

The Prevailing Conventions of Domestic Architecture in the Turn-of-the-Century U.S.

Chicago Balloon Frame Construction

In the late-nineteenth-century United States, the typical middle class house had been built according to a method that became known as Chicago balloon frame construction, in which standardized lumber members, typically two by fours, are nailed together to construct load-bearing framing walls (Fig. 46). The method was increasingly adopted as industrially-produced standardized lumber and nails became widely available, and builders could be easily trained in it because plans were conventionally square or rectangular, with four outer walls supporting the weight of a roof. As Gwendolyn Wright explains in *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (1980), the exterior structural frame of a house simultaneously fixed and ordered its interior functions (Figs. 47 & 48). Clearly defined frontal entrances opened into enclosed first floor rooms that composed the public zones of a family’s private space, while a second floor contained individual private bedchambers. Because balloon frame construction required little skill in fabrication, joinery, proportion, or planning, American carpenters, Morse observed, could not see beyond “the building of the conventional two-storied house and ordinary roof.”

196 Ibid., 35-36
198 Ibid., 10-11, 79-80.
“In our houses,” he explained, the “partitions and outside walls…are solid and permanent; and when the frame is built, the partitions form part of the framework.”

While pre-built framing walls preceded the plan of the typical American house and confined it within a fixed border, the rooms of a Japanese home flexibly delineated the shape and order of structural devices. Tatami determined the placement of supporting roof columns, eliminating the need for fixed, solid walls while instead generating networks of “slight sliding screens” that, as Morse described,

…run in appropriate grooves in the floor and overhead. These grooves mark the limit of each room. The screens may be opened by sliding them back, or they may be entirely removed, thus throwing a number of rooms into one great apartment…For communication between the rooms, therefore, swinging doors are not necessary.

Freed from a frame of load-bearing walls, “[i]n the Japanese house,” he expanded, “there are two or more sides that have no permanent walls… the whole side of a house may be flung open to sunlight and air…[and] a verandah…is protected by the widely-overhanging eaves of the roof.”

“Illustrating the principle points in Japanese architecture,” the Hō-ō-den had been widely visited, the Oak Park Reporter observed, before the World’s Fair opened in May of 1893, as “the structures under way drew…visitors to the north end of the island to watch the proceedings.” It introduced, Peter Bonnet Wight explained in the January 1893 issue of The Inland Architect and Building News, “profitable” lessons as an example of Japan’s traditional wooden domestic architecture that presented a flexible, more efficient alternative to Chicago balloon frame
Carpenters,” Wight had argued, “who think they know so much of their craft, may well go to the wooded island and see how much they still have to learn.”

Victorian Social Conventions

Gifted by the Meiji Imperial Commission to the city of Chicago after the 1893 fair, the Hō-ō-den remained in situ in Jackson Park until its destruction by fire during World War II and eventual removal in 1946. It was a public model of Japanese domestic architecture that was relevant, not only to carpenters, but also to architects and the growing middle class for whom they worked. As Gwendolyn Wright elaborates in Moralism and the Model Home, the late-nineteenth-century growth of modern industrial cities had at once threatened and intensified the Victorian ideal of the private, single-family dwelling “as the basis of a stable society.” As Victorian convention prescribed a social order that upheld the traditional structure and roles of the nuclear family, the typical middle class American house had been planned from a single, ideal perspective. A centrally-placed entry hall commonly led into a parlor for entertaining and family gathering, positioning the women’s realm in the home’s public sphere, while a separate study provided a private space for a man’s retreat from domestic life. A dining room was usually placed further back, positioned in close proximity to a kitchen that was typically small and enclosed at the back of the house.

204 P.B. Wight, “Japanese Architecture at Chicago,” published in two parts in The Inland Architect and News Record December 1892 and January 1893 and reprinted in Nute, Wright and Japan, 194-197 (quotation at p. 197). The January 1893 article was a follow-up to an article by Bonnet Wight published In the December 1892 issue of The Inland Architect and Building News, in which he argued that the Hō-ō-den illustrated, “not only the old architecture of Japan, but the exact method of construction employed in that country during the best period of its arts, ranging from four hundred to eight hundred years ago…”

205 Ibid.

206 Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, 10.

207 Ibid., 10-11, 79-80.
Bedchambers, removed to the second floor, were conventionally accessed by a prominent staircase in the parlor.

By the early 1890s, the model Victorian house was being called into question as the traditional structure of the nuclear family and domestic roles began to change. In light of a national economic recession, increased demand for industrial labor, women’s labor and suffrage movements, and philanthropic initiatives aimed at improving the quality of domestic life across an ever stratifying middle class, women increasingly assumed social, professional, and political roles outside the home while families absorbed domestic duties that some had previously delegated to hired staff.208 As the complexities of modern industrial life generated growing interest in a more pragmatic approach to the middle class home, popular American magazines such as Ladies’ Home Journal and The House Beautiful, Gwendolyn Wright explains, “advocated simpler, more efficient houses” and “demanded changes in the social structure” of domestic space.209 Wright, she argues, responded to the new conditions of middle class life in the modern industrial United States by rethinking the home as a social space that negotiated individual roles and needs within a community order.210

Parallels Between Wright’s Critical Approach to Domestic Space and Interpretation of Japanese Sources

Wright had begun to develop a spatial planning approach that considered the home from the perspectives of multiple inhabitants as he modified his own family’s home in Oak Park, Illinois. Wright had built the home in 1889, when his thinking remained, in many ways, tied to the conventional structure of the middle-class house

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209 Ibid., 107-108.
210 Ibid., 136-139.
(Fig. 49). In a way similar to Martin, Wright had learned, however, that that conventional structure was not practically suited to everyone’s needs.

After leaving Adler and Sullivan in late 1893, Wright had established an independent architectural practice, operating between a shared office that he rented in Chicago’s Schiller Theater Building and the small Oak Park home. Employing as a draftsman the Japanese architect Kikutarō Shimoda, who had overseen the construction of the California Pavilion for the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, Wright quickly built a successful practice based on residential commissions, which he had been accepting in violation of his Adler and Sullivan contract since 1892.211 Between 1893 and 1894, he executed his first official independent designs, attracting clients with his design for the William Winslow home (1893-94) in the nearby Chicago suburb of River Forest.

In 1895, Wright began to adapt and expand the Oak Park home to accommodate the needs of his growing architectural practice and family; between 1890 and 1903, he fathered six children with his first wife, Catherine, who was actively engaged in both the Oak Park and larger Chicago communities and who, as Margaret Klinkow explains in “Wright the Collector,” published in Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fifty Views of Japan: The 1905 Photo Album (1996), “conducted a

Wright’s Fifty Views of Japan: The 1905 Photo Album (1996), “conducted a

211 Shimoda had studied under the British architect Josiah Conder at Tokyo’s Imperial College of Engineering before moving to the United States in 1888. Fluent in English, Shimoda had purportedly financed his move to the U.S. with a Japanese translation of a text on American and European residential architecture. In Chicago, Shimoda worked under Daniel Burnham, who managed the construction for the fair and who likely introduced him to Wright. Shimoda became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1895 and was accredited as a licensed Illinois architect in 1897. He returned to Japan in 1898 and became best known for his promotion of a synthesis between traditional Japanese forms and modern materials and techniques through an “imperial synthesis style” (teikan heigō shiki), proposing that public buildings built using reinforced steel and concrete retain the horizontality of traditional Japanese roof profiles. When, in 1916, Wright received the commission to design Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel, Shimoda would argue that Wright had in fact based his design on an earlier one of Shimoda’s own. See: Olive Checkland, Japan and Britain After 1859: Creating Cultural Bridges, 83. Also See: Jonathan Reynolds, Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture, p. 274, n. 51. Also See: An Autobiography, in which Wright recounts his experiences with Shimoda and Burnham, who had offered Wright a job, which he rejected, after the fair (Wright, An Autobiography, 125-126).
kindergarten in their home in the 1890s and continued to teach her six children by making scrapbooks and practicing arts and crafts.”

In response to the family’s changing needs and activities, Wright modified his earlier design in several phases between 1895 and 1909 (Fig. 50). He opened up the kitchen and designed a secluded but practically integrated studio pavilion. He added a sprawling playroom and children’s quarters on the second floor and expanded the living room to become an articulated communal space oriented around a large central hearth. He incorporated multiple discrete entrances to accommodate the family members’ simultaneous circulation through the home’s open spaces without disturbing the activities occurring elsewhere.

In the midst of redesigning his own family home, in the July 1901 issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal*, Wright introduced his model plan for “A Small House with ‘Lots of Room in It,’” which proposed a middle-class house that could be flexibly adapted to accommodate specific individual needs within an open-ended order (Fig. 51). A home “free in arrangement” with “the main rooms large” would, he argued, free its inhabitants from the confinement of enclosed rooms prescribed by the box-framed house, which presented limited variability in planning and spatial divisions.

Proposing a cross-axial plan, “A Small House with ‘Lots of Room in It’” reduced the division of first floor rooms to three main open spaces: a living room—“the heart of the house”—, a dining room —“so coupled with the living-room that one leads naturally into the other without destroying the privacy of either”—, and a large kitchen that was positioned accessibly between them. Because the home would flexibly fulfill multiple functions simultaneously, unnecessary dividing walls could be

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214 Ibid.
eliminated, thus reducing the cost of materials and construction for a home efficiently built using modern standardized materials.\(^{215}\) In place of solid dividing walls, brick fireplaces would become a defining interior element, delineating distinct spaces while acting as structural devices that freed the load of outer walls, which could be opened to accommodate a terrace and multiple entrances. Block plans projected the home’s potential siting and orientation on a standard-sized one-hundred-foot lot such that privacy, garden space, openness, and logic of circulation could be retained within the larger community network.

Accessible as Wright was developing his spatial planning approach in the 1890s and early 1900s, the Hô-ô-den, Kevin Nute argues in *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, likely informed his conception of open-planning.\(^{216}\) The Hô-ô-den’s central hall, Nute elaborates, was cruciform in plan, with large reception and sitting areas forming the main axis and food preparation and private study areas extending along the shorter axis to either side, providing a model that was essentially similar to Wright’s “early Prairie House” ideal in form and functions.\(^{217}\) During the fair, several of the hall’s sliding *fusuma*, wood-framed partitions, “had been removed,” Nute explains, “to allow visitors a better view of the interiors from the surrounding verandah.”\(^{218}\) “[R]equiring only a relatively short step…to imagine all the internal divisions removed, leaving one ‘big room’ serving several different functions,” the Hô-ô-den, Nute argues, demonstrated how the elimination of unnecessary dividing walls could produce an open plan.\(^{219}\)

\(^{215}\) Ibid. Built of modern standardized materials that were efficiently used to fulfill combined functions, the home’s “simplicity of material and treatment,” Wright explained, would reduce the cost of building from the projected $6,970.00 of the “Home in a Prairie Town” to $5,835.00.

\(^{216}\) Nute, *Wright and Japan*, 59, 166.

\(^{217}\) Ibid., 59, 166-67.

\(^{218}\) Ibid., 166.

\(^{219}\) Ibid., 166.
As Wright recalled in “The Destruction of the Box” (1952), however, his experimentation with open planning, which he referred to as “beating the box”—a reference to balloon frame carpentry—had proceeded from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. “I think I first consciously began to try to beat the box in the Larkin Building—1904,” he explained, but “I had felt this need…early in my architectural life…the space within the building is the reality of that building,” not “the walls and roof.”220 By allowing the practical use of space rather than a preconceived order to define a home’s plan, the structure, Wright argued in “The Destruction of the Box,” would consequently be freed from its confinement within a fixed four-wall frame. Structure could then assume a form optimal to its function as shelter for space. “[T]he outer angles of a box,” he clarified, “[are] not where its most economical support would be…No, a certain distance in each way from each corner is where the economic support of a box-building is invariably to be found.”221 Supports could be positioned as useful elements within the space, where they might house utilities and storage while discretely differentiating zones of distinct use and character. The free placement of structural supports at logical points within the organizing spatial framework simultaneously creates, Wright explained, cantilevers that open corners and relieve the load of outer walls. “[N]o longer enclosing walls,” he elaborated, the “side walls become…free-standing screens, any one of which may be shortened, or extended or perforated, or occasionally eliminated,” while a sprawling roof creates “a splendid sense of shelter” and “of the outside coming in or the inside going out.”222

221 Ibid., 285.
222 Ibid., 286.
Applying the kiwari system, the Hô-ô-den had demonstrated how, by allowing usable space to determine the placement of structural components, it would be possible to move beyond a fixed, four-wall frame while flexibly and efficiently using standardized, prefabricated building members. As Okakura explained in the catalogue, its rooms were designed, and then outfitted with devices that allowed them to be flexibly subdivided or freely opened, both into one another and to the site:

...protection to the room is afforded by means of vertical shutters (shitomi) hung with bronze or iron hooks in the day-time to admit light; and let down at night. A folding door is attached to one side of the room...In passages leading outside or to other rooms misu, a sort of window or door shade made of fine split bamboo was suspended. This misu is easily raised or dropped by means of a hook.223

Dissolving fixed boundaries between rooms and between interior and exterior, the Hô-ô-den exhibited how living spaces could practically define structure within an open plan. Because load-bearing columns spaced at regular intervals could provide the necessary support for a roof whose size and shape was determined by the spaces that it sheltered, what mattered were the spatial relationships between building components. The spaces marked out by tatami were sheltered by cross-lateral roofs and surrounded by an engawa, an outdoor, verandah-like space that opened beneath eaves that extended nine feet beyond supporting roof columns. Without the need for solid, load-bearing walls and fixed windows, the pavilions were fitted with fusuma, sliding wood-framed partitions, and shôji, latticed sliding screens fitted with removable translucent paper, which could be pushed open or closed to adjust light, air, and communication with the larger environment. Without the solid enclosures prescribed by a pre-fixed, four-wall frame, a Japanese carpenter could efficiently extend a structure indefinitely in any direction to accommodate variable spatial needs.

223 Okakura, The Hô-ô-den, 14.
By designing such that domestic space defined a house’s plan and determined the shape of its structure, the need to consciously impose style would, Wright further argued, be eliminated as the form of a house became an expression of its living environment and the materials used in its making. He introduced this argument in the February 1901 issue of Ladies’ Home Journal with his model plan for “A Home in a Prairie Town,” which proposed that a modern house could be practical, beautiful, and logically-integrated with its surroundings if built in response to the social environment that defined it (Fig. 52).224 Because the house was planned according to a “well-established order that enables free use,” it could be efficiently built of modern standardized materials of masonry, cement, plaster, and polished wood without the need for added decoration. “The exterior,” Wright explained, “recognizes the influence of the prairie, is firmly and broadly associated with the site, and makes a feature of its quiet level. The low terraces and broad eaves are designed to accentuate that quiet level and complete the harmonious relationship.”225

“A Home in a Prairie Town” demonstrated that Wright saw the form of a house, not as an autonomous outward condition, but as an expression of the environment that had generated it. In an unpublished lecture on “The Architect’s Ideals” that he delivered at Northwestern University in 1900, Wright had critiqued Western houses that “lie upon the ground like boxes,” reasoning, “[i]n nature the form of anything whatever is determined by the function of that thing and there are no exceptions to this rule until civilization steps in and confuses the issue with a singular


Wright argued that such a home could be economically built and made affordable to all strata of the middle class; because it would eliminate autonomous form and express the modern, machine-produced materials used in its construction, “A Home in a Prairie Town,” he explained, would cost a projected $6,970.00.

225 Ibid.
system of forestalling conclusions called education.” The ideal architect, he argued, recognized that a structure’s form could develop logically in relation to its surroundings by moving beyond a fixed frame, first, on the interior. The ideal architect, he explained,

…must have learned from the Japanese how to respect wood. The walls are seldom painted…and your imagination is quickened and entertained by the imagination of the designer as you see it in the charming devices of the rooms, their inter-relation, the surprises in form and treatment, everywhere virility within the sense of quiet strength and repose. Outside the buildings…took[e] on the character of the site, looking as though they grew there…If your house was on the prairie, it would sympathise with it, make a feature of its quiet level.

Wright saw Japanese carpentry as instructive because it demonstrated that, rather than imposing unnecessary exterior forms on a house, its unique character could emerge organically and economically within the order of modern industrial society. While allowing uniform, prefabricated houses to be transported and quickly built across the country, balloon frame construction had not only required substantial quantities of lumber, nails, and materials for insulation, but also relied on finishing and dressing structures that had been rapidly nailed up using inexpensive, machine-milled lumber. Builders, Morse explained, needed only erect a simple rectilinear frame, which would then be outfitted with “doors, blinds, sashes, mouldings…turned out by the cord and mile.” The whole was finished with “painted surfaces; rectangular windows…; front door with its pretentious steps and portico; [and] warm red chimneys” to produce the “general trimness of appearance outside” that typified the form of the middle class American house. Critiquing this reliance on autonomous exterior form, “no one in our country,” Morse lamented, “is acquiring faithfully the carpenter’s

226 Wright, “The Architect’s Ideals,” Lecture at Northwestern University, Columbia, Avery Architectural Library Archives; 2401.012, 5. Note: Wright made numerous hand-written changes and notations throughout the text, including the indication of alternate titles, which include “What is Architecture” and “This Ideal Architecture.”
227 Ibid., 16-17.
228 Morse, Japanese Homes, 36.
229 Ibid., 6-7.
trade,” a condition that he argued was “no doubt due to the fact that machine-work
had supplanted the hand-work of former times.”

With the increased availability of industrially produced fittings and materials
around the turn of the century, form—the art of architecture—and structure—the
functional aspects of a building—had come to be viewed as independent
considerations. In “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” which Wright had drafted
by 1900 and delivered at Chicago’s Hull House in 1901, he argued that form and
structure were not independent considerations to be synthesized, but conditions that
should interdependently emerge from one another as they had in the handcrafted
buildings of the past. Refuting Victor Hugo’s thesis that industrial production
would kill the art of architecture, he argued that the machine, the tool of modern
craftsmanship, could revive “Art in the grand old sense…of structural tradition,
…wherein this form and that form as structural parts were laboriously joined in such a
way as to beautifully emphasize the manner of the joining.”

Wright emphasized wooden construction as exemplifying how the principles
of craft tradition could be adapted to industrial materials and techniques. “Certain
simple forms and handling,” he explained, “are suitable to bring out the beauty of
wood[…]a material having in itself intrinsically artistic properties, of which its
beautiful markings is one, its texture another, its color a third.”

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230 Ibid., 36.
231 Fenollosa had highlighted this in the “Report of [the] Fine Arts Commission,” which he prepared in
collaboration with Okakura and presented to the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1887. “The great
evil of European architectural practice,” he argued, “is the separation of the two functions of
‘construction’ and ‘decoration.’” See Fenollosa, from Report of Fine Arts Commission, as quoted in
Nute, Wright and Japan, p. 33, Note 82.
232 Columbia University, Avery Architectural Archive, 2401.007; On the first page of the manuscript,
dated to 1900, Wright notes in pencil, “Rewritten from The Art and Craft of the Machine.”
233 Frank Lloyd Wright, “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., The
234 Ibid., 28-29.
argued, “by its wonderful cutting, shaping, smoothing, and repetitive capacity…has emancipated these beauties of nature in wood[,]…universally abused and maltreated by all peoples but the Japanese.”

By applying the lessons of craft tradition to industrial technology, wood, Wright concluded, could be used “without waste,” and the “beautiful surface treatments of [its] clean, strong forms” would be “within reach of all.” He deduced that the same was true for “[o]ur modern materials” of “steel and iron, plastic cement, and terra-cotta,” which should be treated like “old materials in more plastic guise.”

In an 1894 lecture on “The Architect and the Machine,” delivered before the University Guild of Evanston, Illinois, Wright had argued that modern materials and technologies in fact enhanced the architect’s ability to design in response to the needs and conditions of modern life. The art of modern architecture and the conditions of industrial production need only be seen as complementary, rather than opposed, to one another. “The Architect,” he argued, “will…learn the secret of…their harmonies and” thereby transcend “the narrow limitations of structure outlined in his precedents.”

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237 Ibid. Wright reiterated this in his 1908 essay “In the Cause of Architecture,” arguing, “Bring out the nature of the materials, let their nature intimately into your scheme. Strip the wood of varnish and let it alone—stain it. Develop the natural texture of the plastering and stain it. Reveal the nature of the wood, plaster, brick or stone in your designs…” (Frank Lloyd Wright, “In the Cause of Architecture,” in Frederick Gutheim, Ed., In the Cause of Architecture: Wright’s Historic Essays for Architectural Record 1908-1952 (NY, NY: Architectural Record, 1975), 54-55).

238 Frank Lloyd Wright, “The Architect and the Machine” (1894), Columbia University, Avery Architectural Archive, 2401.006. “Scientific possibilities and demands,” Wright argued, “have out-run his hand-made art…The Architect will…learn the secret of…their harmonies and…will know the capacities of modern methods, processes and machines and become their master. He will sense the significance to his Art of the new materials that are his…” (20).

239 Ibid., 20.

240 Ibid., 20.
The ways in which Wright adapted the logic of the *kiwari* system to this end are exemplified by his development of “a unit-system” that employed standardized, prefabricated building components while moving beyond the mechanical uniformity of Chicago balloon frame construction. Wright explained this unit system in “In the Cause of Architecture I: The Logic of the Plan” (1928), arguing, “[p]eople should belong to the building just as it should belong to them.”

Outlining a logic that he applied to varied modern industrial materials, including wood, brick, cast concrete block, and concrete slab, he argued that uniform components could be used to economically build structures of differing size, function, and layout. The architect need only think in terms of a flexible unit of measurement that could be adapted, in a way appropriate to different materials and structures of different function and scale, to determine the proportional relationships between building components: “This scale or unit-of-size of the various parts varies,” he explained, “with the specific purpose of the building and the materials used to build it.”

Analogous to the variable *ken* unit of measurement used in the *kiwari* system, this unit of measurement should be determined, Wright argued, by intervals of usable space—“say 4’-0” on centers—or 2’-8” or whatever seems to yield the proper scale for the proposed purpose. Divisions in spacing are thus brought into a certain texture in the result…A certain standardization is established here at the beginning, like the warp in the oriental rug.”

Wright saw that standardized, machine-made components could be flexibly and logically integrated with a system of spatial planning because he had learned to see the machine itself, as he explained in an unpublished 1900 draft of “The Art and

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242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
Craft of the Machine,” as a structure produced by social space; the machine was an organism inseparable from the social environment that had generated it. “How organic a thing the Machine has become,” he argued, “interwoven as it is in the warp and woof of our civilization…in all flowing the compelling, magnetic fluid of your own life. Here, reflected in steam and steel and electricity, is a creature grown in response to man’s needs and in his image, becoming daily more sensitive and complete.”

If recognized as a structure produced by and integral to the social space that had given rise to it, the machine, Wright argued, would make it possible to design flexible, efficient, beautiful homes in response to human use and needs, thereby achieving “the marvel of a structure wherein time and space fade.”

As Neil Levine argues in *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (1996), Wright saw structure, not as the outward material form that fixes and defines interior space, but as a means of heightening awareness of the temporal experience that defines the home itself, attempting “to suggest by the static forms of a building the sense of duration one might experience in an instant of time” [emphases added].

To this day, this can be seen as a defining, and enduring, quality of Wright’s work (Fig. 53). Levine explains that, while Wright was far from alone “among modern architects in his desire to endow buildings with a temporal dimension,” he achieved that sense of temporality in a unique way because he did “something quite different;” he rejected the synthesis of structural form by which modern architecture became aligned with “steel, concrete, and glass structures” and visualized as “a machinelike, abstract architecture of lines and planes in space.”

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244 Columbia University, Avery Architectural Archive, 2401.007; 1-2.
245 Columbia University, Avery Architectural Archive, 2401.007; 2.
247 Ibid., XV.
rationalist approach emphasizing clear visual order, an industrial aesthetic, and *a priori* assumptions of what a modern house should *look* like to an outward observer, Wright saw the home *phenomenologically*—"as a complex of changing aspects" that could not be understood from a single perspective as fixed structure or pure form.  

As much as Wright embraced the potential of industrial technology to heighten the temporal experience of space, he was therefore also critical of contemporaries who designed specifically with an eye toward using photographs to promote their work. As he later summarized in a 1953 interview in the photography magazine *Aperture*,

> ...no one has ever seen a building in a photograph. No one ever will...[Y]ou must experience [a building] to get it...Of course...the buildings called the “international style” are mere façade. And you can always photograph a façade...But when architecture enters...You can’t photograph it.  

Recognizing that any spatial environment is actively created *as it is being experienced* across multiple senses and perspectives in time, Wright saw that a home’s reality could not be captured in images alone because images necessarily assume a fixed exterior viewpoint. He emphasized this in a 1929 hand-drafted letter “To Editor [Jean] Badovici,” of the avant-garde architectural journal *L’ Architecture Vivant*. Explaining “[w]hy [he was] dissatisfied with the intelligence displayed by [his] critics,” Wright critiqued reliance on purely visual apprehension, arguing,

> Critics will not hesitate to judge by externals, usually from photographs, which require more imagination to read between their hard limitations and distortions than

248 Ibid., 225, 251-52.
249 Frank Lloyd Wright, Interview in *Aperture* (Winter 1953), 36-37.
250 Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 225, 239, 251-252. Levine contrasts Wright with Le Corbusier, who saw the home as a series of snapshots—i.e., as a series of spaces that could be frozen and represented in time and that assumed the fixed viewpoint of an individual observer who remains always outside the image. Wright, conversely, looked beyond the frame of modernism and saw that space only exists in lived time and therefore cannot be visually apprehended; he used the photograph, like “the static forms of a building,” to emphasize that space defies purely visual comprehension because it can only be understood through the physical, intellectual, multi-sensory experience of it.
251 Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter “To Editor Badovici... ‘Why I Am Dissatisfied with the Intelligence Displayed by my Critics,’” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.060A.
most of [them] seem to possess. A good building, (one with the quality of “depth”) suffers in a photograph as does an individual who possesses the same quality.²⁵²

An ardent promoter of his own perspectives, Wright did not wholly reject photography and print media; rather, he used them to underscore the limitations of purely visual logic. This is demonstrated by the photographs of the Martin house that Wright chose to illustrate his essay “In the Cause of Architecture,” published in the March 1908 issue of Architectural Record.

For the publication, Wright selected thirteen photographs—more than of any other project—of the Martin house, which he chose from over thirty that the photographer Clarence Fuermann had taken after the house’s completion in 1907.²⁵³ Despite Fuermann’s efforts to capture overall views of the house, photographing it from elevated vantage points, the photographs that Wright selected present the home as a series of oblique spatial moments (Figs. 54-57). Wright included a single “general view,” in which trees obscure the structure as it steps out asymmetrically from the corner of Jewett Parkway and Summit Avenue, the irregularity of its interlocking broad profiles unfolding in a composition of planar depth that simultaneously discloses and subverts comprehension of the home’s organizing spatial logic (Fig. 58).²⁵⁴ In their deliberate obscurity, the photographs illustrate the impossibility of purely visual perception while provoking the viewer to instead reflect upon the sensations conjured by a photograph’s own reality. Wright understood that, as much as sight alone could not communicate the spatial experience of a home, sight alone could not communicate the experience of a meaningful picture.

²⁵² Ibid.
²⁵⁴ Quinan, Wright’s Martin House, 155. Wright, “In the Cause of Architecture,” in Gutheim, ed., In the Cause of Architecture, photo reproduced on p. 96.
This understanding is expressed by Wright’s personal photographs, which, as Jack Quinan explains in “Wright the Photographer,” published in Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fifty Views of Japan: The 1905 Photo Album (1996), Wright had begun to take and personally develop in 1890.\textsuperscript{255} As an 1895 photograph that Wright made of the living room at his family’s Oak Park home and studio exemplifies, he saw the photograph in a way analogous to his architecture: as a means of heightening individual engagement in temporal experience (Fig. 59).

Wright was distinct in this way of understanding photography in a context where many modernists viewed it, in a way analogous to their views of structure, as an autonomous mechanism that could be used to capture a building’s reality in fixed form. Two 1900 drafts of the essay that Wright later published, in 1912, as The Japanese Print: An Interpretation suggests that Japanese prints had informed him in this way of seeing.\textsuperscript{256}

Any meaningful, well-functioning structure, Wright argued in the early essay, is an expression of the living environment that produces it. Its form, therefore, could not be understood exclusively from a fixed exterior viewpoint because that form is always being generated by the interior nature of experience. “Using th[e] word Nature in the Japanese sense,” he reflected, “I do not mean that outward aspect that strikes the sense as the scene strikes the ground glass of the camera but that inner harmony of structure that penetrates the outward form or letter and determines character.”\textsuperscript{257}

\textsuperscript{256} Frank Lloyd Wright, drafts of “The Japanese Print,” 1900; Columbia Archives, 2401-009A and 2401-009B; these two drafts include both excerpts that Wright quoted in his 1906 letter to Martin and that formed the basis for the essay that Wright later published as The Japanese Print: An Interpretation (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Co., 1912).
\textsuperscript{257} Frank Lloyd Wright, draft of “The Japanese Print,” 1900; Columbia Archives, 2401-009A, pp. 5-7.
Rejecting the notion of pure formal autonomy, Wright saw form, not as the outward reflection of a separate interior reality, but as a living expression of that reality itself. Form, he argued, was generated by “the first and supreme principle of Japanese aesthetics…a stringent simplification by elimination of the insignificant and consequent relative emphasis of the real.”^258 Wright’s equation of “Japanese aesthetics” with “the real” reveals that Japanese prints helped him to formulate an intuitively phenomenological, rather than rational, understanding of aesthetics.^259 In contrast to a Renaissance tradition of visual representation that, extending from Euclidean geometry, centered on the use of fixed-point linear perspective to create an illusion of objective depth, Japanese prints embrace the use of multiple perspectives while drawing attention to their own two-dimensional reality. They simultaneously express the reality of a particular creator’s perceptions and physical engagement in their making, and remain open-ended to be interpreted by each individual viewer.

These qualities are exemplified by the print series’ of the Edo period master Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), whose work Wright particularly admired.^260 Wright’s early inventories indicate that he had, by 1900, acquired a large collection of prints from Hiroshige’s The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō series, which Hiroshige first executed in 1833-34, with multiple editions to follow through the 1850s.^261 The series conveys post stations along the Tōkaidō, the main coastal trade route between Japan’s pre-Meiji military capital of Edo and the imperial capital of

[^258]: Frank Lloyd Wright, draft of “The Japanese Print,” 1900; Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-B, p. 8.
[^259]: See discussion of aesthetics in “Introduction” to this dissertation.
[^260]: In Wright and Japan, Nute, for example notes that Hiroshige was “one of Wright’s favourite print artists,” and offers a series of observations on how Hiroshige’s prints informed Wright’s “process of geometric abstraction” and approach to draftsmanship (See Nute, Wright and Japan, p. 94, and Chapter Six, “The woodblock print and the geometric abstraction of natural, man-made and social forms” (pp. 99-119)).
[^261]: For a list and images from these multiple editions, see “The Woodblock Prints of Utagawa Hiroshige,” Accessible at: https://www.hiroshige.org.uk/Tokaido_Series/Tokaido_Series.htm.
Kyoto, which Hiroshige reinterpreted, from one edition to the next, at different times of year, under strikingly different circumstances and from strikingly different perspectives (Figs. 61 & 67). In a way exemplified by the first, and best known, edition of the Tôkaidô series, each scene itself incorporates shifting perspectives and extends within and beyond the pictorial space, co-integrating landscape, figures, and buildings to materialize as an individually unified environment while interacting with the other prints in an infinite sequence of possible relationships (Figs. 60 & 61). Together, the prints that compose each series, and the differing interpretations of these places offered from one edition to the next, depict the Tôkaidô as a fragmented sequence of distinct spatial moments that evoke—rather than attempt to visually capture—the living reality that bridged time and space to define Japanese society in a continually moving present. They might be seen as expressing the larger understanding that any structure—or form—is unfixed because it is always being actively defined by individual perceptions that unfold from multiple, shifting perspectives in time.

Applying an analogous spatial logic, in “In the Cause of Architecture,” Wright argued that, if the house were seen as a structure generated by the real—the living environment that defines a home—, its form would express the individual aesthetic character of its inhabitants, and the need to fabricate identity within an established social order would be eliminated. Introducing propositions that Wright explained he

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262 Ibid. Note: Though it is unclear if Wright had already acquired a complete set of Hiroshige’s The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tôkaidô before he visited Japan in 1905, it seems that he used that trip as an opportunity to supplement his existing collection of that series while focusing, particularly, on collecting prints from Hiroshige’s One Hundred Famous Views of Edo series (first published posthumously ca. 1856-1859), which seems to have been lesser known to Wright before he visited Japan (See, e.g., Nute, Wright and Japan, 108).
had begun formulating in 1894 and refined “in the light of experience,” he contended.\textsuperscript{263}

There should be as many kinds (styles) of houses as there are kinds (styles) of people and as many differentiations as there are different individuals. A man who has individuality (and what man lacks it?) has a right to its expression in his own environment.\textsuperscript{264}

Wright saw that the interior reality that generates the aesthetic character of the individual home would simultaneously generate the aesthetic character of the larger social environment; he saw that structure, as he had further explained in a 1900 draft of “The Japanese Print,” is never independently defined and autonomous—it is “…an organic form, an organization in a definite manner of parts or elements into a unit or whole...What is true of the pine tree for and by itself is no less true in the relation of the tree to its environment.”\textsuperscript{265} The Japanese “perception of Nature-law,” Wright concluded in that essay, had been “established progressively in individual and social life” to generate an integrated aesthetic culture grounded in living reality, “as a whole the civilization becoming a true work of art.”\textsuperscript{266}

\textit{Japan as a Living “Work of Art”}

“It is a curious sight,” Morse recalled in \textit{Japanese Homes}, “to look over a vast city of nearly a million inhabitants…and see distinctly revealed the minuter details of the landscape beyond” (Fig. 62).\textsuperscript{267} When viewed from the exterior, the Japanese house, he explained, was “unsubstantial in appearance” to an American observer, “[a]customed as we are…to a front-door with steps and rail and a certain pretentious

\textsuperscript{263} Wright, “In the Cause of Architecture,” in Gutheim, ed., \textit{In the Cause of Architecture}, 54.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., 54-55.
\textsuperscript{265} Wright, 1900 draft of “The Japanese Print,” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-B, pp. 2-4.
\textsuperscript{266} Wright, 1900 draft of “The Japanese Print,” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-B, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{267} Morse, \textit{Japanese Homes}, 335, 2.
architectural display,” because it did not convey the expected formal order. The entrance, he emphasized, “is often vaguely defined,” and “since the interior of the house is accessible from two or three sides, one may enter it from any point.”

Because the interior environment rather than a preconceived outward order had generated the Japanese home, its logic could not be apprehended from a fixed exterior viewpoint; the individual home seemed imperceptible as it became absorbed into the larger environment. In “the desire for pretentious show,” Morse reflected, “we have scattered over the land…a countless number of ill-proportioned, ugly, and entirely inappropriate buildings for public use…on the most conspicuous sites.”

Aligning the moralism of the ideal citizen with exterior formal order, many American architects and planners, Gwendolyn Wright explains, had looked initially to English example and to the ideas of John Ruskin to formulate model communities and houses intended to visually promote the individual as the foundation of social order in an ideal industrial democracy. Meticulously lined with winding roads and pathways, lush green space, and tall trees, suburban communities like Parkside were designed to outwardly convey the picturesque, Arcadian ideal of a return to nature as the inhabitants of previously rural communities transitioned to fulfill roles in urban, industrial centers (Fig. 63). Developed between 1876 and 1936 and designed largely by Frederick Law Olmstead, Parkside, like many U.S. suburbs, became populated with single-family detached houses that predominantly emphasized frontality, exterior order, and forms intended to visually define individual identity within the established social order (Fig. 64). Stylistic details inspired by Gothic

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268 Ibid., 6, 235.
269 Ibid., 234-235, 8.
270 Ibid., 335, 2.
272 Ibid., 26-28.
Revival, Neoclassical, and Tudor examples drawn from English aristocratic mansions were viewed as outwardly conveying the Christian values, democratic ideals, and economic prosperity of an emerging American middle class that had no history of a public presence. Made widely available by industrial production, such details were eclectically adopted and were promoted as a way, along with exterior variations in color and surface treatment, to fashion individual identity in homes built of modern standardized materials whose plans and lots in a community grid were largely uniform.

In this context, the U.S. public became increasingly interested in Japan because it expressed ideals that were both familiar and strange. These ideals were exemplified by a “First Japan” exhibition that was curated for the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition (Fig. 65).

The Exposition, for which Wright had designed a pavilion for the Portland Cement Company, recreated a traditional Japanese village for American audiences in Delaware Park. Located less than a mile from both the Martins’ then-house in Parkside and from the site on which the Martin home would be built, the Japanese village was one of the most widely attended features of the Exposition, visited by Morse as well as by Wright’s Chicago client, Mrs. Avery Coonley. In addition to landscaped gardens and merchant shops, it reproduced a full-scale model of a Japanese dwelling with a Shintō shrine and adjoining tea garden, providing an

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273 Ibid., 23.
interested American audience with what the *Buffalo Evening News* described as “a true representation of the home life of the Japanese.” A community of Japanese artisans, craftsmen, merchants, and performers who lived in Buffalo for the duration of the Pan-American Exposition between May and November of 1901 built and inhabited smaller typical residences to create, *Buffalo News* reported, “a perfect reproduction of a Japanese village…The Japanese architecture is a study in itself and many fine examples are to be found…Everything harmonizes.” Upon entering the village, another reporter observed, “[t]he exposition fades” as “[a] bit of old Tokio is mirrored upon the film of the imagination.”

As such exhibitions and the reports describing them suggest, many viewed Japanese culture in a way analogous to the photograph: as a static work of art that reflected their own illusion that space could be outwardly captured as having an isolated, objectively fixed reality in time. Michel Foucault shed light on this tendency in “Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias” (1967), in which he likened the photograph to the mirror. A placeless place, the mirror directs awareness back toward the real space that one inhabits. It is an interval in which space intersects time as abstract utopia—“unreal space…that ha[s] a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society,” becomes heterotopia—“real [space]—a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which…all the other real sites…are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”

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277 See Scrapbooks documenting the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition; e.g., Vol. 6: 184; Vol. 8: 97; Vol. 9: 209; Vol. 11: 259, 244, 100. Accessed at: http://nyheritage.nyln.net/cdm/search/collection/VHB001/searchterm/VHB009/field/collec/mode/exact/conn/and/order/title
278 Ibid., Vol. 16: 156.
279 Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias (1967),” Translated by Jay Miskowiec, in *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27.
That many in the U.S. projected their own utopian visions onto Japan reflects the familiar sense of detachment that they felt from their own domestic environment. As a modernizing Japan was becoming part of a modern industrial world, it, too, had reflected upon itself through the lens of U.S. society, creating structures that defined and introduced cultural traditions that could be read from multiple perspectives to become integrated into the changing, shared social space of modern life: on one hand, Japan actively promoted a romantic illusion of its pre-industrial culture to capture the broader interests of a modern U.S. public that was eager to consume images of the simple life of the past. At the same time, the unique instructive significance of Japanese cultural traditions that were really being generated in relation to modern U.S. society in the living space of the present was not lost on all.

The American art historian Ernest Fenollosa was a close collaborator of Okakura and fellow representative of the Meiji Imperial Fine Arts Commission who helped to found the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts. A specialist on the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Fenollosa had been invited, on Morse’s recommendation, to teach Western philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, yet had, in a way similar to Morse, developed such an interest in Japanese culture after his arrival in 1878 that he instead became central in the project to define and preserve Japan’s own aesthetic traditions. Working closely with Okakura, Fenollosa conducted the first comprehensive survey of ukiyo-e prints and promoted their collection and exhibition in both Japan and the U.S. as he spent the years between

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280 Nute, Wright and Japan, 24. A collaborator of Okakura, Fenollosa taught and worked between Japan, Chicago, and Boston between 1878 and 1890. In 1890, he returned to the U.S. to become the curator of the Japanese Department at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, organizing the museum’s first exhibitions of Japanese prints and lecturing extensively on Japan’s artistic traditions in both Boston and Chicago. Fenollosa’s The Masters of Ukiyo-e (1896) helped to define the Japanese ukiyo-e print tradition as he promoted the collection and exhibition of Japanese prints in both Japan and the U.S.

281 Ibid., 20.
1878 and 1890 traveling between Japan, Boston, and Chicago. After re-settling in the U.S. in 1890, he became the curator of the Japanese Department at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and lectured extensively on Japan’s aesthetic traditions in both Boston and Chicago. Through these activities, he promoted the relevance of aesthetic lessons that he identified across the Japanese arts and architecture for both modern Japan and the United States. Fenollosa summarized these lessons in “The Nature of Fine Art,” a two-part essay that was published in The Lotos in March and April of 1896.

Citing, as Nute points out, large portions of an 1891 lecture that he had delivered on “The Lessons of Japanese Art,” Fenollosa argued that the work of art should dissolve the illusion of separations between fixed space and fluid time and between experiencing subject and experienced object:

[T]he work of art is constituted through a peculiar organic relation of its parts…like the conception of time, and space, and number, and cause, it is not something which belongs by its nature to matter, or something which by its nature belongs to soul alone, but something which transcends the plane of this duality between subject and object.

Signaling his awareness that the distinctive aesthetic character of Japanese art derived from the understanding of craft practice intrinsic to its making, Fenollosa reiterated, as Nute explains, Morse’s advocation of the instructive merits of Japanese carpentry, which countered “the great evil of [a] European architectural practice” based on “the Renaissance imitation of the classic” and “the separation of the two functions of ‘construction’ and ‘decoration.’”

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282 Ibid., see Biographical Sketch on Ernest Fenollosa at pp. 187-188.
283 Ibid., 24-26.
284 Ibid.
286 Ibid. Also see Nute, Wright and Japan, 26, 77, and notes at p. 33.
287 Ibid.
288 Ernest Fenollosa, 1887 Report to the Japanese Ministry of Education, as quoted in Nute, Wright and Japan, 33.
this collapse of space into time and subject into object that most interested Fenollosa. In *The Masters of Ukioye: a Complete Historical Description of Japanese Paintings and Color Prints of the Genre School* (1896), Fenollosa cited Hiroshige’s print series’ as particularly instructive arguing, “Hiroshige is unquestionably one of the greatest and most original of the world’s landscape designers…his work is of special value to our landscape students in the West.”

**The Print as a Representative Study in How to Craft Space**

Echoing Fenollosa’s argument for the instructive merits of Hiroshige’s prints, Wright recalled, in a 1917 lecture on “The Print and the Renaissance” that he delivered at Taliesin, how Hiroshige’s work had deeply impressed his understanding of the spatial-temporal continuity of lived experience, in ways that became directly expressed in his approach to architecture:

…he [Hiroshige] had an idea of swinging this horizontal into the vertical; and in doing that so handled everything to give you a continuous sense of space. Not something within the frame…but something of which you caught a glimpse which gave you a great sense of continuity…you see that go through all the series. The greatest idea in landscape that ever could be found…Hiroshige did, with a sense of space, very much what we have been doing with it in our architecture. Here you get a sense of tremendous, limitless space, instead of something confined within a picture…On what is your attention focused? Nothing. You’re right in the great breadth and spread of the scene.

Nute argues, astutely, that Wright’s study of the print informed both his unique approach to architectural draftsmanship and his visualization of plan as a sequence of geometrically abstracted organic patterns. Yet, Wright’s fluency in Hiroshige’s work and passionate interpretation of it in a way that evokes the experience of his

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290 Frank Lloyd Wright, “The Print and the Renaissance,” from manuscript of a Lecture delivered at Taliesin on 15 November 1917, as quoted in Nute, *Wright and Japan*, 108.

291 See Chapters Five, “Composition: the picture, the plan and the pattern, as aesthetic line-ideas” (pp. 85-98), and Six, “The woodblock print and the geometric abstraction of natural, man-made and social forms” (pp. 99-119), in Nute, *Wright and Japan*. 
own architecture make clear that he had, more fundamentally, long been cultivating
his understanding of the print as a study in the spatial-temporal continuity of lived
experience.

Though it is unclear when Wright began to study the prints of Hiroshige,
specifically, Quinan argues, in “Wright the Photographer,” that “Wright seems to
have encountered [Hiroshige’s work] soon after settling in Chicago.”292 By 1906,
Wright had developed such an appreciation for—and large collection of—the master’s
prints that he collaborated with fellow print collector Frederick Gookin to co-curate
the first major U.S. exhibition of them at the Art Institute of Chicago.293 Wright had
made a point to expand his collection of Hiroshige’s prints during his 1905 trip, and is
known to have later sold prints to alleviate financial strain. Distinct from other
collectors, however, Wright’s appreciation for and promotion of the print was
grounded in its common craft-based reality as a living work of art. As he further
recalled in his 1917 lecture on “The Print and the Renaissance,”

> When I first saw a fine print about twenty-five years ago it was an intoxicating thing…On one of his journeys home he [Fenollosa] brought many beautiful prints, those I made mine…I appreciate today even more than I did then. These first prints had a large share I am sure in vulgarizing the Renaissance for me…“[The print] is not trying to be something it is not…In a word the craft of the print is integrated with its Art.”294

As a young apprentice, Wright had become closely engaged with the work of
Fenollosa, who was Silsbee’s cousin and from whom Wright acquired his first prints
sometime around 1890.295 Consistent with his pragmatic, experiential approach to
learning, Wright had learned to see the craft-based significance of the print from
multiple perspectives as he was learning to practice architecture.

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293 Nute, Wright and Japan, 150-151.
295 Nute, Wright and Japan, 25.
Wright’s statements underscore, for one thing, his attentiveness to the distinction between Renaissance illusionary spatial depth and the print as an expression of the real physical creation of it. Renaissance pictorial conventions aimed to convincingly represent depth by applying fixed-point linear perspective to remove evidence of a particular artist’s engagement in their making—the ideal was to make the flat surface of a picture appear to be a complete, transparent window on the world, through which a viewer could visually apprehend the reality of a space from which they were physically detached. The Japanese print, and particularly those of Hiroshige, express what the Japanese architect Kuma Kengô interpreted, in the Foreword to Patterns and Layering: Japanese Spatial Culture, Nature, and Architecture (2012), as an alternative understanding of the real process by which spatial depth is physically composed.\(^{296}\) Hiroshige’s scenes, namely, are made up of a series of separate blocks that were overlaid, one upon the other, such that depth is achieved in the way that we actually experience it—there is no fixed vanishing or focal point, but rather, a layered sequence of elements that dynamically interact with one another. With each block, elements were variably added and repeated, with varying degrees of gradation and linear articulation, to physically create depth. Kuma argues that Wright “understood that Hiroshige’s woodblock prints were products of this spatial comprehension,” concluding, “[w]e may postulate that the unfolding of such [a spatial] layering technique defines Wright’s architecture.”\(^{297}\)

Wright saw that the physical, process-based manner by which Hiroshige created spatial depth in his prints as logically extended to the embodied experience of a home. This suggests that Wright’s early study of Japanese prints was bolstered by


\(^{297}\) Kuma, “Foreword,” in Liotta and Belfiore, eds., Patterns and Layering, 4-5.
his collaboration with the Japanese draftsman Shimoda, who had helped Wright to build his independent architectural practice in the early 1890s and who himself went on to become an accredited Illinois architect in 1897.298 At the same time, Japanese prints were, in a very real sense, becoming integrated into Wright’s own domestic space in the 1890s.

As Quinan points out, an 1896 photograph that Wright made of the children’s playroom that he had recently designed for his family’s Oak Park home and studio, for example, “reveals” a curious “cluster of Japanese prints tacked to the wall next to the entrance hall” (Fig. 6).299 In “Wright the Collector,” Klinkow explains that, though “Catherine’s complementary activities” during the time that Wright was cultivating his architectural approach are “[l]ess well known,” Catherine herself “collected Japanese home furnishings and materials for use in the children’s education.”300 As Wright was redesigning the Oak Park house, he was concretely learning, equally through interaction with his own family, to see the print, not as an isolated artistic pursuit, but as a living craft that was inextricable from the common activities of daily life. Underscoring this lesson, in that same photograph, a small-scale replica of the Nike of Samothrace—another unusual choice for a children’s playroom—is also visible (Fig. 6). Asymmetrically elevated against a backdrop that visually recedes into pure void, the statue emerges as one of multiple points in a scene that evokes the space’s unifying reliance on the always larger social and natural environment that constitutes a home.

That Wright’s early interpretation of Japanese prints had been inextricable from both his early architectural training and developing understanding of the social

298 See discussion of Shimoda in section titled “Parallels Between Wright’s Critical Approach to Domestic Space and Interpretation of Japanese Sources.”
and natural environment that constitutes domestic space is evident in the way that he integrated them into the design of the Martin house. Although the Martin house was built by late 1906, Wright did not consider it complete until at least 1907, after he had selected two dozen Japanese prints to be displayed throughout the home. The prints included several from various editions of Hiroshige’s *Tôkaidô* series (Figs. 67 & 68).\(^{301}\) For a wall opposite a street-facing window in the living room, Wright selected what seems to be a print of station number five, “Hodogaya: Shinamchi Bridge,” from an as-yet-unidentified edition of the *Tôkaidô* series.\(^{302}\) The scene depicts a wooden footbridge that crosses a river and leads down into a village landscape (Fig. 68).

The pictorial space has no clear focal or vanishing point and is instead built up in layers of depth that at once recede and project to evoke a sense of calm movement as you become engaged in the scene. Assuming a slightly elevated vantage point, which evokes your real perspective when standing in the space, you face the river, whose open expanse is punctuated by bodies of rock, their irregular size, shape and placement generating a quiet, flowing order that directs awareness toward the downslope of the bridge at the lower right. As the bridge descends above a heap, only partially visible, of supporting rubble stone, it extends through the pictorial frame to become part of your own inhabited space as you stand before the picture.

The irregular rhythm of the rocks in the river beneath the bridge is complemented by figures whose movements heighten your awareness of the scene’s unfolding in multiple directions and along multiple paths. Two figures face you, positioned at different points in time and space along the bridge as they cross toward

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\(^{301}\) While the prints merit further research, the Martin House website indicates that the prints on display today are those selected by Wright. See: “The Collection: Martin House maintains, preserves, and exhibits a fine collection of works of art designed or selected by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Martins, as well as objects related to the family and the history of their home,” Accessed 10 March 2022 at: [https://martinhouse.org/explore/collection/](https://martinhouse.org/explore/collection/).

\(^{302}\) Ibid.
you and emphasize the path’s projection beyond the picture. Simultaneously, your 
attention is thrust back into the scene as you follow the alternative path of a figure 
who turns away, proceeding along the bridge as it recedes in time and space toward 
the bank at the opposite end. As the bridge at once projects and recedes to become an 
interval that traverses and connects pictorial and real time and space, your awareness 
moves along and beyond it, guided toward two figures who have already crossed. 
Beyond the bank at the far side of the river, they descend deeper into the scene along 
an oblique diagonal path that leads into the town below.

The flowing, multi-directional movement of the figures is reiterated by the 
staggered forms of structures that rhythmically step out and back beyond view. Deep 
green foliage built up in irregular, curvilinear lines frames and envelopes the 
structures while opening the space into the distance as the scene dissolves toward an 
obscure fog. The shifting broad flow—forward and back, left to right, right to left—of 
discretely intersecting diagonals is punctuated by sprawling trees whose branches, 
bare of blossoms, extend back, out and up toward a pale yellow-gray sky, evoking a 
space between seasons and times of night and day, an atmosphere in flux. With no 
clear horizon line, vanishing point or sense of a correct, fixed perspective from which 
to view and comprehend the scene, you become aware that it relies on something that 
cannot be grasped—your own shifting perceptions of it. Hung opposite a clear plate 
glass, street-facing window, the print becomes at once a reflection and extension of 
the living environment that generates the home’s complex, shifting order.

The Japanese print, Wright had argued in one of his 1900 drafts on the subject, 
was instructive for the U.S. and “for the architect, particularly,” because “we 
remain…outside in the realm of the literal—the objective…[I]n order to comprehend 
[the print]…we must take a view-point to us as a people…unfamiliar” to recognize
the “harmony in the nature of the universe.”303 In “The Modern Home as a Work of Art,” which Wright “[r]ead before the Chicago Women’s Club” in 1902, Wright elaborated that any picture is deceptive when viewed as an autonomous formal object; if viewed as fixed objects separate from the domestic space in which they inevitably function, pictures only distract from the living environment that is domestic space.304 Because the life of the home generates its aesthetic character, the home’s living room, he explained, should offer

…charming glimpses of inner restfulness, of inner harmony...No prints or pictures intrude upon attention here, but the walls stay quiet. In the perfection of their framing finish, and mystery of color[,] they are backgrounds for the pictures living there. How much more important, significant the living moving human pictures become, emphasized and bettered by the gentle harmonious breadth around about them.305

From Wright’s perspective, decoration as such was non-existent because it was itself inextricable from the life of the home. “‘[P]ictorial’ art,” he elaborated, “is cherished and respected too highly to let it become inert or quarrelsome or common on the walls. A broad oak surface with shelf above and simple dark framed surface over, contains yet conceals choice things for rare entertainment, when mood requires their use.”306 Wright described this built-in space for storage and display as a “wood architectural portfolio,” holding pictures until “suited to the mood,” and providing “an appropriate place for setting them out to view...”307

Similar spaces had been exemplified by the right wing of the Hō-ō-den, which was modeled on the tearoom and library of Ginkaku-ji, a late fifteenth century villa built near Kyoto by the retired shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimasa (Fig. 43). The tearoom, in particular, would have interested Wright because it isolated aesthetic values that

305 Ibid., 12, 16.
306 Ibid., 16.
307 Ibid.
Okakura later attributed, in his 1906 *The Book of Tea*, to the centrality of the tea ceremony in Japanese domestic life.

Refining arguments that he had introduced in earlier English-language texts that included *Ideals of the East* (1883) and *The Awakening of Japan* (1904), Okakura argued that the tea ceremony had democratized Taoist aesthetic values in a Zen-like practice freed from worldly concerns, during which all participants met with equal status. During the ceremony, tea is prepared over coals in a sunken hearth and served for the shared appreciation of participants. According to Okakura, the tea ceremony instilled spiritual and spatial lessons that extended to shape all aspects of Japanese domestic life in ways exemplified by the tearoom.

A highly specialized structure that is reserved for the practice of the tea ceremony, the tearoom is the exceptional example of a Japanese structure whose form might be interpreted as fixed: the typical tearoom measures four-and-a-half *tatami* mats, or about 10 feet by 10 feet square, and includes *chigaidana*, staggered built-in wall shelves for the storage of texts and utensils, and a *tokonoma*, an alcove reserved for the display of selected works, such as a hanging scroll, incense burner, flower vase, and candle holder. Yet, while its form might be taken as fixed, the tea room, Okakura made clear, is not meant to be viewed as a fixed structure filled out with objectively present things. “[T]he system of decoration in our tea-rooms is opposed,” he explained, “to that which obtains in the West, where the interior of a house is often converted into a museum.”

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308 Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008 reprint), 47. Notes: Okakura’s name was modified to “Kakuzo Okakura” for this publication. Also, this citation refers to the reference copy of Okakura’s text that is used throughout this dissertation. The text was first published in 1906 by Fox Duffield & Company, New York. The Charles Tuttle edition is a beautifully crafted work that I strongly recommend to anyone interested in reading *The Book of Tea* (Rutland, VT & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956/1980).  
309 Ibid., 50.
for what may be placed there temporarily to satisfy some aesthetic mood. Some special art object is brought in for the occasion, and everything else is selected and arranged to enhance the beauty of the principle theme.”

The tearoom is seen as an unfixed, mutually created space that only takes shape in time with the tea ceremony, the living practice that defines it. Because it is seen as a space activated by interior experience, “[i]n the tea-room,” Okakura elaborated, “it is left for each guest in imagination to complete the total effect in relation to himself.” As much as the experience and reality of the tearoom are wholly individually, it equally, for Okakura, exemplified how living social space, rather than an imposed, a priori order, had generated an integrated society. “The ideals of Teaism,” he reflected, “have since the sixteenth century influenced our architecture to such degree that the ordinary Japanese interior of the present day, on account of the extreme simplicity and chasteness of its scheme of decoration, appears to foreigners almost barren.”

The logic and values exemplified by the tearoom could be applied to any structure because, as Okakura made clear, its reality does not reside in an autonomous material form. The tearoom is seen as marking out a vacant interval in which space can become activated by the living activity that occurs in it. Okakura summarized its significance by invoking the Chinese philosopher Laotze to illustrate how mutually created space defines any practical structure. “The reality of a room,” he explained, is “to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and the walls, not in the roof and walls themselves,” just as “the usefulness of a water pitcher dwelt in the emptiness where water might be put, not in the form of the pitcher or the material of

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310 Ibid., 49-50.
311 Ibid., 51.
312 Ibid., 40.
which it was made. Vacuum is all potent because all containing. In vacuum alone
motion becomes possible.”  

Wright claimed to have not read The Book of Tea until the 1920s, recalling, in
“The Natural House” (1954), his surprise at learning that Okakura’s reference to
Laozte perfectly summarized the approach to space that he believed he had himself
“discovered.” Yet, in line with Wright’s reflection, in An Autobiography, that,
when he first visited Japan in 1905, he “strangely enough…found th[e] ancient
Japanese dwelling to be a perfect example of the modern standardizing [he] [him]self
had been working out,” it is perfectly logical that Wright would have already arrived
at the lessons that he later saw confirmed in other sources.  

By the time Wright visited Japan, he had, for at least a decade, been studying
Japanese prints and had been exposed to the kiwâi system as exemplified by the the
Hô-ô-den and detailed in Morse’s text. Similarly, before The Book of Tea, excerpts of
which had been published in the April 1905 issue of International Quarterly, was
published in full in 1906, Wright had participated in the tea ceremony during his
1905 trip. Reflecting on the experience, he explained, in the 1906 essay that he sent
to Martin,

The tea ceremony impressed me as a most profound expression of reverence…it was the most impressive ceremonial I ever witnessed and the most simple. It is nothing more than the most perfect way conceivable of making and serving a cup of tea but a modern religious service in full ecclesiastic livery among pillars, beneath arches and domes has less dignity.

To contrast their pure and delicate art with the mass of Western art is to contrast the spiritual lines and exquisite grace of the single flower with the material richness of the much cultured rose: To contrast the symbol with the literal…”

313 Ibid., 45.
315 Wright, An Autobiography, 196.
317 Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-6; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906.
For Wright, the tea ceremony exemplified an instructive difference between Japanese practices valuing interior experience and Western formal conventions that valued exterior appearances. While Western convention, in its emphasis on structural display, abstracted lived reality and upheld Cartesian distinctions between subject and object and spirit and matter, Japanese structures were defined by living activity. From Wright’s perspective, this was as true of the tea ceremony, which follows a precise ritual, as of any other Japanese craft: as much as the individual print or the house as a unit, the tea ceremony was a structure that created room in which to cultivate interior life—or space—with one’s surroundings in time.

Making clear that Wright was familiar with the tea ceremony even before his 1905 trip, in one of his 1900 drafts of “The Japanese Print,” excerpts of which Wright quoted in his 1906 letter to Martin, Wright had argued that the tea ceremony was analogous to the print as a “ delicately dramatized” expression of the aesthetic spirit that permeates “the common offices and functions of [Japanese] daily life.” In “The Modern Home as a Work of Art,” Wright similarly described the home’s living room as “the heart of your house…In truth it is a ‘living’ room, to live with those who live in it…" Generated by the living reality that unfolds there, the living room is a mutable, communally composed space in which perceived separations between spirit and matter, subject and object, form and function, individual and community, and space and time dissolve as each element becomes integral to it. The space becomes, Wright explained, “Complete harmony. Nothing to arrange, nothing to disturb. Room

318 Wright, 1900 draft of “The Japanese Print,” Columbia Avery Archives, 2401.009-B, 10. Drawn directly from this draft, for example, is Wright’s argument in the 1906 letter that “The unit of Western civilization is the individual… we must make ‘the whole thing’ or we are not quite satisfied,” while “The Japanese unit of civilization is the family, using the word in a more strict and complete sense than we conceive it.”

and furniture an ‘entity’. No glaring fixtures…but light, incorporated in the wall” to
generate patterns of illumination, just “as sunlight sifts through leaves in the trees.”  

Wright conceived windows, which he called “light screens,” in a way akin to the picture—as heightening awareness of the living temporal reality that is domestic space. The main expanse of the Martin home living room steps down and out to the east, where it is wrapped in tall vertical art glass windows that mediate between the living room and east porch (Fig. 69). In a full expression of the “Wisteria” design used elsewhere, the living room windows generate mutable patterns of transparency and reflectivity that change with the sun’s position, atmospheric conditions, character of the surrounding foliage, and quality of light and shadow throughout changing seasons and times of day.

One of the two main art-glass patterns that Wright designed for the home (although he used at least four in total), the “Wisteria” pattern was conceived as a geometric abstraction of the wisteria plant. Nute argues that the process by which Wright extracted and geometrically abstracted forms from nature was informed by his study of Japanese prints, which Nute examines as a visual model for the architect’s “conventionalization” of organic forms into patterns based on straight lines and regular geometric shapes such as the circle, square and triangle. This assumes a purely Euclidean understanding of geometry, which abstracted nature to deduce from it mathematical principles that approximate the properties of objects in the natural world as fixed forms in space. Yet, consistent with Wright’s rejection of the Renaissance conventions of illusionistic, three-dimensional representation that derived from Euclidean geometry, his statements make clear that he saw abstraction,

320 Ibid., 16.
321 Quinan, Wright’s Martin House, 132-133.
322 Nute, Wright and Japan, 103.
not as an autonomous formal device, but as a means to heighten awareness of the concrete nature of aesthetic experience. Japanese prints had introduced him to an intuitively topological understanding of geometry grounded in the workings of real space, which has no form that is solid, permanent, and unchanging: space generates its own organizing logic—or form—as it actively materializes in time. Topology therefore concerns itself, not with objectively studying fixed forms in space, but in the underlying logic of that which remains constant within conditions of continual change.

Combining what might be seen as a topological understanding of space with Euclidean geometric principles, Wright used abstraction to emphasize the real, rather than signify it. He highlighted the aesthetic relevance of the Wisteria pattern, for example, by punctuating the home’s surrounding low walls and porches with flowering wisteria vines in large concrete planters (figs. 70 & 71). Introducing a deliberate counterpart to the meticulously designed art glass doors and windows found elsewhere, the plants’ systematically irregular placement generates fluctuating transparent reflections on carefully placed clear plate glass windows (Fig. 72). Juxtaposing art glass patterns with clear plate glass, whose changing character derives from the foliage itself in interaction with the surrounding environment, Wright communicated an understanding of the home as both an extension and reflection of nature while disrupting the perception of doors and windows as boundaries between inside and outside (Fig. 73).

Beneath a ribbon of glass transoms, thick bands of oak frame and mediate between the living room windows, generating a rhythmic interpenetration of structure and space. This complementary interaction between structure and space is reiterated by the window patterns and by the integrated effects of exterior and interior reality as
the space of the living room layers out into the porch to become an extension of it (Fig. 74). Accessed through a door at its north end, the fully covered porch opens within piers and low walls toward Jewett Parkway, challenging distinctions between home and surrounding environment while provoking the visitor to again question what it means to enter and exit this home. The effect is heightened as you turn back toward the living room from the porch to perceive the way that structure, space, and environment communicate with one another in multi-directional, layered sequences of mass and volume, light and air, building and landscape.

Moving through the living room from this new perspective, the space again shifts as you face the hearth and the reception hall to the west to realize that the home has spiraled back upon itself (Fig. 75). The hearth, Wright emphasized in “The Modern Home as a Work of Art,” “is the heart of the whole and it is the building itself.” Approaching the Martin home hearth, you return to the center around which the home’s spaces at once converge and separate, open out and close back upon themselves as they are variably revealed and concealed. Measuring 150 square feet, the hearth spans floor to ceiling and is mosaicked with Wisteria patterns rendered in semi-reflective colored glass (Fig. 76). Standing at the intersection of the home’s main north-south and east-west axes, its central cavity at once recedes and projects within this frame, flowing open between the dining and living rooms to emerge as a vacant space that paradoxically anchors the home.

Pivoting northward around the hearth, you return to the entry hall and the 180-foot-long axial view through the pergola to the conservatory, where the illuminated Nike statue stands in a densely layered, asymmetrically balanced frame. You are

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324 Quinan, Wright’s Martin House, 105, 116, 138. Note: the hearth mosaic was executed by Orlando Giannini.
325 Ibid., 105.
again reminded that perspective is never fixed, but always mutable, fluctuating with changes in light and shadow, foliage and atmosphere, individual use and movement. As the entrance corridor runs through the pergola toward the conservatory, it assumes new significance as you see that the home actually has no center because space is not fixed; you find yourself always yet to encounter another unfolding sequence. While recalling the experience of the surrounding spaces that you have moved through—the reception hall, the corridor that bisects the pergola and leads to the dining room, the entrance hall to which you have now returned—you become profoundly aware that the spatial sequence has no beginning or end, no fixed point of entry or exit, continually spiraling out and pivoting back upon itself around an open center that you yourself help to create.

Communicating space as depth, continually layering inward toward something that cannot be grasped, the Martin home demonstrates that, while many in the U.S. viewed Japanese culture in a way that reflected their own sense of detachment from the material world, Wright saw that Japan introduced lessons of deeper significance for modern domestic space. “[T]aken off guard by the entire lack of front of the Japanese people,” he wrote in his 1906 letter to Martin, “the occidental visitor is unprepared for the impressions that crowd upon him when he has had a glimpse of the interior. A passing glimpse is about all that is possible to Western materialism, but that glimpse reveals a highly spiritual people.”  

From Wright’s perspective, a persistent awareness of natural law had allowed Japanese society, as he later reflected in *An Autobiography*, to become “the everyday, Shintô-made dwelling place of the Japanese people.”  

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326 Frank Lloyd Wright, Letter to Darwin D. Martin, August 11, 1906, 24-3; Stanford University, Frank Lloyd Wright Series, Papers, April 17-December 11, 1906.
to heaven instead of seeing this simple Shintō wisdom of sensibly getting heaven to earth?"^{328}

Codified after the introduction of Buddhism and a system of writing from China in the sixth century CE, the indigenous religion of Shintō, which might be translated as “the way of the kami,” had preserved what we now call “animism” in a way unique to Japan.\(^{329}\) It evolved with Buddhism to carry forward a preliterate worldview and practices grounded in the understanding that everything in the material world is a living site activated upon inhabitation by nature’s own divine spirits. Receptive to this understanding because of his own upbringing, Wright saw it expressed across Japanese culture and society in ways that had real, rather than strictly literal, significance. In distinction to U.S. and European social structures that had secularized monotheistic belief systems centered on the order instilled by a single, humanized god, all Japanese structures were seen as living manifestations of space that takes shape in time. Exemplified as much by the tea ceremony as by Japanese prints and models like the Hô-ô-den, this active awareness of the interdependent relationship between structure and space subverted the view, which had become so deeply ingrained in modern U.S. society, that god was the ultimate artist—or architect—who had circumscribed universal space and prescribed the correct way of viewing and acting in it. Japanese culture was instructive for Wright because it demonstrated that any structure can organically unfold according to its own ideal logic. Structure need only be seen as creating the intervals in which we craft our own domestic space in interaction with our surroundings in time.

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^{328} Ibid.

^{329} Mead, *Hypospace*, 57, 133.
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CHAPTER TWO—
THE “STRUCTURAL BEAUTY” OF SPACE:
THE RAUMPLAN OF THE VILLA MÜLLER

A good tea-room is more costly than an ordinary mansion, for the selection of its materials, as well as its workmanship, requires immense care and precision. Indeed, the carpenters employed by the tea-masters form a distinct and highly honoured class among artisans...Later,...we see structural beauty sacrificed to a wealth of ornamentation...330

—Okakura Kakuzō, The Book of Tea, 1906

The Villa Müller was the last urban dwelling that the Austrian-Czech architect Adolf Loos realized before his death in August of 1933 (Fig. 1). It was commissioned by Dr. František Müller, a civil engineer, building contractor, and co-owner of the prominent Czech construction firm of Müller and Kapsa, which was best known for its work in reinforced concrete. Erected by the client’s firm between 1928 and 1930, the villa was designed in a collaboration between Loos, Müller, and the Müller and Kapsa construction manager Bořivoj Kriegerbeck. Loos saw this house, as he wrote when he celebrated his 60th birthday there on 10 December 1930, as the most beautiful of his career:

Mein schönstes Haus!
für den, wie meine Freundin,
Frau Dr. Schwarzwald behauptet,
meinen intelligentesten
Bauherrn, den ich gehabt
habe, Dr. Müller! Das
ist das ganze Geheimniss
der Architektur.—
Adolf Loos
an seinem 60 Geburstag.331

(My most beautiful house!

330 Kakuzo Okakura, The Book of Tea (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008 reprint), 41-42. Notes: Okakura’s name was modified to “Kakuzo Okakura” for this publication. Also, this citation refers to the reference copy of Okakura’s text that is used throughout this dissertation. The text was first published in 1906 by Fox Duffield & Company, New York. The Charles Tuttle edition is a beautifully crafted work that I strongly recommend to anyone interested in reading The Book of Tea (Rutland, VT & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956/1980).
331 Adolf Loos, dedication, hand script reproduced in Karel Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller (Prague: Argo Publishers with Prague Municipal Museum, Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, and State Institute of Care of Historic Monuments, 2000), 33. Note: Loos wrote this dedication when he celebrated his 60th birthday at the villa, with the Müllers and other friends, on 10 December 1930.)
for, as my friend,
Mrs. Dr. Schwarzwald asserted,
the most intelligent
client that I have
had, Dr. Müller! That
is the entire secret
of Architecture.—
Adolf Loos
on his 60th Birthday.)\(^{332}\)

Loos’ architecture has often been viewed with at least three interrelated, if contradictory, preconceptions. First, that he was an independent and outspoken theorist who promoted a functionalist—or utilitarian—aesthetic. Second, that he eschewed artistic expression. Third, that he believed a house should not outwardly speak to the interior character of its inhabitants. These preconceptions derive largely from interpretations of Loos’ well-known essay “Ornament und Verbrechen” (“Ornament and Crime,” ca. 1910), in which he polemically argued that culture could only evolve by moving beyond the attempt to impose preconceived formal ideals on the things inherent to daily life.\(^{333}\) Loos’ reflections on the Villa Müller suggest that his way of thinking has often been critically misinterpreted. Loos saw this house, not only as his most beautiful, but also as the most characteristic example of his approach to modern domestic space, which was termed “der Raumplan” (“the Space-plan”) after the Villa Müller was built.\(^{334}\) Tailored to a client who was as much a discerning art collector, patron, and photographer as he was an engineer, this villa is exceptional

\(^{332}\) Ibid. (Author’s Translation)

\(^{333}\) Although often assigned a date of 1908, Christopher Long argues that the essay developed out of several lectures that Loos delivered, in German, in 1909 and 1910, and that it was only first published in 1913, in French, as “Ornement et crime,” in the June issue of Les cahiers d’aujourd’hui (See: “Ornement et crime,” Marcel Ray trans., Les cahiers d’aujour- d’hui 5 (June 1913), 247–56). Although developed and delivered in German, the essay was not published in German until 1929, when Heinrich Kulka submitted it to the Frankfurter Zeitung for publication (See: “Ornament und Verbrechen,” Frankfurter Zeitung, 24 Oct. 1929). Christopher Long, “The Origins and Context of Adolf Loos’s “Ornament and Crime,”” in Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. 68, No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 200-223.

\(^{334}\) The term “Raumplan” was coined by Loos’ pupil and collaborator, Heinrich Kulka, in Heinrich Kulka, ed., Adolf Loos: Das Werk des Architekten (Wien: Anton Schroll, 1931), 13. For further discussion, see quotation by Loos in chapter sub-section titled “The Attic Room” and succeeding chapter section on the “Raumplan.”
for a room that was collaboratively designed around Müller’s collection of Japanese woodblock prints. Part One of this chapter analyzes the Villa Müller, the context in which it was built, and the intricacies and relationships involved in its construction and design. Part Two interprets Loos’ critical perspectives on his own domestic context relative to lessons that he saw reflected in Japanese culture to argue that Japanese craft practices and social values fundamentally shaped the Raumplan approach expressed in this villa.

Part One: The Villa Müller

**Formal Analysis of the Villa**

The house stands on a 1,248-square-meter lot between Střešovická Road and Nad Hradním vodojem in the upper-middle-class suburb of Střešovice in western Prague (Fig. 2).\(^{335}\) It has an imposing 222.75-square-meter rectangular footprint, described by four white outer walls that climb to a height of 12.9 meters to form a poured concrete rooftop terrace and attic story (Figs. 3 & 4).\(^{336}\) Nested within a hillside site that slopes 11 meters northward, it reveals no clear point of entry as you approach from Střešovická Road, the main thoroughfare between Střešovice and central Prague: its northeast façade rises askew through a labyrinthine frame of hedges and enclosures to front what appears to be a fortified concrete block; in the façade’s center, an upper-story balcony juts out above a trio of transom windows dressed with oddly ornate yellow frames; another balcony projects from the façade’s lower east side to both suggest and obscure a door.

\(^{335}\) *The Müller Villa* Guide (Prague, City of Prague Museum, 2002), 22; also see Pavel Zahradník, “History of the Villa Until the End of 1994,” in Ksandr, ed., *Villa Müller*. Note: There is a discrepancy in the villa’s exact lot size; *The Müller Villa* guide book cites a lot size of 1,270m\(^2\), while documentation pertaining to the villa’s construction indicates a lot size of 1,248m\(^2\).

A fence, conceived by Müller and built by his firm, bounds the property and runs past the villa at street level. It guides you toward a staircase beyond the site’s northwest corner, where you turn to climb southward along the northwest façade (Figs. 5 & 6). At the top of the stairs, the approach pivots again as the fence wraps the site’s southwest corner, now inviting you eastward.

You continue to move around the house, here from an elevated perspective that looks down into the sloping site, the structure’s terraced descent into which perplexes your understanding of where the home itself begins and ends (Figs. 7 & 8). Hardly visible beyond the fence, an alcove opens just below ground level in the southwest façade and steps down into a shadowed space that appears to be at the back of the house (Figs. 9 & 10). High along the southeast façade, a wide, window-like interstice opens toward the sky (Fig. 8).

As you proceed to find a way into the home, the fence opens into a gate beyond the villa’s southeast corner. You pass through it to descend along a path that parallels the one just traced from beyond the fence above. Believing that you are heading back toward what must be the main entrance, you find that this path leads to a subterranean garage and cellar. The southwest façade alcove seems to be the only point of common entry.

Shaded by a concrete overhang, the alcove is surrounded by a stone slab base, eliciting care as you step down from the main path, up, then down once more. Introducing a pronounced break in the imposing façade, it is a small, muted space enveloped in panels of earthen-colored travertine, and opens into a low built-in bench that invites you to pause and linger here for a moment.

The bench recedes beside a raised planter box carefully dressed with four horizontal travertine panels that pinwheel into one another around a square center. As
you contemplate your own pinwheeling approach up to this point, you notice a
discreet oak door to the other side of the bench. Continuing with caution, you
encounter a narrow corridor where the structure’s outward austerity yields to a
welcoming transitional space (Fig. 11).

Here, the walls are lined with panels of semi-reflective seafoam glass and the
floors with terracotta tiles. Deep red floor and ceiling moldings complement a bright
red radiator that projects from the corridor’s left wall. Warm and compact, the space
opens up into a low white ceiling and expands toward a pair of white double doors
with clear glass panes. When closed, these doors create a layered frame for the white
walls beyond, offering partial views that invite further movement, even as you pass
through the corridor with reserve. When opened, these doors offer a glimpse of a set
of wooden stairs that pivot upward, suggesting a still-unseen threshold.

The doors open into an antechamber where white walls, dressed with a pattern
of squares framed in low relief, extend into a low dark blue ceiling (Fig. 12). The
room’s southwest wall opens into a deep alcove, where the ceiling lowers further to
partition off a cloakroom and restroom within the larger space (Fig. 13). The
cloakroom walls are lined with finely-woven Japanese reed mats, brass hooks, and a
wide mirror that faces a seating alcove in the opposite wall. There, a built-in
cushioned bench with under-seat storage retreats into the wall, creating a niche that is
both directly adjacent to and screened off from the stairs (Fig. 14). Waiting here, you
are made aware of, yet never directly confront, the unseen space and host beyond
(Figs. 15 & 16). Even the mirror on the opposite wall is positioned such that the stairs
remain just out of view, drawing attention, not outward toward what is to come, but
inward as you appreciate this liminal space.
Once met in the antechamber, you are invited to continue. As you climb the stairs, you wind up and out of the low, sunken entry space, broken wall masses and marble-faced piers unfurling around you as you approach a space that is insistently concealed from view. Pivoting around and finally out, you emerge, reoriented, in a sprawling living room that spans the width of the villa’s northeast façade, absorbed by light as you meet the windows that face Střešovická road (Figs. 17-19). These extend nearly from the floor to the room’s exceptionally high ceiling, rising above low marble-faced sills to introduce expanding perspectives on northeast Prague and the landscape beyond.\textsuperscript{337} You now see that the central window is actually a door to the lower story balcony, which is only accessible from inside the home and, yet, also an extension of the outside experience. As you consider the permeability of this boundary between inside and outside, you realize that the yellow window dressings that at first seemed purely decorative serve a clear function: heightening the sun’s reflection against the windows’ massive glass panes, they intercept views into the home while variably illuminating and casting deep shadows across the room’s surfaces. Without imposing interior upon exterior or exterior upon interior, these dressings allow them to mutually define and enhance one another by provoking you to appreciate the distinct reality of each.

As the living room extends northward into its surroundings, it also flows open along an east-west axis, revealing an integrated network of spaces that are framed by marble-dressed walls, partitions, piers, and built-in furnishings and fixtures. Along the west wall, a built-in settee cushioned in deep-garnet-colored crushed velvet creates a low alcove that is conducive to leisurely conversation (Fig. 20). Above the settee, the

\textsuperscript{337} As elsewhere, Loos integrated utility devices into structural elements; these low sills, for example, house heating units.
wall recedes into a blank white expanse that was left open so that the Müllers’ could display changing works from their collection, three of which, all Czech landscape paintings, hang here today: *Winter Evening* landscape (1859) by the Bohemian painter Adolf Kosárek (1830-59), and *Summer Day (From the Village of Kraskov IV)* (1906) and *Summer Landscape (Track across the Fields near the Village of Německá Rybná)* (1909), both by Antonín Slavíček.\(^{338}\) The scenes exhibit irregular forms, subdued palettes, and distinctive renderings of light that complement the grains, textures, and semi-reflective tones of the surrounding marble panels and brass fixtures (Fig. 19). They heighten and help to define the room’s mutable character and always-present tension between cool, angular shadows and warm, soft light.

Hung nearest the space where you enter from the antechamber, Slavíček’s *Summer Day (From the Village of Kraskov IV)* depicts a bright landscape that recedes toward a quiet village. Tightly framed, the scene opens beneath a blue sky whose thick white clouds billow out to compress the pictorial space. A small cluster of houses stands amid greenery in a vaguely-defined middle ground, pushing through the picture’s left edge to evoke continuation outside the picture. While this suggests an undefined larger community, a pathway traverses the scene and sprawls open in the foreground, projecting toward you to evoke your own immersion in the surrounding living space. This pathway diagonally extends through the picture frame’s lower right corner, guiding attention toward the foreground of the adjacent scene.

The largest of the living room’s three west wall paintings, Kosárek’s *Winter Evening* is centrally-hung and depicts a dark mountain landscape that unfurls around a foreground clearing. Framed by desolate surroundings, the clearing grounds this

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otherwise obscure place, creating space for two miniscule figures who enter and define it as a site inhabited at a point in some present. Dwarfed by the landscape while heightening its monumentality, these figures approach, with backs toward you, a small wooden hut that is built into the mountain’s base. A low cabin sits beside the hut, positioned closer to a one-story house whose steeply pitched roof is covered in snow. Partially shrouded by the surrounding landscape while inhabiting its own clear space within it, the house lies in what at first appears to be a cul-de-sac that is only accessible from a point beyond the foreground, a point outside the picture that you yourself inhabit. With a closer look, you see that the basin in which this house rests is actually the meeting point of multiple intersecting paths.

One path climbs through the scene’s thick landscape toward a ruined stone structure built upon a cliff. Another continues into the scene’s undefined distance, leading to an unknown space beyond the horizon. A third slopes up beyond the house to the right, extending through the picture’s edge to redirect awareness toward the always larger space that surrounds.

Conjuring the sprawling landscape that surrounds the Villa Müller, the scene, on one hand, directs attention outward toward the living room windows, inviting you to consider how this environment has at once shaped and evolved in response to a modern industrial society. Creating an interval in which space flattens in time, you might here pause to reflect on a past that is being continually redefined in the present. That Müller appreciated such opportunities for reflection is evident in his own photographs. In addition to photographs of his family and those he held closest, including Loos, Müller enjoyed photographing the structures that were engineered
and built by his firm (Figs. 21-23).\textsuperscript{339} Photography allowed him to preserve his firm’s contributions to a modernizing society with images that flatten and abstract the built reality of factories, hydraulic plants, bridges, roads, railways, and apartment buildings. Removing these industrial structures from their everyday functions, he framed them through the lens of a camera to create the threshold across which they might enter the space of an undefined future.

At the same time, Kosárek’s \textit{Winter Evening} returns awareness to the immediate surroundings as it evokes a crossing toward the painting to its right, Slavíček’s \textit{Summer Landscape (Track across the Fields near the Village of Německá Rybná)}. In this small, tightly-framed scene, land meets sky to form a diagonal horizon. A path winds down through the foreground, at once extending into real space and drawing you into a warm, inviting pictorial space. Provoking a sense of stillness within immediacy, the scene anticipates the path’s continuation into the unknown while isolating a fragment that expresses the character of this space as it manifests with activity at a particular moment in time. Positioned nearest the windows, it provokes you to reflect upon the activity that defines the immediate space that you perceive while contemplating this space’s reliance upon all the other spaces and activities that unfold beyond.

While the room’s central expanse was left open to accommodate free circulation, a more formal sitting space emerges around a low brick fireplace that is built into the east wall (Fig. 24). The fireplace is framed by a marble-clad mantel and flanked by utility units that are discreetly integrated into the wall behind brass screens. Paralleling but not mirroring the arrangement of the opposite wall, the

\textsuperscript{339} Müller published a number of these photographs in his 1930 text \textit{40 Let Inženýrské Práce (40 Years of Engineering Work)} (privately published, see translation in Ksandr, ed., pp. 340-343); see Maria Szadkowska’s article on Müller*.
expanse above the fireplace was preserved, again, for the display of personal artworks. Here, the Müllers hung a depiction of *The Alps* (1916-19), now lost, by the Czech painter Antonín Hudeček (1872-1942).\(^\text{340}\)

Though Loos designed the west wall settee and a pair of upholstered low reclining chairs specifically for the Müllers, he otherwise approached the living room’s furnishings much like its works of art. He invited the home’s inhabitants to choose the pieces most suited to personal taste, comfort, and needs, freeing them to outfit the space with furnishings of varied styles, types, and materials. Equally, the room’s meticulously-appointed structural elements are so integral to its character that you do not immediately recognize their multiple functions.

The marble-clad window sills, for example, also house heating units. As the space opens out to the south, you begin to notice that the form and placement of every structural element is as much a condition of the space that it encloses as of the space that surrounds; as much as they frame the living room, *all* the surrounding sculptural masses simultaneously frame unknown spaces that unfold deeper within the home (Fig. 25). As they step up and layer into one another in a series of shifting sequences, these visible structural masses reappear as unseen volumes. Pinwheeling out and up in a puzzling arrangement, they spiral in three dimensions around a center that is suggested even as it remains unidentifiable.

The network of marble-clad walls and piers at the living room’s south end now emerges as both structure and space, creating a partition that helps to define distinct spaces as you ascend a set of stairs (Fig. 26). As the living room recedes, you

\(^{340}\) Ibid. 226, 228. Note: Today lost, Hudeček’s large mountain landscape scene drew upon the painter’s experiences in the Austrian Alps during a 1916 journey, and exemplified a theme close to the artist, whose work frequently extracted scenes from Austria-Hungary’s native forests and mountainous countryside. Also see: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Biographical entry for “Hudeček, Antonín (1872-1941), Maler,” Accessed 3 November 2019 at: [http://www.biographien.ac.at/oebi/oebl_H/Hudecek_Antonin_1872_1941.xml?frames=yes](http://www.biographien.ac.at/oebi/oebl_H/Hudecek_Antonin_1872_1941.xml?frames=yes).
find yourself in a dining room that steps up from it on a mezzanine, such that it enters the larger space while remaining separate from it (Fig. 27). A comforting space that measures half the living room’s height, the dining room’s comparatively compressed dimensions heighten its sense of warmth and intimacy. The effect conjures the way that the passage upward from the low, compressed antechamber had intensified the living room’s effect of openness: here again, the juxtaposition helps to define the particular mood and character of two separate yet interdependent realities.

Setting this more remote interior in appropriate dialogue with its outdoor surroundings, a band of casement windows opens along the dining room’s east wall to communicate with the home’s garden. In contrast to the bright, open space of the living room, walls and ceilings of dark, highly polished mahogany wood here interact with entering light to generate a warm, glowing effect. Built-in wall storage and cupboards again free the center of the space, where a large, circular dining table conjures the activity of gathering around a meal. Made of the same highly-polished wood as the room’s walls and ceiling, the table, which was designed by Loos, has four concentric, semi-circular removable leaves and can be easily expanded or collapsed to meet the needs of a given gathering. Precisely scaled to the room, the table was designed to accommodate up to eighteen guests while retaining freedom of movement, and was paired with a set of cushioned dining chairs that adopted a design by the eighteenth-century English furniture designer and cabinetmaker, Thomas Chippendale. This pairing is interesting because Chippendale is best known as a designer of highly decorative, hand-crafted works that became widely coveted and reproduced after he published his designs in the mid-eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{341} Loos selected this design as much for its comfort and practicality as to enhance the

\textsuperscript{341} Chippendale first published his designs in \textit{The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director} (1754).
character of the space. The chairs have smooth wood frames carved with organic, curvilinear motifs that contribute to the dynamic interplay between angular and rounded forms and light and shadow that characterize the room throughout. They are also both durable and lightweight, allowing extra chairs to be easily stored, as Loos intended, beneath the east wall windows when not in use. Even then, these chairs remain integrated with, rather than becoming autonomous of, the design of the whole as entering sunlight flows through and around the patterned voids carved into their wood backs. A seemingly minor detail, their design tellingly reflects Loos’ belief that beauty was not an objective or inherent property, but a highly particular condition of the meaningful merging of form with living function.

The dining table, similarly, can be seen as as much a work of art as it is a practical piece of furniture, and has a circular slab of sienite—a coarse-grained igneous rock—embedded in its center, providing a beautiful, durable, heat-resistant surface for setting out a meal. This creative collaboration of materials likewise characterizes the room’s sienite countertop, which spans the space between the built-in mahogany cupboards and low storage units along the south wall. Beyond purely functional, these framing devices help to compose a spatial atmosphere while seamlessly fulfilling the needs of those who use them. The east end cupboard, for example, opens into a full-sized pantry that is connected to the kitchen at the home’s southeast corner, easing the preparation and service of meals. Similarly, discreet mirrors near the corners of the east wall help to propel light across the room’s surfaces and enhance visibility, an effect that is complemented by the semi-reflective qualities of the materials chosen.

For use after dark or when the curtains are drawn, a circular light fixture crafted of opaque white glass hangs suspended above the dining table from brass link
chains. In a precise arrangement, the lamp casts a subdued glow across the table’s center, such that its highly polished surface and rhythmic grain at once reflect and enhance the activities of those gathered around it. At the same time, light radiates outward and upward, toward a ceiling that is covered in a grid of polished mahogany square coffers. As the ceiling, too, reflects a sequence of always-shifting scenes that mirror the activities below, its coffer grid is continually destabilized—by changing patterns of illumination and shadow, human movement, the positioning of the things in the room at any moment. You see that the elements that frame the space are not autonomous and objectively present, but rather, are reliant upon and generated by the activities that they invite and make possible. Disrupting any illusion of a fixed material reality, the life of the space is made integral to their character as much as they shape the life of the space.

As the room’s framing elements reflect that life back upon itself in three dimensions, the compact space expands. This effect is intensified by the dining room’s relationship to the living room to the north, where a wide, window-like opening between two piers makes the rooms partially open to one another. Although neither space is visible from the perspective of someone seated in the other, this interval allows light, air, scents and sounds to flow between them. As the character of each space alters and is altered relative to that which occurs around it, the individual is continually reminded that the space they inhabit is being actively defined in communication with all that surrounds.

The opening between the living and dining rooms is mirrored on the dining room’s south wall, where a recessed area of white wall opens between the cupboards (Fig. 28). This wall expanse was reserved, again, for hanging works of art selected by the Müllers. It provided an open interval for displaying works chosen to provoke
contemplation and conversation or to complement the mood of particular occasions and gatherings. The ability to tailor the space in this way was enhanced by a pair of asymmetrical window-like openings in the dining room’s west wall. These extend above low wood partitions and have dark green curtains that can be opened or closed to limit distractions or to adjust mood and the character of lighting. The host might choose to enhance the warmth and intimacy of the space, or allow it to open partially into a sky-lit stairwell that is visible in fragments beyond the dining room to the west.

With the curtains open, you increasingly sense the spaces that continue to unfurl beyond the dining room. These defy any clear sequence or pattern of organization, as structural devices instead unwind in a shifting composition with your own movement (Fig. 26). Entered, not through a doorway, but through an interval between piers, the opening into the dining room, for example, now pinwheels out to suggest multiple possible paths. You might descend the dining room stairs and head back to the living room to the north, where guests might have been invited to join the Müllers around the fireplace after dinner. Or, you might be escorted back through the piers at the living room’s south end, experiencing from a new perspective the path that leads, now, down and around to the sunken antechamber. Closer friends and business associates might have been invited further into the home.

From the living room’s southwest end, another small set of stairs leads up, behind, and into a hovering cube that projects into the room (Fig. 17). This cube is supported by the same piers that create the threshold between the living room and antechamber. As you ascend the staircase, you find, again, that you have not actually exited the living room, but entered a more secluded space within it.

This staircase leads to a door that opens into Mrs. Müller’s boudoir, which steps up northward into an intimate seating alcove that looks down into the larger
space through a wood-framed window (Fig. 29). The window’s clear glass pane is articulated with a geometric pattern of interlocking squares and is fitted with dark green curtains that allow the inhabitant to adjust light, privacy, and interaction with the social activities occurring in the living room below. Built into the lower half of the alcove’s walls, a high-backed cushioned couch opens in a U-shape around a small circular table, which is set beneath a low hanging lamp. Suspended from brass fixtures with a warm yellow parchment shade, the lamp hovers just above eye level to radiate a subdued light. Along the east and west walls, the couch back opens up into built-in shelves for storing glassware and utensils, suggesting a space of retreat into which Mrs. Müller might have invited those close to her during large gatherings. These devices help to distinguish this alcove as a space of its own, even as it remains open and integral to both the living room and the larger space of the boudoir itself.

The sitting alcove opens southward into a pin-wheeling network of equally discrete spaces that are delineated by bright lemon-wood surfaces (Fig. 30). A small set of stairs pivots down to the west and then south into a bright, open area for reading and relaxation. A band of double-paned casement windows opens along the upper expanse of the west wall, brightly illuminating the space before a partitioning unit of built-in bookshelves. Pale yellow curtains allow the intensity of entering sunlight to be easily adjusted while reading a book or reclining in a low built-in day bed, which, fitted with removable cushions, creates another alcove at the room’s south end. A corridor steps up beyond the bookshelf to the east and is lined with additional built-in cupboards and low, curtained cabinets that extend on either side of a second door along the east wall.

Elevated above the west wall door, the east wall door opens into a corridor that spirals northward back toward the dining room, staircase, and landing. As you
pivot south, it climbs up another small set of stairs into Dr. Müller’s office and study (Fig. 31).

Entering the study, you are first met by an imposing, glass-topped mahogany desk, which sits, surrounded by low built-in shelves, at the room’s east end. The desk faces a sitting alcove that composes the room’s western half. This sitting alcove is marked out by a frame of mahogany-faced piers, which stand at the point of intersection between the room’s east-west flowing ceiling cornices and a supporting beam that spans the distance between the south and north walls.

Although seemingly more straightforward in function and character, here, too, the room’s discrete spaces layer open to negotiate shifting moods of formality, intimacy, and repose. The meeting with a visiting client might center on the east side of the room, where a large board built into the east wall above and behind the desk provided a space for displaying and discussing projects. Just beyond and perpendicular to the desk, a wide band of three large casement windows opens along the south wall, inviting sunlight into the space while allowing its intensity to be adjusted by opening or closing a pair of pale yellow curtains. The positioning of the windows was doubly practical, enhancing, on one hand, visibility immediately around the work space. Facing out toward the approach along the home’s south façade, these windows were also positioned such that Dr. Müller could see, while himself remaining partially obscured, the approaching or departing visitor. As the visitor now enters the space and becomes part of it, it becomes increasingly clear that a façade need not attempt to communicate the intricacies of interior character in order to help illuminate them.

As sunlight enters through the office’s south wall windows, it filters through the room to interact with its dark, lustrous surfaces while helping to further
distinguish space within space. The sitting alcove at the room’s west end, for example, is subdivided into southern and northern halves, which are bisected by an open space before a low built-in fireplace. Entering light enhances the character of these two distinct zones, which simultaneously mirror, contrast with, and complement one another. Each opens with a deep couch upholstered in brown leather. Set on wooden bases, these couches face one another as they extend along the south and north walls, which are lined with built-in cabinets fitted with dark green silk curtains. Backing into the street-facing wall, the southern portion of the alcove is cast in partial shadow by entering sun, evoking a quiet, secluded niche that is only indirectly lit. While seated here, attention might turn inward, provoking the sense of being deeply nestled within the space even as you occupy the position closest to the open windows. The intimate mood of this shadowed space is heightened by its juxtaposition with the alcove’s brighter, more open-feeling northern portion, which backs physically deeper into the home even as attention and visibility are directed outward.

Similarly, the darkness and depth of the room’s mahogany surfaces, green felt carpet, and leather couches are offset by a white ceiling; the fireplace, which is faced with white and blue tin-glazed ceramic tiles; and a large mirror that is built into the west wall above the fireplace. Set between a pair of open built-in shelves that run to the ceiling, the mirror is positioned perpendicular to the south wall windows, such that it helps to disperse sunlight in interaction with the room’s lustrous surfaces and varied textures. Composed of nine large square panels rather than a single, unbroken piece of glass, the mirror recalls the dynamic effect created by the dining room ceiling: it continuously inverts the space back upon itself to both expand it and destabilize the illusion of a single, fixed whole. It hangs directly opposite the project
board above the desk, evoking the sense of a space whose infinite depth is generated and regenerated by the thoughts and activities that arise here.

Stepping out of the office and study, you re-enter the corridor through which you approached from the boudoir. Now facing north, you are afforded a new perspective as you see that this corridor continues to extend the path through the home in unanticipated ways: rather than proceeding linearly toward a clear vanishing point, it unfurls in a shifting, fragmented sequence, revealing another stairway that pinwheels open and upward (Fig. 32).

As you ascend, you pivot around a skylit stairwell that unfolds around the home’s center to join its discrete spaces, the home’s interiors continuing to nest into one another as you reach a landing that opens in multiple possible directions (Figs. 33-34). You might head west to pass through a spacious, simply outfitted bathroom into the Müllers’ bedroom, which you can also access directly should you head north at the top of the stairs. Situated above the living room, the large bedroom opens toward Střešovická road through a band of four tall double-paned windows, two of which form a double door onto the upper story balcony (Fig. 35). You can easily imagine how the inhabitants might have paused here to appreciate Prague’s dense landscape as it sprawls toward the Vltava River, the room extending out as the outside is brought in. Even with its simple appointments, the character of the space continually shifts with the sun’s position, the hues and density of surrounding foliage, and the nature of an always mutable social environment.

The room’s restrained furnishings include a pair of low beds and nightstands, a small tiered sitting table, and two lattice-backed chairs, all made of wood. Lamps suspended from brass fixtures hang beside the beds and have pale yellow shades that emit a soft light conducive to reading. These are complemented by an opaque glass
fixture that is positioned overhead between the sleeping and sitting areas to illuminate the room on cloudy days, after dark and before dawn, or when the curtains are drawn. These quiet appointments are offset by pale yellow wallpaper, curtains, bedding, and table coverings that are adorned with a lively blue pattern, chosen by the Müllers, depicting maritime scenes.

Doors near the room’s northwest and northeast corners open into Mr. and Mrs. Müller’s dressing rooms, which flank the bedroom and mirror one another in plan. Mr. Müller’s dressing room is positioned nearest the bathroom and is lined with built-in closets, coat hooks, wardrobes, and storage units housing drawers and sliding shelves (Fig. 36). On the interior, these built-ins are veneered in mahogany and have chrome fixtures, complementing the luxurious materials and fine craftsmanship of the articles that they were intended to house. When closed, the built-ins envelop the room and form its walls. On the exterior, they are therefore faced with panels of lighter polished oak that help to brighten the room as they interact with sunlight that enters through a large window in the west wall.

This window is positioned above a toiletry table that is topped with a thin slab of polished black obsidian, which reflects and subdues entering light to enhance visibility without blinding the inhabitant seated before it. Opposite the window, a low cushioned settee upholstered in dark velvet provides a place for setting out and selecting attire, or for reclining during a moment of repose. Along the room’s north wall, between the settee and window, a pair of mirrors hangs on the outer side of the closet doors. The closet doors open to two more mirrors hung on their inner sides, allowing the inhabitant to conveniently select a tie while standing before the open closet, or to alter the reflection to introduce variable perspectives. Even in this small
space, you are subtly reminded that the character of any space is a mutable condition of all the surroundings that help to define it.

Passing back through the bedroom, a door on its opposite end opens into Mrs. Müller’s dressing room (Fig. 37). Long and narrow, the compact space is, again, open and unobstructed, with its closets, wardrobes, and storage devices built in to form its walls. Appropriately distinguishing this room from its counterpart, the fittings are here faced with maple, lending a softer grain and warmer character to a space that invites high morning rather than low afternoon sun. A large tripartite double-paned window along the east wall provides ample natural light during the day, while high white ceilings help to diffuse sunlight up and out throughout the room. Beneath the window, a toiletry table is built in between two tall cabinets, one meant to house shoes and the other evening gowns. The toiletry table has drawers, surfaces topped in opaque white glass, and a central leaf that opens to an underside mirror. A small chrome and glass tabletop lamp provides additional light around the table when needed and was selected by Loos to compliment the room’s chrome fixtures.

The room’s north end is wrapped by a deep, tripartite wardrobe that evokes a bay window. Extending the space outward as it hinges inward, the doors of the wardrobe are faced on the exterior with mirror panels, which generate shifting perspectives as they are tilted with use. Fragmenting and inverting the space as they introduce oblique reflections of it, the mirrors here remind the inhabitant that a single, straightforward view can never capture an always more complex reality.

The mirrored wardrobe faces another door at the dressing room’s opposite end, where the space flows open into a children’s suite that was designed for the Müllers’ daughter (Figs. 38 & 39). Here again, discrete interiors layer seamlessly into one another. The expansive children’s suite includes a bedroom and playroom, which
unfold north to south along the home’s east side, on axis with the door to Mrs. Müller’s dressing room. The vibrant space introduces a profusion of color while retaining the effects of lighting, subtle articulation, and spatial integration that unify the home throughout. High ceilings rise above low walls, which, in the bedroom, are painted blue with yellow trim. Red-lacquered beds are set to either side of a pair of yellow-lacquered wardrobes along the bedroom’s west wall, creating a frame for a door that opens directly onto the central staircase landing. The herringbone pattern wood floors used elsewhere are here replaced with red linoleum, which enhances the whimsical spirit of the space while using a resilient, hygienic material that could be easily cleaned. Such choices point to the way that Loos pragmatically embraced both natural and hand-crafted materials and new, industrially produced materials to enrich the quality and character of particular spaces.

Evoking the sense of a removed, personal dwelling within a dwelling, the children’s quarters freed even the home’s young inhabitant to cultivate her own interior character. A yellow-lacquered table with a blue linoleum top is set beneath a low hanging lamp with a parchment shade, allowing easy adjustment of lighting in response to need, activity, and preference. Beyond the table, a small balcony opens from the east wall, stepping out above the dining room below to overlook the garden and landscape beyond. The door to the balcony is set within a band of tall windows, which could be opened or closed to alter interaction with the surrounding environment. Allowing the spaces to be illuminated primarily by natural light, another band of windows opens, above a radiator, in the playroom’s east wall. These windows are set adjacent to a low built-in couch and across from an alcove housing a sink.

The playroom is both distinguished from and integrated with the adjacent bedroom as much by color as by structural elements. In this livelier space, the
bedroom’s colors are inverted with low walls and built-in cabinets that are painted yellow with blue trim. Another linoleum-topped table, which is lacquered blue with a yellow top, is set beneath an identical low hanging lamp in an arrangement that mirrors and inverts that in the bedroom. The pronounced inversion of color in these adjacent rooms exemplifies the substantial role that minor details can play in distinguishing space within space, partitioning discrete zones while allowing them to remain co-integrated.

As you exit the playroom, you return to the central landing, where your attention is directed, not immediately outward toward the as yet un-encountered, but inward as you move around the wooden banister (Fig. 40). Lingering here, you see that spaces through which you have already passed remain present as you contemplate fragmented views into the living and dining rooms and back along the spiraling path that you have gradually traced. This new perspective elevates your awareness of the extent to which the home’s spaces layer always into one another. Even as the sequence of relationships among them shifts with each step, the activities and sensations that collectively define each individual interior at a given moment here converge upon an open center.

And yet, there remains something always unseen beyond the visible frame. A narrow staircase at the home’s south end unexpectedly extends the home’s interior, sharply pivoting up and around to lead you to a modest corridor penetrated by warm air and diffuse light. Straight ahead, a pair of half-windowed double doors leads outside, to a sprawling rooftop terrace that spans over two thirds of the villa’s footprint. Your immediate attention, however, is drawn toward an obscure room.

342 Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 35. The darkroom is no longer in tact and the space has been converted into an exhibition space that displays some of Müller’s photographs and documents aspects of the home’s construction and of the family’s life there after it was built.
that opens off the corridor to the left. As you cross into it, you become immersed in a small, meticulously appointed space whose purpose is not immediately clear (Fig. 41).

**The “Attic Room”**

Here, low white ceilings open above a network of rich green and black lacquered furnishings that envelope the space as they step out and layer back to form broken walls (Fig. 42). Recessed wall expanses are lined with a triple-ply, variegated gray paper built up in layers of natural fiber over tin emulsion. A low couch upholstered in horsehair cascades into the room along the west wall, where a space of repose unfolds in a deep recess that is framed by built-in shelves for stowing small personal items and books (Fig. 43). Above the couch, a stepped wall expanse recedes further to accommodate a display of three Japanese colored woodblock prints, by the Edo period master Utagawa Kunisada, from Müller’s collection.343 Four additional prints by Kunisada and one by the master Katsushika Hokusai are also displayed in this room.344 The only pieces of freestanding furniture are a set of light, upholstered reed chairs and a small round table that, crafted to Loos’ design, has a simple wooden top and black lacquered base. These are centrally set beneath a hanging papered lantern that was produced in Japan and that is adorned with autumnal foliage motifs. Also produced in Japan, four and a half woven red straw mats with black edging line the room’s floor space.345 These mats run flush into the north wall, which opens to the home’s rooftop terrace through two large windows and a glass-paned door.

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343 Villa Müller Catalogue, City of Prague Museum, 35. The Kunisada prints are all signed by “Gototai Kunisada.” The Hokusai print is signed by “Sakino Hokusai”; an additional print by Hokusai is now lost. Müller’s collection included nine Japanese woodblock prints in total. See: Roman Prahl, “František Müller as Art Collector,” pp. 224-231 in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller.

344 Ibid.

345 The floor space is lined with approximately four and a half mats aligned side by side; the dimensions of the one partial mat, which is not precisely half the size of the others, were modified to accommodate a low built-in bench that projects from the room’s west wall.
Departing from the fluid approach to artworks demonstrated elsewhere throughout the villa, this room was precisely appointed to accommodate a unique function. It was designed to provide a frame for displaying Müller’s Japanese prints in an intimate, partially open-air dining space conducive to their appreciation. Compact and comfortable, it is perfectly suited to small gatherings over a light meal, or to simply taking time to appreciate the works themselves. It evokes a sense of quiet and remove that is heightened by its juxtaposition with the home’s rooftop terrace. Enhancing feelings of freedom and openess, this juxtaposition helps to create an atmosphere that would have suggested coolness on hot summer days or evoked warmth and shelter from the cold. In a similar interrelationship, the room’s character as a space dedicated to art appreciation is heightened by its situation opposite a darkroom that Loos designed for Müller’s use.346

Because of its precisely appointed artworks and furnishings, this room has been identified, since the completion of the Villa Müller’s restoration in May of 2000, as the home’s “Japanese room” or “summer dining room” and has been cited as an exceptional interior in which Japanese art influenced Loos’ work.347 In their essay “Interior Installation in Villa Müller,” published in a comprehensive catalogue that was prepared to coincide with the completion of the restoration, the authors Pavel Jerie, Karel Ksandr, and Věra Müllerové explain,

The owner’s collection of artworks…included a collection of Japanese coloured [sic] woodcuts by Hokusai and Kunisada. For their installation Loos designed the summer dining room in the spirit of a Japanese room. The furniture color scheme of green and black, the silvery wallpaper, the preserved sofa upholstery of black horsehair fabric, and the floor covered with a vine-coloured [sic] rice mat create an entirely original environment harmonized with the colour [sic] scheme and the Far East provenance of this collection of graphic sheets without which the dining room would be incomplete.

346 Zahradník, “History of the Villa Until the End of 1994,” in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 35. The darkroom is no longer intact and the space has been converted into an exhibition space that displays some of Müller’s photographs and documents aspects of the home’s construction and of the family’s life there after it was built (See Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 280-281.)
The dining room is supplemented with rattan seating furniture and a Japanese funeral lantern.\footnote{Pavel Jerie, Karl Ksandr, and Věra Müllerová, “Interior Installation in Villa Müller,” in Ksandr, ed., \textit{Villa Müller}, 280.}

In order to understand Japan’s relevance to Loos as revealed in this room, it is important to understand, as Loos explained in his 1898 article “Die Möbel aus dem Jahre 1898” (“Furniture from the Year 1898”), that “[e]in japanischer paravent und einige dazugehörige nippes machen ein zimmer noch nicht japanisch” (“[a] Japanese paravent and a few related knick-knacks do not yet make a room Japanese”) [\textit{sic}; See Footnote].\footnote{Adolf Loos, “Die Möbel aus dem Jahre 1898” \textit{(Die Neue Freie Presse}, 9 October 1898), in Franz Glück, ed., \textit{Adolf Loos: Sämtliche Schriften}, B. I (Wien: Herold, 1962), 128 (Author’s Translation). Note: Although nouns are normally capitalized in German, Loos chose not to capitalize nouns in many of his writings as originally published; this is reflected where appropriate in Loos’ writings as republished in \textit{Sämtliche Schriften} and as they are cited throughout this dissertation.}

\textbf{“Raumplan” ("Space-plan") Defined}

As both the Villa Müller and Loos’ statement suggest, he did not view any space as being independently fixed and defined by material things. He saw that spaces collaboratively and continuously \textit{materialize}—they are generated by the living activities and experiences that unfold with things to produce meaning over time. As much as the attic room might be seen as exceptional for Loos, it equally exemplifies his way of perceiving space. As Loos explained in a 1930 interview:

\begin{quote}
I do not draw floor plans, facades, sections. I design spaces...For me, there are only contiguous, continual spaces, rooms, anterooms, terraces, etc. The stories diffuse mutually, but the spaces are mutually connected...To join these spaces in such a way that the rise and fall are not only imperceptible but also practical, in this I see what is for others the great secret...It is just this spatial interaction and spatial austerity that thus far I have been best able to realise [\textit{sic}] in Dr. Müller’s house.\footnote{Adolf Loos, 1930, shorthand record, signed by Loos, of an interview with a journalist in Plzeň; Note: the excerpt quoted here combines translations of the interview (originally conducted in Czech) published in \textit{The Müller Villa} guide book, 1 and Ksandr, ed., \textit{Villa Müller}, 118, 121.}\
\end{quote}
Loos’ description of his approach makes clear that he never identified the Raumplan—which was formulated in practice and later codified as theory—with a particular utilitarian form or set of functions. The Raumplan is a phenomenon of interior experience; it is a network of continually shifting spaces that emerge with living activity to mutually define and enhance the character of one another.

Exemplifying this quality of the Raumplan, the Villa Müller’s attic room was alternatively described, in a 1993 restoration and future use proposal prepared by the Prague Council for the Protection and Development of Cultural Space in Prague, as the home’s “tea room” and was suggested for use, “together with the attractive spacious terrace,” for “special occasions, cultural functions and meetings (exhibitions, drama productions, music performances, lectures, etc.).”\textsuperscript{351} Precisely because it is exceptional both to and within the Villa Müller, the home’s attic room merits closer consideration. It is the key to understanding how Japanese crafts helped to define the Raumplan approach that Loos saw as being best expressed in this villa.

Shortly after the Villa Müller was built, Loos’ pupil and collaborator, Heinrich Kulka, coined the term “Raumplan” to describe Loos’ approach in \textit{Adolf Loos: Das Werk des Architekten}, a 1931 monograph that was compiled for the first comprehensive exhibition on Loos’ life and work.\textsuperscript{352} As the term suggests, Loos’ approach to architecture introduced a critical alternative to a perspective that privileged \textit{a priori} structural order over the lived experience of space. In line with this perspective, space was understood in Cartesian and material terms—as an objectified consequence of the structure that framed it. As Kulka explained:

\begin{quote}
Karel Ksandr, “History of the Building Since 1995,” in Ksandr, ed., \textit{Villa Müller}, 105. It is important to note that the Prague Council identified this space as “the tea room” in a broad sense; the Council did not attempt to suggest that this was a Japanese tea room, nor was it labeled as such by Loos or Müller. The Council’s proposal is cited here to demonstrate, more tellingly, that the room was interpreted in this way on the basis of its spatial character.
\end{quote}
In allgemeinen war bisher die wichtigste Sorge der Architekten die Bildung der Fassade und die Anordnung der Pfeiler im Innern. Der Grundriß wurde Stockwerk für Stockwerk in der Fläche gelöst. Was zufällig die Pfeiler übrig ließen, nannte man den Raum.\textsuperscript{353}

(Universally, the most important concern of architects was, as yet, the forming of the façade and the ordering of the supports on the interior. The floor plan was, story by story, resolved in surface area. What the supports by chance left remaining, one called Space.)\textsuperscript{354}

Most of Loos’ architectural contemporaries viewed the house outwardly, as an autonomous object that was defined primarily by its structural frame and whose function was, first and foremost, to display identity. As a result, the living reality of space was overlooked. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where Loos began formulating his approach in the late nineteenth century, this structural preoccupation predominated because it was inherent to the profession of architecture that had been adopted with modernization.

\textit{The Structural Definition of Modern Domestic Space in Austria-Hungary}

In Austria-Hungary, the modern profession of architecture was based upon a system of formal training that had developed to accommodate the early modern monarchy, aristocracy, and clergy. Until Austria-Hungary began to modernize in the mid-late nineteenth century, there was no need for professional architects in the modern sense because, from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, the monarchy, aristocracy, and clergy were the only classes with an acknowledged public presence—the only classes whose members were permitted to freely display wealth, status, and individual distinction. Structural displays of identity were paramount among these classes because they provided a way to reinforce and preserve power that had begun

\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{354} Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
to shift as medieval Europe’s feudal societies were redefined between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Under the feudal system, society had been organized according to a rigid social hierarchy composed of four classes: the nobility, clergy, commoners, and peasants. Power and wealth derived from land ownership and therefore concentrated in the hands of the nobility, who inherited land at birth. Beneath the nobility were the clergy, who were believed to be in direct communication with god. The majority of the population was composed of commoners, who were the artisans and merchants who provided goods and services to the immediate locale, and peasants, who worked the land owned by the nobility and who were therefore viewed as an extension of their property. Because class membership—believed to be divinely-ordained—was determined by birth, economic and political power were static under the medieval feudal system, which fixed both social status and the grounds of power that was physically rooted in land ownership.

In the late thirteenth century, the rise of early modern capitalism began to destabilize the feudal system throughout Europe. Power was no longer exclusively rooted in landed inheritance, but rather, could also be derived from wealth that was accumulated through long-distance trade, mercantile activity, and banking. As early capitalism destabilized the physical boundaries of power, it simultaneously laid the foundations for its consolidation in the hands of absolute monarchs, who variably readjusted earlier notions, extending back to antiquity, of divinely-ordained authority to new interests.

The body of central European lands that later formed the Austro-Hungarian Empire had come under control of members of the Habsburg family beginning in the late thirteenth century. These lands encompassed large portions of the Holy Roman
Empire, an abstract European empire that was formed in the late tenth to early eleventh centuries, when political, economic, and religious power were consolidated by allying autonomous kingdoms under a single, theoretically supreme Holy Roman Emperor. The power of the Holy Roman Emperor was ostensibly validated by the pope and inherited from the emperors of ancient Rome. Habsburg rulers dominated the office from the fifteenth century until 1806, when the Holy Roman Empire dissolved and the Austrian Empire was established. Across this time and space, the Habsburgs wielded a particularly strong influence as the purported inheritors of the legacy of the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine, and protectors of a unified modern Christian empire. This compounded with other factors, such as the land-locked position of the core Austrian Habsburg territories, to preserve, in a unique way, a feudal economic system in which power remained physically rooted in land ownership, inheritance, and local craft production.355

While the intricacies varied by locality, the nobility and church dominated land ownership under the Habsburg monarchy and, into the mid-nineteenth century, serfdom—which enforced the physical labor of peasants—persisted. As in medieval feudal society, these ruling classes were socially superior to the communal body of subjects that composed the early modern commoner class, which consisted of free farmers, craftsmen, and merchants—distinctions based upon the necessities, skills, and trades that commoners contributed to society. Though commoners were, in theory, socially equal, power and status stratified throughout the early modern era to give rise to the equivalent of an urban middle class. This effective middle class was headed by Bürger—legally recognized inhabitants of a town or city who were, to

varying degrees, granted the rights to vote and hold civic office. A status broadly granted on the basis of property ownership and education, Bürger were recognized in certain Habsburg territories by the early fifteenth century and, by 1420, composed half the population of the Habsburg capital of Vienna. While the stipulations for becoming a Bürger varied by locality, in the most prominent urban centers, including Vienna, the designation was reserved exclusively for wealthy merchants.

As this suggests, the Habsburg monarchy, on one hand, sanctioned the rise of an early bourgeoisie, whose economic activities were needed to support an aristocracy whose wealth was declining. Merchants, in particular, prospered through the sale of local commodities and, especially, the regionally specialized crafts, such as embroidery, metalwork, and textiles, that craft practitioners cultivated for their livelihood. At the same time, both despite and because of such intricacies, Habsburg monarchs instituted strict regulations on comportment, trade, travel, and foreign contact to profit from these changing economic conditions while minimizing challenges to their authority.

They instituted heavy taxes on mercantile activity and land ownership, which filtered down to commoners through the land-owning majority in exchange for providing military protection and local infrastructure. Assuming a new role as public custodians, monarchs became guardian of the news, endorsing while controlling commoners’ access to information and education. They instituted sumptuary laws that variably aimed to limit foreign imports, concentrate domestic wealth, and reinforce

357 Ibid.
social hierarchy as the bourgeoisie grew to threaten the prestige of the aristocracy.\(^{359}\) While the intricacies of this legislation evolved between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, it broadly prohibited commoners from outward displays of individualism and ostentation and enforced standardized modes of dress and housing that distinguished them by social status—as farmer, craftsman, or merchant—from one another. Commoners’ houses, which were typically integrated with their workshops or businesses, were not designed by architects, but built by guilds of craftsmen who specialized in carpentry or brick or stone masonry.

While their instruction varied by trade, early modern building craftsmen were trained through systems of apprenticeship that had evolved out of the Middle Ages: in the typical guild, an accomplished master selectively accepted, housed, and trained apprentices, most of whom came from poor families, in exchange for their labor. In a manner highly particular to each guild and its specialization, apprentices learned to hand-produce individual building members and join these members to create structures. Because the craftsman’s training was grounded in living practice, the craftsman did not think in terms of distinctions between structure and space, form and function, and space and time. Each individual building member had to be meticulously crafted because it would become both a necessary supporting part and inherent to the distinctive character of a given structure. The act of producing these members and joining them to create a structural frame was to physically create space in which to dwell over time.

Once an apprentice had sufficiently cultivated their craft, usually after many years of training, they could be promoted to become a journeyman, a distinction that allowed them to travel and accept work for payment. Traveling craftsmen built, not only mundane structures, but also the palaces and churches commissioned by the court, aristocracy, and clergy. Intended to visually display and reinforce inherited status, identity, and power, these structures were designed and decorated by court artists, sculptors and architects whose exceptional abilities had earned them admission into what was then a small circle of academically trained citizens. The academies that trained these artists, who would have otherwise remained common craftsmen, had been established under imperial patronage beginning in the late thirteenth century to define the fine arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture as elevated pursuits distinct from the crafts.

This distinction between fine arts and crafts was intertwined with a larger effort to formally reinforce the ruling classes’ elevation above the commoner class. For related reasons, in Vienna and other prominent Habsburg cities like Linz, craftsmen were prohibited from becoming Bürger—a stipulation that tacitly prevented craft guilds from gaining the political power that they attained elsewhere throughout Europe. Nonetheless, many became highly respected and sought after among the court, aristocracy, and clergy for the exceptional character of their work. In this way, craft practitioners operated in a unique space of mobility between and within the commoner and ruling classes and across space and time. In a complementary way, Bürger, who, while prohibited from overt displays of status and identity, privately patronized the arts and cultivated a unique role as arbiters of taste, became integral to

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the evolution of domestic craft practices: they had a common interest in upholding the value of locally specialized crafts and in commissioning structures that expressed, without outwardly displaying, distinction through the quality of their materials, workmanship, and interior intricacies.

These conditions began to rapidly shift in the mid-late nineteenth century, in a process that coincided with the onset of industrialization and a series of structural changes spurred by popular revolts, beginning in 1848-49, that challenged the monarch’s absolute authority.\textsuperscript{361} As industrialization increased both the efficiency of domestic production and, with the construction of railroads, the exchange of goods and information, a new middle class rose to become increasingly aware—and to demand recognition—of its economic and, therefore, social and political power. The monarchy again reinvented itself to adapt to these changes while retaining authority.

This led to the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a dual, constitutional monarchy in 1867, and to the recognition of all the empire’s subjects as Bürgers—citizens—in the modern sense. The remnants of feudal hierarchy were abolished as the monarchy sanctioned freedom of the press and lifted restrictions on travel, dress, and housing. Wealth increasingly concentrated in the hands of a modern, capitalist bourgeoisie composed of industrialists and merchants who were no longer invested in the land—the domestic craft industries that early modern merchants had had an interest in sustaining—and, yet, who came to perceive themselves as a new form of landed aristocracy. Commoners who had continued, into the late nineteenth century, to practice essential and highly specialized crafts—such as shoemakers, metalsmiths, lacemakers, and embroiderers—increasingly became lower-middle-class

factory workers as their skills were viewed as obsolete. The labor and skill intensive work of pre-industrial building craftsmen was equally displaced with the introduction of new industrial materials, construction techniques, and mass-produced standardized structural components. Reinforced concrete, in combination with machine-produced building materials like brick, lumber, and plate glass, made it possible to quickly and inexpensively erect structures and meet the needs of growing urban populations. Concrete was embraced as an efficient replacement for costly and protracted masonry construction, which had flourished after lumber was depleted during the Middle Ages. A material that repurposed widely available resources, concrete negated the need for load-bearing walls and required minimal training to mix and set.

A product of this context, the modern profession of architecture was itself a new middle-class pursuit that emerged to counter the leveling uniformity that industrialization threatened to impose. Modeled on early modern academies, modern schools of architecture adapted their predecessors’ visual ideals to industrial materials and techniques and instilled the view that structure alone fixed and defined space. Modern architects’ training emphasized a mastery of form and theory, and their success relied upon garnering public attention and pleasing their patrons—many of whom were modern middle-class individuals, who, now seeking to establish a public presence, emulated the early modern court and aristocracy. Informed by these new conditions, the architect conventionally envisioned the house first in two dimensions, as a series of drawings. After designing a façade that would convey an identity of distinction, the architect prepared a house’s plans and blueprints. These delineated the order of a structure whose ability to stand relied upon principles of engineering, which were applied to determine the placement of interior supports. The architect was
trained, in other words, to design structures that would be built by someone else and that would display a preconceived, fixed identity for their inhabitants.

**Loos’ Critical Perspective on the Common Approach to Modern Domestic Space**

Loos was critical of this approach because it overlooked the interior living activities that actually create any domestic space; it treated the house as an object that had no concrete relation to the individuals who made and used it. This was in part because professional architects were themselves seeking to establish their place in modern society. Most attempted to do this by mimicking forms drawn from the past or inventing new forms that were intended to shape the future. Loos saw, as he summarized in the “Grundsätzlicher” (“Principles”) that were published in his 1931 monograph, that such visual preoccupations precluded the ability to design in response to the needs of the living present:

> Die Architektur gehört nicht unter die Künste. Nur ein ganz kleiner Teil der Architektur gehört der Kunst an: das Grabmal und das Denkmal. Alles, was einem Zweck dient, ist aus dem Reiche der Kunst auszuschließen!…Das Haus hat der Bequemlichkeit zu dienen …Das Haus denkt an die Gegenwart. 362

(Architecture does not belong under the arts. Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the grave and the monument. Everything that serves a function is to be expelled from the empire of art!…The house has to serve comfort…The house thinks of the present.) 363

Loos saw that, while an architect’s approach was appropriate for the grave and the monument—structures whose purpose is to outwardly preserve the past into the future—a house, like anything that people use in daily life, is inseparable from the immediate space and activity of human dwelling. To view the middle-class house like the aristocratic palaces of the past—structures designed to preserve a fixed, inherited identity—overlooked the changing realities of modern industrial life.

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363 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
One of those realities, Loos recognized, was that the modern middle-class individual had no established identity. This individual’s identity, as much as the notion of individual identity itself, was in the process of being defined. Up to that point, identity was literally just the “state of being the same”: it was the condition of being identical to everyone else.\textsuperscript{364} Unlike the landed aristocracy, the distinctions—defining differences—that had emerged between and within the early modern commoner class had derived from the way that its members made their livelihoods—from the living activities that each member of society performed within a community. Loos saw that, rather than attempt to fabricate an identity of distinction—an oxymoron in the strict sense of these terms—by imposing a preconceived vision on the house, the modern architect needed only embrace the shifting living conditions of the present.

Loos explained this in a 1925 interview with Bohuslav Markalouš, a Czech historian and editor of the Brno journal Wohnungskultur, who edited the Czech translation of Loos’ Ins Leere Gesprochen (Spoken into the Void), a collection of essays that Loos wrote between 1897 and 1900.\textsuperscript{365} In this interview, Loos distinguished the home as living space from the house as structure. Unlike a house, a home, he argued, could not be outwardly conceptualized as a static object. A home, like any individual’s identity, evolves over time, with experience and in interaction with one’s surroundings:

A home must never be finished. Is man physically and mentally ever formed, completed? Does he ever remain standing in a single dead point? And if man is in everlasting motion and evolution, if old needs become extinct and new ones emerge, if all of nature and everything around us changes, should the nearest thing man has,

\textsuperscript{365} Ins Leere Gesprochen was first published in German, in Paris and Zurich, in 1921; the Czech translation, edited by Markalouš in collaboration with Loos, was published in 1929 and titled Řeči do prázdná (Prague: Orbis); the English translation, Spoken Into the Void, was published in 1982 (Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 277).
his home, remain stationary, dead, furnished forever? Certainly not. To prescribe to
people where everything should stand, to furnish everything from a W.C. to an
ashtray is ridiculous. On the contrary. I like when people move furniture according to
what they (and not I) need and it is entirely natural and I approve of it, if they hang up
their old favorite pictures, their souvenirs, whether tasteful or tasteless. That is of
little concern of mine. But for them it is a part of their agitated life and intimity. That
means that I am an architect who furnishes humanly, not artistically—inhumanly. I
am always surprised how many people let themselves be tyrannized by the so-called
interior architects! 366

Loos did not oppose art. Rather, he was critical of the common architect’s approach
because it stifled the ability to cultivate the intricacies that give meaning and value to
an interior life over time; it treated the house as an autonomously fixed formal work
and thereby stifled—for the architect as much as for the inhabitant—the ability to
build a home. “[A] normal man,” Loos elaborated in a 1926 article published in the
Czech periodical Stavitel (The Builder), “has the right to be surrounded with objects
he considers beautiful. He needs these objects. He can live without pictures and
without music, but he cannot live without shoes, chairs, without a bed, without the
roof over his head.”367

Loos saw that every individual needed to be afforded the opportunity to
cultivate their own character in the spaces and activities of mundane life. He saw this
as being as important for an upper-middle-class client like Müller, who could afford
hand-crafted furnishings, fine artworks, and more costly materials, as for anyone else.
The common individual was becoming consumed by industrial production as people
who had previously made a living by crafting things for themselves and their
communities went to work in modern factories while also becoming industrial
consumers. Rather than impose upon these individuals ideals absorbed from the ruling
classes of the past, “[d]er Architekt,” Loos contended in “Grundsätzliches,” “muß den

366 Adolf Loos, excerpt from a 1925 interview with Bohuslav Markalous, English translation of the
original Czech published in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 279.
367 Adolf Loos, excerpt from essay sent to Stavitel in 1926, English translation of the original Czech
quoted in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 131.
Geist dessen ausdrücken, was er zu bauen hat” (“[t]he architect must express the spirit of what he has to build”). 368

Loos therefore maintained that the modern architect could learn from the pre-industrial craftsman, whose work, he argued, was more directly relevant to modern middle-class life than that of the pre-modern architect. As he explained in his essay “Hands Off!” (1917),

Alle—für mich—unzeitgemäßen arbeiten waren von handwerkern erzeugt worden, die in die abhängigkeit von künstlern und architekten geraten waren, während die arbeiten, die zeitgemäß waren, von handwerkern geschaffen wurden, denen der architekt noch keine entwürfe lieferte.
Für mich stand der satz fest: wollt ihr ein zeitgemähes handwerk haben, wollt ihr zeitgemäße gebrauchsgegenstände haben, so vergiftet die architekten. 369

(All—for me—untimely works were produced by craftsmen who had been subjected to the advice of artists and architects, while the works that were timely were made by craftsmen whom the architect had not yet furnished with designs.
For me the principle was certain: you want to have a timely craft, you want to have timely products for daily use, so you poison the architects.) 370

From Loos’ perspective, the craftsman’s work was “timely” precisely because there was no attempt to fix and define it as such. The craftsman, as he elaborated in “Grundsätzliches,” was not preoccupied with exhibiting “Originalgenies” (“original genius”) or establishing an individual artistic identity. 371 The craftsman simply made things that ordinary people used in daily life. The craftsman was therefore able to express—or draw out—the spirit of the present: the craftsman built structures that framed—and thereby opened—spaces in which people could dwell while building his own dwelling in the process. Recognizing that this grounding in living reality would allow the craftsman’s practice to actually evolve in response to the changing conditions of the present, Loos argued that, rather than imposing abstract visual ideals

368 Loos, “Grundsätzliches,” in Kulka, ed., Adolf Loos, 18. (Author’s Translation)
370 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
on the craftsman’s work, modern architects should concentrate on cultivating their own practice in complement to it.

**Crafting the Raumplan**

The ways in which Loos did this as he cultivated his Raumplan approach are exemplified by his collaboration with the Müller & Kapsa construction manager and master builder Bořivoj Kriegerbeck on the Villa Müller’s design. Kriegerbeck worked closely with Loos between 1928 and 1930, documenting his “Work for Architect A. Loos” in two personal notebooks that expand our understanding of Loos’ Raumplan approach.372

Kriegerbeck shared these notebooks with the Czech art historian and University of Brno professor, Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, who, in October of 1968, wrote to Kriegerbeck, “as a direct colleague of Loos,” to ask “what collaboration with [him] was really like.”373 Kudělka hoped to learn more about “the character of Adolf Loos” as he prepared a publication intended “to be as exhaustive as possible, and to contain as many unknown facts as possible” about his life and work.374 In a November 1968 reply, Kriegerbeck recalled how he and Loos had begun working together, before construction started on the Villa Müller, in the spring of 1928. Loos had been commissioned to design several apartment interiors to be built by Müller & Kapsa in and around the Czech city of Plzeň. He approached Kriegerbeck, who at the time worked at the firm’s Plzeň office, to render the drawings:

372 Kudělka published excerpts from Kriegerbeck’s extensive and detailed notebooks, in their original Czech, in “A Report on Adolf Loos,” *Science and Life* Magazine:16, in 1971. Kriegerbeck’s notebooks are now maintained by the Municipal Museum of Brno. The numerous notes and entries dealing with the Villa Müller have been republished in English translations in Ksandr, ed., *Villa Müller*.

373 Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, English translation of Letter to Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, 27 October 1968; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; original letters, written in Czech, are held in the Municipal Museum of Architecture and Urban Planning, City of Brno.

374 Ibid.
Loos once came to the office around noon, when there was no-one else there except me, and brought with him some sketches done by an unartistic hand on flattened out flour bags, and asked me to re-do them to scale. I did so, and from that time on he stayed faithful to me. He came to me with sketches and various requests that I arrange things with craftsmen, telephoned etc. Once, when he came to see me at the office with the boss, Dr Müller, he asked that the work be assigned to me. So, we continued to work together. That was in the spring of 1928.

Loos, as you surely know, was very hard of hearing, so we spoke with the aid of an ear trumpet. Later, when he went completely deaf, we wrote everything down… He brought sketches, usually a couple of lines, [and] explained how he saw it. I then put these on paper, and the game began…Loos had a great sense of space…

Loos believed, as he summarized in “Grundsätzliches,” that “Gute Architektur kann beschrieben, sie müßte nicht gezeichnet werden” (“Good architecture can be described, it did not have to be drawn”). Because Loos did not have the skill of a draughtsman, he relied upon Kriegerbeck to help draw out the Villa Müller’s designs (Figs. 44-49). As Loos’ sketches for the west wall of the Villa Müller living room and south wall of the dining room, for example, make clear, he did not picture space in two dimensions, but rather, saw space as it might be embodied (Figs. 44 & 45). Such sketches, both of which indicate the proposed materials best suited to these spaces, equally demonstrate that Loos saw every element of structure as being inextricable from the intervals of potential living space that it helped to frame. Finally, these sketches underscore the way that Loos emphasized, in particular, those intervals that were meant to provoke the home’s inhabitants to cultivate their own interior character through art.

Alongside their collaboration on the villa’s interiors, Kriegerbeck executed its façade drawings while Loos gave input on the size and placement of windows,

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375 Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, English translation of Letter to Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, 4 November 1968, pp. 1-2; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; Kriegerbeck’s original letters, written in Czech, are held in the Municipal Museum of Architecture and Urban Planning, City of Brno.
376 Loos, “Grundsätzliches,” in Kula, ed., Adolf Loos, 18. (Author’s Translation)
377 For further discussion of extant sketches by Loos and of the way that he indicated choices of materials both graphically and in discussion, see Marie Benešová and Karel Ksandr, “Co-operation of Adolf Loos and Karel Lhota in the Design of Villa Müller as Reflected in Preserved Drawings and Documentary Sources,” in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 118-131.
balconies, and other elements that proceeded of necessity from the home’s interiors (Fig. 50). Kriegerbeck recalled Loos explaining, “I never play around with a façade, that’s a part of the house where I don’t live.” Loos emphasized, Kriegerbeck elaborated, that one does not “[t]ake out a chair, sit down in the middle of the street on a rainy day and look at [a] façade.” Kriegerbeck went on to note that he prepared fourteen drawings for the Villa Müller’s main façade, from which Loos selected one and adjusted only the entry vestibule, “lining it with polished yellow travertine and adding a stone bench” (Fig. 51).

In *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (1996), Beatriz Colomina argues that Loos recognized that “[a]rchitecture…must not attempt impossible syntheses,” and that his Raumplan approach therefore treated the exterior of a house as an autonomously drawn “tattooed surface that does not refer to the interior, it neither conceals nor reveals it.” As Colomina’s interpretation suggests, Loos rejected an assumption that was common among modern architects: that interior life and exterior identity could be affixed to one another—or synthesized—in a preconceived structural form. Yet, as Loos’ collaboration with Kriegerbeck demonstrates, he also did not view exterior structure and interior living space as mutually independent concerns; he saw them, more precisely, as mutually interdependent concerns. As much as Loos recognized that the house was not

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379 Ibid.
380 Ibid.
381 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 1996), 66, 281. Colomina interprets Loos’ arguments that the exterior of a home should act as a mask as expressing a belief that exterior structure functions independently to preserve the intimacy of a separate interior life. This interpretation leads her to conclude, writing specifically on the Josephine Baker house, that Loos ultimately viewed structure as autonomous object and in purely formal terms: “The exterior of the house cannot be read as a silent mask designed to conceal its interior; it is a tattooed surface that does not refer to the interior, it neither conceals nor reveals it” (281; also see Colomina’s discussion pp. 274-281).
something to be viewed as an autonomous work of art outside oneself, he equally understood that any interior is inseparable from the structure that frames and, thereby, opens the intervals in which living space can take shape.

Loos’ collaboration with Kriegerbeck helped him to fully express lessons that he had been cultivating since at least 1921, when he had been invited to design eight small houses for a model housing settlement in Heuberg, a suburb of the Austrian capital of Vienna (Fig. 52). The project had been initiated after World War I, when Austria became a social democracy following the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and was intended to introduce affordable, practical single-family housing for the lower middle classes during a period of transition. Loos’ wife at the time, the Viennese dancer Elsie Altmann-Loos, recalled the project in her memoir, Mein Leben mit Adolf Loos, writing,

Loos wollte seine acht Häuser in einer Reihe nebeneinander bauen. Die Häuser sollten einander gleichen, damit kein Siedler sich übervorteilt fühlen konnte. Im Innern des Hauses konnte dann jeder seine Persönlichkeit geltend machen.

(Loos wanted to build his eight houses in a row, side by side. The houses were to be all the same, so that no single inhabitant could feel bested. Then each could exert his personality on the house’s interior.)

Loos saw that, like the mundane structures of the pre-industrial past, a structure built of widely available materials using standardized components would best express the reality and fulfill the needs of modern middle-class life: it would allow precious resources to be expended on cultivating the interior intricacies that mattered most. Loos’ Raumplan approach therefore embraced the efficiency and uniformity afforded
by industrial building materials and techniques. Rather than using unnecessary resources to outwardly distinguish one house from the next, he used reinforced concrete to create a uniform structural frame. This freed, not only the inhabitant, but Loos himself to concentrate on the interior, where he similarly used mundane materials like machine-milled lumber and industrial paint in a common design.

Altmann-Loos reflected on the beauty of this design as she described the first house that opened to the public, in 1921:

Das Haus war von außen ganz winzig. Betrat man es, befand man sich plötzlich in einem kleinen Palast…
Die Möbel waren aus Weichholz, weiß gestrichen…Der Raum war so bezaubernd schön, daß einem das Armsein plötzlich wie ein Privileg vorkam. Am Vorabend der Eröffnung fuhren Loos, Kulka, Fischer und ich nach Lainz [sic; see footnote] und brachten aus unserer Wohnung alles das hinaus, was ein Haus wohnlich macht: Bücher, Bilder, Aschenschalen, Kochgeschirr, Sofapolster und vieles anderes. Wir füllten Blumenvasen mit Blumen und Zweigen und legten japanische Strohmatten auf den weißgescheuerten Holzboden.

(The house was, from outside, very tiny. [When] one entered it, one suddenly found oneself in a small palace…
The furnishings were made of softwood, painted white…The space was so enchantingly beautiful that to be poor suddenly seemed like a privilege.
On the night before the opening, Loos, Kulka, Fischer and I went to Lainz [sic; see footnote] and brought with us everything from our apartment that makes a house homely: books, pictures, ashtrays, cookware, sofa cushions and many other things. We filled flower vases with flowers and sprigs and lay Japanese straw mats on the white polished wood floors.)

Loos saw that, if one could move beyond concern for exterior appearances and beyond attempts to fix identity in structural form, one would be afforded infinite space in which to build a home. In the process, a meaningful identity would emerge and express itself.

The Structural Definition of Identity in Modern Austria-Hungary

386 Ibid., 171. Note: Writing in 1984, Altmann-Loos misidentified Heuberg as Lainz, another suburb of Vienna, where Loos also later designed four houses for the Vienna Werkbundsiedlung exhibition that opened in 1932.
387 Ibid. (Author’s Translation). Note: Writing in 1984, Altmann-Loos misidentified Heuberg as Lainz, another suburb of Vienna, where Loos also later designed four houses for the Vienna Werkbundsiedlung exhibition that opened in 1932.
Altmann-Loos went onto explain that Loos’ Heuberg housing model was critiqued, however, as small and unexceptional by the prospective inhabitants who came to view it.\(^{388}\) While Loos’ way of thinking could be seen as extending logically from the craftsmanship of the pre-industrial past, it seemed radical for a modern architect because it did not align with the ideals introduced with modernization. As the initial public reaction to the Heuberg housing model suggests, pre-industrial craft values had been lost in the drive to structurally define identity in the collective context of modern life.

The process by which this occurred is exemplified by the Austro-Hungarian capital of Vienna, which until the mid-nineteenth century, was a closed imperial capital where the ruling Habsburg court and aristocracy inside lived removed from the majority of the citizens outside. The only commoners who had inhabited the pre-modern capital were the exceptional craftsmen and merchants who provided necessities for the crown and aristocracy. They populated the area around the Graben, a street whose name translates as “ditch” or “trench.” Named for the defensive ditch that once occupied its site on the outskirts of the ancient Roman settlement of Vindobona, the Graben had been filled in when the medieval city was expanded in the late twelfth century.\(^{389}\) It had become a thriving cultural hub beginning in the thirteenth century, when the Habsburgs made Vienna their ruling seat and the de facto capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Along this thoroughfare, which leads to the Hofburg imperial palace, the city’s merchants and craftsmen built simple wooden townhouses that fulfilled the needs of both commercial and domestic life by combining street-level workshops and storefronts with upper-story living quarters.

\(^{388}\) Ibid.
\(^{389}\) Abutting the Danube River, Vindobona occupied a small portion of the modern city. The Graben was dug outside the ancient settlement’s southwestern fortification wall.
These conditions began to shift around 1857, when the Habsburg emperor Franz Joseph I ordered that Vienna’s medieval fortification wall be torn down and replaced with a modern boulevard—the Ringstraße (Ring Road)—and infrastructure. This coincided with the onset of Austria-Hungary’s industrialization and propelled the capital’s rapid transition into a modern city open to all the empire’s citizens. As a new urban middle class moved into the capital and worked to establish its place in the imperial city, Austria-Hungary sought to establish its cultural traditions in a modern industrial world.

Public academic and professional institutions were formed and prominently housed in new structures around the Ringstraße. The Austrian Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts), which had been founded with imperial support in the seventeenth century, was reorganized to become the empire’s official arts institute and authority. It offered training in what were being defined as the traditional fine arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, as did the Gesellschaft bildender Künstler Österreichs (Austrian Artists’ Society), which was founded in 1861 to promote ongoing development within these fields. In 1863, the Austrian Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts) introduced instruction in the new field of applied arts, which centered on the design of visually appealing industrial products. Whether trained in the fine or applied arts, many professional architects and designers adopted forms drawn from the civic monuments of the Gothic past and from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo styles that had been favored by the Viennese court and aristocracy. Such forms were eclectically applied as much to the municipal buildings erected around the capital as to private commercial structures and apartment buildings. Modern industrial materials and techniques allowed these forms to be widely and variably affixed to the new structures—as well as to the furnishings,
domestic objects and other products—that were designed to represent the modernizing empire and appeal to its growing middle-class public.

By the turn of the century, there was a coinciding desire to break with forms that had become associated with the outdated traditions of the past and construct a distinctively modern cultural identity. This effort was led by the Vienna Secession, a group that was founded by several of Loos’ contemporaries, including the painter Gustav Klimt and the architect Joseph Maria Olbrich, who seceded from the Austrian Artists’ Society in 1897 (Fig. 53). Under the motto “Der Zeit Ihre Kunst, Der Kunst Ihre Freiheit” (“To the time its Art, to Art its Freedom”), the Secessionists promoted the need for art’s autonomy in the context of modern life and sought to collapse what they perceived as traditional distinctions between the fine and applied arts. In domestic architecture, they promoted the ideal of a Gesamtkunstwerk, a “total work of art,” in which all elements of a house, inside and out—its facades and fittings, furnishings, fixtures, utensils and other domestic objects, artworks and sculpture—were conceived and appointed in the design of an artistic whole. Stemming from this ideal, in 1903, the Secessionist architect Joseph Hoffman and designer Koloman Moser, both professors at the Kunstgewerbeschule, established the Wiener Werkstätte, an industrial design workshop that promoted the artistic reform of all varieties of everyday domestic products, including furnishings, glassware, flatware, textiles, and jewelry.

390 Demonstrating their intention to cut ties to absorbed imperial traditions, the Secessionists held their first public exhibition in January of 1898 in a headquarters and exhibition building that was designed by Olbrich and erected on a site off the Ringstrasse. In January of the same year, they also introduced their ideals and designs in the first issue of Ver Sacrum (Sacred Spring), a magazine published between 1898 and 1903 to promote their work and theories. As their exhibitions and publications make clear, the Secessionists broadly advocated the creation of entirely new forms across painting and the visual arts, poetry, graphic design, sculpture, interior design, the decorative arts, and architecture. (For discussion of the Secession, see, e.g., Rolf Toman, ed., Vienna Art and Architecture (Potsdam, Germany: h.fullmann publishing, 2013.)
At the same time, the Graben was transitioning from a craftsmen’s thoroughfare into a commercial boulevard lined with fashionable shops and cafes. The combined-use structures of the pre-industrial past were torn down and replaced by modern houses of industry, design, and commerce. By the late nineteenth century, the Graben had become the center of display and consumption for a new type of bourgeois urban consumer that Charles Baudelaire, in *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* (1863), termed the *flâneur*, usually translated as “stroller.”

Satirically depicting the flâneur as a pure perceiving subject who strolls the city in order to visually apprehend it, Baudelaire describes this individual as a “passionate spectator.” A detached observer, the flâneur, Baudelaire writes, “is an ‘I’ with an insatiable appetite for the ‘non-I’, at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive.” Baudelaire used the flâneur to critique the modern middle class individual’s frenzy to consume the new and fleeting things that surround at the expense of cultivating one’s own interior life.

Speaking to Baudelaire’s point, as Vienna’s emerging bourgeoisie became central to the economic and social life of the capital, many sought respite from the speed of urban life and from the spaces of public display and consumption. New residential development began to tend away from the former imperial center and Vienna’s city limits expanded to encompass the rural outskirts that had been inhabited by the majority of the population prior to modernization. These were developed to form suburban districts where the new public of private individuals attempted to recreate the ideals of the pre-modern past.

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392 Ibid.
393 Ibid., 9-10.
Loos’ Critical Perspective on Modern Domestic Culture

While many of Loos’ contemporaries were blind to the contradictions inherent in this process, Loos’ own experiences had afforded him a unique critical perspective on it. As an article posthumously published, in *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* on 25 October 1933, explained, he had “kein Diplom” (“no diploma”), yet, “[e]r erkannte die Notwendigkeit einer neuen Handwerkskultur” (“[h]e recognized the importance of a new craft culture”).394 “Freilich,” the article elaborated, “als öffentlicher Lehrer hat Loos niemals ein Amt bekleidet, er wurde nie vom Staat besoldet und er erwarb auch nie den Titel eines Professors. Ein Freibrief als Maurer, den er in Amerika bekommen hatte, genügte vollkommen” (“In fact, as a public teacher, Loos never held an office, was never remunerated by the State and he also never earned the title of a Professor. A charter as a mason, which he had received in America, was enough”).395

Loos had cultivated his approach to architecture directly and concretely, in a way that negated assumed oppositions between private life and public identity and that allowed him to operate without the preoccupations of his formally trained Viennese contemporaries. He had been born in 1870 into the lower-middle-class family of a sculptor and stonemason in Brno, a medieval settlement that had flourished as the capital of the Kingdom of Moravia. Absorbed by the Habsburg monarchy with the Czech lands, Brno was ruled by the Habsburgs as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the empire’s dissolution, at the end of World War I, in 1918. Like other formerly medieval Czech cities, it had rapidly modernized throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in a process that closely coincided with, and yet was distinct from, that of the capital.

395 Ibid., 308. (Author’s Translation)
While it, too, was absorbing modern materials and production methods and academic and professional institutions that were transforming domestic life and culture, Brno, situated 142 kilometers north of Vienna, became particularly important as a supporting center of industrial production for mundane goods, such as machinery, metal works, wool and other textiles, and food products. A poor student, Loos learned more from an early age from his family’s trade and from Brno’s newly emerging industries themselves than from his formal education.

More interested in making things that people use in daily life than in abstract academic theories, Loos studied, briefly and unsuccessfully, at the Technical University of Brno between 1889 and 1890 and again between 1892 and 1893 before dropping out to travel to the United States. Working odd jobs as a dishwasher, carpenter, and mason, he remained in the U.S. between 1893 and 1896, visiting St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago, where he attended the 1893 World’s Fair. After brief stays in London and Paris, Loos returned to Austria-Hungary in 1896. He settled in Vienna and began to practice architecture while introducing critiques of what he saw as the capital’s degenerating domestic culture.

Beginning in the late 1890s, Loos publicized his critiques in polemical articles that he wrote for popular newspapers including Die Neue Freie Presse (The New Free Press) and Die Wage (The Dare). These articles addressed all aspects of cultural production—from fashion and cuisine to interior design and architecture. In 1903, Loos published a self-edited selection of his writings in his bitingly titled Das Andere: Ein Blatt zur Einführung Abendlandischer Kultur in Oesterreich (The Other: A Magazine for the Introduction of Occidental Culture to Austria). Das Andere

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397 Loos executed his first independent design, for the interior of the Ebenstein tailoring shop, in Vienna in 1897 (see Ksandr, ed., *Villa Müller*, 334).
articulated the critical perspective that Loos went on to summarize in “Ornament und Verbrechen” (“Ornament and Crime,” ca. 1910), in which he contended, “evolution der kultur ist gleichbedeutend mit dem entfernen des ornamentes aus dem gebrauchsgegenstande” (“culture’s evolution is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects”). 398

Academic training had instilled in many of Loos’ contemporaries the belief that it was necessary to define aesthetic identity, on both the individual and cultural levels, by fusing, or synthesizing, art—the autonomous formal work—and industry—the functional efficiency of industrial materials and techniques. Using dress as a synecdoche for the whole of cultural production, Loos argued that the collective conditions of modernity had negated the need and ability to outwardly define identity in the form of fixed material objects. Exterior forms, he explained, could not communicate all the intricacies of an interior life that is continually being defined and redefined in relation to its surroundings:

Die herdenmenschen mußten sich durch verschiedene farben unterscheiden, der moderne mensch braucht sein kleid als maske. So ungeheuer stark ist seine individualität, daß sie sich nicht mehr in kleidungsstücken ausdrücken läßt. Ornamentlosigkeit ist ein zeichen geistiger kraft. Der moderne mensch verwendet die ornamente früherer und fremder kulturen nach seinem gutdünken. Seine eigene erfindung konzentriert er auf andere dinge. 399

(The nomadic herdsman had to distinguish themselves by various colors; modern man uses his clothes as a mask. So immensely strong is his individuality that it can no longer be expressed in articles of clothing. Freedom from ornament is a sign of


spiritual strength. Modern man uses the ornaments of earlier or alien cultures as he sees fit. He concentrates his own inventiveness on other things.\textsuperscript{400}

Loos saw that, if interior life could be freely cultivated without concern for exterior appearances, identity would develop as a byproduct of each individual’s distinct combination of intellectual and artistic abilities, interests and tastes, roles and contributions, emotional and physical experiences. Each individual would become a living expression of the valuable differences that distinguish one from all the others within any larger order.

For Loos, this was as true for the individual as for the development of Austro-Hungarian culture in a broader sense. As he further contended in “Ornament und Verbrechen,”

Da das ornament nicht mehr organisch mit unserer kultur zusammenhängt, ist es auch nicht mehr der ausdruck unserer kultur. Das ornament, das heute geschaffen wird, hat keinen zusammenhang mit uns, hat überhaupt keine menschlichen zusammenhänge, keinen zusammenhang mit der weltordnung.\textsuperscript{401}

(Because [today’s] ornament is no longer organically connected with our culture, it is also no longer the expression of our culture. The ornament that is produced today has no connection with us, has no human connections at all, no connection with the world order.)\textsuperscript{402}

With industrial production, skilled labor had been reduced to an abstract commodity and the unique beauty and value that had been intrinsic to handcraftsmanship was being devalued by a capitalist system that thrived on rapid output and consumption. Domestic—or local, land-based—skills and resources were being wasted to manufacture an identity that had, not only no relation to immediate living reality, but also no real distinguishing qualities of its own. For all the ways that Austro-Hungarian architects and designers attempted to outwardly assert a unique cultural identity that


\textsuperscript{402} Ibid. (Author’s Translation). Also see alternative English translation published in Ulrich Conrads, \textit{Programs and Manifestos}, 22.
would make Austria-Hungary competitive in a modern industrial world, Austria-Hungary failed, from Loos’ perspective, to cultivate anything of unique cultural substance or value. It was simply falling in line with the most mundane conventions, ideals, and fashions that had been adopted, in comparable forms, across so many other contexts.

Loos therefore maintained that it was necessary to move beyond the commonly accepted view that identity could be defined by synthesizing art and industry; to attempt to synthesize these objective opposites only stifled the development and reduced the value of either and both. Drawing upon his earlier arguments “On Art and Architecture[,] Which is a Craft,” he summarized this point in 1926:

*Works of genius do not give the impression of beauty; on the contrary, they give the impression of horror. In most cases they are not intended for our generation…There is art—the future…There is industry—the present…There is no art industry, applied art. Industry manufactures for us objects we use and wear. Foodstuffs and beverages, cars and houses—all must seem beautiful to those who use them…A work of art should not be worn by use. It is eternal…It should be given time needed for the fulfillment of its mission. It should simply last so long that it can force itself on the people who have it in front of their eyes.*

Loos’ own experiences had taught him that art and industry needed not be synthesized because they needed not be viewed as diametric opposites in the first place—there was no need to equate art with the purely formal work and industry with the purely functional object. Rather, Loos saw that, just as industry must fulfill the changing needs of the present by producing well-made things that would allow each individual to cultivate their own sense of beauty in mundane life, art must preserve the freedom of expression that would allow it to continue provoking thought and, thereby, to remain relevant, into an as-yet-unseen future. For art and industry to fulfill these

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403 Adolf Loos, excerpts from a 1926 essay written for the Czech periodical *Stavitel*, English translations from the original Czech quoted in Ksandr, ed., *Villa Müller*, 131, 278.
respective functions, they needed be allowed to separately but *interdependently* develop. Only then could they emerge meaningfully in relation to one another to mutually shape domestic life and generate identity—on both the individual and cultural levels—over time.

**Functional Analysis of the Villa Müller**

Müller was an ideal client for Loos because his own pursuits afforded him a perspective that complimented the interests and abilities of both Kriegerbeck and Loos. A trained civil engineer whose firm specialized in steel-reinforced concrete construction, Müller had equally little interest in synthesizing art and industry because he understood that a structure’s identity and value are not autonomously fixed; a structure’s identity and value reside in its ability to sustain the living activities that define a community over time. He had been born in 1890 in Plzeň, where his father, Antonín Müller, had co-founded Müller and Kapsa the same year to introduce industrial materials and engineering practices to newly modernizing cities throughout the Czech lands.404 Innovatively using reinforced concrete to construct roadways, sewage systems, hydraulic and engineering plants, bridges, railways, and residential and commercial structures, the firm had quickly become instrumental in the regional development of modern civic infrastructure, opening a second office in Prague in 1904 and a third in Bratislavia (the capital of present-day Slovakia) in 1921.405

After succeeding his father as co-owner of Müller and Kapsa in 1921, Müller resided in Plzeň until the late 1920s, when the firm’s activities began to focus on its

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405 Ibid. The firm also, notably, fulfilled several contracts to build new engineering and factory structures for the Plzeň-based Škoda Works firm.
Prague office. A former seat of the Holy Roman Empire, under Charles IV (r. 1346-1378) and Rudolf II (r. 1576-1612), Prague had been named the capitol of the Czechoslovak Republic when it declared its independence from Austria-Hungary in 1918, and rapidly grew from a fortified imperial center into a modern industrial city with a population that reached nearly a million inhabitants by 1930. With Müller and Kapsa’s work increasingly concentrating around the new capital, Müller and his wife, Milada Müllerová (nee Krátká), whom he had married in 1923, and daughter, Eva, born in 1926, moved to Prague, where the firm was headquartered at Dělnická Street 473. Living initially in a nearby apartment at Dělnická Street 25, in September of 1928, the Müllers purchased a plot upon which to build a family home in Střešovice, a village on the outskirts of the former medieval city that had developed into an elite suburb of modern Prague.

Seeking to retain Střešovice’s picturesque image as a pre-modern village removed from modern industrial life, the Prague Municipal Planning and Building Control Department closely regulated all new construction. Civic authorities sanctioned the ideal of a two-story, single-family house built of brick and topped by a pitched, shingled roof. Load-bearing outer walls were to articulate the order of a fixed plan with clearly defined interior floor and room divisions. Introduced to Loos by the Czech architect Karel Lhota, who was co-contracted to design the Villa Müller’s plans, Müller had seen Loos’ work on the commissions that were executed, in collaboration with Kriegerbeck, through his firm’s Plzeň office beginning in the

409 Ibid.
spring of 1928.\textsuperscript{410} In October of that year, Müller hired Loos to design his home, working closely with him on its program and construction.\textsuperscript{411}

The structural drawings that Müller submitted to the Prague Municipal Planning and Building Control Department in November of 1928 were repeatedly rejected throughout late 1928 and early 1929 because they challenged municipal regulations: the structure exceeded a prescribed maximum footprint of 180 square meters; “[t]he plans [were] entirely inadequate,” lacking “the required sectional drawing,” as well as façade and site plans; and “[b]esides, the proposed façade [wa]s tasteless.”\textsuperscript{412} While disrupting the regularity of even a flat roof profile, the Villa Müller’s attic, the Zoning Office objected in its first ruling on 18 December 1928, was an empty addition, with which the house “invoke[d] a three-storey building instead of [the] two-storey structure [added: without penthouse] permissible in this area [sic].”\textsuperscript{413} Even as it repeatedly delayed the issuing of a building permit, “the attic,” Müller appealed on 6 April 1929 as he refused its omission, “is a necessary part of any given building.”\textsuperscript{414}

Müller was not granted a permit to proceed with the villa’s construction until 14 June 1929, after making repeated appeals to both the local Zoning Office and Regional Government.\textsuperscript{415} By then, the structural frame was already largely in place; Müller and Kapsa had begun building it, under Müller’s direction, in December of

\textsuperscript{410} Ibid. Karel Lhota is attributed as Loos’ collaborator in designing the Villa Müller; although Loos acknowledged that he had designed the villa with architect Lhota, the documentary evidence indicates that Lhota’s involvement in the project centered primarily upon executing the villa’s plan and section drawings.

\textsuperscript{411} Ibid. Lhota had met Loos in 1923 in Brno through Bohumil Markalous and worked with him on several projects throughout Plzeň and Prague.

\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., 29, 36, 40. For a full discussion of the villa’s continued rejection by the Prague Municipal Planning and Building Control Department and of the ensuing modifications that led to the eventual issuing of the necessary building permits, see pp. 29-40.

\textsuperscript{413} Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{414} Ibid., 35; See discussion at pp. 33-35.

\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., 41-42.
1928. Nearly two feet thick, the villa’s outer walls, which are non-load-bearing, were built of salvaged and irregular bricks, which provided insulation. These walls were finished with a weather-protective double coat of lime mortar and white stucco plaster. Four massive internal columns of reinforced, cast-in-place concrete supported the rooftop terrace, buttressed the central stairway, and facilitated an open plan. On 19 July 1929, Müller wrote to Loos, “My villa is already under roof these days, the next steps will be to put up partition walls and to install plumbing and heating…” On 7 August 1929, he submitted to the Planning and Building Control Office “the prescribed blueprint of the enclosure of my family home” [emphases added].

Recognizing the interdependent relationship between a house—framing structure—and a home—the potential living spaces that it opens—Müller helped Loos to refine the spatial planning approach of the Raumplan. As Loos conceived the plan to accommodate the needs and activities of Müller and his family, the interiors of the villa were articulated by a combination of concrete cross beams, wooden floor boards, and brick masonry partitions, all of which were then meticulously painted, clad, and stuccoed. These interiors were further outfitted with hand-crafted built-in furnishings and artworks, which Kriegerbeck noted that he hung, in late May of 1930, according to precise heights, placements, and groupings. With the exception of those in the attic room, these works were meant to remain fluid, such that the Müllers

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417 Ibid.
418 Ibid.
419 Ibid., 44.
420 Ibid., 44.
421 Ibid.
422 Kriegerbeck, English translation of notebook entry, published in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 73.
could select and display them to complement and enhance, while being complemented and enhanced by, their surroundings.\textsuperscript{423}

\textit{“The Last House”}

After construction ended on the Villa Müller, Loos continued to cultivate his Raumplan approach in collaboration with both Müller and Kriegerbeck. In 1931, they began working on a prototype for a small single-family house, a version of which Loos had proposed for the Deutscher Werkbund’s 1927 Weißenhofsiedlung exhibition in Stuttgart.\textsuperscript{424} After it was rejected, Loos had continued to refine the design, alongside his work on the Villa Müller, in anticipation of the 1932 Vienna Werkbundsiedlung exhibition, but it remained unrealized as he cooperated with Heinrich Kulka on a more conventional model. Loos hoped to finally contribute it to the Baba model housing settlement that the Czech Werkbund had begun planning in 1928, and that was built between 1932 and 1940. Never constructed, the design gave rise to a separate but closely intertwined, and also unrealized, design for a second, smaller house for Müller.\textsuperscript{425} Kriegerbeck speculated that Müller felt that the Villa

\textsuperscript{423} For inventory and summary discussion of works in the Müllers’ collection, see Prahl, “František Müller as Art Collector,” pp. 224-231 in Ksandr, ed., \textit{Villa Müller}.

\textsuperscript{424} Kriegerbeck wrote to Kudělka that he had discussed the possibility of such a project with Loos before 1931, while still working on the Villa Müller: “During a work break, which Loos and I sometimes took, I told him that he works only for the rich, and that for the middling or little person does nothing. He replied, ‘How so, I have a small cottages [sic] with one wall on a plan of 48 m\textsuperscript{2}, I’ll send it to you.’ His book hadn’t yet been published. This [sic] cottages, explicitly English, I copied out, but did nothing until when I congratulated him on his 60\textsuperscript{th} [birthday], I reminded him, that under his direction I should like to do such a cottage or villa as if for Dr. Müller. He took this up, and then kept me busy with it. Within the firm, though, I met with incomprehension, so the whole project fell through. Until I last met with Loos at Ing. Semler’s.” Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, L11a-d Letter from Bořivoj Kriegerbeck to Zdeněk Kudělka, undated. English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum.

\textsuperscript{425} This related project for Müller was for the design of a small masonry chalet, with a plan area of 60.2 square meters. Although others have speculated that the smaller house, which was never built and for which a plot was never secured, was intended for the Müllers’ daughter, Eva, Kriegerbeck maintained that Müller hoped to sell the Villa Müller and move to the smaller, more modest dwelling. See: L11a-d Letter from Bořivoj Kriegerbeck to Zdeněk Kudělka, undated. English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum.
Müller “was too large for him, and expensive to run and maintain.” Across these iterations, the design was adapted to various materials, including concrete and stone masonry (Fig. 54). The prototype came to be known as “The Last House” because Loos concentrated intensely on it from 1931 until his death in 1933.

In June of 1931, Loos sent Müller a preliminary plan and description for the prototype, from which Kriegerbeck began to execute more detailed drawings. Through April of 1932, the three corresponded to select materials and work out the intricacies of the design. Semi-detached with a 64 square-meter-footprint, the house was to be built of prefabricated lumber, facilitating ease of construction, maintenance, affordability and adaptability to individual and site-specific needs. It was a simple structure that was conceived to be both widely accessible and conducive to expressing individual character within a communal order. To Loos’ description, its interiors were

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426 Ibid.
427 See, e.g., Letter sent from Müller to Kulka on 14 April 1932 to be received on Loos’ behalf [“The Last House, Müller to Kulka, 14.4.1932”; English translation of this letter, along with others related to the project, provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum]. Müller explained,

“In the enclosure we are sending you a project for a wooden house for Prague with the request that you submit it to Mr. Architect Loos for corrections.

We discussed the entire design with him at the time and need primarily particulars and completion about the room configuration of the lower level rooms…

Mr. Loos indicated the following descriptions at the time:

- Hall: white lacquer, red Japanese matting
- Living room and dining room: oak with visible nail heads, with green wallpaper
- Library: black—red lacquer,
- Master bedroom: light polished oak with blue fabric
- Other bedrooms: lacquered in black-green, blue-yellow, orange-blue”

428 Ibid.
429 Zdeněk Kudělka, “Činnost Adolfa Loose V Československu,” Sborník Prác Filozofické Fakulty Brněnské Univerzity Studia Minorica Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis F 18, 1974; 20. In this article, Kudělka cites an undated plan and description of the “Familien Haus” by Loos, and argues that it suggests Loos looked to “the tradition of light Japanese wood houses” (20). Kudělka notes that it was one of multiple related versions of such a home, and that it was likely a partial basis for plans that Kriegerbeck later refined; In a letter on 30 October 1931, Müller informed Loos that Kriegerbeck had drawn plans based on his specifications. Kudělka further references these plans in a letter to Kriegerbeck on 19 March 1969; he cites a letter that Loos sent to Müller on 5 June 1931, in which Loos explains that he had intended to realize the design for the 1932 Vienna Werkbundsiedlung; because it was not realized, Loos hoped that he might be able to contribute it to the Baba housing settlement (See: d1 Letter from Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka to Bofivoj Kriegerbeck, Mar. 19th 1969; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum).
to be outfitted with vibrantly crafted materials. These included woods lacquered in colors of white, black, red and combinations of “black-green, blue-yellow,” and “orange-blue;” “oak with visible nail heads” juxtaposed “with green wall paper;” “light polished oak with blue fabric;” and “red Japanese matting.”

**Part Two: Japan’s Significance for Loos**

In a 1974 article, the art historian Kudělka argued that “The Last House,” in its shifting prototypical versions, suggests that Loos looked to “the tradition of light Japanese wood houses” later in his career. This insight drew upon accounts gathered from people who knew Loos in the 1920s and ‘30s. In a 1968 letter to Kudělka, the painter František Viktor Mokrý, for example, recalled that in January 1924, he “sat with [Loos]…in the former ‘ROMANIA’ wine-bar on the corner of Rybná and Jakubská ul., and heard his original comments, e.g. on why…‘Alles Modernes ist japanisch’…” (“Everything modern is Japanese”). In a November 1973 letter, Kriegerbeck explained, in greater detail, that Loos’ approach to domestic space had been informed by a visit to Japan during his marriage to the Viennese

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430 Letter sent from Müller to Kulka on 14 April 1932 to be received on Loos’ behalf (“The Last House, Müller to Kulka, 14.4.1932”; English translation of this letter, along with others related to the project, provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum).
431 Ibid.
432 Kudělka, “Činnost Adolfa Loose V Československu,” Sborník Prací Filozofické Fakulty Brněnské Univerzity Studia Minorà Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunnensis F 18, 1974; 20. Note: In this same article, Kudělka cites the interior of the apartment for Leo Brummel in Pilsen (1929/30) as another example that demonstrates “Loos’ ‘Japanese’ orientation” (see p. 11 of Kudělka’s article).
433 English translation of Letter from F. V. Mokrý to Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, February 25th 1968; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; In the letter, which has been translated from Czech, Mokrý recalls, “On Wednesday 28th January 1924 I sat with [Loos] and Josef Vydra in the former ‘ROMANIA’ wine-bar on the corner of Rybná and Jakubská ul., and heard his original comments, e.g. on why we wear ties, or ‘Alles Modernes ist japanisch’…” Note: as Kudělka was researching his intended publication on Loos, he had contacted numerous of Loos’ previous acquaintances, friends, clients, students and collaborators—anyone still living who had personally known or met Loos while he was alive. The comprehensive study that Kudělka hoped to publish never materialized, instead resulting in a series of articles that were published in 1973 and 1974.
dancer Elsie Altmann. While this would indicate that the couple visited Japan sometime between 1919 and 1926, Altmann’s mention of the use of their own “japanische Strohmatten” (“Japanese straw mats”) in the Heuberg housing model suggests that the trip occurred before 1921. More to the point, Kriegerbeck shared with Kudělka an article published in 1960, in the Czech daily newspaper Dneska, that shed light on what Loos had learned there, writing, it “will certainly be of interest to you, and might perhaps aid you in filling out Loos’ human and aesthetic profile,” although “there are certain errors.” “Loos did not work as a mason in Japan,” he clarified, “he was there with his wife…as part of her world tour. In Japan, however, he picked up a great deal, and it is from thence that the inspiration for his coloured [sic], low cost interiors comes. He told me this himself.”

Kriegerbeck’s recollection of what Loos learned from Japan is both surprising and telling for at least three reasons. First, because Loos’ appreciation for handcraftsmanship and fine materials led to his association with high-budget private commissions, like the Villa Müller, that allowed him to fully express that appreciation. Second, because the literally “coloured” interiors designed for the Villa

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434 Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, English translation of Letter to Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, 21 November 1973; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; Kriegerbeck’s original letters, written in Czech, are held in the Municipal Museum of Architecture and Urban Planning, City of Brno. Note: Loos’ relationship with Altmann began in 1917; they may have traveled to Japan before they were married in 1919. I have been unable to find Loos’ passport from this period, perhaps because Loos changed his citizenship after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. It also possible that Loos’ passport was lost, as were the documents of many, during World War II. Equally likely is that Loos’ passport was destroyed when he ordered, as Beatriz Colomina notes in Privacy and Publicity, the destruction of “all the documents in his office” when he departed Vienna for Paris in 1922 (Colomina, Privacy and Publicity, 1).

435 Altmann-Loos, Mein Leben mit Adolf Loos, 171.

436 Ibid. Note: Along with the article mentioned here, Kriegerbeck shared a second article, both of which had been, Kriegerbeck notes, “published in memory of Adolf Loos to mark what would have been his 90th birthday in 1960.” As I cannot read Czech, I have unfortunately been unable to concretely identify either article, but will, and hope that others who are better informed also will, continue to pursue these resources.

437 Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, English translation of Letter to Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, 21 November 1973; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; Kriegerbeck’s original letters, written in Czech, are held in the Municipal Museum of Architecture and Urban Planning, City of Brno.
Müller and the “The Last House” are exceptional relative to Loos’ designs for public housing projects like the Heuberg settlement. Third, while they vary widely in their construction, intricacies, and finishes, traditional Japanese houses are not colorful in the assumed visual sense. An account by Loos’ third wife, Claire Beck Loos, sheds further light on how, precisely then, Japanese domestic architecture was instructive for Loos.

In her 1936 text *Adolf Loos Privat*, Beck Loos recalled accompanying Loos at an exhibition of his own designs at a trade school in Stuttgart in 1927, the same year that his “Last House” prototype was omitted from the Deutscher Werkbund’s Stuttgart exhibition. During the trade school exhibition, she writes, Loos “r[iss] eine Streichholzsackel aus der Tasche [und] beg[ann] zu sprechen” (“pull[ed] a matchbox from his pocket [and] “beg[an] to speak”).

‘Seht’, r[ief] er, ‘das ist moderne Architektur! Die Häuser der Zukunft werden nicht aus Eisenbeton sein, die man, um sie fortzuschaffen—wie es bei der letzten Ausstellung in Paris der Fall war—, mit Ekraßit sprengen muß…das Haus der Zukunft ist aus Holz! Wie die kleinen japanischen Häuser! Es hat verschiebbare Wände! Moderne Architektur ist: japanische Kultur plus europäische Tradition!’

Eine Menschenmenge hat sich um Loos gebildet…Loos w[urde] immer lebhafter…Später sagt[e] er mir:

…‘Je mehr Menschen mir zühoren, desto stärker ist das Fluidum, desto leichter ist es für mich, zu sprechen. Niemals habe ich mich auf einen Vortrag vorbereitet! Das, was ich spreche, ist immer im Moment improvisiert. Einen Vortrag vom Blatt zu lesen, wäre mir unmöglich!’

(‘Look’, he exclaim[ed], ‘this is modern architecture! The houses of the future will not be of reinforced concrete, which, in order to remove them—as was the case with the last exhibition in Paris—, one must blow [them] up with Ekraßit…the house of the future is of wood! Like the small Japanese houses! It has moveable walls! Modern architecture is: Japanese culture plus European tradition!’

A crowd formed around Loos…Loos bec[ame] ever more spirited…Later, he t[old] me:

…‘The more people who listen to me, the stronger the aura, the easier it is for me to speak. I have never prepared for a lecture! That which I say is always improvised in the moment. To recite a lecture from the page would be impossible for me!’


[439] Ibid. The excerpt given here is also partially quoted in footnote 143 of Kudělka, “Činnost Adolfa Loose V Československu,” 20. Note: Ekraßit was an explosive used by the Austrian army.

[440] Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
Kudělka argues that traditional Japanese wooden houses were the source of structural lessons that informed the plan and dimensions of “The Last House,” specifically. And yet, both the design of “The Last House” itself, which Loos adapted to materials other than wood, and Loos’ own statements make clear that he neither viewed the Japanese house as a traditional wooden structure fixed in the past nor sought to literally emulate it. Loos saw the Japanese house in a way consistent with the work of art that he argued would persist to shape the future: it was instructive for deconstructing the structural ideals that had been adopted in the modern industrial present.

Loos’ spirited polemic on the lessons of Japanese wooden construction for modern architecture suggests, on one hand, a sense of frustration with contemporaries who were fixated on the idea that progress could only be propelled by the innovations of modern industry. It also suggests that Loos had been refining his ideas while living in Paris in the 1920s, where he had become integrated into a vibrant community of avant-garde artists that included the Japanese-born painter Foujita Tsuguharu, the Romanian-born writer Tristan Tzara, the American-born performer Josephine Baker, and the self-proclaimed Swiss-French universalist Le Corbusier. Most fundamentally, however, such bold statements suggest that, much like his Raumplan approach itself, Loos had begun formulating his ideas long before he ever articulated

them. Indeed, by the 1920s, Japanese culture had persisted to “force itself on the people who [had] it in front of their eyes.”

The Carefully Crafted Culture of Edo Japan (ca. 1603-1868)

Loos would have seen that Japan introduced particularly valuable lessons for the evolution of modern domestic culture as Japan was modernizing through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in a process that both closely coincided with and instructively differed from that of Austria-Hungary. When Japan began to modernize, with the 1868 restoration of imperial power under Emperor Meiji (r. 1867-1912), it was emerging from a period of nearly two and a half centuries of relative seclusion under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate. A military dictatorship that had been established after campaigns led by the daimyō (“lords”) Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu resulted in the unification of Japan’s warring clans under the shōgun (“general”) Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1603, the Tokugawa Shogunate instituted strict regulations on trade and foreign contact beginning in the 1630s. By the mid-nineteenth century, Edo Japan (1603-1868), named for the military capital that the shogunate established at Edo (present-day Tokyo), had flourished as a prosperous and complex feudal society based on the rice and sake trade.

Comparable to the feudal societies of Europe, Edo’s feudal society adhered to a strict

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443 Loos, 1926, as quoted in Ksand, ed., Villa Müller, 131 & 278.
445 A mission led by U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry from 1852-54, and the resulting Kanagawa Treaty between the U.S. and Japan, signed in 1854, are usually cited as initiating Japan’s reopening to the West. Japan had, however, maintained trade relations with the Dutch during the Edo Period.
Confucian social order that Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and Tokugawa Hidetada had formalized in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Named the *shinōkōsho* (士農工商), this social order was hierarchically stratified according to four ranks: *samurai* (shi 士), the warrior class from which the *daimyō* and *shōgun* ascended, peasants (*nō* 農), who were the farmers who provided the food necessary for survival, craftsmen (*kō* 工), who made the things that people used in daily life, and, at the bottom, merchants (*sho* 商), who bought and sold things for profit. The emperor and nobility stood above the ranks, and Shintō and Buddhist priests, who were not bound by the *shinōkōsho*, could move between them.

While there were certain affinities between feudal Japan and the feudal societies of Europe, as Japan transitioned into a modern industrial empire, it preserved, in a unique way, pre-industrial craft practices and social values that were being lost elsewhere as the old was destroyed to make room for the new. In his 1906 *The Book of Tea*, the Japanese-born scholar Okakura Kakuzō, who played a key role in defining and introducing Japan’s cultural traditions to Europe and the U.S. after the Meiji Restoration, attributed this to the tearoom, which might be seen as the exceptional example of a Japanese structure that is fixed in form in order to facilitate the free development of a space dedicated to a particular function. Okakura argued that, as such, the tearoom typified the elusive culture that had been cultivated in Edo Japan.

Formally codified in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the typical tearoom measures four and a half *tatami* mats, the dimensions of which had been

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447 Ibid.
448 Ibid.
standardized at measurements of 3 by 6 or 3 by 6 ½ shaku (equal to about 3 by 6 or 3 by 6 ½ feet) in the fifteenth century (Fig. 55). It is reserved for—and understood to be activated by—the practice of the tea ceremony, during which a bowl of tea is prepared and served, according to a precise ritual, for the shared appreciation of participants. Because the character of the tearoom is seen as being cultivated through the interior practice that defines it, it is, according to Okakura,

…it is unimpressive in appearance. It is smaller than the smallest of Japanese houses, while the materials used in its construction are intended to give the suggestion of refined poverty. Yet we must remember that all this is the result of profound artistic forethought, and that the details have been worked out with care perhaps even greater than that expended on the building of the richest palaces and temples.\(^{449}\)

Meticulously crafted, the tearoom includes a tokonoma, an alcove for the changing display of works chosen to complement a given practice, such as a hanging scroll, incense burner, flower vase, and candleholder, and chigaidana, staggered built-in wall shelves for housing selected texts and utensils. It unfurls in a centrifugal arrangement around a hearth upon which water for the preparation of tea is heated over a charcoal brazier. Though it accommodates a single, specific function and is built to what might be taken as a fixed form, the tearoom, Okakura made clear, has no inherently fixed reality, identity, or center. Dedicated to “the full enjoyment of aestheticism,” it is “a sanctuary from the vexations of the outer world,” in which “one can consecrate himself to undisturbed adoration of the beautiful.”\(^{450}\)

Okakura went on to argue that, in the feudal society of Edo Japan, the tearoom had emerged as an exceptional communal space in which all individuals, regardless of class, wealth, or social standing, could freely cultivate an aesthetic life. Democratized with the tea ceremony—a practice that could be adopted by any member of society—, the tearoom, he contended, had instilled values that extended through the Edo Period

\(^{449}\) Okakura, *Book of Tea*, 41.
\(^{450}\) Ibid., 44, 53.
to shape all aspects of Japanese domestic life. Reflecting upon the tearoom’s relevance to Japan’s past through the lens of a history that he was helping to craft in the early-twentieth-century present, Okakura proposed it as remaining equally instructive for modern industrial society:

In the sixteenth century the tea-room afforded a welcome respite from labour to the fierce warriors and statesmen engaged in the unification and reconstruction of Japan. In the seventeenth century, after the strict formalism of the Tokugawa rule had been developed, it offered the only opportunity possible for the free communion of artistic spirits. Before a great work of art there was no distinction between daimyo, samurai, and commoner. Nowadays, industrialism is making true refinement more and more difficult all the world over. Do we not need the tea-room more than ever?451

While the shinôkôsho theoretically fixed a person’s social status, it did not fix economic power, which, during the Edo period, had shifted into the hands of an effective middle class composed of craftsmen and, especially, merchants.452 These classes thrived as internal demand and consumption increased with Japan’s decreased importation of foreign goods.453 This had resulted in the shogunate’s institution of strict sumptuary laws that restricted commoners’ access to forms, materials, and building styles that were deemed appropriate only for the ruling shogunate and military aristocracy.454 Hand-produced mundane goods—such as clothing, furnishings, domestic implements, lumber and building materials—were standardized, and commoners’ houses were regulated against exterior displays of wealth or distinction. Okakura emphasized the tearoom—a space that materializes with interior living practice—as a model exception to the rules of Edo society because it exemplified how Edo Japan’s merchants and craftsmen had cultivated their own domestic culture in the intricacies of the mundane.455

451 Ibid., 53.
452 Mead, Hypospace, 187.
454 Ibid., 124-125.
455 Okakura, Book of Tea, 40.
Composing half the population of the city of Edo proper, which had grown to become the world’s largest city of one million by the early eighteenth century, merchants and craftsmen generated new modes of craft practice and redefined literature, entertainment, and the arts. Urban pleasure quarters districts were established where Bunraku puppetry and Kabuki theater emerged and flourished. Small, reproducible, and easily disseminated, woodblock prints became prevalent, particularly after late-eighteenth-century technological innovations increased the efficiency of polychrome printing.\textsuperscript{456} Especially popular among wealthier merchants who could patronize the arts were series’ of prints, by such masters as Kunisada, that depicted individual actors and characters in images that conjured scenes from well-known narratives and productions.\textsuperscript{457} Other print masters depicted scenes of mundane life along the five pedestrian highways that developed as Japan’s ruling feudal clans systematized the production, distribution and sale of rice and sake.\textsuperscript{458} Vital to both administrative and cultural development, these pedestrian highways connected Edo Japan’s main urban centers to one another. Utagawa Hiroshige’s print series \textit{The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tôkaidô} (first edition 1833-34), which reflects upon the route between Edo proper and Kyoto, exemplifies how these pedestrian highways sustained domestic life and allowed culture to evolve with living activity (Fig. 56).

Kyoto, the capital that had been designated when the imperial family established its residence there in 794, coexisted with the military capital at Edo as


\textsuperscript{457} In addition to prints depicting familiar individuals, scenes and subjects, prints that illustrated and/or reproduced written texts also became prevalent.

\textsuperscript{458} These five pedestrian highways are the Tôkaidô, Nakasendô, Kôshû Kaidô, Ôshû Kaidô, and Nikkô Kaidô Ways.
Japan’s imperial capital until 1868.\textsuperscript{459} There, the imperial court and aristocracy dedicated themselves to leisure, learning, and refinement. They commissioned sprawling suburban retreats where they practiced poetry, painting, calligraphy, and the tea ceremony. Integral to these retreats were tea houses that were meticulously planned and built in a collaborative practice between tea masters, craftsmen, and patrons. Working alongside the tea master to accommodate a given patron and environment, the craftsman helped to select the materials and craft and join the building members used in a given structure. Certain patrons so appreciated the beauty of the tea house’s fine craftsmanship that this approach was adopted and refined across the multiple pavilions that composed their suburban villas.

Traveled by millions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, pedestrian highways like the Tôkaidô encouraged the cultural development of cities like Edo and Kyoto in relation to one another.\textsuperscript{460} These pedestrian highways generated thriving farming villages and post towns that accumulated their own wealth and gave rise to inns, shops, homes and entertainment houses. These structures were built by traveling craftsmen who mediated a unique space between classes and between fine art and craft—a distinction that, unlike in the early modern West, had not been introduced in pre-industrial Japan. Craftsmen helped to simultaneously design and build, not only intricately planned manors, villas, and teahouses for the elite, but also works like the Kyoto Entertainment House, a communal retreat commissioned by members of the merchant class.\textsuperscript{461} Such entertainment houses (ageya) reinterpreted the villas of the imperial court and aristocracy in shared suburban villas where commoners who had

\textsuperscript{459} With the 1868 Restoration, Emperor Meiji moved his residence and court from Kyoto to Edo—a move that distinguished Kyoto as the empire’s western capital (西京) from a newly established eastern capital at Tokyo (東京).

\textsuperscript{460} Mead, \textit{Hypospace}, 168-69.

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid., 188.
the means could meet for dining, entertainment, discourse, and to practice the tea ceremony.\textsuperscript{462} Similarly, Edo’s craftsmen adapted their skills across contexts to build mundane commoners’ houses (\textit{minka}), which ranged from farmhouses (\textit{nōka}) to merchants’ urban townhouses (\textit{machiya}) to the craftsman’s own single room dwelling.

While privately commissioned tea houses and tearooms were really highly specialized structures, Okakura saw that the tearoom was the perfect exception that proved a rule: far from an isolated expression of Edo culture, it exemplified how that culture had evolved in the everyday spaces of living activity. It epitomized the space in which the culture of “Teaism” unique to Japan had taken shape.\textsuperscript{463} As Okakura explained,

\begin{quote}
The long isolation of Japan from the rest of the world, so conducive to introspection, has been highly favourable [\textit{sic}] to the development of Teaism…Teaism is a cult founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence…It represents the true spirit of Eastern democracy by making all its votaries aristocrats in taste…Our home and habits, costume and cuisine, porcelain, lacquer, painting—our very literature—all have been subject to its influence. No student of Japanese culture could ever ignore its presence. It has permeated the elegance of noble boudoirs, and entered the abode of the humble.\textsuperscript{464}
\end{quote}

Okakura saw that “teaism” provided a useful way to differentiate, and, thereby, preserve, Japanese culture relative to what was occurring across the modernizing societies of Europe and the U.S.: it allowed him to align Japanese culture with the variable realities and ideals of modern industrial life.\textsuperscript{465} This portrayal of traditional Japanese culture made it appealing to middle class consumers who increasingly sought respite from that which they associated with the pace of modern industrial life. More pointedly, it evoked association with the sort of aristocratic refinement to which

\begin{footnotes}
\item[462] Ibid.
\item[463] Okakura, \textit{Book of Tea}, 4-5.
\item[464] Ibid.
\item[465] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
many aspired. At the same time, it evoked industrial capitalist values of productivity and of the rewards to be reaped from disciplined hard work. Finally, across contexts where notions of nationhood, identity, and the right to self-govern had become mutual interests, “teaism” conjured the image of a model modern democratic society driven by a common will. It summarized how, both despite and because of Edo’s strict social order, its industrious commoners had generated urban centers that thrived—and self-sustained—on craft production while learning to build their own dwellings in the intricacies of the mundane.

**Loos’ Introduction to Japanese Culture**

As a young self-training architect, Loos had the opportunity to study the culture of Edo Japan because Japan and Austria-Hungary were in particularly close communication as contemporaries that rapidly transitioned from feudal into modern industrial societies. By the early 1870s, strong diplomatic and trade relations had developed between the two nations as they looked to one another to supplement their domestic technologies, skills, and resources while adapting to the conditions of modernity. This exchange was exemplified by Japan’s extensive contributions to the 1873 Vienna World Exposition.

The first international exhibition in which Meiji Japan officially participated, the exposition played a key role in defining and establishing Japan’s cultural traditions in a modern industrial world. It had included a Japanese pavilion; accompanying merchant shops that sold wares and souvenirs; a small-scale model of a Shintô shrine; and a partial reproduction of an Edo period Buddhist Temple from

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Chiba prefecture. These structures were erected within an area of landscaped gardens in Vienna’s Prater park, where the Japanese exhibitions featured over 6600 works that introduced audiences to the culture that had been cultivated in Edo Japan. Alongside woodblock prints, texts, paintings, and sculptures, these works emphasized domestic life and utilitarian objects made for daily use. They included textiles, clothing, wood and metalworks, lacquerwares, furnishings, and household fixtures. Domestic architecture, in particular, was prominently featured, with plans, reproductions, and models that instructed audiences in traditional Japanese housing types, building practices, and spatial planning systems. Many of these works, which were produced in Japan and sent to Vienna for the exposition, remained in Vienna through both private acquisition and diplomatic collaborations.

Rudolf von Eitelberger, an Austrian art historian and the first professor of art history at the University of Vienna, purchased a large portion of the collections to establish a Museum of Japanese Art and Culture. Additional works remained in the care of a Japanese legation that was established during the exposition and were used to form the Orientalische Museum (Oriental Museum), which was founded in 1875.

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468 Ibid; Also see: Renate Nada, “Zur Geschichte der Japan-Sammlungen des Museums für Völkerkunde, Wien” pp. 13-41 in Made in Japan: Aus den Sammlungen des Museum für Völkerkunde, 18. For detailed inventories of all the works displayed, see Catalog der kaiserlich japanischen Ausstellung (Wien: Japanischen Ausstellungs-Commission, 1873).
469 Ibid.
470 Ibid., 160; Japan auf der Weltausstellung in Wien 1873, 55; Catalog der kaiserlich japanischen Ausstellung, see, e.g., “Gruppe XVIII, Bau- und Civil-Ingenieurwesen,” “Gruppe XIX, Das bürgerliche Wohnhaus mit seiner inneren Einrichtung und Ausschmückung,” and “Gruppe XX, Das Bauernhaus mit seinen Einrichtungen und seinem Geräte.” For brief discussion of the significant role that architectural models played as expressions of national identity in the context of nineteenth century exhibitions, also see Renate Nada, “Zur Geschichte der Japan-Sammlungen des Museums für Völkerkunde, Wien” pp. 13-41 in Made in Japan: Aus den Sammlungen des Museum für Völkerkunde, 21.
471 Fux, Japan auf der Weltausstellung in Wien 1873. Note: Eitelberger had also spearheaded a campaign to convince to Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph to sanction the establishment of a museum of applied arts modeled after London’s South Kensington Museum. This led to Eitelberger’s co-founding, in 1864, of the K.k. Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie (Imperial Austrian Museum for Art and Industry), the predecessor of the current Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst (Austrian Museum of Applied Art, or MAK).
and renamed the Handelsmuseum (Trade Museum) in 1886. These included “Das bürgerliche Wohnhaus mit seiner inneren Einrichtung und Ausschmückung” (“The Bourgeois Dwelling with its Interior Furnishing and Decoration”), one of two elaborate architectural models that were displayed during the exposition and detailed in the catalog prepared by its Japanese commission. Prefabricated in 1872 by the Musashiya Masayuki Model Building Workshop in Asakusa, Tōkyō, this model group intricately replicated a typical, multi-structure daimyō’s estate (yashiki) (Fig. 57). Arranged in a roughly symmetrical layout, its buildings were constructed of wooden members, were fitted with sliding fusuma screens, and had floors lined with tatami mats. It exemplified the sort of ornately crafted details and components that were reserved for the military aristocracy and that were used to outwardly distinguish the multiple separate structures that composed this type of formally planned manor.

It is unclear if Loos would have seen the model daimyō’s estate, which had fallen into such disrepair by 1907 that it was excluded from the Japanese collections that were transferred to Vienna’s k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum (Imperial Natural History Court Museum) when the Handelsmuseum dissolved that year. Of greater significance to Loos, however, would have been a second architectural model that was absorbed by the k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum from the Forstakademie Mariabrunn (Mariabrunn Forest Academy) in 1885: “Das Bauernhaus mit seinen Einrichtungen und seinem Geräte” (“The Farmhouse with its Furnishings and

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473 Ibid., 21; Also see: Catalog der kaiserlich japanischen Ausstellung, “Gruppe XIX, Das bürgerliche Wohnhaus mit seiner inneren Einrichtung und Ausschmückung,” and “Gruppe XX, “Das Bauernhaus mit seinen Einrichtungen und seinem Geräte.”
475 Ibid. The daimyō’s estate model has since been repaired and restored by the Vienna Weltmuseum, working in collaboration with the Department of Architecture at the Technical University of Vienna. It is today on display in the Weltmuseum, which is the successor of the k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum.
After the k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum, which had been founded in 1876, opened to the public in 1889, this model was, as Renate Nada explains in “Zur Geschichte der Japan-Sammlungen des Museums für Völkerkunde, Wien,” exhibited for many years as part of the permanent collection. This would have afforded Loos the opportunity for prolonged study of it after he settled in Vienna in 1896. While the aristocratic daimyō’s estate would have appealed to a modern bourgeois audience that sought to find reflected in Japan formal traditions comparable to those of the West, it was the Bauernhaus model that would have particularly interested Loos. It reflected structural, spatial, and social lessons that he would have recognized as having unique instructive relevance for the modern middle-class dwelling in his own domestic context.

This model represented the nōka of a particularly well-to-do farmer and village administrator, or as translated into German, the house of a Bauer—a term that literally means both farmer and builder (Fig. 58). Evoking the way that mundane, locally available materials would have been used in such a context, it was constructed of hand-crafted wooden members and had pronounced pitched and thatched roofs that would have effectively provided shelter in the rural conditions in which this house would have stood. Meant to exemplify the unique defining qualities of Japan’s vernacular domestic architecture, it demonstrated methods by which to distinguish while mediating between separate interiors within a single, co-integrated structure.

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476 Ibid., 13, 17, 21. As Nada explains, the Bauernhaus model group was gifted by the Forstakademie Mariabrunn to the k.k. Ackerbauministeriums (Imperial Ministry of Agriculture), which gifted it to the k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum in 1885.

477 Ibid., 21. It is important to note that, according to Nada, the main house was long exhibited alone and was only reunited with its attendant structures, which remained in the museum’s storage repository, in 2003. It is unclear, however, when, exactly, the structures were separated from one another after their transfer to the k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum and is therefore possible that Loos would have had an opportunity to study the ensemble, which was documented by Michael Moser in an 1872 photoalbum picturing the works before their transport to Vienna, as it had been displayed for the 1873 exposition.
Layering open into one another, the model’s interiors were differentiated by varying floor and ceiling heights, which allowed practical communication between discrete functional zones.\textsuperscript{478} A \textit{doma}—an earthen-floored space for washing, cooking, and keeping particularly prized livestock—was set at ground level, and stepped up into the house’s main living and dining area.\textsuperscript{479} Elevated above ground level on wooden posts, the living and dining area had wooden board floors and unfurled around a central pillar and sunken hearth.\textsuperscript{480} It stepped down into, and up from, a \textit{zashiki}, a formal reception room reserved for distinguished guests.\textsuperscript{481} The \textit{zashiki} was not typical of ordinary \textit{nôka}, but rather, an element adapted from aristocratic villas that typified how Edo’s wealthy commoners emulated the elite.\textsuperscript{482} The \textit{zashiki} incorporated into the Bauernhaus model was distinguished as an exceptional space relative to the surrounding interiors by its meticulous appointments: as described by Nada, it had \textit{tatami} floor mats; a \textit{tokonoma}—a recessed wall niche for the display of a hanging scroll, flower arrangement or other chosen work—; and a \textit{tana}—a built-in wall shelf for selected texts and utensils.\textsuperscript{483} Situated at the house’s far end, this space of honor would have been accessed either by moving all the way through the house, passing right to left through the \textit{doma} and main living areas, or through a separate covered entry vestibule reserved for special guests and occasions.\textsuperscript{484} Extending the interior floor to the exterior, this entry vestibule acted as what might be interpreted as a mediating space, or passageway, between inside and outside. It formed an interval in which the dwelling could layer inward in a sequence of increasing intimacy and

\textsuperscript{478} Nada, “Zur Geschichte der Japan-Sammlungen,” in \textit{Made in Japan}, See photo at p. 20 and description at p. 21.
\textsuperscript{479} Ibid. Note: Nada identifies this living and dining area as an “\textit{itanoma}.”
\textsuperscript{480} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{481} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{482} Mead, \textit{Hypospace}, 189.
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid.
outward to communicate with the surrounding environment. Similarly, the model’s outer walls were formed by sliding screens that demonstrated how the living spaces of a prominent family could open into the larger community with discretion while remaining separate within it.

As constructed and displayed for the 1873 exposition, the nôka was part of a three-structure ensemble that, underscoring the affluence of its inhabitants, included both a separate stable and a kura, or storehouse.\textsuperscript{485} Distinct from the exposed wood frames and thatched roofs of the nôka and stable, the two-story kura was a seemingly solid rectangular structure whose outer walls were painted with white gypsum and punctuated by small window openings. While the kura had a practical grounding in the granaries used to store rice, this kura, as Nada notes, evoked the storehouses more typically associated with the houses of Edo’s wealthy urban merchants.\textsuperscript{486} This again speaks to the fluidity of Edo culture and building practices.

In a manner closer to the main living space of the nôka, rice storehouses were initially wooden structures that were raised on posts to protect that which was inside from flooding, overexposure to light and air, and vermin; they were utilitarian structures built to house that which was cultivated on the land and necessary for daily survival. In Edo’s populous urban centers, wooden storehouses were covered in clay plaster to create a fireproof shell that made them resistant to the fires that rapidly spread through Japanese cities.\textsuperscript{487} Secure and insulated, such kura came to be used as repositories, not only for the provisions that sustained a community, but also for that which a distinguished family valued most: the prized picture scrolls, texts, utensils,

\textsuperscript{485} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{487} Mead, \textit{Hypospace}, 296.
and other works that might be selected for changing use and display.\textsuperscript{488} In this way, the \textit{kura} might be seen as having evolved, in various forms, from the simple utilitarian storehouse to become an archetypal shelter for that which sustained daily life and which was, therefore, precious. At the same time, it might be seen as having evolved to become a marker of status and distinction.

As much as the Bauernhaus model group was a highly specialized, hybridized demonstration of Edo Japan’s commoner—or middle-class—housing that, in its context, would have spoken to the interior character of its inhabitants, it would have been instructive for Loos as he pushed back against a context where his contemporaries had become fixated on displaying identity. Japanese domestic architecture had interested the American biologist Edward Morse, who reflected upon the Japanese dwelling through the lens of U.S. society, for similar reasons. As Morse observed in \textit{Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings} (1886), “the foreigner, at least, finds it difficult to recognize any distinct types of architecture among the houses, or to distinguish any radical differences in the various kinds of dwellings he sees in his travels through the country.”\textsuperscript{489} For Morse, this was a defining value of Japanese culture—Japanese houses were outwardly “unsubstantial in appearance,” even “suggest[ing] poverty,” because the Japanese were not concerned with “pretentious architectural display.”\textsuperscript{490} “Rarely,” he elaborated, “does a house strike one as being specially marked or better looking than its neighbors.”\textsuperscript{491}

For Morse, this quality of Japanese domestic architecture was exemplified by the \textit{machiya}, an urban townhouse that combined a street-front workshop or

\textsuperscript{488} Ibid., 22. Nada further explains that, as the \textit{kura}’s functions expanded, its interior space often evolved to accommodate a library and reading room for a family’s private use.\textsuperscript{489} Edward S. Morse, \textit{Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings} (NY, NY: Dover Publications, 1961), 47. Morse’s text was first published by Ticknor and Company in 1886.\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 6, 235.\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., 49.
commercial space with domestic quarters (Fig. 59). As he noted of those that he observed in Tokyo (former Edo), machiya appeared remarkably uniform and reserved on the exterior, yet continually layered open to reveal interior spaces of unlimited depth:

In Tokio, the houses that abut directly on the street have a close and prison-like aspect. The walls are composed of boards or plaster, and perforated with one or two small windows lightly barred with bamboo, or heavily barred with square wood gratings. The entrance to one of these houses is generally at one corner, or at the side...[and] is usually [accessed] by means of a gate common to a number...

The houses, if of wood, are [usually] left in [their] natural state...With a plastered outside wall the surface is often left white...

Since the revolution of 1868 there has appeared a new style of building in Tokio, in which a continuous row of tenements is under one roof...

On the business streets similar rows of buildings are seen...in the case of all the smaller shops, and indeed many of the larger ones, the dwelling and shop are one, the goods being displayed in the room on the street, while the family occupy the back rooms...It is a source of amazement to a foreigner to find in the rear of a row of dull and sombre business-houses independent dwellings, with rooms of exquisite taste...I remember, in one of the busiest streets in Tokio, passing through a lithographer’s establishment...in full activity,...and, after crossing a miniature foot-bridge, [coming] to a house of rare beauty and finish...

...There is no display of an architectural front; indeed, there is no display anywhere.492

As Morse’s observations suggest, the pre-industrial machiya had both been preserved and evolved in response to the changing conditions of life in modern Tokyo. While there was no actual structural uniformity that characterized the machiya as a house type, they conveyed what Morse perceived as a common sense of anonymity on the exterior in order to preserve and protect the interior dwelling spaces that mattered most.

As Morse, who was familiar with Chicago balloon frame carpentry, recognized, this derived in part from the kiwari system, a Japanese tradition of proportional wooden construction that employed prefabricated building members that were hand-cut to regionally standardized dimensions. Used across Japan’s pre-industrial cities to efficiently build structures of varying size and function, the kiwari

492 Ibid., 50-55.
system had evolved to accommodate a system of spatial planning based on *tatami* mats. Negating the need for load-bearing walls, it relies upon interior columns to support the weight of a roof and applies the *ken*, a variable unit of length that denotes the intervals in which living space can unfold. Initially based on the center-to-center distance between columns, the *ken* came to be based on the distance between column edges as the use of *tatami* became increasingly common and their dimensions standardized in the sixteenth century.\(^{493}\) In this way, the *ken*, which became fixed at regionally specific measurements of 6 and 6 ½ Japanese feet (*shaku*) in the seventeenth century, allowed a carpentry practice based on the division of space by columns to be coordinated with a planning practice based on the division of space by *tatami*.\(^{494}\)

*Tatami*—units of potential living space—, came to guide and describe a house’s plan, while the *kiwari* system determined the proportional size and placement of the structural components that create—or open—these intervals. Rooms came to be measured in terms of the number of *tatami* that lined their floors, and a house could accommodate any number of rooms whose arrangement was based on the logic of their sequential relationships to one another. More fundamentally, because any living space is seen as taking shape with the living activities that occur in the intervals marked out by columns and *tatami*, the home’s interiors are understood to have no fixed, *a priori* form or reality outside the immediate use and experience of them. They are therefore infinitely open-ended and layered: when use, movement, and perception, rather than an *a priori* structural order, are seen as creating space, even a simple 4 ½ mat room can expand to manifest as an infinite number of shifting interiors. Equally,

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\(^{494}\) Ibid., 224.
because the *kiwari* system employs standardized structural components whose order and proportional relationships to one another are determined by the *ken*, it negates concern for—and the very notion of—autonomous structural form.

Enhancing the lessons that he would have later appreciated in the Bauernhaus model, Loos had had the opportunity to study the *kiwari* system at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, where, Vera J. Behal argues, “besonders wurde er…von der japanischen Architektur angeregt” (“he was especially stimulated by the Japanese architecture”).495 For Loos, like Frank Lloyd Wright, the Hô-ô-den must have been of particular interest (Figs. 60 & 61). A three-fifths scale model of the eleventh century Hôô-dô of the Byôdô-in Temple at Uji, the Hô-ô-den adapted the Hôô-dô’s plan and siting to what was really a highly specialized model of Japanese domestic architecture. As Okakura, who helped curate the exhibit, explained in the visitors’ catalogue, the Hô-ô-den was “substantially a replica of the [temple] at Uji,” though “smaller in size and modified to adapt it for secular use.”496 It had three interconnected pavilions, whose interiors reinterpreted: a suite of rooms from an Edo Period (1603-1868) feudal castle; a Middle Heian Period (ca. 868-1068 CE) aristocratic apartment; and a Muromachi Period (1336-1573) library and tearoom (Figs. 62 & 63).497 These structures had been prefabricated in Japan according to the *kiwari* system and were rebuilt by Japanese craftsmen for the exhibition.

As a demonstration of the *kiwari* system, the Hô-ô-den would have interested Loos because it exemplified a carpentry practice that uniquely complemented his own

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497 Ibid.
way of thinking as a mason. As a mason, Loos understood that structures do not autonomously precede and fix space because structures are themselves created in the active spatial and temporal process of building them; they have no a priori form, reality, or identity that can be outwardly grasped because the builder is always inside the structure as it is taking shape. This practical understanding of the living process by which structures materialize made Loos intuitively critical of the Cartesian structure of rational thought that had been absorbed by modern professional architects: Cartesian separations between subject and object, form and function, structure and space, and space and time had resulted in an objectified view of space as having a fixed physical form and predetermined set of functions that were circumscribed by structure. Complementing Loos’ practical understanding of structure, the Hô-ô-den exhibited a craft-based understanding of structure as creating and opening the intervals—or voids—in which space can occur with interior use and movement. Beyond demonstrating that structure does not frame and fix space, the Hô-ô-den would have helped Loos to see, in other words, that spaces equally have no a priori form, reality, or identity that can be outwardly grasped because spaces, like structures, always and only take shape with living activity: you are always experiencing and, thereby, constructing, space while you are in it. When structure is seen as fundamentally void and space is seen as void that is activated by living activity and perception, it becomes possible to see that any structure can accommodate an infinite number of potential spaces and functions—an infinitely layered network of shifting interiors.

As he returned from the U.S. and began to formulate his Raumplan approach, Loos would have seen that lessons exemplified by models like the Bauernhaus and the Hô-ô-den could be usefully combined and adapted to the variable living needs and
conditions of modern Austria-Hungary. Concrete, for example, was an inexpensive, widely-available material that made the need for load-bearing walls obsolete. Many professional architects had, however, inherited the view that concrete was a solid structural material whose inherent properties limited its use to framing and enclosing spaces of fixed form and function. In line with this view, they concentrated, not on the potential interior intricacies and variability that it could facilitate, but on compensating for its visual uniformity.

Loos’ exposure to Japanese carpentry coupled with his masonry training had shown him that concrete could, as much as any other material, create the voids that would open, rather than enclose and fix, interior space. Loos extended this logic to consider how concrete could be practically and meaningfully combined with other materials to maximize the efficiency and enhance the character of space at any scale. This is evident in the Heuberg houses: the use of concrete to create a uniform exterior frame freed Loos to conceive the equally uniform plan of these small houses as a network of potential interior spaces that could materialize and shift to accommodate differing individual needs and functions. Loos articulated these intervals of potential living space with standardized wooden components, in a way that defied the logic of planning conventions based on envisioning a sequence of separate rooms confined by rectilinear structural enclosures, but that aligned with the flexible and open spatial logic of Japanese interiors.

To create the much larger structural frame of the Villa Müller, reinforced concrete was used—in a way that applied Müller’s own expertise—for the four massive interior columns that supported the weight of the villa’s poured concrete roof terrace. This core structure opened, from the inside out, the potential for an expansive living environment. This living environment was effectively insulated by outer walls
built of stucco-plastered recycled brick and was articulated with materials and components that were conceived to enhance the experience of a fluidly unfolding network of interiors.

**Analysis of Japan’s Significance for Loos, as Articulated in the Villa Müller**

These flexible and practical juxtapositions of framing materials reiterate that, for Loos, structure as such was immaterial: he cared, not about the independent material properties of a structure or about what it looked like to an outward observer, but about what it did—it created the intervals in which living space could take shape. Beyond this, Loos’ internally-driven approach to spatial planning was so distinctive because he had learned to see that space, like structure, is fundamentally void that is activated by—and crafted with—interior experience in time. This complementary understanding of structure and space could be seen as having been adapted and applied as much to models of Japan’s commoner’s housing like the Bauernhaus as to the aristocratic interiors reproduced in the Hô-ô-den: these were equally specialized demonstrations of Japan’s vernacular craft practices that underscored how the values exemplified by the tea room had extended, in various forms, to shape every Japanese interior.498 Because Loos was not preoccupied by notions of material identity and independently fixed structural form, he was uniquely receptive to the common spatial lessons that were expressed across these structures: he saw that the interior spatial values that had evolved with Japanese craft practices could be adapted and applied to any modern middle-class dwelling.

In a modern industrial society that was both fundamentally different from and uncannily similar to the feudal society that had preceded it, the individuals who, by

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498 Ibid.
the 1920s, composed the majority of this middle class could not, however, fully see the value of Loos’ approach. A unique upper-middle-class industrialist who had become well aware of his own place in that society, Müller understood that the individual need neither seek separation from the surrounding community nor attempt to fashion an identity of distinction. What his family needed most was space and time to cultivate an interior life *with* their surroundings. This commission therefore afforded Loos the opportunity to fully express what he had learned from Japan—it allowed him to freely articulate the mutually-defining value of a distinction between structure and space.

Evoking the *kura* that had been included in the Bauernhaus model group, the Villa Müller’s brick and plaster outer framing walls efficiently insulated and sheltered the home’s interiors while suggesting the concrete construction for which Müller’s firm was well known in Prague. This protective shell at once outwardly spoke to the interior character of its inhabitants and established a boundary between interior and exterior. That boundary freed the Müllers, as a prominent family, to comfortably reside in the community that they were helping to shape, which enhanced their ability to appreciate and respond to that community’s living intricacies. And yet, their own interior needs were not compromised. This is because Loos saw that the structural lessons exemplified by the *kura*—a simple, practical shelter that created and preserved the voids in which space could unfold—could be combined with the lessons in interior spatial planning exemplified by the *nôka* proper.

In what might be seen as a way of experientially reinterpreting the shifting outer walls of the *nôka*, the visitor approaches the villa in a shifting path that precludes both outward comprehension of the home’s interiors and a direct, easy point of entry. Rather, evoking the discreet formal entry vestibule of the *nôka*, Loos
conceived the Villa Müller’s entry vestibule—the exceptional part of the façade that he designed—as a threshold that mediates between worlds, such that the path connecting exterior to interior is actively and gradually built as the visitor moves through it in time. This active and gradual building of interior space continues as the visitor is invited into the home to varying depths as it opens inward.

Preventing a priori comprehension and expectation, you are never afforded a clear straightforward view of what is to come, but rather, always and only find yourself physically immersed in interior space as it manifests. This shifting manifestation—or active opening—of interior space is a characteristic of the Raumplan that the Villa Müller’s central reinforced concrete pillars allowed Loos to develop to increasingly intricate depths: they framed and created an expansive void that Loos was freed to conceive—or plan—as a network of spaces that would unfold in four dimensions.

Applying a way of thinking that was intrinsic to the Hô-ô-den as a demonstration of the kiwari system, Loos allowed intervals of potential living space to guide the shape, character, and placement of interior structural elements. A commission that afforded Loos the exceptional room needed to fully cultivate this approach, the Villa Müller unfolds in ways that are each time different for each individual and yet always fluid and practical. This is because Loos similarly approached the villa’s interior structural elements in a way akin to the sliding screens, shifting floors and ceilings, and built-in devices that were used in the nôka: as you move through the villa to transform intervals of void into inhabited spaces, framing structural elements become part of the spaces that you inhabit. Organically partitioning space within space, they become thresholds through which the villa’s
interiors can continually layer open into one another while nesting inward to infinite depths with your own experience.

Moving beyond the three dimensions of Euclidean geometry, by which space had become abstracted as something that could be fixed, confined, and plotted within a grid of rectilinear coordinates, Loos envisioned space, as his statements, collaboration with Kriegerbeck, and the Villa Müller itself make clear, as embodied experience lived in time. He was able to “join…spaces in such a way that the rise and fall are not only imperceptible but also practical” because he had learned that, when you are not bound by an a priori ideal of spatial order, it becomes possible to plan spaces according to how they might emerge—become real—with the momentary activities of use, movement, and perception. Loos had cultivated a phenomenological approach to planning grounded in consideration for the living realities of what Martin Heidegger later identified, in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954) as raum—the inhabited space that we actively build—in distinction to the abstract Cartesian notion of spatium—objectified space that has a fixed, measurable existence outside the thinking, feeling human subject. Consistent with Heidegger’s phenomenological understanding of space as raum, Loos also saw structure as bounding and, thereby, creating, not space itself, but room for space to unfold: as Heidegger explained, from a phenomenological perspective, “[a] boundary is not that at which something stops but…that from which something begins its essential

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499 Adolf Loos, 1930, shorthand record, signed by Loos, of an interview with a journalist in Plzeň; Note: the excerpt quoted here combines translations of the interview (originally conducted in Czech) published in The Müller Villa guide book, 1 and Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 118, 121.
“unfolding” because “space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into bounds.”

As much as Loos’ intuitively phenomenological approach to planning—the Raumplan—defied the prevailing conventions of modern architecture in his own domestic context, it had a practical referent in the spatial planning logic that was exemplified, in very different forms, by both the Bauerhaus model group and the Hô-ô-den. In Nurturing Dreams: Collected Essays on Architecture and the City (2008), the Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki shed further light on this spatial planning logic by identifying it with the term oku, which he explains as a sense of the value of “innermost space.” Tracing this concept to animistic belief systems that recognized the sanctity of a land whose unseen workings sustained daily life, Maki argues that oku evolved from prehistoric animism and shamanism to “permeat[e]…social structures by way of the collective unconscious…it is believed that important things should remain hidden.” Maki uses oku to translate an unstated understanding that he contends had, and has, been concretely expressed in a general cultural “tendency to recognize and esteem what is hidden, invisible, or secret.” As in a Buddhist temple or Shintō shrine, “in traditional Japanese dwellings,” he elaborates, “oku has been given a…clearly defined location and status”: it is “any space that functions as a private sanctuary;” it “can be called an invisible center—or, more precisely, a convenient alternative to the center.”

503 Ibid., 162, 156-57.
504 Ibid., 154.
505 Ibid., 155, 159, 162.
Because *oku* is an actively created phenomenon, it has, in other words, no fixed form, reality, or localizable presence in a Japanese dwelling; it is not an objective space with an inherent meaning and value, but a shifting space that each individual crafts with their surroundings in time. “As an ultimate destination, innermost space,” Maki explains, therefore “often lacks a climactic quality. Instead, it is the process of reaching this goal that demands drama and ritual…This structuring of spatial experience takes into account the dimension of time.”\(^{506}\) For this reason, traditional Japanese homes might be understood as gradually unfolding through layered networks of boundaries—they nest inward to preserve the value of the as-yet unseen.

Comparable to Heidegger’s *raum*, for Maki, *oku* provided a useful way to express a fundamental distinction between Japanese and Cartesian understandings of domestic space. From a Cartesian perspective, interior space is something circumscribed, like the universe as a whole, by an autonomous creator to adhere to an exterior structural order. From this perspective, interior space, like the space of the universe, is assumed to have an objective, identifiable, measurable form and presence outside the perceiving human subject.

From a Japanese perspective, space might be seen as only ever temporally unfolding with our surroundings. From this perspective, it becomes possible to see any and all spaces as interior spaces. Equally, it becomes possible to see that any structure—from a single-room dwelling to a valued work of art—can bound, or open room for, an infinitely nested network of shifting interior spaces. Okakura reiterated this in *The Book of Tea*, when he used the tea master’s approach to a work of art to craft an alternative picture of what Maki later translated as *oku*:

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\(^{506}\) Ibid., 162-63.
In the old days, the veneration in which the Japanese held the work of the great artist was intense. The tea-masters guarded their treasures with religious secrecy, and it was often necessary to open a whole series of boxes, one within another, before reaching the shrine itself…Rarely was the object exposed to view, and then only to the initiated.507

Analysis of Loos’ Critical Writings on the Lessons Exemplified by Japan

The depths to which Loos saw Japan as having instructive relevance for modern interior life is further evinced by his writings on Japan beginning in the late nineteenth century. “Trotz der neuen form” (“For all the new form”), he argued in his October 1898 “Kunstgewerbliche Rundschau” (“Handcrafts Review”), the Austrian decorative arts and crafts “haben…nicht geist von unserem geist” (“do not derive their spirit from our [own] spirit”).508 “Der osten,” he continued, “bildete das große reservoir, aus dem immer neuer samen in das abendland strömte…; uns nur noch Japan übrig blieb” (“The East formed the great reservoir from which always newer seeds flowed into the West…; for us, only Japan still remained”).509 Loos went on to polemically critique his Austro-Hungarian contemporaries for eagerly imitating Japanese visual forms in a way akin to so many others. In the frenzy to consume Japan’s exotic aesthetic culture after its reopening, many failed to see that Japanese culture had a unique presence and instructive relevance within their own modern domestic context.

As Reinhold Lorenz, an economist, University of Vienna law professor, and advisor to the 1873 Vienna International Exposition’s Japanese delegation, explained in Japan und Mitteleuropa: Von Solferino bis zur Wiener Weltausstellung (1859-73) (1944), the 1873 exposition had been integral to a process of “giving and taking

508 Adolf Loos, “Kunstgewerbliche Rundschau,” Die Wage, 1 Oktober 1898; republished in Glück, ed., Sämtliche Schriften, B. I, 165-170; 169. (Author’s Translation)
509 Ibid., 167-68. (Author’s Translation)
Japan” and Austria-Hungary to one another.\textsuperscript{510} A Japanese community had emerged in and around Vienna as Japanese craftsmen, students, and a delegation of over seventy officials arrived both to prepare and maintain works sent for the exposition and to study the Western artistic traditions and industrial practices that were being absorbed by its European counterpart.\textsuperscript{511} Sano Tsunetami, the head of the Japanese Imperial Exhibition Commission, dispatched students to the capital before the exposition’s opening, and, after it closed in December of 1873, others arrived.\textsuperscript{512} The Japanese design student Hirayama Eizo (1855-1914), namely, studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule from 1874 to 1877.\textsuperscript{513} In 1883, the Meiji statesman Itô Hirobumi, who had served as an ambassador during the exposition, returned to Vienna, precipitating the further growth of its Japanese community as over one hundred additional Japanese statesmen, students, and scholars followed him between 1883 and 1890.\textsuperscript{514}

As Meiji Japan endorsed the study of traditional European arts and began to adopt modern academic and professional institutions, Austria-Hungary’s newly emerging scholars and collectors were promoting Japan’s cultural traditions within their own modernizing society. With his Museum of Japanese Art and Culture in Vienna, Eitelberger was the first to make a large private collection of Japanese arts and culture accessible to the Austro-Hungarian public. Others followed throughout the second half of the nineteenth century: Heinrich von Siebold, Richard von Drasche-Wartinberg, Julius Raab, and Archduke Franz Ferdinand, all traveled to

\textsuperscript{510} Lorenz, Japan und MittelEuropa, 166.  
\textsuperscript{511} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{512} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{513} Yoshinori Amagai, “Hirayama Eizo (1855-1914): The First Japanese Design Student in Vienna,” in Journal of the Asian Design International Conference (Tsukuba, 2003), 2; Eizo studied under the Austrian architect and director of the Kunstgewerbeschule, Josef von Storck.  
\textsuperscript{514} Lorenz, Japan und MittelEuropa, 15*. 
Japan and studied various aspects of its culture, publishing texts, acquiring collections, and introducing sources that furthered public access to and interest in Japanese models.

In this context, many of Loos’ Austro-Hungarian contemporaries viewed Japan as a new source of influences to be drawn from without. This visual interest was similar to that developing in cities like London and Paris, where, by the late nineteenth century, the Aesthetic and Art Nouveau Movements were promoting Japanese prints, decorative arts and architecture as instructive for reforming the arts in the face of industry. Texts like Christopher Dresser’s 1882 *Japan: Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufactures* encouraged the adoption of ornamentation inspired by Japanese architecture, furnishings, and fine and decorative arts among European artists and designers who rejected the imitation of past historical styles. As they developed their own initiative in this regard, members of the Vienna Secession looked to Japanese models that included woodblock prints and textile patterns to rethink the artistic conventions that had been absorbed in their own domestic context. The Secessionists read such models as instructive for their refined forms and treatment and nature-inspired themes and motifs (Fig. 64). In architecture and interior design, they were particularly drawn to principles of coordinated design that they saw reflected in Japanese tea houses, which they reinterpreted through the familiar lens of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. By 1903, Japan had become such a strong influence that the Secessionists devoted their entire annual exhibition to Japanese art and design.

These activities buttressed the efforts spearheaded by Okakura, who promoted the adoption of what was being defined as traditional Japanese aesthetic culture. As

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Okakura saw, the European adoption of Japanese aesthetics could help provoke his eagerly modernizing compatriots to reflect upon the lasting relevance and value of what had been cultivated in their own interior life.\textsuperscript{517} Loos’ perspective was distinctive because he reflected, through the lens of Japan, upon what was being lost, rather than absorbed, in his domestic context. In his 1898 “Kunstgewerbliche Rundschau,” Loos went on to summarize the lessons that he saw reflected in Japanese culture with an interpretation of Japanese prints:

\begin{quote}
Japanisch ist also in erster linie das aufgeben der Symmetrie. Dazu kommt die entkörperlichung der darzustellenden gegenstände. Die Japaner stellen Blumen dar, aber es sind gepreßte Blumen. Sie stellen Menschen dar, aber es sind gepreßte Menschen. Ein stilisieren, wie geschaffen dazu, die fläche zu dekorieren. Und dabei kann man doch naturalistisch bleiben.\textsuperscript{518}
\end{quote}

(Japanese is, then, first and foremost the abandonment of symmetry. With this comes the disembodiment of the things to be portrayed. The Japanese portray flowers, but they are extracted flowers. They portray people, but they are extracted people. A stylization created precisely to dress the surface. And in so doing can one still remain naturalistic.)\textsuperscript{519}

Symmetry presupposes an object that mirrors its own physical structure along a fixed and clearly defined center. Loos saw that to appreciate Japan’s deeper lessons for modern domestic life required moving beyond symmetry—which is to say, beyond the tendency to project onto Japan the visual and material preoccupations that had been absorbed with modernization. From Loos’ perspective, Japanese culture was uniquely instructive because it had developed during the Edo Period, when Japan had turned inward to cultivate the intricacies of its own interior life. As much as scholars like Okakura and Morse were helping to draw out those intricacies, Loos interpreted Japan as introducing a distinctive cultural identity precisely for this reason—as he saw

\textsuperscript{517} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{519} Ibid., 167-69. (Author’s Translation). Note: \textit{Gegenstände} can be defined as both/either objects and/or subjects; literally, the term suggests that which is an “against” (gegen) “state” or “condition” (stand).
it, Japan had made no attempt to outwardly fix and define its identity. Japanese prints, which had become as popular among middle class collectors as among his contemporaries in art, architecture, and design, afforded Loos a mutually relevant way to communicate this to his intended audience. They demonstrated that, by concentrating on the intricacies that give meaning to a particular interior life and extracting—drawing out—the substance distinct to that life, an identity of lasting value would emerge and speak for itself.

Loos’ interpretation of Japanese prints suggests that his exposure to Japanese culture helped to define an argument that ran through his early writings and that he applied in projects like the Heuberg houses: identity would emerge within the collective order of mundane life when one freed oneself of the conscious attempt to define it. Loos had introduced this argument in his May 1898 article, “Der Neue Stil und die Bronze-Industrie” (“The New Style and the Bronze Industry”), which was published as the Jubiläumsausstellung (Jubilee Exhibition) opened in Vienna to commemorate Franz Joseph I’s fifty-year reign over the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Overlapping with the first Secessionist exhibition, the Jubiläumsausstellung was meant to demonstrate the progress achieved under the Habsburg monarchy, centering on the display of the empire’s modern industrial manufactures and technical accomplishments. From the time it opened, Loos critiqued “Die Ausstellungstadt” (“The Exhibition City”) for attempting to fabricate Austria-Hungary’s cultural identity in the form of objects that had no relation to interior life. A simultaneously modernizing Japan was already helping to draw out, he argued, a distinctively Viennese identity in the intricacies of the mundane:

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521 Ibid.
For Loos, the Jubiläumsausstellung exemplified the problems inherent in a perspective that viewed exterior identity and interior life and art and industry as concerns to be synthesized: this perspective treated the things intrinsic to daily life as objects outside oneself. Any meaningful identity, Loos argued, must emerge from within. As he summarized in his 1913 article “Die Kranken Ohren Beethovens” (“Beethoven’s Sick Ears”), “[e]s ist der Geist, der sich den Körper baut” (“[i]t is the spirit that builds for itself the body”).\(^\text{524}\) Loos saw that, in order for identity to develop in a modern industrial world, one needed to preserve time and space in which to cultivate one’s own interior life. In a context where Japanese aesthetics were being eagerly embraced, Loos polemically invoked both the “Japanese influence” on and “Graben flâneur’s” appreciation for Viennese bronze work—which had been excluded from the exhibition—to provoke his contemporaries to reflect upon their own defining cultural values.

\(^{522}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{523}\) Ibid. (Author’s Translation)

\(^{524}\) Adolf Loos, “Die Kranken Ohren Beethovens” (1913), as partially quoted in Kulka, ed., Adolf Loos, 10; Article republished in full in Glück, ed., Sämtliche Schriften, B. II, 326-327. (Author’s Translation)
Loos further developed this argument in “Wie wir leben” (“How We Live”), a polemical essay on table manners that he published in Das Andere in 1903. The essay recounts the anecdote of a young Austrian man, who, while dining at a table with Germans and Americans, repeatedly dipped into a shared salt bowl with his own knife and offended his fellow diners, oblivious to their use of a salt spoon to avoid individually contaminating the bowl’s contents. “Die japaner,” Loos concluded, “haben uns längst überholt. Die jungen japanischen studenten in Wien erfüllen die gebote der abendländischen kultur in unseren restaurants viel besser, als die um sie her sitzenden wiener bürger es tun. Das ist nur ein beispiel für viele” (“The Japanese…have long surpassed us. The young Japanese students in Vienna fulfill the precepts of Western culture in our restaurants much better than the Viennese citizens sitting around them do. This is just one example of many”).525

Loos recognized that the Austro-Hungarian preoccupation with independently displaying identity stifled the ability to see the meaningful differences that emerge within any larger order and to refine oneself in relation to the whole. The ordinary Japanese student in Vienna preserved what Loos saw as an exemplary awareness of the intricacies that allow identity to evolve. Rather than blindly consuming things drawn from without, the modern Japanese student had learned to cultivate their own interior character in relation to their surroundings.

In a 1907 text, Loos reflected on how he had himself learned to do this as a student of Japanese culture. The text summarized arguments from a series of instructive “Wohnungswanderungen” (“Apartment Walks”) that Loos had begun leading around Vienna in 1903. Arguing, “Man möge sich weder in einer alten, noch

525 Adolf Loos, “Wie wir leben,” published in Das Andere: Ein Blatt zur Einfuehrung Abendlaendischer Kultur in Oesterreich (The Other: A Magazine for the Introduction of Occidental Culture to Austria) (Wien, 1903); republished in Glück, ed., Sämtliche Schriften, 237. (Author’s Translation)
Loos aligned the craft practices of Japan and pre-modern Europe to explain the process by which he had formulated his approach to modern domestic space:526

(Our modern production was by the artists, as well as by the civic authorities, mishandled with disdain. I knew with regard to this that it was, nevertheless, not at all necessary to construct the style of our time because we, after all, already possess it…Certain products of the carpenters and woodworkers had escaped the architects…I asserted 10 years ago that a modern man is no longer able to bring forth an ornament. The modern products of our culture possess no ornament…Only people who are born in the present, but actually live in an earlier century…(the Japanese included)...bring forth still today a new ornament as valuable as the old…Ornament that does not spring organically from the human spirit, as with the old masters or with the people of the new Orient, is worthless…And so I invite all who are interested in how one must furnish a dwelling of lasting value to embark upon a course through a number of dwellings that were created under my guidance.) 527

Loos’ statements make clear that, far from eschewing ornament, he simply had a fundamentally different understanding of it. That understanding negated the distinction, not only between art and industry, but the more fundamental distinction between art and craft that had formed the foundation for modern professional architecture. It collapsed the difference back to a time when everyone had shared the power—or Kraft—of expressing their own interior character within a social order that

526 Adolf Loos, “Wohnungswanderungen,” 1907, 1; Adolf Loos Archive, Albertina, Wien. (Author’s Translation)
527 Ibid., 1-3.
528 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
was strictly uniform in theory and highly diversified in practice. As Japan exerted its power by crafting a highly refined image of its pre-industrial culture in the modern industrial present, it helped Loos to see the overlooked value of what was already present in his own domestic context: the mundane craft practices that made the cultivation of beauty a common pursuit.

Even within a structure standardized down to the individual component, the builder understood that every member was of equal significance, as it would become an inextricable part of—contributing to the definition of while being defined by—the space that it helped to frame and create. Without concern for style, the builder learned, of necessity, to appreciate the beauty to be found in the intricacies of the mundane. The builder saw that even a single-room structure built to a fixed form using standardized components and everyday resources could become an invaluable space in which to build one’s own dwelling.

**The Art and Craft of the Villa Müller’s “Attic Room”**

In an undated diary entry recorded sometime between April and May of 1930, Kriegerbeck noted that, as the Villa Müller neared completion in the spring of 1930, “the terrace room,” was the “one room [that] was still unfinished.” Loos had been bedridden by illness for several weeks and Kriegerbeck, working with Müller’s desired appointments, Loos’ freehand sketches, and their discussions of the space, had rendered the designs. “I arrived at Loos’ bedside,” Kriegerbeck wrote, and

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529 Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, English translation of diary entry, published in Ksandr, ed., *Villa Müller*, 72. This diary entry was recorded sometime between April and May of 1930.
530 Ibid. In this entry, Kriegerbeck recounts his visit to Loos at the home of his then in-laws, Olga and Otto Beck. Kriegerbeck’s account is particularly significant because, as Marie Benešová and Karel Ksandr note in “Co-operation of Adolf Loos and Karel Lhota in the Design of Villa Müller as Reflected in Preserved Drawings and Documentary Sources,” Loos’ one known/extant sketch of this room was lost sometime after that sketch was featured in the 1984 exhibition “Adolf Loos and Czech Architecture.” The sketch had been dated to sometime after the beginning of the villa’s construction in
Loos approved my design of the terrace room without suggesting any corrections, we merely agreed on the choice of materials...On the walls were pictures by the prominent Japanese painter Haru-nor [!] [sic]. The lighting fixture was a genuine Japanese lantern. The furnishings cost only twelve thousand crowns. I found this room most beautiful.531

In a November 1968 letter to Kudělka, Kriegerbeck reiterated the beauty of those spaces where they “used materials that were less expensive, or even cheap...wallpapers, hangings with straw or grass or...mat.”532 “You can see this in the interior,” he explained, “at Dr Müller’s in the room on the terrace. And this may betray that the simple interiors...were the prettiest, and because they didn’t shout ‘I’ve got it’, weren’t the targets of the rich.”533

As Kriegerbeck’s description of “the terrace room” suggests, this space never had a preconceived fixed form, identity, or independent objective value from any of its designers’ perspectives. In early plans, Loos had identified it with a term from his native Czech: půda, which is commonly translated, not only as “attic” or “loft,” but also as “terrain,” “ground,” or “earth.” As paradoxical as the term that Loos appropriately used to describe it, the space conjures these contradictory meanings: a remote abode elevated high above the surrounding terrain, it is a grounding space that mediates between earth and sky, interior and exterior, inhabitant and environment. As inseparable from the Villa Müller’s darkroom as from the rooftop terrace, Müller insisted that it was “a necessary part” of the family’s home because it preserved that which sustains daily life and which is therefore precious: room for cultivating one’s own interior character in interaction with one’s surroundings.534

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531 June 1929 and had been retained by Milada Müllerová as part of her family estate. See: Benešová and Ksandr, “Co-operation of Adolf Loos and Karel Lhota,” in Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 128.
532 ‘Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, English translation of Letter to Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, 4 November 1968, p.2; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; Kriegerbeck’s original letters, written in Czech, are held in the Municipal Museum of Architecture and Urban Planning, City of Brno.
533 Ibid., 2.
534 Ksandr, ed., Villa Müller, 35; See discussion at pp. 33-35.
In a pronounced deviation from the wood flooring that Loos commonly used, the attic room’s floors are lined with about four and a half red woven straw mats with black fabric borders (Figs. 41 & 42). Produced in Japan, these recall the tatami that line the floors of traditional Japanese urban dwellings and mark out their potential living spaces, although they depart from the tatami’s traditional form and function. Thick, dense, and natural in color, traditional tatami have a packed core of rice-straw that is wrapped in a softer outer layer of woven igusa (rush grass) to enhance comfort. They had evolved from their use in early earthen-floored dwellings to line the floors of Japanese houses because they provided a practical, flexible way to furnish a home’s interiors: they could be easily moved between houses and served a variety of changing functions. Used for sleeping, sitting, and all other activities of daily life, they allowed even a single room dwelling to act as a bedroom, reception room, dining room, and work space. Because regionally standardized at measurements of 3 by 6 or 3 by 6 ½ shaku, they could be fitted into the intervals between columns to become part of any living space that was built according to the kiwari system.

Thin and flexible, the mats used in the Villa Müller are not traditional tatami, but rather, are a highly specialized reinterpretation of the tatami’s igusa covering, or outer layer. While thin, flexible straw mats were used by commoners who could not afford to line their rooms with the more costly tatami, the Villa Müller’s mats depart from these, too—in part because they are, very unusually and deliberately, dyed red. They also elongate the tatami’s conventional width to length ratio of about 1:2; they measure approximately 3 by 12 feet, which allows them to span the distance between the room’s south and north walls. Aligned east to west, their borders run flush into one another. The outer edges of each mat extend into the room’s framing elements,
which stand in place of a clearly defined perimeter to bound the room in three dimensions.

The highly particularly use of these mats in the attic room exemplifies another affinity between the Villa Müller and the nôka of the Bauernhaus model, in which varied materials were used to help distinguish—and enhance the character of—discrete zones. As in the nôka, the mats depart from the wood flooring that was used for the Villa Müller’s main living areas to mark this room as exceptional. Similarly, Loos used red terracotta floor tiles in the villa’s antechamber, which evokes, without mimicking, both the nôka’s earthen-floored doma and its highly specialized zashiki, or formal reception room.

These terracotta tiles help to denote the antechamber as a grounding interval—or threshold—connecting exterior to interior, while enhancing its exceptional character as a reception room for guests. Loos further enhanced this character with undyed woven Japanese mats. While these mats, on one hand, more closely recall the character of traditional tatami, Loos used them in an unusual way to line the walls of the cloakroom that unfolds within the larger space of the antechamber. Again evoking, without mimicking, the exceptional space of the zashiki, they appropriately lend a sense of warmth and intimacy as you are invited deeper into the home.

A space that is at once highly specialized and wholly mundane, the Villa Müller’s antechamber anticipates the sense of continual interior nesting that extends through the home to reach full expression in the attic room. Like the zashiki—a room reserved, at the nôka’s far end, for distinguished guests—, the attic room is positioned at the Villa Müller’s remote uppermost corner. It is a reserved space that is both protected and formed by requiring passage through an intricately layered network of boundaries. And yet, it is central to the life of the home.
Appropriate to this room’s unique function, which might be seen as analogous to that of the tearoom, its appointments were collaboratively selected and arranged to frame a void in which its inhabitants could cultivate their own sense of beauty. This is most evident in its anomalous red Japanese mats, which make clear that Loos and his collaborators had as little interest in imitating traditional tatami as in designing a simulacrum of the tearoom. Red mats were chosen because, like the room’s other appointments, they spoke to those who were building it. They form a meaningful part of a structure that was conceived to provoke the continued unfolding of interior space.

Accordingly, Loos here reinterpreted the tatami’s significance as a spatial planning device. These mats can be seen as denoting a co-integrated space of discrete intervals lived in time, each mat’s border at once separating it from and connecting it to the next. As each spatial interval contained inside extends through its border into that which is outside, the boundary as enclosure dissolves. Each boundary becomes a threshold through which you find yourself moving further into the space as it unfolds in time.

As the mats’ outer edges flow into the structural elements that form the room’s walls, you begin to see that these elements similarly mark, not the limits of this room, but its extension, allowing the space to push open into and beyond its physical frame. Layering out and up in four dimensions as you move through space in time, each surrounding element becomes an interval that expands the life of the interior.

Infusing the attic room with light and air, the terrace becomes a literal extension of it when the room’s north wall doors are open. Sunlight infiltrates the space, subdued as it skips across its semi-reflective surfaces toward a broad mirror set into the south wall. The mirror is composed of a grid of nine panels and recessed within a deep frame of black lacquer, above a unit of built-in drawers and cupboards.
for storing dishes and utensils. Retreating from the space as it enters and extends it, it intensifies the character of the surrounding surfaces as it kaleidoscopically redirects flickers of light. Reflected back upon itself across a broken frame of changing fragments, the room begins to emerge as space framed and generated by space, propelling always inward as it layers outward.

The dimensions of the room’s one partial floor mat were modified to accommodate the room’s west wall alcove, where three prints by Kuniyada are displayed (Fig. 43). The prints separately portray three unidentified kabuki actors, two performing roles as samurai and one as a geisha. Isolated within closely-cropped pictorial frames, each character is depicted in a tilted, half-portrait view that evokes the three-quarter profile view conventional in contemporary Renaissance portraits. Yet, rather than attempting to capture their subjects in convincingly life-like representations of reality, the prints flatten their subjects, emphasizing their own reality as two-dimensional illusions inscribed with sharp outlines, exaggerated features, and dramatic contrasts.

Unidentified surroundings compress into the shallow space around each figure like a painted backdrop, evoking a paradoxical sense of depth as each figure is thrust to the forefront of what becomes an immediate, all-consuming pictorial space. Magnified before the viewer, each character is at once meticulously masked and revealingly stripped of the inessential, their faces reduced to blank facades marked only by those features that distinguish them from one another. Diagonal lines and boldly-rendered forms convey fleeting, if exaggerated, physical and psychological states, each character becoming clearly identifiable as each actor becomes an emphatic expression of the mundane. Appropriately depicting actors in a kabuki drama—a form of performance in which character is expressed primarily through
action and expressive attributes rather than language—each character speaks for itself precisely because it says nothing.

Disrupting any illusion that they are complete and self-contained objects to be visually apprehended, each print provides a partial perspective on a distinct set of circumstances and experiences, extracting defining fragments that communicate identity as it manifests at one point in a complex narrative. Rather than attempting to fix and imitate reality, each actor is isolated in a particular moment of performance, each representing a character who looks out beyond the scene. Any interior space, you are reminded, is unfixed and inevitably permeated by that which remains unseen. Impossible to capture all its intricacies in a single view, the larger narrative collapses into a momentary fragment. You are offered a passing glimpse into the activity that unfolds beyond the visible frame while entering and helping to define it.

Conjuring the way that each of the home’s spaces layers open beyond itself into those surrounding, each print extends through its abruptly-cropped frame to layer out into the real space that surrounds. Hung nearest the terrace, the portrait of a geisha depicts a figure who looks out beyond a hazy landscape toward the terrace doors, the scene bathed in a bright, uneven light that evokes the room’s permeation by entering sun. This print hangs alongside another that depicts a samurai dressed in a vibrant red robe. Though his body is similarly positioned toward the doors, this figure propels the space toward the mirror at the room’s opposite end, his head abruptly turned toward it as a sword slung over his shoulder extends diagonally upward beyond the picture. This gesture complements the surrounding reality, the sword’s tilt tracing the path of light that traverses the room as it is diffracted between the terrace doors and paneled mirror. Positioned nearest the mirror, the third print depicts a samurai figure dressed in a patterned robe of subdued white, gray, and black tones that subdue reflectivity.
This figure confronts the room, head and gaze tipped out toward it as he grasps his sword in a gesture that directs attention diagonally down and out beyond the picture. Collapsing into the expanse of muted gray wall while projecting from it, this figure inverts the framing wall, drawing awareness inward as it radiates outward, the space spiraling infinitely around an unfixed center that continually pinwheels open from while turning back upon itself.

As each print enters the room, stepping out into it in a sequence of shifting fragments, you see that each work at once contributes and responds to all the other elements and activities that allow this room to take shape as raum—inhabited space. As you consider how they shape and are shaped as much by the surrounding appointments as by your own perceptions, they help to further destabilize imagined distinctions between exterior and interior, framing structure and living space. Quietly retreating from the terrace doors, they heighten awareness that the room’s character of intimacy and remove relies upon its opening to the terrace, just as the distinct character of each and every one of the home’s interiors is heightened in its relation to the others.

The three Kunisada prints displayed on the attic room’s west wall had hung with a fourth—Hokusai’s “The Great Wave of Kanagawa” (1830-31)—in Müller’s study, on the wall behind the desk, at the family’s first apartment in Plzeň (Figs. 65 & 66).\textsuperscript{535} At the Villa Müller, this print was selected for a discreet interval behind the door that opens into the attic room at its southeast corner.

A picture that can be deceptive in its simplicity, it depicts an agitated seascape that appears to be consumed by a single wave. Growing as it absorbs the sea’s current, this imposing wave curls inward and upward, imminently approaching the height of

\textsuperscript{535} As shown in photograph printed in Ksandr, ed., \textit{Villa Müller}, 131.
paradoxical tension between complete fullness and complete emptiness just before a crash. As you anticipate the moment when it will swell beyond its own confines to collapse back upon itself, you see that it is nothing more than its own creation. The momentum with which it rises is propelled by the momentum with which it falls. It continually absorbs and overflows back into itself, creating a circular vacuum as it unfurls around a shifting center that it perpetually creates, floods, and recreates.

While this one wave at first seems to consume the picture in its entirety, you see with a closer look that three wooden boats lie nested within the scene. Nearly imperceptible, they are embraced by the sea’s ebb and flow, becoming absorbed, but never engulfed, by their surroundings. Groups of miniscule figures then surface among their hulls, their bodies securely nestled alongside one another in co-integrated units. Drawn into the scene while remaining discrete, each figure is minutely rendered and yet distinct from every other. They, too, flow with the sea to become part of it, stirred by a vitality that is at once unpredictable and unerringly logical as the sea rises and falls, expands and retreats. As the scene isolates a moment that expresses this complementary tension, it diffuses within and beyond itself. Each line and form, you see, emerges in relation to while collapsing back into the larger pictorial space, each intricacy precisely rendered to become integral to this mutually-created interior.

As the great wave verges on collapse, another absorbs momentum in the immediate foreground. Curving toward you, it draws you deeper into the scene as you contemplate the moment when it will spill out and into the real space that you inhabit. And still, even as you anticipate the scene’s outpouring, it continues to recede into its own space of undefined depth. Retreating from the seascape and yet inseparable from it, a snow-capped mountain emerges in the distance. Though nearly indistinguishable,
this mountain grounds the scene, marking its shifting center to heighten awareness of its projection into unseen depths.

A well-known image that is widely reproduced through the present day, Hokusai’s “The Great Wave of Kanagawa” was executed in 1830-31 as part of the artist’s series depicting *Thirty Six Views of Mount Fuji*. This print became highly prized among European and American collectors as Hokusai’s work became increasingly popular in the early-to-mid-twentieth century. And yet, it is tucked nearly out of sight in the Villa Müller’s attic room. It hangs nestled within a shallow, secluded alcove that is created as you close the door to open space between the south and east walls. Concealed when the door is open, it is only revealed when the room is closed and in use, allowing the space to further emerge as activity brings it into the bounds of framing structure. Even then, the print remains partially concealed and is impossible to grasp from any fixed perspective. As it materializes in a sequence of shifting fragments—its own reality unfolding with the activities and experiences that generate and expand this interior over time—, distinctions between inhabitant and dwelling, dwelling and artwork, that which is inside and that which is outside this room collapse into a common space of multiple, mutually defining interiors (Fig. 67).

**Reflections on the Raumplan**

“I promised,” Kriegerbeck wrote to Kudělka in an undated letter,

…that I would write further on Loos... Now I can see that I have done the whole thing poorly, that I should have started with Loos’ character, splitting it up and applying it to his work. In short, I should have created a specific framework to provide context…I have therefore decided to describe Loos’ character for you as I saw it, without any embellishments and superlatives.\(^{536}\)

\(^{536}\) Bořivoj Kriegerbeck, English translation of Letter (L15a) to Dr. Zdeněk Kudělka, undated; English translation provided by Norbertov Study and Documentation Centre, Prague, City of Prague Museum; Tellingly, Kriegerbeck’s experiences as a builder informed his own character and personal perspectives as much as it informed his work.
“Adolf Loos,” he continued, “was a genius, who created a certain order, by which he wished to make the life of the new generation easier and more beautiful.”

While Loos has become known as an independent modernist who devised and promoted a radical utilitarian vision, Kriegerbeck’s reflections express the extent to which Loos’ work was really much closer to that of the traditional artist. His Raumplan approach did not proceed from an *a priori* ideal, but rather, took shape as he cultivated his own interior character in interaction with his surroundings. As much as that character had, like Loos’ surroundings, shifted and expanded over time, it remained grounded in the understanding that any artwork of meaning and lasting value is a *raum*—an inhabited space that we bring our own meaning and value to. Met with initial resistance among many members of the middle class, Loos’ Raumplan relied for its full expression upon a builder like Kriegerbeck and a client like Müller, both of whom were unconcerned with conventional ideas about modern architecture and who appreciated, from complementary perspectives, the beauty in cultivating a space between art and industry.

An exceptional commission that helped to fully draw out Loos’ artistic character, the Villa Müller equally speaks to his long-standing collaborations with sympathetically minded craftsmen. As Loos was developing his Raumplan approach, the Austrian painter and poet Oskar Kokoschka had become a close friend who shared and contributed to Loos’ belief that the artist must practice without expectations in order to introduce perspectives on the present that might persist to shape the future. Loos became particularly close with the Austrian writer and cultural critic Karl Kraus, who explained in the introduction to Loos’ 1931 monograph,

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537 Ibid. Kriegerbeck continued, “You I didn’t want to go home from work, and sometimes You I couldn’t wait to arrive in the morning.”

538 Müller also became familiar with Kokoschka’s work and ideas and purchased a painting by the artist for his collection. Interestingly, he seems to have chosen not to display this painting in his home.
Adolf Loos und ich, er wörtlich, ich sprachlich, haben nichts weiter getan als gezeigt, daβ zwischen einer Urne und einem Nachttopf ein Unterschied ist und daß in diesem Unterschied erst die Kultur Spielraum hat. Die anderen aber, die Positiven, teilen sich in solche, die die Urne als Nachttopf, und die den Nachttopf als Urne gebrauchen.  

(Adolf Loos and I, he literally, I linguistically, have done nothing more than show that there is a difference between an urn and a chamber pot, and that culture has space to move only in this difference. But the others, the positive ones, divide themselves into those who use the urn as a chamberpot, and the chamberpot as an urn.)

Most of Loos’ contemporaries in architecture and design were fixated on synthesizing the urn—the purely formal object—and the chamberpot—the object of pure utility—because they identified culture with autonomously fixed material structures. This perspective was consistent with the notion, inherent to modern academic training, that progress was linear and that it was propelled by the synthesis of opposites that could be objectively grasped. Loos recognized that this perspective overlooked the reality that any culture is, like the home, a living condition of all the activities that generate social space and allow structures to evolve over time. As Kulka explained in Loos’ 1931 monograph, “Er nennt unsere Kultur eine Zussamenfassung von Japanismus und Tradition (Klassizismus)” (“He calls our culture a coming together of Japanism and Tradition (Classicism)”).

Taking the urn and the chamberpot as exceptions that proved a rule, Loos understood that there really is no diametric opposition between the purely formal object and the object of pure utility. Even the urn and the chamberpot could be seen as either and both: any work of art can be seen as a utilitarian device, just as the most mundane object can be seen as a work of art. Loos polemically insisted on a boundary between art and industry because Japan had helped him to see that such a boundary

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539 Karl Kraus, as quoted in Kulka, ed., Adolf Loos, 7.
540 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
541 This interpretation of culture draws upon both Loos’ perspectives and the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō’s A Climate (jūdo) (1935).
542 Heinrich Kulka, in Kulka, ed., Adolf Loos, 27. Note: “Zussamenfassung” might also be defined in this context as “union.”
would create the threshold across which they could extend into one another: it opened the interval in which the craft practices and values of the pre-industrial past could evolve in the space of the modern industrial present. Neither the art of the past nor the industry of the present and yet both, the works being exported to define and preserve Japanese culture reflected the understanding that all art of lasting relevance and value is a form of craft practice. As a modernizing Japan worked to distinguish its fine arts traditions from what had all just been common craft, it demonstrated, in other words, that industrialization had simply created more room to cultivate and exchange the unique interests that sustain daily life.

Loos articulated the extent to which Japan had shaped his Raumplan approach as he found an increasingly receptive audience for his thinking after the Raumplan had been refined and absorbed into his own modern domestic context. Reflecting on one of his first apartment designs, the Hugo Haberfeld apartment (Vienna, 1899), in his 1931 monograph, he explained: “Der Zimmergrundriß ist heute, da wir unter japanischem Einfluß stehen, zentrifugal...Die Mitte ist frei (Bewegungsraum). Das künstliche Licht gehört dorthin, wo man es braucht. Eine betone Mitte gibt es nicht” (“The room plan is today, as we stand under Japanese influence, centrifugal...The center is free (movement space). Man-made light belongs there, where one needs it. There is no concrete center”).

543 Adolf Loos, quoted in Kulka, ed., Adolf Loos, 28. (Author’s Translation)
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CHAPTER THREE—
“TWO PARALLEL WAYS OF LIFE”: E1027

In this very small house we have tried to express two parallel ways of life: the “camping” method, which responds to an accidental need for outward expression, and the normal method, which tends to provide an independent and remote center where the individual can develop his profound powers. One must anticipate that the present need for action, for a hectic life, will come to an end and will be replaced by the need for inner knowledge and refinement.\

—Eileen Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer” (English Translation), 1929

In 1938-39, the Swiss-French theorist and architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, called Le Corbusier, vandalized a private seaside villa in the French Mediterranean town of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. He painted—in the nude—nine large murals on its walls, and referred to the work as his Graffite à Cap Martin. The home, E1027, had been designed between 1924 and 1929 by the Irish-English urushi (lacquer) practitioner, furniture designer, and architect Eileen Gray (Fig. 1).

Gray made it clear that the murals intruded upon the “spirit of the house.” Le Corbusier refused to remove them, but continued to visit the villa through the 1940s. In the 1950s, he added the Unités de Camping, a vibrant compound of small vacation houses, on the adjacent lot, and installed his own one room Cabanon

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545 The modern commune of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin encompasses the mountainside medieval village of Roquebrune, and the peninsula of Cape Martin and surrounding village of Carnolès that sit below.

546 The number and content of the murals has been contradicted, both in the existing scholarship and by Le Corbusier himself, who sometimes stated that there were seven murals, sometimes nine, etc; The change in the stated number of murals likely has to do with the fact that Le Corbusier executed them over a course of two visits.

547 Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (New York: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2007), 122-123. As Constant explains, Gray made her feelings about the murals known by urging Jean Badovici, her collaborator and E1027’s then primary inhabitant, to write a letter to Le Corbusier.

548 Le Corbusier also became a regular at the neighboring Etoile de Mer restaurant, owned by Thomas Rebutato, when it opened in 1949. At the time, Le Corbusier was staying at E1027 while working with a team of apprentices on his Bogota city designs. He was the Etoile de Mer’s first customer on opening day and ingratiated himself to Rebutato, becoming a close friend of Rebutato and his family as he frequented the site over the next decade and a half. See: “The Etoile de Mer,” accessed 23 September 2020 at: https://capmoderne.com/en/lieu/letoile-de-mer/.
overlooking E1027 and its site. In 1965, he died while swimming in front of Gray’s villa, in the waters of what is now named the “Plage de Buse” (“Buse Beach”), and is buried in the local cemetery that stands above Cape Martin, perched at an elevation of 856 feet atop the medieval village of Roquebrune. Today, you can climb to his grave and look out toward Cap Moderne, a French Cultural Heritage site that was launched in June of 2015 to promote the area’s modernist legacy. There, you are introduced to Le Corbusier and Gray side by side and can tour the Unités de Camping and Cabanon along with E1027, which has been restored with much of Le Corbusier’s *Graffite* in place (Figs. 2 & 3).

When Le Corbusier first visited E1027, and Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, in 1938, he became fixated on the villa because it responded, in an unforeseen way, to principles that he had outlined in 1923 in *Vers une architecture* (Towards an Architecture), which was translated into English as *Towards a New Architecture* in 1931 (Fig. 4). In that manual of modernism, Le Corbusier instructed architects to adopt his “five points towards a new architecture”: manipulating the capabilities of reinforced concrete construction, the modern house should be raised on *load-bearing pilotis*, which would allow for *a free plan*, *a free façade*, and *ribbon windows*, with a *roof garden* to provide access to the outdoors. He claimed that these principles had been formulated to fulfill basic human needs for light, air, and space and declared them universally applicable.

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549 Le Corbusier designed the Unités de Camping for Rebutato, who gave Le Corbusier the land on which to build the Cabanon as compensation.

550 The Etoile de Mer restaurant is also part of the Cap Moderne site and tour.

Gray, who was not formally trained as an architect, had been introduced to Le Corbusier’s theories by the Romanian architect Jean Badovici, for and with whom she designed E1027 to be a seaside retreat.\textsuperscript{552} Gray’s lover at the time and the founding editor of the influential avant-garde architectural journal, \textit{L’Architecture vivante} (Living Architecture), Badovici was firmly entrenched in the circles driving modernist discourse. He lent his theoretical and engineering expertise to the project and urged Gray to apply Le Corbusier’s “five points” in the villa’s design.\textsuperscript{553} Gray acknowledged their collaboration in the name E1027, which is an alphanumeric cipher for the couple’s combined initials: Eileen (E), Jean (10), Badovici (2), Gray (7).\textsuperscript{554}

Because of Gray’s collaboration with Badovici and Le Corbusier’s fixation on E1027, Gray was not widely recognized as its main architect until after her death in 1976, when feminist scholarship began to revive interest in her work.\textsuperscript{555} The villa itself, which was privately owned through the 1990s, was largely overlooked in histories of architectural modernism until the late twentieth century, and, when mentioned, was attributed either to Badovici exclusively or to Le Corbusier himself.\textsuperscript{556} Since its rediscovery, Le Corbusier, in particular, has framed E1027’s

\textsuperscript{552} Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 67.
\textsuperscript{553} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{554} Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{555} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{556} Constant notes that, following the villa’s completion, it “fell into relative obscurity, rarely mentioned in histories of the Modern Movement” (Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 93). As Constant further explains, Gray, too, was largely excluded from histories of architectural modernism and her role in E1027’s design was underacknowledged. This is exemplified by a November 1956 memorial exhibition that the Union des Artistes Modernes held in Badovici’s honor. Although Gray was among the UAM’s founding members, and had contributed her own architectural drawings of E1027 to the union’s first exhibition, her request to assist with Badovici’s memorial exhibition was denied, “and E1027 was attributed to ‘Jean Badovici with the collaboration of Eileen Gray for the furniture’” (Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 12, 127). Also see: “Appendix V: A Note Concerning Attribution of E1027,” pp. 246-47; Here Constant explains that Le Corbusier repeatedly publicized and fought for the preservation of his murals while deliberately, if tacitly, propelling misconceptions about the villa and its authorship; he omitted specific references to Gray and E1027 itself, which at times led to assumptions that he was the villa’s architect.
history, because of and despite both the nonconformist manner in which Gray applied his theories and his consequent obsession with and vandalism of her design.

Several studies have linked E1027, Gray’s emphasis on interiority, and Le Corbusier’s murals—which include abstract depictions of female nudes—to the fact that Gray was a woman and openly bisexual. In Eileen Gray: A Biography (2000), Peter Adam interprets the Cap Martin murals as a form of “rape.” In “Battle Lines: E1027,” Beatriz Colomina argues that the murals were Le Corbusier’s attempt to colonize Gray and her sexuality by asserting control over her villa. In Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity: staying in (2011), Jasmine Rault contends that Le Corbusier was threatened by E1027 because he viewed it as a representation of Gray’s lesbianism, sexual ambiguity, and defiance of early twentieth century feminine norms. In Eileen Gray (2007), Caroline Constant expands our understanding of E1027 by examining it as the site of a complex exchange between two artists. She argues that Gray intended E1027 to be a built critique of Le Corbusier’s abstract theories, and interprets Le Corbusier’s murals as a reaction to that critique. Constant further points out that, though the murals altered Gray’s design, they also led to E1027’s partial preservation and eventual designation, in 1998, as an historic monument. Because the villa had fallen “into relative obscurity” after it was built, it

would likely have been demolished had Le Corbusier not had an interest in protecting his murals.\textsuperscript{561}

These readings have offered vital critical perspectives on E1027, its history, and the contentious but symbiotic personal and professional relationship between Gray and Le Corbusier. At the same time, they leave room to further consider Gray’s more substantive, though less tangible, role as the villa’s architect. In order to better understand E1027 and the dynamics of Gray’s intellectual exchange with Le Corbusier, it is necessary to examine what made Gray’s particular interpretation of his theories so provocative to him in the first place. This requires looking beyond the built form—the house as a material structure—to more deeply explore the intricacies of interior life that Gray herself saw as defining a dwelling.

**Part One: Analysis of E1027**

The logic of Gray’s approach to domestic space was grounded in a hands-on, experiential approach to learning—she learned by doing and making things directly and concretely, rather than by adhering to a fixed and predetermined plan. E1027 exemplifies this approach. Flexibly incorporating Badovici’s instruction and Le Corbusier’s theories as they proved germane, Gray: realized the villa’s interiors; devised and installed its electric lighting; designed and helped craft its furnishings and fittings; assisted with building and landscaping; and drew and modified its plans while leading construction on site between 1926 and 1929 (Fig. 5).\textsuperscript{562}

\textsuperscript{561} Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 93. By the time E1027 was purchased by the French Conservatoire du littoral, in 1999, it had been further vandalized, largely gutted, and neglected. For discussion of the villa’s attribution, see: “Appendix V: A Note Concerning Attribution of E1027,” in Constant, *Eileen Gray*, pp. 246-47.

\textsuperscript{562} Ibid., 94. Constant notes that Badovici “held patents on the house’s sliding glass windows and doors, for example, in both the United States and France.” When construction began, Gray was residing primarily in Paris and traveling to Roquebrune Cap-Martin by car; in 1927, she moved on site.
Gray had chosen the site sometime between 1925 and 1926, when she drove from Paris to the South of France and stopped at Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. More remote than it is today, the small commune then had a population of some 5,000 inhabitants. Rail lines had not yet been introduced, and the only paved road edged a cliff at Roquebrune’s base (Fig. 6).\textsuperscript{563} Gray strolled the seven-kilometer course—now named “Le Corbusier Way”—that unfurls along the edge of Cape Martin as it steps out into the Mediterranean.

Rocky and rich with vegetation, the coastal headland is, to this day, only accessible by foot (Fig. 7). As you meander away from town, the signs of progress slowly fade to reveal a quiet promontory that courses open along land’s edge, pivoting at the tip to give way to a world where there is nothing but time. Abundant growth, remote plateaus, and jagged cliffs abut the sea. Brisk waves and maritime air temper a hot, radiant sun. Sea, sky, and earth meet among lemon, pear, and olive trees; fallen carob pods and ripened figs; chinois and cactus fruit; coarse rock and petrified wood. The route climbs and descends, twists and turns, disclosing coasts that span an unseen distance before retreating back into shelters of forest, curving here and there to recall where it has been. You follow the path as it unwinds with each step, diverting once in a while to rest at an outcropping before rounding the next bend.

At some point, a modest gate invites you down a set of stairs (Fig. 8). Shaded by greenery, you descend left, then right, then turn once more to step down still further toward another gate that opens between low rubble walls. As you move through it, you are immersed in land, sea, and sky. Oriented eastward, you pause with an oblique glimpse of E1027, which begins to reveal itself in fragments as it retreats

\textsuperscript{563} Roquebrune-Cap-Martin today has a population of about 12,000 inhabitants. Also of Note: there is a contradiction in the date of the rail line’s construction; Caroline Constant writes that the train was already there when Gray selected the site (see Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 94).
into its surroundings. Abruptly, the approach wraps toward the sea and your awareness shifts as the site unfurls toward a free horizon (Fig. 9). The landscape rambles down along a terraced course, emerging within an open-ended arrangement of rough-cut steps, citrus trees, and rubble walls. You remain on the immediate path, briefly descending toward the sea before pivoting left to walk parallel to it.

You come to a band of louvered windows with sliding shutters, which open along the wall next to you to allow light, air, sounds and sights to flow through the villa from end to end (Fig. 10). The earthen path gives way to a bright tiled floor, while a deep red ceiling emerges overhead to form a cooling shelter that tempers the heat of the sun. Suggesting an entry alcove, the space accommodates all the conventional elements usually found near a front door, although no front door is visible. Instead, a rounded wall, painted dark blue, projects beneath the shaded overhang and invites you to pause and rest (Fig. 11). You need not proceed to find a way into the home because you sense that you have already found it.

A small light fixture faced with black glass extends from the dark projecting wall, providing a dim light to illuminate the path when needed. You notice that the wall facing you bears the inscription “Sens Interdit”—a familiar French road sign phrase that is usually understood to mean “No Entry” or, literally, “Way Prohibited.” As this sign directs you to contemplate your next steps rather than persist straight ahead, you consider other possible readings—“sens” is also commonly translated as “sense” or “meaning.” Read differently, then, “Sens Interdit” equally suggests that any already-held assumptions about the correct way to read things are themselves not permitted here.

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564 Today, this wall preserves one of the large, boldly colored murals painted by Le Corbusier.
Another sign, to the right, invites you to “Entrez Lentement,” which might be translated as “Come In Slowly” or “Come In Leisurely.” Turning back toward the direction from which you approached, you continue through a doorway, where you encounter a high, curved partitioning wall, vibrantly painted green, that again redirects movement with a pivot to the left (Fig. 12).

You are greeted by a sequence of devices that disrupt your expectations of what a house’s entryway should look like and instead attend to your needs and comfort. Immediately to the left of the door, an in-built rack for “Chapeaux” (“Hats”) opens in a wall depression that is painted deep red, inviting you to remove your hat and fix your hair in the adjacent mirror (Fig. 13). In the reflection, you notice a small chrome light fixture that projects from the curving entry wall above the whimsical inscription “Defense de Rire” (“Laughing Forbidden”), which puts you at ease with the reminder that you need not take yourself too seriously here (Fig. 14). A low tubular steel railing offers a place to hang an umbrella. The soft light of a single bulb illuminates an elliptical-shaped coat closet, which is not fully enclosed, but just high enough to create a tucked-away nook where a guest could comfortably deposit her things without disrupting the activities of the larger space. Though concealed from view, you sense what is occurring there as light and air, scents and sounds permeate your consciousness.

Once you have settled in, you are drawn in the direction of a bright seaside terrace that opens through a band of floor-to-ceiling glass paned doors (Fig. 15). As you move toward it, you pause as you notice a small cork-topped dining table and sitting area that are tucked to the left before a small shadowed alcove (Fig. 16). Guided by sunlight, you then pivot right, rounding the closet’s elliptical curve as it leads you to the living room (Fig. 17).
Although you could not picture what was on the other side of the closet, you see that you have already become immersed in the experience of it (Fig. 18). The majority of the floor space is lined with white limestone tiles that conjure the surrounding shores while enhancing illumination by natural light. The band of windows that met you outside here opens above a radiator, making it possible to stay warm on cool winter days while still allowing fresh air and light to flow through the space (Fig. 19). The windows have deep red fabric curtains that evoke feelings of comfort and retreat. Their pivoting glass panes and sliding shutters can be completely or partially closed, or thrown fully open to the garden. This sense of limitless space and uninhibited movement is enhanced by the floor-to-ceiling glass doors that compose the opposite wall. Fitted with floor-length curtains, these, too, pivot and slide, such that they can be fully or partially closed, or collapsed to open the living room to the seaside terrace.

The floor space is largely open and freed for circulation, with many of the room’s furnishings built-in and designed to fulfill fluidly arising functions. Several devices juxtapose storage and partition, allowing discrete spaces to emerge while remaining open-ended. The opposite side of the curved green entry wall, for example, houses shelves and cupboards for inconspicuously storing records, books, and other items that should remain accessible but not distracting. The outer wall of the elliptical coat closet, whose lower portion is painted a deep, dark blue, calms the surrounding light while subdividing the open living space to create a sense of intimacy and enveloping security without confinement.

Offering more private overnight accommodations or a quiet place to read or take an afternoon nap, a small alcove is tucked just beyond a fireplace in the living room’s far southwest corner (Fig. 20). Evoking a sense of remove, this space can be
fully or partially partitioned off within the larger room by a tall wooden screen that has pivoting, interlocking panels. A small divan extends from the seaside wall, adjacent to a compact, in-built storage unit that allowed personal belongings to be efficiently stowed without compromising comfort and needs. This storage device incorporates a pivoting wooden side table that can be collapsed and folded into the wall, or expanded to provide a small dining or work surface complete with a prop-up book holder. A mosquito net extends from a wire rod overhead, and can be easily slipped down or stashed in its cupboard when not in use. With the particularity of this alcove’s possible functions in mind, Gray painted its south wall a dark, calming blue and omitted seaside windows, instead including a vertical band of pivoting windows with inward folding wooden shutters (Fig. 21). Minimizing distractions and heightening the intimacy of this more secluded space, the narrow windows allow adaptable access to light and air while ensuring that an overnight guest not be abruptly awoken by glaring light or oppressive heat.

To the north, the alcove opens into a guest bathroom, which adjoins the living room while partitioning itself from it to provide a discreet space where visitors could have freshened up without intrusion (Fig. 22). Enhancing this sense of individual freedom and comfort within an always-larger order of surroundings, a small shaded balcony opens off the alcove to the west, affording private contact with the site while adjoining the home’s south terrace to provide direct access to the garden (Fig. 23).

Here, a guest could go off alone to descend toward the sea that extends through layers of rocky coast and verdant terrain. Others could lounge in a solarium that opens into the ground with deep red tiles, creating a radiant basin, oriented around an in-built table, in which to fully appreciate the sun’s warmth while mists of sea air cool the skin (Fig. 24). Just beyond, an outdoor dining room retreats in shadow
beneath the villa’s main floor, sinking low into the damp earth to offer others a refreshing sheltered oasis (Fig. 25).

While the guest’s attention turns westward with an invitation into the home’s entry hall, on an ordinary day, Gray herself likely continued eastward, pausing to check for mail in a discreetly-hung, elliptical-shaped receptacle (Fig. 11). Gray labeled this device “Lettres,” recognizing that, because it was designed for practicality, rather than objective legibility, it may not be immediately clear that this is a letter box. Clothed in black leather that is more resilient than metal to the scorching Mediterranean sun, it includes a small circular opening, making it easy to see if there is mail to be retrieved when standing in the living room, or before stopping to deposit provisions in the kitchen, which opens immediately to the left (Fig. 26).

Partially open air, the kitchen combines indoor and outdoor areas and is situated near the site’s northeast corner. There, Gray oriented it in a garden niche that affords refreshing shade during the day and maximizes evening light and warmth while minimizing pervasive heat and odor throughout the home.

The indoor kitchen is an exceptionally compact space and was conceived mainly for food storage and for use during the colder winter months (Figs. 27 & 28). Making ample use of built-in cabinets and shelves, which line its south wall nearly floor-to-ceiling, the arrangement accommodates plenty of storage while preserving abundant expanses of the outward-facing north wall for windows. This provides, not only necessary light and ventilation for winter food preparation and cooking, but also preserves both heat and feelings of openness in this trim space, allowing it to expand toward the garden. The walls just beneath the windows open into a sink and built-in countertops, which extend above additional storage cabinets. A small coal-fired cast
iron stove is safely positioned in the far northeast corner, where a crimson wall offsets the brightness of white paint to enhance feelings of comfort and warmth.

The north wall’s large-paned louvered windows can be folded flat in full communication with the exterior, while a door allows the indoor kitchen to expand flexibly into its outdoor counterpart (Fig. 29). Partially sheltered by a large overhead cistern, the outdoor kitchen was used during warmer months—which make up most of the year in this Mediterranean climate—and served dual functions as the home’s primary cooking, food service, and laundry space. Also accessible directly from the garden, it has low built-in cupboards, inbuilt washing and cooking basins, and broad, unobstructed counter surfaces lined with semi-reflective black tiles (Fig. 30). While more expansive than the indoor kitchen, this area was composed with equal care for retaining maximum openness and freedom of movement. Again positioning utility devices in logical relation to one another, Gray preserved a substantial expanse of the space such that it could have accommodated multiple individuals and activities at once, or perhaps even been used, one might imagine, for occasional light dining and small gatherings. She here included a discreet wall alcove housing a woven cushion that could have been flexibly positioned to enjoy lunch or refreshments in this remote corner shelter on particularly hot days. Above this alcove, an expansive window-like opening invites the garden and distant lush mountainsides into the space, bringing the outside in while throwing the inside out to conjure the cooling shade of the surrounding treetops.

The rounded projecting wall that, from the approaching visitor’s perspective, denotes a point of entry while obstructing any view of one, abuts the kitchen and wraps southward to enclose a small lavatory. A narrow vertical band of pivoting windows with frosted glass panels allow light and air to filter into the space, which,
outwardly indistinguishable, is discreetly and practically positioned for ease of use upon returning home from a trek in the sun or a day on the beach. It opens into a narrow corridor lined with closets and cupboards for laundry and linens, which were stored in convenient proximity to both the outdoor washing area and the main bathroom, which stands between the lavatory to the west and the kitchen to the north. Pragmatically integrated near the home’s primary water repository, the bathroom’s positioning near the kitchen simultaneously maximizes its exposure to cool garden air and natural light, the dynamic effects of which Gray enhanced with a profusion of light-responsive surfaces and fixtures (Figs. 31 & 32).

The bathroom extends southward into the bedroom, which spreads open toward the sea at the home’s southeast corner (Fig. 33). Creating a space that is intimate and secluded while remaining unrestricted and expansive, Gray positioned the low bed near the room’s northwest corner, orienting closets and shelves around it in a fluid arrangement that would have accommodated the needs of both herself and Badovici without obstructing freedom of movement (Fig. 34). On the west wall, an in-built cupboard for pajamas and other small items opens next to the bed, alongside a pair of low built-in shelves that function in place of a nightstand. Nearest the door to the bathroom, a hinged, chrome bedside table extends from the room’s north wall and can be expanded to accommodate a glass of water or a book, or collapsed when not in use (Fig. 35). Next to it, Gray installed a band of low wall switches that made it easy to operate the room’s electric lights in the dark, while a small chrome clock projects at an angle that is conveniently visible from a reclining position. A pair of soft flowing mosquito nets hang like curtains overhead and can be quickly pulled down or drawn open. Simple, practical and inviting, the bed is dressed in cotton linens, with a plush red leather bed spread that provides warmth without absorbing sweat.
Bands of curtained windows with sliding shutters and pivoting panes open along the room’s east and south walls and, again, allow flexible engagement with light, air, and the larger site in a manner carefully choreographed in response to human comfort and needs. Thick, dark drapes run along the south wall, allowing the bedroom, when desired, to retreat into cool shadow even as bright direct light and intense reflections off the sea permeate the room’s south end. Shaded by the surrounding green landscape, the east wall windows are, conversely, fitted with pale curtains whose loosely-woven texture softens while inviting trickles of daytime light (Fig. 36).

Beneath these windows, a low storage unit for toiletries and other personal items cantilevers out from the wall, preserving floor space to comfortably stand around it or pull up a chair. Topped with hinged panels of highly-reflective aluminum that can be flipped up, this device redirects light to enhance visibility while preparing items for a bath or for use in the dressing area, which Gray integrated into the bedroom with the simple addition of a perpendicular projecting wall (Fig. 37). With a sink, soft padded stool, and ample mirrors, the dressing area would have allowed her to comfortably ready herself while Badovici bathed or remained in the low bed, which could be easily partitioned off from the larger space by unfurling a scroll-like screen that Gray designed to be especially mobile (Fig. 38). Lighter and more flexible than the screens used elsewhere, the free-standing bedroom screen can be rolled up and unobtrusively stored or easily moved around the room; It could have been positioned to quiet the sun as needed, or to limit disturbances to a sleeping Badovici as Gray worked at a desk beneath the south wall windows or gathered her things for the day.

While retaining privacy, Gray freed the room’s southwest corner by including another pivoting window in the west wall, which allows the bedroom’s south end to
sweep open to the terrace when desired (Figs. 39 & 40). Nearby, a door opens into a 
low compressed corridor that, sharing the bedroom’s west wall, connects the bedroom 
to the lavatory and kitchen to the north, and the home’s small dining area, living 
room, and terrace to the west (Fig. 41). After heading to the kitchen to retrieve 
breakfast, Gray might have returned to dine in a remote, terrace-side niche that she 
identified, in plan, as the home’s “foyer,” and, in “Maison en Bord de Mer,” as the 
home’s “dining room” (Fig. 42).

As Gray’s terms suggest, this niche can serve as both a foyer and a dining 
area, collapsing the expectation that a home must have an outwardly oriented, more 
public entry space and a separate, removed interior space for the more intimate 
activity of dining. It is discreetly partitioned from and yet opens freely into the living 
room to the west, the terrace to the south, and the home’s entryway to the north. 
Framed by the terrace windows to the south and a dark alcove to the east, its east wall 
projects to form a low built-in bench that would have occasionally provided additional 
seating around a small table that Gray designed to serve multiple audiences and 
functions. This table, as Gray explained, is “surfaced in cork to avoid the noise of 
plates and place settings” and was conceived, not only for individual or group dining, 
but also to provide an open workspace.\footnote{Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer,” in Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 243.} It has a tubular steel frame that could have 
been easily expanded to accommodate larger gatherings and includes an in-built lamp 
that could have been raised or lowered to adjust lighting according to need and mood. 
It is lightweight with a quiet, resilient texture and is, again, easily mobile. “During the 
summer,” Gray suggested, “one can either push the table onto the terrace, or, by 
sliding the terrace doors open, expose the dining room to the exterior.”\footnote{Ibid.}
Part Two: Gray’s Exchange with Le Corbusier

Once you have visited E1027, you can see why Le Corbusier would have admired it. Invited to stay there as a guest of Badovici in 1938, he was so captivated by the home and its site that he wrote to Gray, after that initial visit, to praise her design:

> Je serai heureux de vous dire combien ces quelques jours passés dans votre maison m’ont permis d’apprécier l’esprit rare qui en dicte toutes les dispositions, dehors et dedans, et a su donner au mobilier moderne—à l’équipement—une forme si digne, si charmante, si pleine d’esprit.\(^{567}\)

(I am so happy to tell you how much those few days spent in your house have allowed me to appreciate the rare spirit which dictates all the organization, outside and inside, and which has given the modern furnishings—the equipment—such a dignified, charming, and witty form.)\(^{568}\)

Later that same year, Le Corbusier returned to E1027 and began executing his *Graffite à Cap Martin* murals, which are boldly colored, disproportionately large, disruptive, and out of place. Clearly, he had been not only deeply impressed by “l’esprit rare” (“the rare spirit”) of the villa, but also agitated by the manner in which this “esprit rare” had dictated its form.\(^{569}\)

**Le Corbusier’s Theories on the Ideal House and Gray’s Application of Them**

“The spirit of architecture,” Le Corbusier had declared in *Towards a New Architecture*, “can only result from a particular condition of material things and a particular condition of mind.”\(^{570}\) As he saw it, “[m]achinery, a new factor in human affairs, ha[d] aroused a new spirit; the spirit of modernity.”\(^{571}\)

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\(^{567}\) Letter from Le Corbusier to Eileen Gray, 28 April 1938, as quoted in Peter Adam, *Eileen Gray*, 309-310, and as pictured in Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 124. Note: the translation given here is an author’s translation that differs slightly from that quoted in other texts.

\(^{568}\) Ibid.

\(^{569}\) Ibid.

\(^{570}\) Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 90.

\(^{571}\) Ibid.
Le Corbusier believed that modern life called for a house as efficient as the automobile, airplane, or ocean liner—modern industrial machines whose forms were determined purely by their functions. He theorized that an ideal house type could be developed through a process of standardization comparable to that reflected in these machines and in the structures of antiquity. He illustrated this process with photographs from popular advertisements, likening the formal development of the automobile, for example, to the formal development of the Doric temple as it had been perfected in the Athenian Parthenon (Fig. 43). Though these structures fulfilled fundamentally different needs in fundamentally different contexts, Le Corbusier argued that they exhibited common principles that could be universally applied across space and time: both represented the height of engineering, used ideal geometric forms derived from nature’s ideal order, and reflected the ideal proportions of the human body. He concluded that the modern house should be both a “modern temple” and “a machine for living in” whose form was “simply guided by the results of calculation (derived from the principles which govern our universe) and the conception of A LIVING ORGANISM.” It must express “the spirit of modernity” in a manner like the ocean liner—a machine that fulfilled changing needs, demonstrated the use of new industrial materials and technologies, and whose form was an expression of pure functional efficiency.

E1027 applies all of Le Corbusier’s “five points towards a new architecture” in a structure that is as flexible, efficient, and meticulously planned as an ocean liner. Built using reinforced concrete, the villa is raised on load-bearing pilotis, has both a free plan and a free façade, is articulated by ribbon windows, and is topped with an

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572 Ibid., 95, 133-148.
573 Ibid., 123, 133-140.
574 Ibid., 90, 95.
575 Ibid., 90, 102-103.
open air roof garden (Figs. 44 & 45).\textsuperscript{576} It accommodates living, dining, and work spaces, kitchen and laundry facilities, a bedroom and dressing area, ample storage, guest rooms, bathrooms, and multiple terraces in a compact home of 160m2. Finished on the exterior with stucco plaster and white paint, it is today often pictured on its scenic outcropping overlooking the limestone coast of the French Riviera and has become a modernist icon (Fig. 1).

Le Corbusier did not realize his own iconic expression of his theories until the Villa Savoye, which, built between 1928 and 1931, is a prototype of the ideal functional house he had envisioned (Fig. 46). A rectilinear, concrete-framed volume, the villa hovers on pilotis above trim green surroundings and is rhythmically articulated on all sides by ribbon windows. Its main living spaces are neatly contained in a single, elevated story, which is accessed by a ground level entrance. This entrance opens to a central staircase that prescribes a straightforward progression upward. The sequence culminates at the rooftop garden, which is accessed by a ramp from the main story and framed by an elliptical-shaped wall that projects into the air. Painted white inside and out, the structure is a cohesive picture of clarity, symmetry and order.

As the Villa Savoye demonstrates, Le Corbusier believed that the house’s first and foremost function was to outwardly delineate the order of interior space. In \textit{Towards a New Architecture}, he had therefore theorized that the ideal functional house must be a structure whose “exterior is the result of an interior.”\textsuperscript{577} He argued that this ideal could be achieved by arriving at a synthesis that would harness interior space within a structural order that could be clearly read from the outside. “There is a

\textsuperscript{576} Adam, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 193.  
\textsuperscript{577} Le Corbusier, \textit{Towards a New Architecture}, 177, 180.
new spirit,” he proclaimed, “it is a spirit of construction and of synthesis guided by a clear conception;” it is “the spirit of order.”

Le Corbusier illustrated this theory with a set of diagrammatic sketches of his own houses that he published in *Oeuvre complète 1910-1929* (1929): he drew a thesis in which a particular arrangement of interior spaces produced an irregular structural form, followed by an antithesis in which a uniform exterior structure contained a varied interior space (Fig. 47). He then worked out the synthesis between interior space and exterior structure that he went on to concretize in the Villa Savoye, in which a perfect rectilinear structure circumscribes the interior. Though the confines of the interior were expanded beyond necessity to align with this perfect exterior form, Le Corbusier declared his solution wholly efficient—it would allow any outside viewer to quickly understand the house’s organizing logic. He had outlined this organizing logic in the “Manual of the Dwelling” that he included in *Towards a New Architecture*, which instructed:

Demand a bathroom looking south…One wall to be entirely glazed, opening if possible on to a balcony for sun baths…An adjoining room to be a dressing-room in which you can dress and undress…In this room demand fitments for your linen and clothing, not more than 5 feet in height, with drawers, hangers, etc.

Demand one really large living room instead of a number of small ones…Built-in fittings to take the place of much of the furniture…Put the kitchen at the top of the house to avoid smells.

Demand concealed or diffused lighting…Buy only practical furniture and never buy decorative “pieces.”…Keep your odds and ends in drawers or cabinets…Demand ventilating panes to the windows in every room…Bear in mind economy in your actions, your household management and in your thoughts.

With his authoritative rhetoric, Le Corbusier helped to define what would become the dominant canons of rationalism in modern architecture. Gray saw both the relevance

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578 Ibid., 89, 154.
and the limitations of Le Corbusier’s theories, and had applied them with the understanding that “[l]a théorie ne suffit pas à la vie et ne répond pas à tous les besoins” (“[t]heory is insufficient for life and does not respond to all its requirements”).  

**Gray’s Approach to Domestic Space and Le Corbusier’s Reaction to It**

Gray explained this in “Maison en bord de mer,” a 1929 special issue of *L’Architecture vivante* that was devoted to E1027 (Fig. 48). In this publication, Gray documented and described the villa after it had been built, arguing,

> L’architecture extérieure semble avoir intéressé les architectes d’avant-garde aux dépens de l’architecture intérieure. Comme si une maison devait être conçue pour le plaisir des yeux plus que pour le bien-être des habitants…Il ne s’agit pas de construire seulement de beaux ensembles de lignes, mais avant tout, *des habitations pour hommes.*

(Exterior 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…It is not only a matter of constructing beautiful ensembles of lines, but above all *dwellings for people.*)

Gray saw that, while Le Corbusier professed that the house must be designed in response to human needs, he was more concerned with the ideal geometry and structural order of architecture than with living reality; his theories were really aimed at reforming architecture to reflect his own leveling formal ideals. This is evident in his adoption of the Parthenon as a model. In terms of use, this classical Greek temple—which was not built for human inhabitation—had no instructive relevance for fulfilling the living human needs that Le Corbusier claimed the modern house

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582 Ibid.
583 Ibid. Note: the English translation given here differs slightly from that given by Constant.
must fulfill. Yet, as the photographs of the Parthenon included in *Towards a New Architecture* demonstrate, the Parthenon was useful for Le Corbusier precisely because it was not built for human inhabitation; it was a structure regulated by its own formal order, outside and in (Fig. 49). Le Corbusier contended that, because this order reflected the ideal proportions of the typical human body, the Parthenon’s effect was objective and universal—every human subject could outwardly view and efficiently understand it in a single, fixed way. He concluded that this formal ideal must extend to inform modern domestic architecture, arguing, “a plan proceeds *from within to without*, for a house…is an organism comparable to a living being.”

Le Corbusier, again, concretized his ideal in the Villa Savoye. The house’s uncurtained ribbon windows allow you to clearly discern that the exterior perfectly aligns with the interior, where hard, cold, unadorned surfaces enhance the structure’s outward effect of rectilinear formality (Fig. 50). Furnishings and fittings are stiffly based on the ideal proportions of the human body, and living spaces are arranged and oriented to be highly visible from the outside (Figs. 50 & 51). You can observe that the house’s main living area opens to an outdoor patio, where a ramp leads upward to the rooftop garden. Blurring the distinction between inside and outside, the structure overlooks the inhabitants’ need for comfort while subjecting interior life to the inescapable gaze of a perceived outside world.

For Le Corbusier, autonomous structural appearances took precedence over the experience of space. He did not design the Villa Savoye with consideration for an actual inhabitant’s or visitor’s experience of it, but rather, choreographed it, as Beatriz

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584 Although the Parthenon’s complex history and program are beyond the scope of discussion and analysis here, it might be broadly interpreted as having served as both a treasury for the ancient city of Athens and a monument to its patron goddess.
Colomina argues in *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (1996), to be publicized in photography and film. For this reason, the villa is best known from photographs taken diagonally of the main façade (Fig. 46). While this perspective has little relation to the physical reality of visiting the villa, it perfectly captures the structure as a regular geometric form projecting in space. Just as Le Corbusier intended, the Villa Savoye has, like the Parthenon, become canonic—accepted to truly exist—as a picture perfect whole that can be easily photographed from a single ideal perspective.

While Le Corbusier approached architecture from a structural and primarily visual perspective, Gray saw that a dwelling’s form should emerge from the interior experience of space. “The interior plan,” she argued, “should not be the incidental result of the façade; it should lead a complete, harmonious, and logical life…[It] should respond to human needs and the exigencies of individual life, and it should ensure calm and intimacy.”\(^{587}\) Gray recognized that preoccupation with a preconceived ideal order hindered the architect’s ability to really consider the needs of interior life. She had designed E1027 to prevent exterior visual apprehension, as is evident in her choice of site.

The villa lies nestled in a secluded inlet of the Mediterranean on Cape Martin’s northwestern coast and is indiscernible from the wooded path that leads to it (Fig. 52). When you expectantly step down into the site, you find yourself behind the structure, never to confront a clear, single point of entry and nowhere afforded an unobstructed, cohesive view of it (Fig. 53). The villa simply spills open into its surroundings while what many visitors envision as its main façade orients obliquely…\(^{587}\) Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer,” in Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 241, 240 (also quoted in Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 72).
eastward toward the sea. You now see that the one exterior view that is analogous to the canonic image of the Villa Savoye can only be captured from the sea below. The iconic image of Gray’s villa dissolves into a fragmented mass of asymmetrically shifting planes and obscure forms whose logic you cannot comprehend without moving through the home’s spaces in time.

“[I]n regarding the dwelling as a living organism,” Gray explained,

...we...sought to plan [it] in such a way that each of its inhabitants could, on occasion, achieve total independence and an atmosphere of solitude and contemplation. The entrance is done away with, as befits a region where the windows and doors are rarely closed; but on the other hand one has sought an architectural layout that separates the interior from the exterior. One avoids making a door when one fears that it may open at any moment, evoking the possibility of an inopportune visit. 588

Le Corbusier insisted that differences between function and form, interior and exterior, and individual and collective thought and activity could and must be leveled through synthesis—he sought to impose a universal structural order on domestic space. Gray incorporated Le Corbusier’s theories in a way that made clear that she was not simply critical of his structural ideals. She was critical of his refusal to acknowledge the more complex living reality behind any structure—the more complex living reality that generates and sustains the spaces in which we dwell. That living reality had shown Gray that differences need not be reconciled and perceived opposites need not be synthesized. If each individual were freed to function naturally in relation to her or his surroundings, every dwelling’s form would emerge logically from the life that defines it. Gray interpreted and applied Le Corbusier’s theories from this perspective. She incorporated them in a way that responded, as Le Corbusier professed they should, to human use and need, while tacitly pointing out that there was nothing inherently necessary or universal about his rigid ideal of order in the first

place: that ideal was itself a highly particular reflection of Le Corbusier’s own interior perspective. It was this subversion of Le Corbusier’s way of thinking, not just Gray’s defiant application of his theories, that led to Le Corbusier’s persistent obsession with E1027 for nearly three decades. The home was neither a built demonstration nor critique of his theories, and yet it was both. It was a wholly logical prototype of modern domestic space that at once engaged and destabilized the structural logic upon which those theories relied.

*Le Corbusier’s Rationalist Perspective on Architecture*

Le Corbusier’s approach to architecture stemmed from a rationalist perspective that relied upon a priori ideas—ideas that are assumed to precede and order experience. This is evident in his assertion that “[t]he plan is the generator.”

“Without plan,” he contended,

…we have the sensation, so insupportable to man, of shapelessness, of poverty, of disorder, of willfulness…Arrangement is an appreciable rhythm which reacts on every human being in the same way.

Le Corbusier believed that universal mathematical principles structured the world and regulated its workings. He maintained that those principles could and must be deduced and applied to the house to ensure that every individual would understand the correct way to interact with it. He argued that he had accomplished this with his ideal house type, which he proclaimed would function optimally across all domestic contexts, independent of both individual needs and experiences and the particularities of a given site. Its perfect form could not be questioned because it had been objectively derived from a universal order determined by the human individual as a

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590 Ibid., 48-49.
“A LIVING ORGANISM.”591 “By imposing the order of his foot or his arm,” he insisted, man “has created a unit which regulates the whole work; and this work is on his own scale, to his own proportion, comfortable for him, to his measure…It is in harmony with him.”592

Le Corbusier assumed that his rationale would be accepted as inherently logical because it aligned with the structure of thought that most societies in continental Europe had adopted with modernization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This structure of thought had been strongly shaped by the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes, whose ideas helped to establish the Enlightenment philosophical tradition upon which many modern industrial societies were founded.

In his 1628 treatise Regulae ad directionem ingenii (Rules for the Direction of the Mind), Descartes had proposed the need for a method by which to efficiently attain true understanding of the world of experience. He argued that, because individual sensations are deceptive and imperfect, this could only be accomplished by deducing verifiable, universal truths from the objects and phenomena that we encounter; in Descartes’ view, true knowledge of things, in other words, relied upon the ability to abstract from them objective ideas—he believed that we must look beyond our own perceptions to isolate the underlying mathematical principles that regulate the workings of the material world.

In Traité du monde et de la lumière (Treatise on the World and on Light) (1629-33), Descartes went on to theorize that everything in the material world is composed of particles that function according to universal laws set in motion by god.

591 Ibid., 123, 133-140.
592 Ibid., 72.
He argued that god had pronounced these laws to save the universe from a state of eternal darkness and chaos by establishing order. God’s own existence, Descartes explained, could be verified through reason, by man alone: god had given man the unique ability to contemplate and understand that his own physical form reflected a universal order so perfect that it could only have been determined by the creator himself.

Descartes’ theories introduced a distinction between mind and body upon which he expanded in *Principia Philosophiae (Les Principes de la Philosophie)* (Principles of Philosophy) (1644). There, he posited that the universe consists of two separate realms composed of two fundamentally different substances: the *res cogitans*—the realm of thought, which is composed of an imperceptible substance that can extend into imagined time because it has no measurable physical extension in space—and the *res extensa*—the physical realm, which is composed of all things that extend in space and that can be measured as objective forms with definite length, breadth, and depth.593 Arguing that the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* operate independently of one another, Descartes introduced a distinction between one-dimensional time and three-dimensional space that is exemplified by the Cartesian coordinate system.594 This system allows us to represent things in the physical world by plotting fixed points within a grid that is itself an abstracted representation of three-dimensional space. The logic behind this system directly aligns with Descartes’ explanation of how space and time intersect in the world of our experience. He imagined a clear beginning—a fixed point in time—at which God had ordered universal space and established the temporal laws that regulate the existence

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594 Ibid.
and activity of all physical matter. This relied upon the further assumption that god’s own existence was infinite—unbound by the limits of either time or space—and propelled faith in the a priori belief that abstract ideas—or predetermined laws—fundamentally precede physical existence.

This belief became integral to modern continental philosophy, as is particularly evident in the ideas of the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who argued that pre-existing truths structure human understanding of the world. Expanding upon Descartes’ assumptions, Kant maintained that these pre-existing truths had been fixed by god—"an all-sufficient highest mind"—, who had given man the innate ability to understand the world through reason, “in order to make room for faith.” Kant proposed, in other words, that god had planned the world so that we would learn to recognize the limitations of knowledge that we can attain directly and concretely and default to faith in an unknown higher order.

Born in 1887 and trained, beginning at age thirteen, as a watch engraver and painter at the École d’Art in his birth town of La Chaux-de-Fonds, a Swiss-French border town in the Jura mountains, Le Corbusier had internalized the rationalist perspective inherent to modern continental philosophy from an early age. At the École, his studies had been deeply impressed—and redirected—by the painter Charles L’Eplattenier, who endeavored to elevate the school’s applied arts curriculum. He introduced students to the romantic theories of such late-nineteenth century thinkers as John Ruskin and encouraged the study of nature’s underlying ideal order: “Look for her causes, her formal principles, her vital development and draw out from these a

596 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B Preface, Bxx.
“synthesis,” he instructed. Inspired by L’Eplattenier’s teachings and his awe of his mountainous surroundings, Le Corbusier pursued landscape painting until L’Eplattenier deemed him, according to Le Corbusier, better suited for architecture: “I had a horror of architecture and of architects...I was sixteen,” but, “I accepted the verdict and I obeyed; I committed myself to architecture.”

Under the École’s architecture instructor, René Chapallaz, Le Corbusier learned, as Norbert Huse explains in Le Corbusier, that “buildings...arise from materials, ground plans and cross sections.” At the same time, he developed, as Le Corbusier himself claimed in Oeuvre complète 1910-1929, a “true horror of academic instruction, prescribed formulas, the a priori [order] of divine law,” and “assured [him]self of the need to reclaim [his] own personal convictions.” Reiterating the fear, skepticism, and sense of isolation and need for self-reliance that these early experiences must have instilled, Sigfried Giedion—one of Le Corbusier’s leading promoters—described him, in a 1958 German language catalogue, as “verschlossen, hart, unnahbar, alles Persönliche abwehrend, mißtrauisch wie ein Bergbauer. Niemand weiß, wer er eigentlich ist” (“closed, hard, unapproachable, defensive of everything personal, distrustful like a mountain farmer. No one knows who he actually is”).

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597 Charles L’Eplattenier, as quoted in Norbert Huse, Le Corbusier (Hamburg, Germany: Rowohlt, 1976), 9, citing a quotation from L’Art décoratif d’aujourd'hui (Paris, 1925), 198. Note: the quotation given here is an author’s translation of the German translation that is given in Huse’s text (written in German).
599 Huse, Le Corbusier, 9.
Le Corbusier left La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1907 and embarked on a self-fashioned course of academic study, becoming well-versed in the history and theory of Western architectural tradition and traveling extensively to study the monuments of the European past before arriving in Paris in 1908. There, he apprenticed, between 1908 and 1910, as a draughtsman for the French architect Auguste Perret, a pioneer and champion of reinforced concrete construction, and furthered his provincial education with courses at the École des Beaux-Arts, extensive reading, and close observation of the city’s built landscape. Developing a knowledge of engineering and classical geometry, he went to work as head draughtsman in the Berlin atelier of the German architect Peter Behrens from 1910-1911 before returning to La Chaux-de-Fonds, at L’Eplattenier’s urging, in 1913 to teach a course on “geometric elements, their character, decorative and monumental meaning, various applications to architecture, furniture and other objects (layouts, plans, sections, perspectives, etc.).” Intent on reclaiming control of his future, Le Corbusier returned to Paris in 1917 and began to formulate his own independent vision of and approach to modern architecture. Reflecting the rationalist perspective that had been so deeply instilled in him, that vision and approach centered on formulating the ultimate ideal, a priori order—or set of theories—whose perfect logic would be universally accepted as absolute truth and adopted without question.

**Gray’s Critical Perspective on Rationalism**

Gray’s approach to architecture challenged, not only Le Corbusier’s theories, but the broader rationalist perspective behind them. She recognized, as Constant explains, the limitations of tendencies that “assume[d] an attitude of detachment from

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602 Huse, *Le Corbusier*, 15 (author’s translation of course description as quoted in German).
any physical grounding in the experience of the world.” Gray was intuitively critical of rationalism because she saw that understanding—knowledge—emerges from lived experience, in a way that is simultaneously physical and intellectual. Although rationalism dominated the modernist context in which Gray and Le Corbusier worked, Gray was not alone or prophetic in this critique.

Descartes’ seventeenth-century contemporary, the English philosopher John Locke, had promoted a philosophy of empiricism that rejected the notion of innate, pre-existing truths. In contrast to Descartes’ faith in a priori ideas, Locke emphasized a posteriori knowledge—knowledge that proceeds from, or that is gained through individual experience. He argued that knowledge derives from our sensory perceptions, and promoted the value of that which we can concretely see and understand to be true—that which we learn works or doesn’t work—through our own doing and understanding. Because certain of Locke’s ideas persisted alongside Descartes’ to become intrinsic to the English Enlightenment, his thought had helped to shape, perhaps more than elsewhere, the cultural contexts across which the Irish-English Gray had been born and raised. This contributed to her hands-on approach to learning and understanding, which was not bound by rationalism’s inherent assumptions because intuitively phenomenological.

A philosophy that emerged from Germany in the early twentieth century, phenomenology was an updated empiricist critique of rationalism’s faith in the belief that a priori ideas precede experience. It began to attain widespread interest among continental philosophers, particularly in France, with the publication of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s 1927 text Sein und Zeit (which was published in English, as Being and Time, in 1962, and in a partial French translation, as Être et

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603 Constant, Eileen Gray, 93.
Temps, in 1964). While Gray never formally identified with phenomenology, and likely never read Heidegger’s text, it is useful for understanding her approach to architecture because it was in many ways a philosophical parallel to the critique that she was building in E1027.

In his text, Heidegger pointed out what he saw as rationalism’s inherently flawed reliance on a self-perpetuating history of abstract thought. He traced this history of thought to assumptions that derived from a limited understanding of Greek antiquity, when philosophers including Plato and Aristotle had begun to reflect upon the nature of “‘being’” and our experience of the world. Heidegger argued that the ancient Greek understanding of the ambiguity of the phenomena of being and experience had been “trivialized” and reduced to a series of propositions that could be objectively grasped. This reduction had proceeded through the theology of the Middle Ages to form the basis for a worldview centered on the belief that the human subject could transcend their individual sensations and deduce objective, absolute truths from a material world that was separate from the spiritual self. Heidegger argued that Descartes had modernized this worldview by propelling a separation between subject and object into the philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment. This separation extended from Descartes’ distinction between the realms of mind and matter and is exemplified by his statement “Cogito, ergo sum” (“I think, therefore I am”). Operating on the logic that thought preceded being, Descartes believed that the ability to contemplate an object separate from himself proved his own physical

604 Heidegger, Being and Time, 1.
605 Ibid.
606 Ibid., 2, 9, 21.
607 Ibid., 22-23. Note: While later written in Latin in Principles of Philosophy (1644), Descartes’ well-known phrase was actually first published in French, as “je pense, donc je suis,” in Discourse on the Method (1637).
Heidegger explained that Kant had expanded upon this subject/object separation with his notion of the “Ding an sich”—“the thing in itself”—, which proposed that things have innate properties that remain constant independent of any interaction with them. Kant theorized that we have the innate ability to understand these properties, but can never actually know the reality of the thing itself. Redolent of common interpretations of Plato’s Theory of Forms, Kant believed that everything that we perceive—all physical objects and phenomena—are just representations of a pre-determined ideal reality that we must accept as self-evident.

From these assumptions followed the nineteenth century thought of the German philosopher Georg Willhelm Friedrich Hegel, who argued that fixed universal truths could be deduced by defining things and feelings relative to what we know they are not. Heidegger explained that Hegel’s ideas helped to generate a logic of dialectical synthesis centered on using human reason to reconcile things and feelings believed to exist in fixed states of fundamental opposition. By accepting a thesis—that which is assumed to be concrete truth—and an antithesis—a critique of that assumed truth—as unquestionably defined opposites, the rational individual could locate their point of agreement to produce a synthesis—a new, presumably concrete, fact or thesis. This process made it seem possible to continually pinpoint truths that could be easily accepted to efficiently expand human knowledge and drive progress as time proceeded along a straightforward, linear course. This history of thought, Heidegger argues, laid the groundwork for modern faith in human reason and in the structure of progress-driving dialectical thought that it had produced. Embedded

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608 Ibid.
610 Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena (1783).
611 Heidegger, Being and Time, 407-408.
612 Ibid., 219-220.
within this structure was the perception that there were fundamental oppositions between subject and object, thinking and feeling, and space and time to be reconciled; if things and feelings could be accepted as having a definite and inevitable reality independent of any direct experience of them, then the space in which they are believed to exist, or to have existed, could itself be physically contained, quantified, and understood at a fixed point in time.\(^6^{13}\)

Phenomenology attempted to move beyond rationalism’s dualistic structure of thought by approaching reality and existence as manifestations of what Heidegger explained as “in-der-Welt-sein” (“being in the world”).\(^6^{14}\) It values complete sensory engagement over purely visual apprehension and an individual’s direct contact with the world and its entities themselves over abstract beliefs and representations. There are no fixed universal truths or ideas that are believed to precede phenomena and structure our understanding of the world because ideas are themselves seen as phenomena that are formulated \textit{in the process} of making and doing things. Cognizance simply unfolds with things and phenomena as they present themselves with our perceptions. Rejecting the view that space, objects and sensations can be ordered, understood, and controlled in a fixed form outside oneself, phenomenology seeks an experiential understanding of space as it takes shape in time.

E1027 reflects many ideas that overlap with phenomenology’s interests because Gray’s experiential, process-based approach to understanding had guided her in designing the home. This practical approach to understanding allowed Gray to see that no particular perspective, set of principles, or realm of culture need be viewed as having an independently fixed reality, interpreted in a single, correct way, or taken as

\(^{613}\) Ibid., 403-413.

\(^{614}\) Ibid., 111.
an autonomous whole. Rather, different experiences and ideas could complement and expand one another. Constant argues that the early twentieth-century productions of the Russian Ballet in Paris, for example, “stimulated [Gray’s] interest in liberating the sensual body in its use of space.” Gray incorporated lessons from such myriad sources as she began to design furnishings and interiors in the nineteen-teens. By the time she met Badovici, in 1921, Gray had become a well-established Parisian designer of modern furniture and apartment interiors, without ever having formally studied furniture or interior design.

When they met, Badovici was drawn to Gray’s way of thinking precisely because she was someone who had learned to be guided by her own living experience rather than by a rigidly fixed, predetermined structure of thought. This afforded Gray a perspective of relative autonomy from prescribed ideas about modern architecture and design that Badovici saw could make a relevant contribution to the modernist context that he was invested in shaping. He soon began inviting her input in writing and editing pieces for L’Architecture vivante, and encouraged her to realize her own ideas for the design of a retreat removed from the demands of Parisian life. This led to their collaboration on E1027, a project of mutual interest that, Constant argues, “fulfill[ed] Badovici’s avant-garde objectives,” while allowing Gray, “by challenging and/or working within the framework of…Modern Movement spatial devices,…to overcome the supposedly cold and inhuman qualities associated with abstract forms by engaging the subjective qualities of experience.”

Gray was not opposed to engaging contemporary theory as she formulated her experiential approach to architecture because her flexible way of thinking allowed her

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615 Constant, Eileen Gray, 23. Constant argues, e.g., that the Russian Ballet “stimulated [Gray’s] interest in liberating the sensual body in its use of space” (23; also see pp. 18-19).
616 Ibid., 11, 42, 67.
617 Ibid., 94.
to see that theory, as much as anything else, could expand and complement that approach. This is evident in E1027, which was at once: individually meaningful and distinctive; broadly applicable in its critical contributions to modern domestic space; deeply informed by cultural sources beyond the usual canon of modern architecture and design; and yet still in dialogue with the work and writings of influential contemporaries, including Le Corbusier, Adolf Loos, De Stijl, and the Munich Werkstätten. Gray was able to engage in theoretical discourse with such eclectic sources because she understood that theory itself could be useful when interpreted from a practical and experiential perspective. “[Gray’s] work,” Constant elaborates, “[wa]s consistently grounded in her conception of the modern individual as a sentient being,” yet, she equally “recognized the need to transcend the intuitive limits of her work and ground it in the intellect.”

This is exemplified by the written text of “Maison en Bord de Mer,” in which Gray directly responded to many of the principles that Le Corbusier had asserted in *Towards a New Architecture*. Underscoring Gray’s differences with Le Corbusier, the text unfolds as a dialogue between Badovici and Gray, in which Badovici invites Gray to reflect upon prevalent ideas about modern architecture through the lens of experience. Rather than attempting to prescribe a set of true and correct principles to be universally applied in a fixed form, this dialogue draws out both a specific discussion of E1027 and broader insights that Gray saw might have widespread relevance. “[P]our moi,” she explained,

...[u]ne maison type n’est...qu’une maison...dont l’architecture réalise pour une situation donnée, le maximum de perfection; c’est-à-dire qu’elle est comme un modèle qu’on devra, non pas reproduire à la l’infini, mais dont on s’inspirera pour construire dans le même esprit d’autres maisons...Il fallait se dégager d’une tendance

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618 Ibid., 7, 21, 23.
619 Ibid., 17-18.
Gray pointedly engaged Le Corbusier’s notion of an ideal house type to highlight the flawed logic inherent in that idea—standardization could not produce an ideal house type that would function optimally in response to all needs and across all contexts; the interior life that defines any dwelling is too highly particular and complex to actually work best in a single, fixed way. She saw that the architect could simply formulate his or her own ideal, without attempting to project that ideal, part and parcel, onto others. Each individual need only be freed to isolate, reflect upon, and reinterpret that which might be personally meaningful and instructive. Gray herself had applied such an approach in designing E1027—she selected, adapted, and incorporated lessons that she perceived as relevant based on her own experiences, which allowed her to negotiate her way through mainstream modernism while formulating a meaningful critique of it.

While Gray did not believe that the house as a whole could be standardized, her experience as a furniture designer, for example, had taught her that standardization could be applied to design beautiful, durable furnishings that would fulfill differing individual needs in differing contexts. Many of the pieces that she designed for E1027 were conceived to be reproduced and affordably sold, such as her “E1027 Table,” a tubular steel side table that remains in production to this day (Fig. 620).


Lightweight, portable, and adjustable in height, this piece combines refined form and industrial materials with infinite functional versatility. A cutout in its base allows for ease of use and placement at a bedside, tableside, next to a work station or pulled up close to a lounge chair. Just as easily, this single piece of furniture can be expanded and positioned to serve as a full-height standing table, around which multiple individuals might gather for conversation over morning coffee or evening cocktails.

While E1027 was under construction, Gray also designed what she referred to as a series of “‘camping’ style” pieces, which similarly responded to the need for lightweight, mobile furnishings that would serve a variety of functions while avoiding clutter. These included the “Transat Chair,” which was designed to fluidly and comfortably accommodate the changing needs, moods, and activities that might arise among multiple individuals interacting in a shared space (Fig. 55). A reinterpretation of the type of deck chair found on a transatlantic ocean liner, Gray’s “Transat Chair” is enticingly curvilinear, with soft leather-upholstery and a low sycamore wood frame finished in smooth clear lacquer. Inviting a moment of repose after working in the sun, perhaps, it has a padded pivoting headrest, which is seamlessly facilitated by nickel-plated metal joints. Recognizing the prototype’s broad appeal and relevance, Gray designed several variants of it, for use throughout the home, using different types of metal, wood, lacquer, and upholstery.

Even as Gray embraced the potential of standardization in many of her designs, her perspective on standardization was nuanced and highly discerning, and

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622 It should be noted that Constant interprets Gray’s approach to furniture as exemplifying the way that Gray critiqued the “dogma” of “pure functional[ism]” that predominated among her contemporaries and that was epitomized by Le Corbusier’s modernism (see Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 117-120).

623 Also see discussion of the versatility of Gray’s furniture designs in Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 95, 105.


625 Ibid.
she cautioned the wholesale adoption of prepackaged forms. “[T]he creations that are inspired by [the “camping” style],” she warned in “Maison en Bord de Mer,” “are undeniably precarious,” elaborating that blind obedience to any stylistic ideal “leads to an impoverishment of the inner life by suppressing all intimacy.”

Unlike Le Corbusier, Gray saw that the individual should be freed to select and use only those pieces that might expand the spaces and activities of a particular interior life—standardized forms should enhance the potential for variation within uniformity. One can easily imagine, for example, how the Transat Chair might have been positioned around the E1027 living room during social gatherings, one guest opting to comfortably recline while others danced around a record player, for which Gray designed a small rolling table that made it easily mobile (Fig. 19). Others may have relaxed on a divan built into the room’s northwest corner, where a quiet nook is distinguished from its brighter, more lively surroundings by a frame of dark tiles (Fig. 56).

Plush and inviting, the divan extends from the wall near a built-in end table, providing a place for setting down one’s spectacles or a glass. An open and integral part of the living room as a whole, this space evokes a distinct sense of intimacy within it while welcoming any visitor to feel at home in a space of repose and relaxed gathering. Wide and low with a padded backrest, the divan has soft, deep-blue cushions that Gray designed, like the home’s free-standing furnishings, to be easily removed and repositioned as needed. They might have flexibly provided additional floor seating or bedding for overnight guests, or, on hot afternoons, have been set near the open terrace so that sea breezes and the sound of crashing waves could provoke feelings of coolness. On rainy days or chilly evenings, they might have been oriented

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626 Ibid.
around the low fireplace built into the room’s south wall, where it could radiate warmth alongside the terrace doors and provide gentle illumination after dark or when the curtains were drawn.

It is clear that, as Gray became personally and experientially immersed in every aspect of E1027’s realization, she became increasingly perceptive of the ways in which, in order to function optimally, any individual dwelling must itself accommodate multiple individual perspectives. This led her particularly to rethink Le Corbusier’s insistence on “the necessity for order.” From Le Corbusier’s perspective, this meant that a predetermined arrangement of universally perfect forms must dictate the activities of every individual’s life. Gray believed that such illusions of formal objectivity overlook the intricacies of how each individual engages with their surroundings and understands order. “[E]veryone,” she argued,

..even in a house of restricted dimensions, must be able to remain free and independent…It is by interpreting the desires, passions, and tastes of the individual that one will best interpret social life and collective order.”

For this reason, Gray had designed E1027 with pointed consideration for the multiple perspectives from which its spaces might open and unfold.

This is demonstrated in Gray’s plan diagram for the home, which modifies the conventional floor plan by depicting two possible patterns of human movement through the home’s spaces during the course of a day (Fig. 57). She used dotted lines to project how a guest or the housekeeper might move through the home, and solid lines to project the movements of herself or Badovici. Because the usual

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629 Caroline Constant explains that Gray’s plan diagram was meant to distinguish her own circulation paths, indicated by solid lines, from those of the housekeeper, indicated by dotted lines, with hatched lines representing the daily course of the sun (Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 114-115). Expanding this understanding of Gray’s planning approach, the home itself demonstrates that she more intricately choreographed its spaces to accommodate visitors and guests in the areas to the west, and the movement of two inhabitants—presumably herself and Badovici—throughout the home.
630 Ibid.
depiction of a building’s footprint is replaced with a network of overlapping lines, Gray’s web-like plan at first appears erratic. Though it is difficult to read when viewed on its own, as you continue to move through the home, you see that it was generated by a logic that is wholly systematic.

Gray’s plan diagram further demonstrates that she had designed E1027 with equal consideration for how the spaces and activities of daily life might unfold in harmony with the daily course of the sun, which she represented with a sequence of hatched lines (Fig. 57). She oriented the home’s south terrace, for example, slightly toward the east, so that the rising sun could moderate the brisk sea air of early morning (Fig. 58). This allows sunlight to then slowly filter through the terrace’s floor-to-ceiling windows and into the living room to warm its floor tiles and illuminate its textures (Fig. 59). At the same time, sunlight trickles into the bedroom through the tree-shaded east wall windows to quietly brighten the space around the dressing table and sink. As it stretches toward the low bed, which retreats into the room’s northwest corner, a sleeping inhabitant might stir and rise toward the seaside windows (Figs. 60 & 61). Should she draw the curtains apart and collapse the windows fully, the bedroom would be thrown open to emerge within the site. Or, she might step out onto a small balcony that opens, just beyond the dressing area and discretely partitioned by it, in the room’s far southeast corner, allowing herself to simply stand suspended in the open air (Fig. 62).

Much as she recognized that individual and collective spaces and activities could variably coincide and unfold separately but simultaneously, Gray saw that interior and exterior life could emerge freely and logically in relation to one another. As she elaborated, “[t]he terrace adjoining the large room,” for example,

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serves as an extension to that space when the window panels are folded up against the pillars. On this terrace, which gently slopes toward the interior, the fleeting patterns of sun and shadow play freely about, and the breeze flows in from the far horizon. It is a preferred location where one can, according to the hour and the mood of the weather, either hide from or stretch out in the full sun.  

Unlike Le Corbusier, Gray saw that there was no need to collapse differences between function and form, interior and exterior, and individual and collective life by outwardly imposing her own ideal structural order on domestic space. “Ce qu’il faut c’est donner à la objet,” she explained, “la forme qui convient le mieux au geste spontané ou au réflexe instinctif auxquels il correspond par sa destination” (“What is necessary is to give the object the form that is most suited to the spontaneous gesture or instinctive reflex that corresponds to its destination”). Gray understood that it was possible to design a home whose form—order—could flexibly unfold in response to whatever particular needs and conditions might arise. One need only take time to consider the unique combination of living activities and experiences that might shape the spaces of any individual dwelling in a given moment. Gray had therefore conceived E1027 such that each individual could “have the impression of being alone, and if desired, entirely alone,” and very deliberately “obstruct[ed] views that might penetrate from the exterior to the interior.” At E1027, there is always space for interior reflection because there is always room for direct and open communication with one’s surroundings. And yet, nowhere does an individual feel either encroached upon or like an outsider looking in; comfortable and welcoming to visitors, the home is perfectly suited to both social gatherings and longer-term visitors while always preserving each individual’s ability for quiet and retreat.

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633 Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer,” L’architecture vivante (Winter 1929). (Author’s Translation)
Le Corbusier’s Ideal of Transparency

Conversely, at the Villa Savoye, the individual is consistently preoccupied by views outside oneself. This is because, while Gray acknowledged the need for interior reflection—the need to at times isolate ourselves and embrace our own unique perceptions—Le Corbusier projected onto the house an ideal of transparency—the illusion that we are capable of transcending our individual perspectives to view the surrounding world with absolute objective clarity. The Villa Savoye’s ribbon windows visually dissolve the appearance of a solid structural enclosure to create the illusion that we can penetrate the surface and capture the reality on either side of the glass.

In Privacy and Publicity, Colomina relates Le Corbusier’s compulsion for transparency to a “voyeuristic” spatial narrative, arguing that he treated the house as a camera whose window functioned as its lens. Colomina explains that the Villa Savoye’s ribbon windows act as “frames for [ordering the outside] view” as they arrange the exterior landscape into a sequence of images to be looked at like a series of photographs or film stills (Fig. 63). The inhabitant’s gaze is directed toward perfectly ordered views of a surrounding world from which she, as much as the house itself, stands physically detached. Like a camera, which can be transported to photograph any place, for Le Corbusier the house was a machine that could be transported to any place to frame and order views of an outside world.

At the same time, the inhabitant everywhere senses the unsettling gaze of an unknown observer. Colomina argues that this is because Le Corbusier treated the house as both a camera and as a series of scenes to be photographically framed and

636 Ibid., 283.
637 Ibid., 311-312.
viewed objectively. Colomina cites Le Corbusier’s own photographs of his houses and stills from his 1929 film, *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, to illustrate her point. The photographs depict a series of interiors that have been staged with things like open doors, pots of coffee, or a partially-sliced loaf of bread to create the sense that we are following someone who, never pictured, seems to have always just left the room (Fig. 64).  

Similarly, in a still from *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, we follow a woman moving up the Villa Savoye’s central ramp as she, looking away from the camera, is followed by a gaze that she never returns (Fig. 65).  

Colomina argues that this is the gaze of the “absent photographer”—Le Corbusier himself—, who had designed the Villa Savoye such that it could be staged as a sequence of photographs to be visually inhabited by an outside observer. The Villa Savoye’s spaces are not actual spaces in which to dwell, but photographic illusions of spaces of transparency.

The photograph, of course, is always a self-reflection; the glass lens of the camera, as Colomina reminds us, “functions as a mirror when the camera is lit.” Colomina concludes that Le Corbusier’s photographs reflect his own voyeuristic gaze, which he exerted to visually objectify, order, and control a series of abstract surroundings. A closer look reveals that Le Corbusier’s photographs equally reflect a compulsion to control the real space of individual experience.

In a modernist context in which photographs were powerful mechanisms of advertisement, Le Corbusier saw that they could be used to promote his avant-garde theories by controlling the *perceptions* of a public who had not experienced his work in person. This expands our understanding of Le Corbusier’s pointed efforts to

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638 Ibid.
639 Ibid., 293.
640 Ibid.
641 Ibid.
642 Ibid., 113, 117.
represent temporality in his photographs—by effecting the sense that someone has moved through the pictured spaces, the images blur the line between static visual representation and the living reality of experience. Yet, Le Corbusier had very deliberately composed, ordered, and edited these scenes to direct the viewer to experience his houses in a single, fixed way that had no basis in physical reality. This is most clear in *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, which splices scenes from multiple houses into a cohesive visual narrative. The film opens, for example, with Le Corbusier leading the viewer to and through, not the Villa Savoye, but the Villa Garches, climbing its central staircase as if he is presenting its spaces in a continuous, objective sequence. In reality, Le Corbusier used the photograph to control the surrounding world by projecting his own ideal order onto interior life.\(^{643}\)

It is therefore no coincidence that Le Corbusier’s photographs of his houses are also perfect representations of the ideal structural order that he had outlined in *Towards a New Architecture*. His photographs of interiors, for instance, emphasize bare, white walls and ribbon-window-framed views to the outside (Fig. 64). The most important “architectural elements of the interior,” he had professed, “are vertical walls…in full brilliant light…Light is intense when it falls between walls which reflect it.”\(^{644}\) Critiquing the dwelling whose “walls are a riot of all manner of things,” Le Corbusier maintained that ornament must be minimal so that “the elements of the site itself [could] come into play by virtue of their cubic volume, their density and the quality of the material of which they are composed, bringing sensations which are very definite…both to the eye and to the mind…”\(^{645}\)

\(^{643}\) Ibid.
\(^{644}\) Ibid., 185.
up,” he elaborated, “like the walls of a room,” while the structure’s windows “contract this vision like the lens of a camera.”

In “Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias” (1967), Michel Foucault provides further insight on the manner in which the camera lens—or window—is analogous to a mirror. Foucault interprets the mirror as the point of convergence between utopia, which he defines as “unreal space…that ha[s] a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society,” and heterotopia, which he defines as “real [space]-a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which…all the other real sites…are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” The mirror is a placeless, virtual place, yet it directs one’s gaze back toward oneself; back toward the real space that one inhabits.

What Le Corbusier’s photographs most reveal is that, for him, the line between utopia—unreal, perfectly envisioned space—and heterotopia—the real space of experience—, was fundamentally blurred. He actually understood the house as a purely representational form. As Colomina notes, for Le Corbusier, “the house [was] immaterial”; he believed that “‘Architecture is made in the head,’ then drawn.” More precisely, for Le Corbusier, the house’s primary function was to represent a preconceived ideal order that he had conceptualized—abstracted—from what he took to be the ideal order of nature itself. And he accepted nature’s own ideal order as having been determined by a set of intrinsic universal laws that every human being was capable of understanding through sight alone. Le Corbusier viewed the house, in other words, as a purely representational form because he viewed the world itself as

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646 Ibid., 192, 184.
647 Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias (1967),” Translated by Jay Miskowiec, in Diacritics 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27.
648 Ibid.
649 Ibid.
650 Colomina, Privacy and Publicity, 312, 314.
structural, material, and purely representational; it was made up of ideal forms—fixed three-dimensional objects with static, inherent properties. This of course relied upon the deeper assumption that these forms existed in a universal space that had been circumscribed by a perfect geometric structure and ordered to adhere to a fixed plan. For Le Corbusier, it was easier to accept this assumption than to acknowledge an alternative—that space as much as its inhabitants might be generating their own structural order as they manifest in time.

As a rationalist, Le Corbusier necessarily projected his preconceptions onto the world of experience. “In considering the effect of buildings in relation to a site,” he insisted, “here too the exterior is always [the result of] an interior.” 651 Le Corbusier even used the house’s roof terrace as a mechanism with which to select, control, and fix the way an inhabitant experienced their surroundings. This is evident at the Villa Savoye, where the rooftop garden’s elliptical enclosing wall is punctured by a wide window-like opening that frames a snapshot-like scene of the landscape below (Fig. 66). “[A] man,” Le Corbusier reasoned, “has only two eyes at a level of about 5 feet 6 inches above the ground, and can only look at one point at a time.” 652

From Le Corbusier’s perspective, space had to be visually ordered and captured at a fixed point in time because there was no other way to logically understand it. “The human eye,” he argued, “in its investigations, is always on the move and the beholder himself is always turning right and left, and shifting about...[B]eauty can only come when [one’s surroundings] are brought into order.” 653 And yet, paradoxically, Le Corbusier’s compulsion to fix, frame, and order space suggests that he was not actually blind to the unsettling reality that we simply cannot

652 Ibid., 197.
653 Ibid., 191, 193.
see, delineate, or know the boundaries of the worldspace that we inhabit. Rather, his compulsion for order was a direct and concrete reflection of his reaction to that unsettling reality—it was his way of trying to regain control. Le Corbusier’s perspective on space is epitomized by the Cabanon that he built for himself overlooking E1027 (Fig. 67). A tiny square hut pierced by small window openings, it is, as Colomina argues in “Battle Lines: E.1027,” a built simulacrum of a camera obscura.654 Safely isolated inside it, Le Corbusier attempted, by looking out, to rationally understand, independently control, and fix the view of the space on the other side of the window, or lens (Figs. 68 & 69).

Even if Le Corbusier, in one sense, succeeded in imposing his own views on E1027 and its site, he never escaped the reality that Gray’s villa is impossible to grasp in photographs (Fig. 70). The home’s spaces continually shift—and can only be understood—as you move through them in time. This had tormented Le Corbusier for nearly two decades before he built his Cabanon, and had first compelled him to attempt to regain control in the clearest way he could envision: by imposing order—which he equated with synthesis—on his surroundings. Frustrated with the inability to understand how E1027 worked from the exterior, he vandalized the villa’s white interior walls, claiming afterwards that “the walls chosen to receive nine large paintings were the most colorless and insignificant.”655 This was a rationalization that Le Corbusier issued to justify his large, disturbing murals. Yet, like the murals themselves, it directly contradicted his own directives on the necessarily minimal place of ornament in the ideal functional dwelling.

655 Constant, Eileen Gray, 122.
Le Corbusier had argued that the form of the ideal house must derive exclusively from primary geometric shapes, mathematical proportions, and unornamented building materials, which would restore a sense of functional purity to modern life and domestic architecture. “Demand bare walls,” he directed, “in your bedroom, your living room and your dining-room,” for a “house is only habitable when it is full of light and air, and when the floors and walls are clear.” Rephrasing and, quite intentionally, critically misinterpreting Adolf Loos’s essay “Ornament and Crime,” which was first published in French as “Ornement et crime” in 1913, he condemned “the follies of ‘Peasant Art’” as “an offence,” explaining, “[d]ecoration is of a sensorial and elementary order, as is colour…Harmony and proportion incite the intellectual faculties and arrest the man of culture.” He maintained that the only permissible formal compositions were those that served a clear visual function and that were read in the correct light, arguing,

*Pictures are made to be looked at and meditated on.* In order to see a picture to advantage, it must be hung suitably and in the proper atmosphere. The true collector of pictures arranges them in a cabinet and hangs on the wall the particular painting he wants to look at.

Paradoxically, Le Corbusier’s own compulsion for order had driven him to violate these principles and pervert the formal harmony of Gray’s fully functional design; he had given in to “a furious desire to dirty the walls” of Gray’s villa—a desire of which he had written to Badovici in August of 1939, before he returned to E1027 and completed his *Graffite.* In 1948, Le Corbusier tried again to reconcile his offenses, backhandedly conceding, “This villa that I animated with my paintings was very

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657 Ibid., 91, 143.
658 Ibid., 120.
beautiful, white on the interior, and it could have managed without my talents.” But Le Corbusier remained trapped in a web of self-contradictions and his obsession with E1027 persisted to the day he died.

**E1027 as a Site for Reflection**

Despite Le Corbusier’s refusal to admit that what really troubled him about Gray’s villa was his inability to understand it, Gray’s approach to architecture reflected a worldview that was perfectly logical. She understood that space does not exist in a fixed form, and cannot be apprehended in a universal way through sight alone. Rather, space emerges and shifts through multi-sensory experience, in ways that are highly particular and different for each individual. Later in life, Gray summarized this understanding in a letter to her niece, the English painter Prunella Clough, writing,

> Was so glad to have your letter—it brought back all the atmosphere—always wanting to get out & the feeling of frustration—Pictures don’t satisfy in those surroundings as the enchanted villas with their terraces…The orange blossom, the sudden rift in the cypruses & those little blue hills radiating that interior light.

Deeply attuned to the limitations of purely visual perception, Gray made no attempt to capture E1027’s spaces in an objective, pictorial way when the villa was featured in *L’Architecture vivante*—which, much like *Towards a New Architecture*, relied upon images and text to communicate built works. Instead, she embraced the home and site’s defiance of outward visual comprehension, and used the photograph to complement both the text of “Maison en Bord de Mer” and the living reality of E1027 itself. Contributing to a compositional whole that is both analogous to and the

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660 Ibid., 122, 362.  
661 Letter from Eileen Gray to Prunella Clough, National Museum of Ireland, Eileen Gray Archival Collection, Art and Industrial Division, NMIEG 2003.1760.1 (note: this letter is undated, but based on numerous other letters exchanged between Gray and Clough, it likely dates to sometime around the early 1970s).
complete inverse of *Towards a New Architecture*, Gray’s photographs help to isolate forms and fragments that might provoke an individual to become immersed in their own interior experience.

Gray pictured, for example, E1027’s “shuttered windows,” explaining that they were conceived such that “light and air can be regulated at will, as with the shutter of a camera” (Fig. 71). While Le Corbusier equated the window with a camera lens, using it to create an illusion of transparency and project his own formal ideals onto interior life, Gray saw the window as analogous to a camera’s shutter—it was an interactive tool that allowed the individual to personally reflect upon a particular site’s shifting, multi-sensory integration into the spaces and activities of daily life. E1027’s windows, which adopted a design by Badovici, have panes that collapse and fold and shutters that pivot and slide. Gray dressed them with fabrics of varying weight, texture, and color, exploring ways to enhance the individual’s ability to compose spaces that respond as much to changing needs, moods, and activities as to the shifting nature of atmospheric conditions (Fig. 72). The individual does not simply stand inside the home and look out at removed surroundings, but is invited to directly and flexibly engage with the home and site as they unfold in a mutual relationship, variably opening and closing the curtains, panes, and shutters to invite sounds, scents, air, and views into the home in an endlessly fluctuating arrangement. “The truly civilized man,” Gray explained, “requires a certain formal elegance: he knows the propriety of certain gestures; he needs to be able to isolate himself.”

At E1027, the inhabitant is not put on display, but becomes integral to the home’s spaces, as much a part of their character as the shutters, curtains, and panes.

662 Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer,” in Constant, *Eileen Gray*, 243. Note: the design of the windows has been attributed to, and was patented by, Jean Badovici.
663 Ibid., 241.
that respond to each subtle fluctuation of light, movement, and atmospheric condition. This generates a continually-shifting order of fluid, multi-sensory reflections as fleeting fragments—auditory, olfactory, haptic, and visual—of, not just the surrounding land and seascape, but also the surrounding activity, are projected into the experience of the space as it is reflected back upon itself. The effect collectively heightens your awareness that multiple perspectives always coexist to define any given space at any given moment in time (Fig. 73).

As sounds, scents, air, and sights from the outdoors enter the interior, you begin to see that an individual on either side of any window is neither inside nor outside the home, but part of both at once. You then see that the home itself exists neither inside nor outside the site, but mediates between these realms as they manifest in relation to one another. As the inside becomes part of an outside that infinitely expands from while collapsing back upon the space that you inhabit, the life of the home dissipates into a larger temporal order.

This effect is enhanced by the seaside terrace (Fig. 74). Obliquely oriented toward an undefined horizon, this terrace does not frame any prescribed sequence of landscape views, but rather, invites you to directly encounter the surroundings in which you are immersed. Your attention might turn toward a fog-immersed mountain in the distance, or settle on the sea and an arrangement of large rocks that punctuate its expanse (Fig. 75). Pausing here, you might find yourself isolated as you reflect upon the breezes, scents, rhythms, and silhouettes that variably permeate the home’s interior life. You might ponder the unseen depth to which nature’s forms, even when not visible, are always integral to the space that you inhabit.

While Le Corbusier projected onto the individual his own compulsion to order and understand space as an arrangement of fixed, objective forms, Gray saw every
form as a site for individual reflection upon a lived reality that is never independently fixed, exclusively material, or purely visual. This is exemplified by her 1950 photograph, *Bois pétifié* or *Petrified Wood*, which depicts a tree that has been transformed into a stone replica of itself through a process that has slowly unfolded, and that will continue to unfold, over a course of centuries (Fig. 76). While the petrified tree pours out into the foreground to collapse into your space, a severed tree limb directs attention across an open seascape and out beyond the horizon. The composition evokes sounds, scents, breezes, and textures, conjuring you into a mutually-generated space while provoking contemplation of its simultaneous suspension and projection in open-ended time.

Seeing that the photograph need not function as an exclusively visual mechanism, Gray approached it like the window or terrace—as one among many elements that might provoke the individual to reflect upon time and space beyond herself while becoming immersed in an interior experience. This perspective applied equally to every formal composition that Gray designed for E1027. For the home’s living room, for example, she designed two plush floor rugs that soften the cool, hard texture of the tile floor while conjuring two contrasting themes that are integral to the home—the “Centimetre Rug” embroidered with the number “10,” a reference to the first name of the architect and engineer Jean Badovici, and a circular rug whose design evokes the arc of the sun’s path rising and setting over the sea. The only wall hanging that she installed in the home is a large living room mural that extends an “Invitation Au Voyage” (‘Invitation to Travel’) (Fig. 77). Positioned alongside the living room’s north wall windows and across from the terrace, this mural gives a partial rendering of the Atlantic Ocean in the form of a maritime map that extends across and beyond the confines of a rectilinear grid, and has a projecting tubular light
fixture that illuminates a narrow mirror. The composition invites you to see that, the more you allow your assumptions and expectations to dissolve, the more your interior perspective expands to afford infinite potential for physical and intellectual engagement with your surroundings.

Gray saw that any composition of forms—visual, linguistic and built forms as much as those that are naturally-generated—comes together in highly particular ways to shape and color the spaces in which we live. This led her to question the ideals of functional purity that variably predominated among her avant-garde contemporaries, whose “excès d’intellectualité” (“excessive intellectualism”) and “volonté de précision rigide leur a fait négliger la beauté de toutes ces formes” (“desire for strict precision ha[d] made them neglect the beauty inherent to all forms”).664 “L’art,” Gray argued,

…n’est pas dans l’expression de rapports abstraits; il doit enfermer aussi l’expression des rapports les plus concrets, des exigences les plus secrètes de la vie subjective…[C]omment parvenir à un tel résultat…sans tenir compte de se besoin qu’ont les hommes, de retrouver aux lieux qu’ils habitent, certaines caractères qui expriment leur personnalité particulière et leurs goût propres?665

(“Art is not just the expression of abstract relationships; it must also encapsulate the most concrete relations, the most intimate needs of subjective life…How can we achieve such a result…if we don’t take into account the need that humans have to discover in the places that they inhabit certain characters that express their individual personalities and their own experiences?”)666

Gray’s statements help to explain the fundamental difference between her experiential approach to architecture and the rational approach that Le Corbusier’s modernism exemplified. Le Corbusier viewed all forms—including the house—as inanimate objects that exist in fixed material states and function in fixed ways, independent of the specific acting, thinking human subjects who perceive and use them. Gray saw

664 Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer;” excerpts from original French published in L’architecture vivante (Winter 1929) and translation printed in Constant, Eileen Gray, 239.
666 Gray, “Maison en Bord de Mer,” in Constant, Eileen Gray, 239-240
that this perspective overlooks the necessarily interdependent process by which any form—and our individual perceptions of, reactions to, and engagement with it—is generated. “A house,” she argued,

…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.667

For Gray, the house was not an autonomously functioning formal object; it was a dwelling—a living composition that she saw as being defined by the particular combination of entities, activities, environs, and human inhabitants that together generate any space.

The distinction between Gray’s and Le Corbusier’s understandings of the house is consistent with a distinction between phenomenological and rational perspectives on space that Heidegger later identified in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954). In that essay, Heidegger distinguished between the abstract Cartesian notion of vacant, autonomous space (spatium) and inhabited space (raum) to argue that space, the physical and intellectual boundaries that we build to mark out places within it, and the experiences that make those places real together produce dwelling (wohnen), “the relationship between man and space.”668 Rejecting the view that there is a fundamental opposition between a thinking, feeling human subject and inanimate, objective space to be reconciled, Heidegger defined dwelling as the temporal activity of building the spaces that we inhabit through experience. Similarly, Gray intuitively saw that “[o]ne must build for the human being, that he might rediscover in the architectural construction the joys of self-fulfillment in a whole that extends and completes him” [emphases added].669

667 Ibid., 118.
Gray understood that space has no fixed, independent existence because any space is a collaboratively generated, continually evolving, living environment that emerges with the activity of dwelling—space is itself continually being formed as it manifests and becomes perceptible to us through living processes that occur in time. And she saw that those living processes are never exclusively defined, controlled, or activated by human inhabitants—the space with which we dwell equally activates and shapes us; we are as much physical, intellectual and spiritual manifestations of our dwelling space as we are active agents in it. This perspective is integral to E1027, where every entity and phenomenon is an integrated part of the living activity that defines the home’s spaces as they unfold and shift in time.

**Part Three: Gray’s Urushi Training**

Gray’s attentiveness to the phenomenology of how space unfolds with the activity of dwelling was grounded in her awareness that all realities and perceptions are temporal and collaborative. This awareness derived from Gray’s embodied experience with the handcraft practice of Japanese lacquerwork, which is known in Japanese as *urushi*, a term that refers to the medium, process, and product of the practice. Constant argues that this “direct experience with the craft of lacquer production” was among the influences that were formative for the qualities of “sensuality, grounding in bodily interaction, and subordination of each element to the expression of the whole” that can be seen as characterizing Gray’s distinctive “contribution to Modern Movement discourse.” In order to appreciate the depths to which Gray’s experience as an *urushi* practitioner was given outward expression in E1027, it is necessary to further reflect upon the interior intricacies that Gray

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cultivated through this medium during the vital period in her development as a designer and architect.

Gray had learned *urushi* under the Japanese master Sugawara Seizô (1884-1937), with whom she rigorously trained, collaborated, and intermittently lived between 1906 and 1930 (Fig. 78). Labor-intensive, precise, and highly toxic, the practice relies upon the volatile, slow-hardening *urushi* resin, which is sourced from the sap of the *urushi* (lacquer) tree. In its most basic form, it involves mixing this resin with stones that have been ground into a fine powder to create a mixture that will be applied in thin layers to a smoothed wood surface covered in silk and rice gum paste.\(^{671}\) Twenty to thirty coats of the mixture must be applied to each side, each coat allowed to harden for two to four days in a dust-free, humid environment before being polished to a smooth finish.\(^{672}\) The results vary widely in texture and character, responding, not only to temporal conditions, but also to the specific types of stone and wood used, the manner in which the materials are prepared, the proportions in which they have been blended, and the tools and technique of the practitioner.

This same process must be applied to every component of a given composition—for example, to every panel of a folding screen. No matter how seemingly simple or complex, each composition is a highly singular, unified whole whose form is determined by the particular way that individual components come together at every step: from the smoothness of a bare wooden surface, to how the shape of a given vessel receives resin and pigment, to how finely ground a powder is; from the coarseness of a polishing stone, to the size and shape of a brush and the quality of its fibers, to how comfortably a wooden spatula has been molded to fit a

\(^{671}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{672}\) Ibid.
particular practitioner’s hand. The unique qualities of each entity involved in the process impact how it will contribute in a precise way to the creation of a piece—whether a bowl, utensil, or partitioning screen—that is crafted to meet a specific need, for a specific user, in a specific context. Impossible to grasp in a fixed state, each composition is a highly tactile work that varies in texture, durability, luster, opacity, reflectivity, and nuances of color. These qualities make the medium both highly responsive to and a formative part of its spatial environment. Always individual and yet never independently fixed or defined, any given composition will continually change over time as it interacts with heat, light, air, moisture, its user and its contents.

In use as much as production, *urushi* is an intrinsically process-centered medium that might be seen as collapsing superficial distinctions between form and function, interior and exterior, individual and collective, subject and object, thinking and feeling, and space and time while rendering purely visual comprehension unfeasible. In his 1933 essay, “In Praise of Shadows,” the Japanese author Tanizaki Jun’ichirō conjured its effect by describing the sensations involved in drinking from an *urushi* soup bowl:

I know few greater pleasures than holding a lacquer soup bowl in my hands, feeling upon my palms the weight of the liquid and its mild warmth…Remove the lid from a ceramic bowl, and there lies the soup, every nuance of its substance and color revealed. With lacquer ware there is a beauty in that moment between removing the lid and lifting the bowl to the mouth when one gazes at the still, silent liquid in the dark depths of the bowl, its color hardly differing from that of the bowl itself. What lies within the darkness one cannot distinguish, but the palm senses the gentle movements of the liquid, vapor rises from within forming droplets on the rim, and the fragrance carried upon the vapor brings a delicate anticipation. What a world of difference there is between this moment and the moment when soup is served Western style, in a pale, shallow bowl. A moment of mystery, it might almost be called, a moment of trance.673

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Commonly used for domestic implements, utensils, and furnishings, *urushi* exemplifies a Japanese approach to understanding that has no exact counterpart in European tradition. Wholly engaging, it forces a complete abandonment of rational thought and visual expectation as you become immersed in a reality that only manifests through the senses in time. It has no form that can be visually comprehended or physically grasped because its form emerges and shifts with your own perceptions. Understanding occurs as the bowl takes shape with its user, contents, and environment in an experience that is simultaneously spatial and temporal, deeply personal and yet impossible to independently produce. Unfolding with your own cognizance to unseen depths, each encounter with *urushi* provokes you to reflect upon the always-still-unseen depth of that which unfolds beyond yourself. It conjures the effect of gazing out into the unknown darkness of a space whose suspension in time cannot be grasped.

**Gray’s Exposure and Receptivity to Urushi**

Gray had become interested in Japanese domestic culture around the turn of the twentieth century, as it was being broadly introduced to the West following the 1868 Meiji Restoration. In this context, a newly modernizing Japan was defining and exporting traditions that had been cultivated during its two-and-a-half-century isolation under the Tokugawa Shogunate. This propelled, on one hand, the widespread imitation and collection of Japanese arts, which many Europeans and Americans embraced as fashionable for their novelty and formal simplicity. Gray, however, was among those who developed a deeper interest in Japanese culture, and chose to engage in the lifelong pursuit of a highly demanding Japanese craft that, in Japan, was practiced almost exclusively by men. That Gray earnestly pursued *urushi*, which set
her apart from others who were primarily interested in imitating its appearance, reflects the extent to which her particular combination of early life experiences had afforded her, not only exposure to Japanese art, but a unique receptivity to the perspectives behind it.

*Early Life: Ireland and England*

Born into an elite family in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland on 9 August 1878, Gray’s own domestic background made her critical of what she saw as the modern individual’s concern for appearances. The daughter of a socially-defiant union between an aristocratic Irish mother and a middle-class English father who was a free-spirited painter, she had grown up living between the family’s homes two homes, which were located at 14 Boltons in South Kensington, London, and at the Brownswood Estate, in a remote part of southeast Ireland.674 She spent most of her early life at the sprawling 150-acre Irish estate, which was bisected by the River Slaney and surrounded by the Blackstairs mountains (Fig. 79).675 Sited within a lush, varied landscape with a mutable climate, it included extensive gardens, agricultural lands, hunting and strolling grounds. Early photographs and notes demonstrate that these conditions instilled in Gray a deep appreciation for and attunement to her environs, documenting her sensitivity to “the cold wet weather,” love of the outdoors, and peaceful memories of “long sunny summer” days spent “picking great branches of flowering bushes for the house” and boating on the river.676

At the same time, Gray was already formulating a critical understanding of domestic space. In 1888, her parents divorced and, shortly after, between 1889 and

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675 Ibid., 27-28.
676 Ibid., 24.
1896, the family’s Brownswood house, which had been an early-nineteenth-century Georgian manor passed down from Gray’s grandfather, was remodeled in the fashionable Elizabethan style (Fig. 80). From an early age, Gray lamented the redevelopment and kept two photographs throughout her life: one preserving the simple dignity of the family’s original five-bay, two-story brick home with its wide hipped roof, and another depicting the structure’s reinvention in what Gray saw as an “unimaginative,” pretentious display (Figs. 79 & 80).

Before Gray’s parents divorced, the family had also traveled extensively, to destinations that included Genoa, Milan, Nice, Paris, the Alps, Egypt and the Americas. The youngest of five children, Gray had often accompanied her father on painting trips throughout Germany, Italy and Switzerland. With her mother, she made frequent trips to the Irish capital of Dublin, where she may have been first introduced to Japanese art. Ireland, which was ruled as part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 1801 until it declared independence in 1922, provided a rich climate for the study of Japanese culture, perhaps because it reflected a sense of autonomy from the dominant English cultural framework. Between 1879 and 1897, the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin acquired and displayed a growing collection of Japanese art, decorative objects, and lacquer ware. Though it is unclear if Gray visited the collection, her early travels certainly afforded her an openness to diverse environments and cultural perspectives that heightened as she spent time living at finishing school in Dresden and at the family’s London home.

677 Ibid., 27.
678 Ibid.
679 Ibid., 23-24. As Goff notes, the family’s activities and dynamic changed with the separation of Gray’s parents in 1888.
681 Ibid.
682 Goff, Eileen Gray, 23.
There, Gray likely visited the Japanese collections that had begun to appear in
London as early as the 1850s, as England joined in the United States’ efforts to re-
open Japan to the West.\textsuperscript{683} The Victoria and Albert Museum (then the Museum of
Ornamental Art), for example, began accumulating Japanese collections in 1852, and
a substantial display of Japanese works was separately imported and prepared for the
1862 London International Exhibition.\textsuperscript{684} As England was experiencing the effects of
a process of industrialization that had begun in the 1740s, these collections became of
particular interest for artists and thinkers seeking to recover pre-modern handcraft
traditions in the face of mass production. From the mid-nineteenth century onward,
the artistic merits of Japan’s pre-industrial craft culture were especially promoted
within the developing Arts and Crafts Movement, which emerged out of the theorist
John Ruskin’s and designer William Morris’ efforts to introduce social and artistic
reform by applying lessons from the medieval past. In this context, enthusiasm for the
London International Exhibition’s Japanese display led to the establishment in 1863
of a permanent “Japanese Court,” at London’s South Kensington Museum, to
encourage the study of Japanese arts, crafts, and furnishings.\textsuperscript{685} Popular among
English architects, designers, artists and the elite public, the collection was already
familiar to Gray when she moved to London in 1900 and, as Ruth Starr explains in
“Influences Extrême-Orientales” (“Far Eastern Influences”), began to frequent it
while a young art student at London’s Slade School.\textsuperscript{686}

\textsuperscript{683} Starr, “Influences Extrême-Orientales,” in Pitiot, ed., \textit{Eileen Gray}, 39. For further discussion of
Gray’s exposure to these collections and growing interest in Japanese lacquer, see Caroline Constant,
\textit{Eileen Gray}, 23.

\textsuperscript{684} In light of the contact with and interest in Japan that was initiated in 1848, the museum purchased
small collections of Japanese lacquerware, porcelain, and decorative arts objects in 1852 and 1854.


\textsuperscript{686} Ibid., 32, 39.
The 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle: Crafting L’Histoire de l’art du Japon

Gray had decided to pursue training in the arts and had enrolled at the Slade School in 1900, after having attended the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. Starr argues that the Paris exposition had been particularly formative for the then-22-year-old Gray because it had provoked her interest in Japanese lacquer.687 The exposition had also afforded Gray her first extensive experience with Japanese culture.

It featured a 3,212-square-foot Japanese section that encompassed displays of artworks, crafts, sculpture, furnishings, domestic implements, and architecture. Lacquerwork, woodwork, and metalwork were prominently showcased, with many works that exemplified how these media and practices are often co-integrated in examples ranging from individual utensils to entire buildings. The displays at the same time demonstrated how any individual work operates as part of an always-larger spatial context. These displays unfolded among five structures that were prefabricated in Japan and reassembled under the French architects Ch. Régnier and J. Petitgrand within a Japanese garden at the Trocadéro Park: a replica of the Kondo from the Buddhist temple of Hōryūji at Nara, a bazaar, an arts pavilion, a sake pavilion, and a tea house (Figs. 81 & 82).688

Japan’s Commission Impériale à l’Exposition Universelle de Paris also published an exhaustive, 272-page French language text, titled Histoire de l’art du Japon (1900), to coincide with the exposition (Fig. 83).689 This text established a history of Japanese art while introducing a predominantly French audience to its

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687 Ibid.
689 The text included numerous additional unnumbered pages with plates illustrating the themes and works discussed.
distinctive qualities. In an opening chapter emphasizing the “Caractère particulier de l'Art japonais” (“Particular character of Japanese art”), it explained,

L'art Japonais s'est développé sous l'influence d'un terroir, d'un milieu, d'un peuple et d'une civilisation à part. En même temps qu'il était pourvu d'une tendance générale déterminée fatalement dès son origine, il lui est arrivé d'acquérir un caractère tout particulier grâce à une série de conditions venues de l'extérieur, de l'intérieur, du passé et du présent. Certes, chaque branche de l'art, chaque école, chaque maître a ses tendances propres; cependant dans son ensemble, l'art japonais a sa personnalité bien définie.690

(Japanese art has developed under the influence of a distinctive terrain, atmosphere, people and civilization. At the same time that it was endowed with a general tendency inevitably determined by its origin, it happened to acquire a very particular character thanks to a series of conditions arising from the outside, the inside, the past and the present. Certainly, each branch of art, each school, each master has unique tendencies; yet, as a whole, Japanese art has its own well-defined personality.)691

The text went on to point out that “[l]es objets fabriqués par l'art industriel” (“[t]he objects fabricated through industrial art”) as much as “les objets d'art du Japon” (“the art objects of Japan”) had, by the turn of the century, come to “jouï[r] d'une grand reputation” (“enjoy a great reputation”).692 This reputation was attributed to the Japanese artist’s exceptional sense of handicraftsmanship: “en manifestant leur tournure d'espritoriginale, les Japonais ont toujours uni prodigieuse habiléemanuelle” (“when expressing their original form of spirit, the Japanese have always exhibited prodigious manual skill”).693 Japanese works were exemplary because they “procèdent” (“proceed”) from “la perfection de l'exécution et a la beauté du sentiment” (“the perfection of the execution and beauty of feeling”) with which they are made.694

691 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
692 Ibid., 10. (Author’s Translation)
693 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
694 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
The text went on to explain how this craft spirit had been cultivated through various media, emphasizing the use of organic materials and sensitivity to nature’s own order that could be seen across Japanese practices. Japanese architecture was promoted as particularly instructive for the practicality, simplicity and “universal” applicability of its defining principles. Its basis in a flexible, beautiful system of wooden skeleton construction; its emphasis on the inherent character of unornamented, widely available natural building materials; its demonstration of a consistent, easily adopted order of proportions; its refined use of lacquerwork and differing materials and treatments to articulate open, flexible interior plans; its restrained scale in general distinction to the monumentality of Western architecture; and its harmony with the surrounding environment. Exemplifying these principles, the typical Japanese house, the text explained, “ne soumet pas à une travail ingénieux; un toit de chaume sur des colonnes de bambou, une maison très simple” (“is not subject to ingenious work; a thatched roof above bamboo columns, a very simple house”). Yet, it continued, “[q]uelquefois, au contraire, on s’abandonne aux inventions d’une imagination décorative extraordinaire. Ces constructions sont dans le genre des pavillons de thé” (“[s]ometimes, on the contrary, one abandons oneself to the inventions of an extraordinary decorative imagination. These structures are within the genre of tea pavilions”).

_Histoire de l’art du Japon_ was planned, compiled, organized and edited largely under the direction of the Japanese-born scholar Okakura Kakuzō, who oversaw its publication as the Curator of the Tokyo Imperial Museum from 1889 until his resignation in 1898, after which the text was finished, to his designs, under

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695 Ibid., 8-10. (Author’s Translation)
696 Ibid., 9.
697 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
698 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
Fukuchi Mataichi and Yoshio Ki. Unlike Okakura’s short catalogue for the Japanese Pavilion at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, the historical text that he designed for the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle delved deep into a discussion of the worldview behind Japan’s distinctive craft culture. This worldview, Okakura maintained, held particular relevance in the turn-of-the-century French context because it provided a way of seeing beyond the confines of the structure of rational thought that had extended from Descartes.

The text explained that coinciding esoteric—inward and intangible—and exoteric—outwardly expressed—doctrines had shaped Japanese perceptions “du monde visible” (“of the visible world”) in a way that had “une répercussion profonde sur les beaux-arts” (“a profound effect on the fine arts”). Summarizing this effect, the authors elaborated:

L’ésotérisme, comme l’exotérisme, considéra l’Éther comme la cause réelle…Il donne les six éléments: terre, eau, feu, air, éther, connaissance, comme l’essence des innombrables êtres…De même que les six éléments sont la résultante du la connaissance du corps spirituel…, de même toutes les existences sans exception sont des devenirs de ces six éléments.  

(Esoterism, like exoterism, will consider Ether as the real cause…It gives the six elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether, knowledge, as the essence of innumerable beings...Just as the six elements are the result of the knowledge of the spiritual body, all existences without exception are manifestations of these six elements.)

From the perspective of someone perceptive to the limitations of Cartesian rationalism, this worldview could have been seen as instructive in myriad ways. If all physical and intellectual existence were understood as sharing a common grounding in space that is continually generated, regenerated, and sustained by living processes that naturally occur in time, the notion of human-driven progress would become

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699 Fukuchi Mataichi’s name was mispelled as “Mataitci Foukoutci” in the text.
701 Ibid.
702 Ibid. (Author’s Translation)
obsolete. Every entity and perception could be taken as simply a temporary, outward
manifestation of nature’s own intangible interior processes. We could then
acknowledge that, we, too, will eventually collapse back into the ether that
continually generates and regenerates space and all the phenomena that compose it.
There would be no need to pinpoint absolute truths or to reconcile perceived
distinctions between subject and object, an interior self and an exterior world, form
and function, and space and time; every entity and every experience could
alternatively be seen as a partial, temporary manifestation of a collective world space
that we cannot fix, and whose origins and boundaries we can neither concretely
identify nor rationally explain.

To ensure that the instructive relevance of a worldview grounded in these
understandings not be overlooked as wholly abstract, the authors of *Histoire de l’art
du Japon* emphasized concrete ways that Buddhism, which was imported from China
in the sixth century CE, and Shintô, an indigenous religion codified in the seventh
century CE, had both shaped Japanese life and culture.703 Buddhism, which is broadly
based in practices that seek direct, unmediated engagement with “the inner nature of
things,” and Shintô, a belief system derived from preliterate animistic understandings
of sites in nature as spiritual manifestations, share points of common grounding that
had allowed them, as the text explained, to separately but symbiotically coexist in the
Japanese context.704 Both value collective social development over the development
of the individual, and accept the complementary evolution of different belief systems
and practices.705 The *kami* (spirits or manifestations of nature) recognized by Shintô

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703 This is pointed out throughout *Histoire de l’art du Japon*; See, e.g., pp. 7, 10, 88, 99, 229.
704 Ibid. Note: the quotation cited here is taken from Okakura’s *The Book of Tea*, but provides a useful
summary of the way that Buddhism was interpreted in *Histoire de l’art du Japon*.
705 Ibid., 7, 10, 99. Note: at p. 10, for example, *Histoire de l’art du Japon* makes specific reference to
the mutual evolution of Shintô and Buddhism in shaping Japanese architecture.
could be perceived as Buddhas, just as Buddhas could be perceived as *kami*, because neither Buddhism nor Shintô prescribes faith in an individual creator, deity, or system of deities.706 Both instead recognize everything in the perceptible world to be a manifestation of nature’s own temporal order.707

Because they share these common understandings, Buddhism and Shintô, *Histoire de l’art du Japon* made clear, had been able to evolve in complement to one another while also incorporating and adapting new influences and ideas through and into the Meiji era. The text illustrated and explained that this could be seen in everything from language, literature, and music; to temples and shrines; to statuary and prints; to common domestic utensils, furnishings, and dwellings.708

Complementing the exhibitions curated for the exposition, the text crafted a linear history that showed how Buddhism and Shintô had separately but symbiotically developed across the Japanese arts while shaping domestic life as a whole over time.709

This underscores how pointedly Okakura and his collaborators had tailored *Histoire de l’art du Japon* to their French audience. Refuting the assumption that modernization required the wholesale adoption of a single structure of thought and had to proceed along a fixed course, their history introduced a critical alternative to the Cartesian structure of rational thought upon which the Western Enlightenment had been founded. It demonstrated that a worldview could be dialectical, and that a culture

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706 Ibid., 86-88. Note: *Histoire de l’art du Japon* explains, in further detail, that the naming of *kami* and doctrines and practices of Shintô were becoming effectively intertwined with the Buddhist Sutras by the 8th CE. This coincides with the overlap of Shintô and Buddhism that was intrinsic from the late seventh century CE, when, following Buddhism’s introduction to Japan, indigenous animistic belief systems were consolidated, readjusted to Buddhism, and formally codified in the religion of Shintô.

707 Ibid., 88.

708 Ibid. This is pointed out throughout the text; See, e.g., pp. 7, 10, 88, 90, 99, 229. Note: At p. 10, the text specifically notes the mutual evolution of Shintô and Buddhism, making specific reference to Zen Buddhism, in shaping Japanese architecture.

709 Ibid.; See, e.g., pp. 7, 88.
could progress, without the need for synthesis; different perspectives could coexist and expand one another while building their own, perfectly logical structures. One need only move beyond the preconception that the spaces we inhabit can and must be fixed and objectively understood from a single, correct perspective and instead allow space to manifest with experience in lived time.

Coinciding with phenomenology’s interest in the way that we understand and experience space as it unfolds in time, this perception of space could be seen, as Tanizaki’s interpretation of the urushi soup bowl suggests, as informing the most mundane aspects of Japanese culture. It is therefore not surprising that urushi would have interested Gray when she attended the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. The mutability, lustrous, semi-reflective qualities, and atmospheric responsiveness of this highly tactile medium would have directly appealed to her sensibilities as someone who was more interested in what things do when we engage with them than in what they look like to a detached observer.

**Gray’s Path to Urushi**

While the 1900 exposition stimulated Gray’s interest in urushi, there was no clear path to training in the traditional Japanese practice. This is in part because urushi defies classification as either art or handicraft—a distinction inherent to modern arts institutions that had not been made in pre-industrial Japan—and did not fit into the conventional structure of academic training in turn-of-the-century Europe. As this conventional structure was itself being called into question, urushi was

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710 Starr argues, in “Influences Extrême-Orientales,” that Gray may have been especially influenced by two or three screens by the Rimpa School artist Ogata Korin that were exhibited at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, but notes that further examination is required to establish a concrete connection between Gray and these works, specifically (See Starr, “Influences Extrême-Orientales,” in Pitiot, ed., *Eileen Gray*, 40).
interpreted and imported as the craft of Japanese lacquer and, like other Japanese crafts, became fashionable in the wake of the Arts and Crafts Movement’s calls for aesthetic reform and a return to handcraftsmanship. While this provoked demand for Japanese masters to teach lacquer at private European studios and ateliers, the demanding practice of *urushi* did not translate into a set of skills or forms that could be simply and widely taught. At the same time, the arts and crafts in general were still male-dominated fields in the early twentieth century, although women of the middle and upper classes were increasingly encouraged to study certain artistic pursuits and to attend arts institutions as a form of finishing school. Gray negotiated this context by first pursuing the training that was accessible to her as a woman of elite status.

This led her to enroll at the Slade School, which was co-ed in admission from the time of its founding in 1871. A school that specialized in the fine arts, the Slade afforded Gray valuable instruction in painting and drawing. Gray embraced this instruction, but soon grew frustrated with the school’s curriculum, which, as Jennifer Goff argues in *Eileen Gray: Her Work and Her World* (2015), emphasized copying from the antique and afforded students limited opportunity for development. Gray’s attendance dropped off and she began to supplement her formal education with private lessons under the London lacquer specialist and furniture restorer Dean Charles, whom she had met in 1901, in his Soho atelier.

Charles introduced Gray to traditional Chinese lacquer techniques and instructed her in the mixing and application of colored varnishes, which were commonly used for European furnishings and paravents. This instruction was augmented by *A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing: Being a compleat* [sic]

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712 Ibid., 30-31.
713 Ibid., 31-32.
714 Ibid., 32.
discovery of those arts (1688), a seventeenth-century lacquer manual written in English by the British scholars John Stalker and George Parker. The text provides recipes and techniques by which to safely and efficiently simulate the surface texture and appearance of Japanese lacquer and other media, outlining, as the title page explains, “The best way of making all sorts of VARNISH for Japan Wood, Prints, or Pictures,” and “Also Rules for Counterfeiting TORTOISE-SHELL, and MARBLE, and for Staining or Dying WOOD, IVORY, and HORN.” Proposing the use of minimally toxic, quick drying resins, the treatise instructed methods of lacquer reproduction that were less demanding than the traditional practices and therefore more easily accessible to European audiences and particularly, as Goff argues, to “women who were encouraged to learn Japanning as a pastime.”

Though Gray remained in contact and on good terms with Charles, she pursued more rigorous study. By 1902, she was travelling between London and Paris, where she shared a pension with fellow students Kathleen Bruce and Jessie Gavin at 7 rue de Joseph Bara in Montparnasse, a district known for its free-thinking atmosphere, inexpensive hotels and pensions, and international community of artists, students, and performers. Gray continued to study drawing, enrolling, in late 1902, at l'Académie Colarossi, which offered an alternative to the state-sponsored École des Beaux Arts and which attracted a more diverse international student body. In 1903, she transferred to l'Académie Julian, a private institution that, though also international,

715 Gray maintained a copy of this text in her library, which is now part of the Eileen Gray Archival Collection at the National Museum of Ireland. Text accessed electronically on 28 February 2020 at: https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/treatisejapanin00stal .
716 Goff, Eileen Gray, 122.
717 Ibid., 32.
718 Ibid., 33.
segregated women’s and men’s classes and catered to students preparing for the École’s meticulous entrance examinations.\textsuperscript{719}

While Gray embraced the opportunity to further develop as an artist at l’Académie Julian, she also, as Goff explains, “embraced [a] liberal social philosophy.”\textsuperscript{720} As a woman of elite society, Gray operated from a privileged position that afforded her the perspective, financial means, and education to critique what she saw as a flawed social structure from within. Far from alone in this critique, Gray became connected with like-minded artists and intellectuals who were also well-positioned to challenge prescribed social norms and beliefs. Among such thinkers was the English occult theosophist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), whom Gray met in Paris through a mutual friend in 1902.\textsuperscript{721}

A controversial critic and writer, Crowley denounced monotheistic doctrines and what he saw as unquestioned faith in their morals.\textsuperscript{722} Informed by diverse philosophical, spiritual, and mystical perspectives and practices, including Buddhism, yoga, occultism, and alchemy, he formulated a syncretic personal philosophy upon which he founded, in the early 1900s, the esoteric religion of Thelema.\textsuperscript{723} In 1902, after visiting Japan and while traveling in India, Crowley explained his perspectives in *Berashith: An Essay in Ontology and Ceremonial Magic*, in which he interpreted...
Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism alongside one another. In December of 1903, he gifted an inscribed copy of this text, which he had privately published that year, to Gray, who, Goff argues, may have become briefly engaged to Crowley in January of 1903. Exceptionally, Gray, who retained few personal belongings, kept this text throughout her life.

In *Berashith*, named for a Hebrew word meaning “in the Beginning; the first word of Genesis,” Crowley explored the limitations of rational thought. “[F]rom the point of view of thought,” he contended, “extinction is complete: we have no data for discussing that which is unthinkable, and must decline to do so.” Emphasizing the need to move beyond perceived truths and blindly accepted doctrines, he denounced “ceremonial as idle,” and espoused meditation as the means by which to arrive at “a state [of contentment] which transcends thought [and] cannot be described in thought’s language.”

Buddhist practices, he elaborated, were useful for becoming liberated from the confines of a structure of rational thought that relied upon ideas outside ourselves to become directly engaged in the world in which we live:

> [T]he task of the Buddhist recluse is [to]… plunge every particle of his being into one idea: right views, aspirations, word, deed, life, will-power, meditation, rapture, such are the stages of his liberation, which resolves itself into a struggle against the law of causality… The exoteric Christian and Hindu rather rely on another person to do this for them, and are further blinded by the thirst for life and individual existence, the most formidable obstacle of all, in fact a negation of the very object of all religion.

724 Ibid., 37.
726 Ibid.
729 Ibid.
730 Ibid., 17.
Crowley further interpreted Buddhism as relevant for understanding that physical existence is not individually sustained, fixed, or inherent, thereby introducing a perspective from which contradictory forces could be seen as complementary and coexistent. Arguing that Buddhism “permits the co-existence of an indefinite number of means: they need not even be compatible,” he proposed it as instructive for moving beyond a structure of dialectical thought centered on synthesis. “Hegel says,” Crowley explained, ‘Pure being is pure nothing!’ and it is true that the infinite heat and cold, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, and all the other pairs of opposites cancel one another out.” Yet, while Hegel sought “the reconciliation (rather than the identity) of opposites in a master-idea,” the Buddhist, Crowley argued, sees that opposing forces always collapse into a shared continuum that extends “from the essence of all nothingness to finity extended in innumerable categories.”

“[I]nfinently unextended,” the Buddhist, he concluded, transcends preoccupation with physical existence; “he is in fact $0^A+B+C+D+E+\ldots+N$.” From Crowley’s perspective, Buddhism was useful because it provided liberation from the anxieties embedded in a Cartesian structure of thought centered on the individual will to understand existence. Paradoxically, Crowley wielded this interpretation to promote himself as the prophet who would lead humanity into an infinitely regenerating spiritual realm where the individual could achieve ultimate self-realization and discover their own “true will.”

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731 Ibid., 20.
732 Ibid., 19.
733 Ibid., 19.
734 Ibid., 20.
735 Crowley codified these ideas in his 1904 *The Book of Law*, which Crowley claimed had been dictated to him by a higher being and which he introduced as the doctrinal text of the Thelema religion of which he was the prophet. While Crowley did not use the phrase “true will” in this text, he adopts it elsewhere to summarily identify the ultimate aim of Thelema as described in *The Book of Law* (See: “True Will,” Entry for *Thelemapedia: The Free Encyclopedia of Thelema*, Accessed 6 March 2021 at: [http://www.thelemapedia.org/index.php/True_Will](http://www.thelemapedia.org/index.php/True_Will)).
As much as Crowley’s propositions still emphasized the individual and relied upon Descartes’ distinction between the realms of spirit and matter, his writings make clear that Westerners across a variety of cultural contexts, with myriad interests, were seeking to expand their worldviews beyond the limitations of Cartesian rationalism. Crowley was among those who reinterpreted and used some of the ideas that Japanese scholars like Okakura were simultaneously introducing to the West to aid them in this pursuit. Crowley may even have met Okakura, who, coinciding with Crowley’s travels, spent nearly a year in India, between late 1901 and 1902, as he wrote *Ideals of the East* (1903). Among her fragmentary effects, Gray kept several undated handwritten notes that suggest how she was cultivating her own interior perspectives within this larger critical context.

Warning of the “danger of routine governing our work,” Gray emphasized that “[m]ental discipline is essential,” and explored ways to cultivate the mind through meditation. “[S]pend an hour a day without saying anything except in answer to direct questions,” she wrote, and “learn to think for ½ an hour a day exclusively on one subject beginning with only five minutes.” She also reminded herself to “write a letter without once using the following words[.]: I, me, my, mine,” noting, “[t]his practice forces us to see ourselves in perspective.”

Gray’s statements demonstrate that, as much as she was formulating a perspective that overlapped both with some of Crowley’s writings and phenomenology, her own developing ideas did not directly align with the concerns of

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738 Ibid.

739 Ibid.
either. One important distinction is that Gray saw the need to retreat from the notion of self. This notion was inherent to European Enlightenment thought and remained inherent even to the thought of Heidegger, who identified the phenomena of human being with *Dasein*—literally, “being-there.”* Heidegger, Being and Time, 10-11.

“Dasein,” he argued,

…is the being which I myself always am…We are ourselves the entities to be analysed…In accordance with the character of *always-being-my-own-being* [*Jemeinigkeit*], when we speak of Dasein, we must always use the *personal* pronoun along with whatever we say: “I am,” “you are.”* Heidegger’s philosophy therefore remained tied to the assumption of an autonomous self. Gray, however, saw that we must learn to suspend the preconceptions of an autonomous self in order to “see ourselves in perspective.”* Gray, Notes on Philosophy, NMIEG 2003.514.

That she deliberately cultivated practices by which to shift her awareness away from the notion of an individual self—a notion intrinsic to her own native language—suggests that she was learning to see herself relative to others who did not rely upon this notion.

Gray’s thinking is redolent of the Buddhist idea of “no self,” or the idea that we have no self, only notions of self that arise from how we perceive ourselves in relationship to the world. A 1950 text, titled *Buddhist Meditation in the Southern School*, that was identified as part of Gray’s personal library and inscribed by its author, G. Constant Lounsbery, to Gray, “in admiration of her pursuit of beauty,” might suggest that Gray consciously thought along such lines later in life.* In the early 1900s, however, Gray’s thinking would have been more directly related to her acquaintance with the “Panthéon,” a Parisian community of Japanese lacquer artists,

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741 Ibid., 53, 41-42. Note: The statement quoted here, “We are ourselves the entities to be analysed,” differs slightly from that given in Joan Stambaugh’s translation of *Being and Time* and comes from an earlier translation of the text by John Macquarrie and Edward S. Robinson (NY, NY: Harper & Row, 1927/1962).
woodworkers, and craftsmen that had emerged with the 1900 Exposition. As she interacted and communicated, in French, with this group, Gray likely noticed, for example, that personal pronouns were often omitted as ideas formulated in Japanese were translated into French. This is because, in contrast to the structure of Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and Romance languages, Japanese does not require the use of personal pronouns or subjects. These are often dropped as the Japanese sentence structure follows a pattern in which a topic is introduced, commented on, and then modified by a verb. Fundamental to this linguistic structure is the understanding that meaning is, like the self, relative—it is not fixed and inherent, but rather, manifests as relationships emerge within a larger context.

Equally, Gray must have learned how language itself often hinders our ability to understand things that can only be communicated through experience. This would have become increasingly clear as she began training under Sugawara, a respected urushi master who had moved to Paris in late 1905. As Ruth Starr argues in “Seizo Sugawara, maître laquer,” Gray likely received her introduction to Sugawara through the Panthéon sometime in 1906, when Gray decided to make Paris her primary

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745 Ibid., 43 (Also see Goff, Eileen Gray, 126). As Starr explains, after 1900, Japanese masters increasingly taught and studied in European ateliers, an exchange fueled by the emergence of Art Nouveau, the Meiji government’s desire to adopt Western practices, and the paradoxically declining demand for traditional Japanese arts in Meiji Japan. She argues that Sugawara had come to Paris in 1905 with Shoka Tsujimura (1867-1929), a professor of lacquer at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts who had been invited to teach lacquerwork in Paris (see pp. 43-44). It is important to note that in the permanent exhibition of Eileen Gray’s life and work installed at the National Museum of Ireland, the curators’ text states that Sugawara had come to Paris in 1900 to restore lacquer works from the 1900 Paris Exposition.
residence. They were well acquainted by late 1906 or early 1907, when Sugawara agreed to train Gray in urushi.

Sugawara’s Training

In order to understand this training, it is necessary to first understand Sugawara’s own. Though he has been identified primarily, and often exclusively, as a lacquer craftsman in studies on Gray, Sugawara was, as Kawakami Hinako explains in “The Background of Seizo Sugawara’s Lacquer Art Learned by Eileen Gray” (2017), an urushi master as well as a sculptor and woodworker. He had been born in 1884 into the Hiraoka family in Sakata, a city on the coast of the Sea of Japan in northern Japan’s Yamagata Prefecture. He was adopted into the Sugawara family at age 10 and, shortly after, began apprenticing at the Kawaseya, a crafts institute and furniture shop that was established in 1889 by Urayama Ukichi (Enzan).

Urayama was a merchant who was instrumental in advancing and preserving Edo Period craft practices in the Sakata region as Japan began to industrialize after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. This coincided with a larger effort to preserve Japanese artistic traditions in the face of Meiji modernization by integrating pre-industrial

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746 Starr, “Seizo Sugawara,” in Pitiot, ed., Eileen Gray, 43. Goff, Eileen Gray, 126. Note: Though the exact date and circumstances of Gray’s first meeting with Sugawara are unclear, Goff argues, in discrepancy to Starr, that Gray received her introduction to Sugawara around 1907 through contacts made by Charles.
749 Ibid.
750 Kawakami, “Background of Sugawara,” 59. The Kawaseya succeeded the Enyama Lacquerware Woodworking Factory, which Urayama had founded in Sakata in 1868 to help cultivate and promote the region’s craftsmanship and to offer children of the lower classes a forum for training under experienced masters who Urayama brought to Sakata from regions such as Niigata, Aizuwakamatsu and Shizuoka. In her detailed study, Kawakami explains that the Kawaseya was located on Sakata’s central mercantile street, where it comprised a “longhouse” combining craftsmen’s workshops and living quarters with shop fronts.
practices into the modern industrial world. This required first defining and reinforcing those practices within Japan so that they could be exported to the West. Okakura led this undertaking with the American art historian Ernest Fenollosa, with whom he helped to establish, in 1887, the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts (Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkô).

As the school’s name suggests, fundamental to the mission of Okakura and Fenollosa was the need to distinguish between the fine arts and crafts. The Tōkyō School of Fine Arts instructed a tradition of Japanese fine arts centered on prints, painting, sculpture, architecture, and lacquerwork.

A counterpart in defining traditional Japanese crafts, Urayama played a key role in bringing experienced masters from regions such as Niigata, Aizuwakamatsu and Shizuoka, which were well-known for specializing in pre-industrial practices, to instruct students in Sakata.\textsuperscript{751} The young Sugawara trained primarily under Morikawa Yoshide, an urushi master who had likely come to Sakata from Niigata.\textsuperscript{752} This training was not limited exclusively to lacquer, and, as Kawakami points out, must be understood as a holistic process of simultaneous artistic, intellectual and spiritual cultivation.\textsuperscript{753}

From the time it was founded, the Kawaseya was closely intertwined with the adjacent Seisei school, which the Zen priest Fujiwara Ryo had formed in 1888 to offer children of the lower classes a forum for study and training in craft practices. By the early twentieth century, the two institutions were inextricable from one another as the Seisei school, which was initially funded by donations from surrounding Zen temples,
had come to rely primarily upon Urayama’s patronage. Studying across these institutions, Sugawara’s training followed a course of mentorship in which an accomplished master accepts and guides a student, not merely to perfect individual skills and techniques, but rather to cultivate a way of seeing and engaging with the world through practice. For this reason, a Japanese master’s agreement to accept a pupil in any pursuit is complex and highly discerning: a prospective student must often make repeated attempts to study with a particular master, who might over time recognize in the student the necessary commitment of character and willingness to learn. Inherent to this process is the development of a direct understanding that every entity is a product of innumerable elements that come together in a precise interaction to generate a whole.

Training at the Kawaseya-Seisei combined carpentry, woodwork, and lacquerwork, which were together applied in crafting furnishings and domestic objects including desks, tea chests, cabinets, bowls, and utensils. Whatever a particular student’s specialty, the training would have instilled, from the earliest stages, a deep understanding of the co-integration of carpentry, woodwork, and lacquer. The creation of a simple urushi tray, for example, required the careful selection, treatment, shaping, and smoothing of a particular piece of wood, using tools that had each themselves been as meticulously crafted. The wood’s surface might then be carved with intricate details, and, before any lacquer could be applied, had to be further treated and prepared using materials and mixtures precisely suited to both a given piece of wood and a given lacquer mixture.

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754 Ibid., 59.
755 Ibid.
Many furnishings and fittings required the use of wooden joinery techniques analogous to those used in pre-industrial Japanese building, in which individual wooden components are meticulously crafted to be fitted together, without nails, in a system of interlocking joints. Such techniques exemplify a regard for all materials as living manifestations of nature and would have been applied as much to common household implements as to pieces specially made for the Japanese tea ceremony and other precious works. One area in which the Kawaseya specialized, for example, was in the production of *butsudan*, usually translated as “Buddhist altar(s).”

Distinctive to the Japanese Buddhist context, *butsudan* are small structures that are meant to evoke the space of a temple, its main worship hall, or innermost sanctuary, and are also dedicated to honoring a family’s ancestors. Housed in a place of honor in traditional Japanese homes, they are usually either crafted of darker, richly grained woods like cedar or elm and finished with clear lacquer, or lacquered in deep, lustrous shades of dark brown and black. On the interior, they might be carved and finished with lacquer mixtures incorporating precious, highly reflective gold pigments. With doors to be closed when not in use, they are not viewed as static objects to be outwardly worshipped, but rather, become activated by “infusion of the life force” (*oshô-ire*). An isolated expression of the way that the home itself is seen, the *butsudan* is not an inanimate structure, but a space that manifests, in production as much as use, with living practices that unfold in time.

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756 Ibid. Note: Works seem to have been produced for both local sale and export, particularly to Hokkaido.
758 Rambelli, “Home Buddhas,” in *Japanese Religions*, 71, 81. Note: This is a broad interpretation of *butsudan*, which differ for each particular practitioner and family.
759 As Rambelli explains, the *butsudan* is a particular form that emerged in Japan and was not adopted with Buddhism from China in the sixth century CE.
760 Ibid., 63-86, 69.
761 Underscoring the way that Buddhism and Shintô have informed and evolved with one another, some kami may be recognized as Buddhas, just as a family’s ancestors or particular deceased individuals
Although an interest in defining and preserving Japanese practices among an onslaught of Western influences underlay Sugawara’s training at the Kawaseya-Seisei, his perspective on this situation shifted with the decision, in 1901, to move to Tôkyô. There, he enrolled at the Tôkyô School of Fine Arts, where, Kawakami argues, he “carved the philosophy and technology of Japanese art into the mind and body.”

In addition to further instruction in the actual production of lacquer—now with a focus on adapting recipes, mixing techniques, and application methods to create new modern forms of a traditional Japanese art—, Sugawara’s courses included painting; pattern and design; art history and lacquer history; aesthetics and design method; history and archaeology; applied chemistry; and gymnastics. Sugawara continued to practice urushi but became resistant to the school’s rigid curriculum, and was required to repeat his third year of study for failure to complete the necessary assignments. This resistance expressed the extent to which Sugawara had internalized his training at the Kawaseya-Seisei. Yet, the tension between an aesthetic curriculum and the practice that he had learned as an apprentice also afforded Sugawara a unique opportunity to further cultivate, readjust, and internalize pre-Meiji culture so that it could remain present in a modern industrial world.

During his more than four years enrolled at the school, Sugawara studied under the urushi master Matsuka Tsujimura, with whom he would move to Paris in

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may be recognized as kami or as having exemplified the virtues or spiritual qualities of kami. The Japanese Emperor, as one pronounced example, is honored as the descendant of the sun kami, Amaterasu Ômikami, and is traditionally understood as himself becoming kami in death. The kamidana in a family home is also usually dedicated to a particular kami with which the family perceives an ancestral or local, community-based connection.

Kawakami, “Background of Sugawara,” 62. Note that all the translations of Kawakami’s essay are based on machine/Google translations of the original Japanese text.*

Ibid., 61.

Ibid., 60.

Ibid., 62.
1905; Kazushi Kawanobe, who was a master of the maki-e urushi technique; and the master sculptor Komura Takamura. Masters who had trained in what were then being defined as traditional or pre-Meiji practices, Sugawara’s teachers had themselves cultivated their pursuits through a process of mentorship and lifelong study that defied clear translation to a model of modern academic instruction. This made them valuable mediators in a context when Meiji Japan was negotiating the importation of modern structures of thought with the definition and preservation of distinctively Japanese practices.

This was especially true of Takamura, who had been a founding member with Okakura of the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts and who had become internationally recognized for his contributions to the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. Even after Okakura resigned as Director of the school in 1898, the two remained close as Takamura promoted, within Japan, the values that Okakura was introducing to the West. Kawakami argues that it was, in fact, Takamura who most influenced Sugawara, who saw himself, first and foremost, as a sculptor.

Sugawara never graduated from the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts, leaving his graduation project incomplete when he departed for Paris in November of 1905. But he had developed, and would continue to develop, as a dedicated and respected artist and craftsman. He had also thoroughly absorbed and, would become

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766 Ibid., 62. Note: The maki-e technique involves the use of a brush to sprinkle fine metallic powder, usually silver or gold, onto wet lacquer, which produces a glittering effect. It may be applied to entire pieces, or used to ornament select areas of a piece with images or designs.

767 Ibid., 62. Kawakami argues that Okakura had directly invited Takamura to visit the United States and Europe as a contributor to the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. Also see Kawakami Hinako, “Influence of collaboration between Japanese and French artists and Eileen Gray on European art,” (Research Report, 2016-18).

768 Ibid., 62.

769 Ibid.
instrumental in, the joint mission of Takamura and Okakura to preserve traditional Japanese crafts in the face of Western aesthetics.

An experienced master who had then been practicing for at least a decade, Sugawara’s agreement to instruct Gray, whose understanding of urushi was at best novice when they met, is telling. While urushi was being translated into forms of lacquer that could be instructed and broadly adopted with relative ease across Europe, Sugawara understood that training in actual urushi is a continuing and all-encompassing pursuit. That he agreed to mentor Gray in the traditional practice suggests that he saw, not only the opportunity that her financial and social status might afford as he was establishing himself in Paris, but also the opportunity for symbiosis. She had been persistent in seeking his instruction, and he saw reflected in her the qualities of someone who would be receptive to urushi training and with whom he, too, could continue to expand in practice.

Writing to his respected master, Morikawa, from the Kawaseya-Seisei, Sugawara requested materials and pigments from Sakata.\(^\text{770}\) He began to instruct Gray in the intricacies of urushi, which, traditionally practiced near the sea, requires a dust-free environment under controlled humidity. Sugawara and Gray worked first out of Gray’s apartment at 21 rue Bonaparte, where they recreated the necessary conditions in a bathroom.\(^\text{771}\) After studying for about a year, Gray started crafting small pieces on her own in 1908.\(^\text{772}\) In 1910, she created her first screens and established, in collaboration with Sugawara, an atelier and gallery at 11 rue Guénégaud, where they

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\(^{770}\) Ibid., 61.
\(^{771}\) Ibid.
\(^{772}\) Goff, *Eileen Gray*, 130.
produced and sold furnishings and domestic objects.\textsuperscript{773} These included chests, tables, chairs, beds, toiletry items and tables, dishes, and utensils.\textsuperscript{774}

\textit{Gray’s Evolution into Furniture, Textile, and Interior Design}

As Kawakami argues, Gray’s rapid evolution from producing small experimental pieces in 1908 to saleable furnishings in 1910 suggests that Sugawara was simultaneously teaching Gray—who, again, had not studied furniture design—to craft in multiple dimensions.\textsuperscript{775} Sugawara, of course, understood that \textit{urushi} is not simply an independent visual medium. It is natural that his training of Gray would have reflected his own experienced understanding that it is inextricable from carpentry, woodworking, and sculpting, and that the necessary interrelationship of these practices is not simply a consequence of the fact that lacquer requires something to be applied to.

More fundamentally, this interrelationship is inherent to a process that requires a practitioner’s complete consideration for the way that separate components interact with one another to create a whole that will shape and function in space over time. This is as true for the practitioner who executes an entire work as for the practitioner who lacquers an object that has been crafted by someone else or the practitioner who creates a single part—a panel of a screen, for example—of a larger whole. In every case, the practitioner must understand the receptivity and reactivity of individual materials and forms in relation to one another; the interlocking relationships that allow individual components to join and shift; the way that particular materials and

\textsuperscript{773} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{774} Ibid.
pigments interact with varying qualities of shadow, light, and air. And still beyond these considerations, the practitioner must reflect upon the sensations—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—that these elements might come together to produce as part of a particular spatial environment for a particular individual.

As Gray’s urushi practice expanded, she also, around 1910, began to design carpets and practice weaving. She experimented with using widely-available organic materials, such as cotton, undyed wools, and natural pigments, to produce well-crafted, engaging textiles that could be affordably sold. She explored ways that different fibers, pile lengths, combing and dyeing techniques, and weaving, knotting, and hand stitching methods could interact to enhance everyday household textiles. Suggesting Gray’s growing interest in the spatial nature and use of domestic implements, some of the early carpets, Goff argues, “were designed to complement [her] lacquer furniture and her use of natural woods.” That these often “had identifiable subject matter” suggests that Gray was learning to mediate, not only myriad craft practices, but also conventional Western distinctions between art and craft, form and function, and physical, intellectual, and spiritual engagement.

As Goff notes, Gray’s 1910 gouache of a design for a “Japanese style carpet,” for example, incorporates the Kanji 卍, whose Romanized spelling is manji (Fig. 84). Derived from Sanskrit and introduced to Japan from China with Buddhism in the sixth century CE, 卍 might be translated to mean “a thousand (man) characters

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776 Goff, Eileen Gray, 162-163. As Goff explains, Gray undertook this endeavor in partial collaboration with her American friend, Evelyn Wyld, with whom she traveled to North Africa to studying weaving and organic dyeing practices, and with whom she, in 1910, set up a weaving atelier at 17 Rue de Visconti in Paris.
777 Ibid., 164-166.
778 Ibid., 168.
779 Ibid., 168.
780 Ibid., 167. Goff identifies this character, not specifically as 卍 or manji, but as “the Buddhist Swastika.”
(ji),” and is strongly associated with Buddhism as a symbol of the absolute. The 卍 motif is the basis for the geometric sayagata pattern sometimes applied in Buddhist temple design; has been used to denote temples on Japanese maps; was commonly incorporated into woven textiles imported to Japan from China during the Tenshō era (1573-92); and was popularized during the Edo Period in textiles and ukiyo-e prints, which were widely circulated among merchants. Goff argues that Gray’s incorporation of 卍, as a “simplified for[m]” adopted in combination with “flat areas of colour,” in her 1910 carpet gouache likely reflects the visual influences of Katsushika Hokusai’s Edo period woodblock prints, which became popular in Paris beginning with the 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition. While Gray may, indeed, have seen this motif in ukiyo-e prints, she reinterprets it in a way that suggests, not visual imitation, but a deeper consideration of the potential for the mundane—that is, everything inherent to daily life—to become a site of spiritual and intellectual engagement.

While 卍 typically appears as a geometric cross with interlocking arms bent at 90 degree angles in straight lines, Gray’s 1910 “Japanese style” carpet gouache dissects and reinterprets the character in an irregular network of broken, curvilinear lines. While the regular, interlocking geometric forms of the typical 卍 would have been easily suited to a woven carpet design, Gray deliberately disrupted any sense of regulating pattern in an asymmetrical composition whose dynamic arrangement of elements evokes, but does not imitate, the usual motif. Instead, her composition forces

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781 JAANUS (Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System), “sayagata,” last accessed 7 January 2021 at: http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/s/sayagata.htm; Helen A. Langford-Matsui, “Educate the people and keep the ‘manji’ (卍) on Japan's maps,” in The Japan Times, 10 February 2016, Accessed 7 January 2021 at: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2016/02/10/voices/educate-people-keep-manji-%e3%81%98%e3%81%bf%e3%81%a2%e3%81%8d%e6%88%91-japs-maps/.

782 Goff, Eileen Gray, 167.
the viewer to mentally complete the incomplete as she considers the potential forms that might be generated by mediating negative spaces. This precludes purely visual experience or the clear reading of a regular pattern, while forcing the viewer to herself become intellectually engaged in the composition. As she contemplates the shifting interplays between geometric order and curvilinear forms and positive and negative space, she becomes attuned to their mutual interdependence and to the infinite number of ways that forms might bend, twist, mutate, and interact while remaining within the shared confines of the woven textile network.

Gray continued to refine and expand her urushi practice as she engaged with new media and subject matter, and began to experiment with the creation of a distinctive and particularly demanding form of blue lacquer, which she applied in one of her first large-scale screens, *La Voie Lactée (The Milky Way)* (Fig. 85).783 Completed in 1912, the now-lost four-paneled screen was made for Gray’s friend, Florence Gardiner, and is known only in images that remain from features in a 1917 issue of *Vogue* magazine, and a 1924 issue of the Dutch publication *Wendigen*.784 The composition depicted a cosmic scene in which an obscure figure strides across a mountain.785 Bands of trailing stars, inlaid with mother of pearl, flow from the figure’s head while evoking waves rippling across a sea, emerging as a bright counterpart within an undefined realm of layered darkness. Rendered with precision and yet non-descript, each form complements the others, each entity remaining distinct while collapsing into the unified whole of an open-ended space that floats suspended between positive and negative ground and stasis and movement. Wholly

783 Ibid., 130.
784 Ibid., 130-131.
785 Ibid. Note: The only known images remain from features in a 1917 article in *Vogue* magazine, and the Dutch publication *Wendigen*, in 1924.
enigmatic despite its bold, clear forms, the composition evokes a moment of pause, in which an all-consuming energy of unknown source disintegrates into stillness.

Although Gray’s choice of subject matter for *La Voie Lactée* was not in itself unusual—the Milky Way became a common nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century literary theme as modern science revived interest in the mysteries of the cosmos—her evocative interpretation of it is. The typical Western vision, extending from Galileo Galilei to Descartes to Sir Isaac Newton and into modernity, was that the Milky Way was a distant realm removed from our own, whose physical workings could be predicted and understood by observing them from afar through a telescope. Departing from this vision, Gray projects the individual into the scene. What we recognize as a human body becomes just another fleeting form, pulled by an irresistible force into the unseen depths of universal darkness. Though this work has been interpreted as reflecting Gray’s interest in mythology and the influence of literary imagery on her early lacquer screens, it is an equally significant expression of her development as an *urushi* practitioner.786

A notebook and journal that Gray kept between 1914 and 1923 makes clear that she was learning to see each *urushi* composition as a living practice in which practitioners, tools, materials, and environmental rhythms collapse into a mutually-defining experience.787 Emphasizing the need to respond to changing atmospheric and seasonal conditions, she detailed, for example, the “nature of lacquer” and the properties, sensitivities, and treatments suited to different types of wood, pigment, charcoals, and precious materials.788 She described the importance of incorporating

786 Ibid.
788 Ibid. Gray notes, e.g., “in winter put a little camphor with sesame so that the coat should be more even…”
earth into lacquer mixtures and of allowing materials to harden in open air and sunlight, and warned that if hot rice flour paste is applied before cooling, “the lacquer will die.” For Gray, lacquer was not an inanimate medium, but a living entity that was being collectively generated and sustained by interactions occurring in time.

Gray recorded these notes, primarily in her native English, at the height of her training with Sugawara, with whom she verbally communicated primarily in French. This speaks to the way that, as Gray and Sugawara used French—which was neither one’s native tongue—as a medium that facilitated the ability to craft an understanding of urushi across cultures, the lessons that Sugawara imparted were equally non-verbal: he was not explaining a set of instructions to be literally followed, but was teaching Gray, through concrete practice, to see urushi for herself. This is evident in the process-based nature of Gray’s notes, which explain, for example,

…smooth out creases with hera=spatula pressing wide down[,] afterwards with flexible bamboo stick going backwards & forwards over a small surface at a time & pressing until mixture under neath [sic] soaks through cloth…The bamboo stick or spatula must be used rounded side down take care to work spatula evenly & not to press harder in one place or it will make the mixture uneven

Elsewhere she records the need to “boil rice flour…about 5 to 7 minutes (more water than for pasting cloth or silk)” in order to achieve “coromandel” lacquer with the “consistency of very thin soup…like sabi.” Another recipe notes,

*after putting on Sesame with small flat brush it must not be rubbed off with cotton. A piece of Japanese paper…quality fine…(Rami=paper) must be laid on surface of silver double…hold in right hand a small pad of cotton wool & smooth paper over silver…smooth evenly then draw off—continue until no stain appears on the paper—

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789 Ibid. Gray notes, e.g., “Sabi should be put first in open air and sun to dry…” 
790 Ibid. Note: By this time, Gray did, as other correspondence makes clear, write and speak French fluently, and primarily used French in daily life. Yet, with the exception of six “inserts” that were written in French, Gray’s lacquer notebook is written in English—i.e., as she interpreted Sugawara’s training for herself, she defaulted to her native tongue. 
791 Ibid. 
792 Ibid. 
793 Ibid.
Gray’s attentiveness to the intricacies of every detail underscores her receptivity to the lessons that Sugawara communicated, despite the challenges of literal translation, as they collaborated very closely during this period. They shared Sugawara’s tools, which included a variety of hand-crafted wooden brushes with organic fiber heads, pumice stones, engraving instruments, and customized wooden spatulas, one of which was inscribed with their combined initials, “G” and “S” (Figs. 86-88). They together selected, purchased and prepared the natural powdered pigments, Japanese charcoals, gold and silver leaf, mother of pearl, oils and other materials that they used, and housed these resources under carefully composed conditions in Sugawara’s wooden urushi cabinet (Figs. 89 & 90). In 1915, after the outbreak of World War I, they fled Paris for London, where they lived together and opened a lacquer workshop at Cheyne Walk in Chelsea.

As Constant notes, “little is known of Gray’s professional activities during this period,” but, after their return to Paris in 1917, she received her first commission for a fully integrated interior design: an apartment at 9 Rue de Lota for Madame Juliette Mathieu Lévy (1918-24). Gray composed the spaces—which included a dining room, bedroom and boudoir, salon, and hallways—, with carpets, furnishings, textiles, light fixtures, wall hangings, and partitions (Fig. 91). These pieces juxtaposed sensually engaging materials such as salmon silk, wool, parchment, ivory, and ostrich shell with dark urushi furnishings, screens, and wall panels inflected with silver and gold. Gray’s notebook documents that Sugawara guided her throughout the project, teaching her, for example, how “to make [the] rugged Sabi” used for the “Mathieu

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794 These items are today housed in the Eileen Gray permanent exhibition at the National Design Museum of Ireland.
796 Ibid., 139.
Levy antechamber brick screens,” which involved a mixture of urushi resin and powdered Japanese Tono-ko stone to create a lustrous, raised surface texture with a marbleized quality. The largest of Gray’s brick screens, they were composed of 450 interlocking black urushi panels with brass hinges (Fig. 92). Gray used them to line the hallway between the salon and bedroom, such that this space could be flexibly subdivided into an alcove and an antechamber. As they offset the varied patterns of the salon and bedroom, these screens also disrupted the flatness of the antechamber’s bare walls, introducing a quality of layered depth as the voids between their panels revealed only portions of the shadowed spaces beyond. In 1922, the French art journal Feuillets d'art praised the Mathieu Lévy apartment as “a perfectly cohesive ensemble…adapted to our lives…which satisf[ies] our senses.”

Echoing Kawakami’s insights on Gray’s seemingly rapid evolution into furniture design, both the Mathieu Lévy commission and the consequent praise of it suggest that Gray had been cultivating an approach to interior space as she trained with Sugawara. Tanizaki shed light on the relationship between urushi and interior space in In Praise of Shadows, when he explained that the spatial and temporal nature of an urushi bowl equally extends to shape and color the space of any traditional Japanese dwelling. Like every urushi composition, the dwelling is a mutually generated composition in which each element contributes to the lived reality of spaces that emerge and shift with sensory experience and perception in time. For this reason, everything in the traditional Japanese home—furnishings, fixtures, paper screens, utensils, flowers, vases, wall hangings, wind bells—is appointed and changed to

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800 Ibid.
complement the changing of the seasons, provoking interior reflection upon their arrival and passing while invoking all the senses with comforting suggestions of coolness in summer and warmth in winter. For Tanizaki, this sensibility was exemplified by the “picture alcove” of “the Japanese room.”

Known in Japanese as the tokonoma (床の間), the “picture alcove” is the space of symbolic honor in a Japanese reception, or tatami-mat-lined, room. It conventionally houses “a hanging scroll and flower arrangement,” both of which are changed in accord with the particular character of each passing season. These are not works that are displayed for independent visual apprehension. Rather, the individual significance of each element rests in how it contributes to the shifting sequence of harmonies that emerge within an always-changing order. As Tanizaki explained,

…the scroll and the flowers serve not as ornament but rather to give depth to the shadows. We value a scroll above all for the way it blends with the walls of the alcove, and thus we consider the mounting quite as important as the calligraphy or painting. Even the greatest masterpiece will lose its worth…if it fails to blend with the alcove, while a work of no particular distinction may blend beautifully with the room and set off to unexpected advantage both itself and its surroundings. Wherein lies the power of an otherwise ordinary work to produce such an effect?

More valuable than any single work or fixed whole is the harmony of relationships that emerge among the elements of a tokonoma in space over time. The structural elements, materials and finishes of a tokonoma are therefore, Tanizaki continued, as significant as the implements that it houses:

…the beauty of the alcove is not the work of some clever device. An empty space is marked off with plain wood and plain walls, so that the light drawn into it forms dim shadows within emptiness. There is nothing more. And yet, when we gaze into the darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam, around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, though we know perfectly well it is mere shadow, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquility holds sway. The “mysterious

803 Ibid.
804 Ibid.
“Orient” of which Westerners speak probably refers to the uncanny silence of these dark places…

… The technique seems simple, but was by no means so simply achieved. We can imagine with little difficulty what extraordinary pains were taken with each invisible detail—the placement of the window in the shelving recess, the depth of the crossbeam, the height of the threshold…

Each element of the tokonoma must “strike just the right balance with the darkness of the alcove and room” because the tokonoma is seen as a microcosm of the cosmos.

It is not a display alcove for viewing aesthetic objects, but an interval of space appointed to evoke the shifting temporal harmonies of the universe. Isolating and expressing the perception of space that shapes and colors the home throughout, the tokonoma is a continuously-shifting composition meant to provoke meditation on the transient nature of existence.

**The Absorption of Lacquer into Interior Design and Architecture**

The Mathieu Lévy apartment was exceptional in a context where lacquer was becoming, as the London *Daily Mail* reported in 1922, “not a fashion but a passion in Paris,” where there was growing demand among the elite, not only for individual lacquer pieces, but for fully integrated lacquer rooms. Gray and Sugawara had themselves played a key role in propelling this turn since the previous decade, as is evident in demand for Sugawara’s tutelage beginning in the early 1910’s, and in several articles that were devoted to Gray’s work in the late nineteen-teens and early 1920s. A 1920 *Harper’s Bazar* article, titled “Lacquer Walls and Furniture Displace Old Gods in Paris and London,” for example, explained:

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805 Ibid., 20-21.
806 Ibid., 19.
808 As Constant explains, in Paris, other avant-garde decorative artists had begun seeking Sugawara’s instruction even before the war; most notably, the Swiss sculptor and metalworker Jean Dunand briefly studied lacquer techniques under Sugawara in 1912, although Sugawara did not train Dunand, who treated lacquer like “oil painting,” in *urushi*. Sugawara’s growing reputation in Paris also led the master
There is in Paris today an artist whose lacquer is exciting much interest among...the first to sanction something new...When Miss Gray exhibited her first work in this difficult medium the smart world of Paris first stared, then talked, and then...accepted it avidly. It was new, distinctly novel and oh so very, very expensive. And so, over night,...lacquer rooms became the rage.809

Constant argues that the elite’s growing taste for lacquer in the French decorative arts and interior design was part of “a collective drive to forget the trauma of war” in post-World War I Paris.810 As this suggests, neither lacquer, broadly defined, nor a Japanese style of lacquer was novel in the post-war context; other Parisian designers had begun experimenting with the use of Japanese-style lacquer around the turn of the twentieth century. Yet, Gray’s work, in particular, became interesting and avant-garde in the post-war context because it was distinct from the forms in which Japanese craft traditions had been absorbed into the modern decorative arts and interior design, both in France and abroad, up to that point.

The French decorative arts had begun to undergo substantial evolution after the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, which had provoked anxieties over the need to define a modern French cultural identity. This process centered on the decorative arts, an area in which France had become internationally known for its luxurious, one-of-a-kind, handcrafted designs, which were a coveted and leading export and influence throughout Europe.811 This status began to shift as the exposition garnered interest in a new decorative arts aesthetic introduced by the Munich Werkstätten, which was founded in Germany in 1897.812 Informed by the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Werkstätten rethought the Arts and Crafts emphasis on restoring the aesthetic

craftsman Katsu Hamanaka to move from Japan to Paris in 1924 to study urushi under him. Hamanaka was integrated into Sugawara and Gray’s workshop and became a long-time friend of Gray (see Constant, Eileen Gray, 36-37).

810 Constant, Eileen Gray, 35.
811 Ibid., 17.
812 Ibid., 15-17.
sensibility and collective values exemplified by pre-modern craftsmanship.

Recognizing that hand-crafted works were not affordable to the middle classes, the Werkstätten applied the logic of pre-modern craft workshops to formulate a new model of industrial design aimed at making aesthetically pleasing, well-made domestic objects that could be mass-produced and affordably sold.\textsuperscript{813} Coinciding with this collective aim, the Werkstätten operated as a collaborative body of artists, architects, designers, and engineers who applied the Germanic notion of a \textit{Gesamtkunstwerk}—a “total work of art”—to promote the idea that all elements of a domestic environment should be conceived to form a unified compositional whole.

In 1901, the Société des Artistes Décorateurs was established in Paris with the aims of preserving the distinctive craft quality of the French decorative arts while reforming them to become competitive in a European market that Germany was beginning to dominate.\textsuperscript{814} As part of its mission, the Société sought to elevate the French decorative arts—which were until then classified as crafts—to fine arts status.\textsuperscript{815} This was partly motivated by a drive to prevent the imitation and unlicensed industrial reproduction of the designs of French decorative artists, whose designs had to be classified as works of art to be protected under French copyright law.\textsuperscript{816}

At the same time, however, the late-nineteenth-century distinction between art and craft was becoming increasingly blurred. As national debates emerged over the appropriate direction for the French decorative arts, they predominantly centered on aesthetic values.\textsuperscript{817} Some French designers promoted advancing the formal and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[813] Ibid.
\item[814] Ibid., 16-17.
\item[815] Ibid., 17.
\item[816] Ibid., 17.
\item[817] Ibid. As Constant explains, in this context, some French artists and designers, namely the Inspector General of Fine Arts, Roger Marx, and the painter and furniture designer Francis Jourdain, deviated from the mainstream and promoted the social relevance of embracing industrial production to create works that would be affordable to the middle classes (Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 21).
\end{footnotes}
material luxury that had been uniquely associated with hand-crafted French products. Others promoted learning from German designers and embracing a more subdued, industrial craft style comparable to that being popularized by the Werkstätten. This led to the invitation of the Werkstätten to participate in the 1910 Salon d’Automne, where domestic objects and furnishings produced by the Werkstätten were displayed in a fully integrated composition of rooms designed to represent the “House of an Art Lover.”

The mainstream response to the Werkstätten exhibition was critical, perhaps because, as Constant argues, “[t]he collaborative efforts of German decorative artists to produce conceptually unified interiors were deemed antithetical to the French proclivity for individualism and respect for creative genius.” Nonetheless, the Werkstätten succeeded in introducing the notion of a Gesamtkunstwerk combining architecture and interior design into the French decorative arts. At a time when mutual interest was bringing Japanese craftsmen to Europe and European artists and engineers to Japan, this Germanic notion had, by the first decade of the twentieth century, become inflected as much by German designers’ reinterpretations of the Arts and Crafts Movement as by the Japanese aesthetic traditions that had informed that movement.

In this context, Gray and Sugawara continued to practice urushi. They created works for a number of elite patrons who eschewed mainstream aesthetic tendencies and who had the means to patronize the crafts. Japanese lacquer, specifically, was well-poised to be embraced after the war because Japan, unlike Central-allied China, had been a French ally. It could therefore be taken as a luxurious medium that,

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818 Ibid., 19.
819 Ibid., 21.
paradoxically, evoked both uniquely French associations and a sense of remove from the complexities that had plagued the nation before and during the war. This allowed Gray and Sugawara, transplants in Paris who did not share either the nationalist or aesthetic concerns that preoccupied many of their design contemporaries, to integrate into avant-garde Parisian life Japanese craft practices that had been overlooked in light of structural and material concerns. In a context when other Parisian designers were applying lacquer as a primarily visual medium, their urushi compositions, as the Mathieu Lévy apartment demonstrated, deepened an inhabitant’s ability to cultivate their own space and time in relation to their surroundings. ⁸²⁰

_Jean Désert: Collaboration Among Japanese Masters_

Propelled by the success of the Mathieu Lévy commission, Gray and Sugawara were able to make their works more widely accessible. In 1922, Gray opened a gallery that specialized, as she noted in an advertisement, in “lacquer screens, lacquer furniture, wooden furniture, wall-coverings, lamps, divans, mirrors, [and] carpets,” and that offered “the decoration and installation of apartments.” ⁸²¹ Located at 217 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré in Paris, the gallery was called “Jean Désert” (Fig. 93). Alluding to the biblical legend of John the Baptist in the desert, Gray’s adoption of this pseudonym suggests a sense of her own reclusive place in Parisian society as an avant-garde designer forging a path distinct from her contemporaries. She was a European woman of nomadic background, helping to adjust a Japanese craft that had traditionally been practiced by men to the needs and tastes of Parisian clientele. As much as she was operating from a highly individual

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⁸²⁰ Jean Dunand, especially, became known for his simultaneous work in Japanese lacquer.
⁸²¹ Publicity announcement Quoted in Constant, _Eileen Gray_, 43, and on display in Eileen Gray exhibition at the National Design Museum of Ireland.
place, Gray was an effective mediator of this context precisely because she did not assert individual ownership over Jean Désert’s activities or the works sold there. Many of the pieces were produced by an atelier of Japanese craftsmen that Sugawara led at the rue Guénégaud studio, which was expanded to coincide with Jean Désert’s opening.  

During this period in the early 1920s, Gray began working more closely with several other Japanese craftsmen. In addition to Sugawara, she became particularly close with the lacquer craftsman Hamanaka Katsu (1895-1982), from whom she kept throughout her life a card signed “J’espère vous revoir un jour,” and Ousouda Katsumi, whose strong involvement in the gallery and studio Gray documented in her Jean Désert records (Fig. 94). Her most prolonged collaboration was with the woodworker and sculptor Inagaki Kichizô (1876-1951), with whom she had begun working as early as 1912 (Fig. 95).

Born in Murakami, Japan, Inagaki had arrived in Paris with several compatriots in 1906, first sharing an apartment at 16 rue de Théâtre with Sugawara and three others. Gray likely met Inagaki around the same time as, if not before, Sugawara, as is suggested by her later recollection, “I was very glad when Sougawara [sic; see note] who was lodging with some friends came to see me and we decided to start a workshop.” Skilled, like Sugawara, in a number of traditional Japanese

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822 Ibid., 43. Also note that Gray contracted her friend Evelyn Wyld to oversee the activities of the weaving workshop and her friend Gabrielle Bloch to help manage the business as a whole.
824 Ibid.
826 Gray, as quoted in Goff, *Eileen Gray*, 126. Gray’s spelling is not incorrect, but rather, an alternative spelling of “Sugawara.”
practices, including *ikebana* (floral arranging) and *urushi*, Inagaki was best known as a woodworker and sculptor. Particularly praised for his ability to create wooden bases that were integrated with their sculptures, he was deeply perceptive of the distinctive qualities of particular types of wood and of the importance of conceiving each aspect of a work of art as inherent to its overall character. These aptitudes were demonstrated as much in his own sculptures as in his work as a base maker for contemporaries including Sugawara and Auguste Rodin (Figs. 96 & 97).  

Inagaki’s particular combination of experiences and abilities allowed him to contribute in unique ways to Gray’s *urushi* practice as their collaboration intensified between 1919 and 1925. Their frequent correspondence through 1930 documents that Gray relied upon Inagaki to craft tabletops, handles, legs, lanterns and other components of her furnishings, and that she consulted him on questions of proportion and arrangement, and on the selections, combinations, and properties of the materials used in her designs. Gray’s collaboration with Inagaki would have particularly heightened her awareness of how each individual element contributes to the harmony of a craft composition as it materializes and shifts in space over time.

In the midst of her integration into this atelier of Japanese craftsmen, Gray’s architectural interests expanded. Overlapping with the Mathieu Lévy commission, between 1921 and 1923, she purchased and modified an adjoining pair of vacation homes in the riverside village of Samois-sur-Seine, and, with the help of a resident craftsman, joined the homes’ facades, extended an upper-story balcony, and converted

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827 Inagaki began working with Rodin around the same time that he began working with Gray, in 1912. In addition to contributing bases to Rodin’s work, Inagaki also crafted frames for the artist.


829 Ibid.
a stable into a garage.\textsuperscript{830} On the interior, she freed the stairway, adding an overhead skylight and, on the landing, a sitting alcove whose walls she lined with in-built benches fitted with woven rush mats.\textsuperscript{831}

According to Constant, “[t]hese interior fittings…are both undocumented and no longer extant,” but they “exhibited little of the exoticism that [had] characterize[d] [Gray’s] rue de Lota interiors.”\textsuperscript{832} This suggests that, even as Gray’s work on the Mathieu Lévy apartment and on her own Samois-sur-Seine home overlapped, she was freed to more directly express her own interior perspectives in the design of a home for which she was her own client. The Samois-sur-Seine project, which Gray started before she met Badovici, allowed her to begin refining the approach to domestic space that would guide her in designing E1027.\textsuperscript{833}

Like Gray’s other pursuits—as a furniture maker, textile designer, weaver, and designer of interior spaces—that approach to domestic space was inextricable from her urushi training. She had been cultivating it all along as she absorbed the deeper lessons behind her work with Sugawara and other Japanese masters. In 1906, Okakura had introduced these lessons to European and American audiences in \textit{The Book of Tea}: “It is impossible, indeed,” he argued, “to find any department of art in which the tea-masters have not left marks of their genius. In painting and lacquer it seems almost superfluous to mention the immense services they have rendered.”\textsuperscript{834}

\textsuperscript{830} Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 41-42.
\textsuperscript{831} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{832} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{833} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{834} Kakuzo Okakura, \textit{The Book of Tea} (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008 reprint), 79. Notes: Okakura’s name was modified to “Kakuzo Okakura” for this publication. Also, this citation refers to the reference copy of Okakura’s text that is used throughout this dissertation. The text was first published in 1906 by Fox Duffield & Company, New York. The Charles Tuttle edition is a beautifully crafted work that I strongly recommend to anyone interested in reading \textit{The Book of Tea} (Rutland, VT & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956/1980).
The Book of Tea was integral to Okakura’s mission to help preserve what he saw as the most significant qualities of Japanese culture by integrating Japanese craft practices into modern industrial life (Fig. 98). With this text, he translated the Japanese practice of chanoyu (茶の湯), and the ethic behind it, sadô or chadô (茶道), into an aesthetic practice that could be understood by European and American audiences: the tea ceremony. Deeply aware of the extent to which “our particular idiosyncracies dictate the mode of our perceptions,” Okakura saw that “[t]he sympathetic communion of minds necessary for art appreciation must be based on mutual concession.” He was a mediator well-poised to perform this act of cultural translation because he was a Japanese-born-and-raised scholar who had been educated, in Japan, in English (Fig. 99). He had become fully fluent in English before he learned to read and write Japanese. This afforded him a unique ability to interpret the native culture that he had come to know, first and foremost, through experience while writing for a Western audience in what was effectively his native tongue.

In The Book of Tea, Okakura interpreted the tea ceremony as a fully integrated expression of Japanese aesthetic culture. It was a discerningly simple practice during which a host prepares and serves a bowl of tea, following a precise process, in a precisely appointed room, for the appreciation of at least one guest:

The ceremony was an improvised drama whose plot was woven about the tea, the flowers, and the paintings. Not a colour to disturb the tone of the room, not a sound to mar the rhythm of things, not a gesture to obtrude on the harmony, not a word to break the unity of the surroundings, all movements to be performed simply and naturally—such were the aims of the tea ceremony.

Okakura crafted a way of understanding the tea ceremony as a living composition, in which a particular set of participants, utensils, appointments, and environmental conditions comes together to generate a co-integrated space of multi-sensory

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835 Ibid., 60, 56.
836 Ibid., 33-34.
experience. He explained that, because every entity engaged in a particular ceremony is meticulously made and selected to contribute to it, the ceremony is an ephemeral phenomenon that is each time unique and impossible to independently produce. It therefore provided an aesthetic performance through which to practice relinquishing ties to the material world and abandoning ourselves to the shared transience of life. Behind this aesthetic practice, Okakura explained, lay “The Philosophy of Tea,” which,

…is not mere aestheticism in the ordinary acceptance of the term, for it expresses conjointly with ethics and religion our whole point of view about man and nature. It is hygiene, for it enforces cleanliness; it is economics, for it shows comfort in simplicity rather than in the complex and costly; it is moral geometry, inasmuch as it defines our sense of proportion to the universe."

Reinterpreting *Histoire de l’art du Japon*’s emphasis on the symbiotic evolution of Shintō and Buddhism in shaping Japanese aesthetic culture, Okakura here emphasized the common relevance of Japanese cultural practices and the worldview behind them. Usefully engaging Zen Buddhism in this pursuit, he argued, “Taoism furnished the basis for aesthetic ideals, Zennism made them practical.”

“All our great tea-masters,” he explained, “were students of Zen and attempted to introduce the spirit of Zennism into the actualities of life.”

Okakura introduced Zen such that his Western readers might reflect upon its practical relevance for their own daily lives. “A special contribution of Zen to Eastern thought,” he argued,

…was its recognition of the mundane as of equal importance with the spiritual. It held that in the great relation of things there was no distinction of small and great, an atom possessing equal possibilities with the universe. The seeker for perfection must discover in his own life the reflection of the inner light."

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837 Ibid., 4.
838 Ibid., 38.
839 Ibid., 43.
840 Ibid., 37-38.
In Okakura’s telling, the tea masters had democratized the tea ceremony in the sixteenth century. With it, they had democratized craft practices that enhanced the quality of domestic life and every element that is integral to it:

All the celebrated gardens of Japan were laid out by the tea-masters. Our pottery would probably never have attained its high quality of excellence if the tea-masters had not lent it to their inspiration, the manufacture of the utensils used in the tea-ceremony calling forth the utmost expenditure of ingenuity on the part of our ceramists [sic]...Many of our textile fabrics bear the names of tea-masters who conceived their color or design...[I]n the arrangement of all our domestic details...we feel the presence of the tea-masters.\(^{841}\)

Okakura elaborated that the tea masters had “completely revolutionised [sic] the classical architecture and interior decorations,” as they “established the new style...of the tea-room,” which is a structure dedicated to and composed specifically for the practice of the tea ceremony.\(^{842}\) Okakura described the tearoom as “an oasis in the dreary waste of existence where weary travellers [sic] could meet to drink from the common spring of art-appreciation.”\(^{843}\) He argued that it formed the prototype for the traditional Japanese dwelling, and that it was equally relevant for modern domestic architecture because it embodied principles that were instructive for preserving the individual spirit in a modern industrial world.

“Art,” he observed, “to be fully appreciated, must be true to contemporaneous life...Slavish conformity to traditions and formulas fetters the expression of individuality in Architecture.”\(^{844}\) The tearoom, Okakura explained, is a rectilinear structure of fixed form that measures 4 ½ tatami mats. Built of unadorned, mundane materials, it is flexible, efficient, and meticulously planned. These principles directly derived from the tearoom’s sole function as a space defined by the practice of the tea ceremony. Because the tea ceremony centers on cultivating interior spirit through a

\(^{841}\) Ibid., 79-80.
\(^{842}\) Ibid., 79.
\(^{843}\) Ibid., 79, 33.
\(^{844}\) Ibid., 49.
living practice, the tearoom is “absolutely empty, except for what may be placed there temporarily to satisfy some aesthetic mood.”

Just as “[o]ne cannot listen to different pieces of music at the same time, a real comprehension of the beautiful,” Okakura elaborated, is “possible only through concentration upon some central motive.”

“The tea-room (the Sukiya),” therefore, does not pretend to be other than a mere cottage—a straw hut… The early tea-room consisted merely of a portion of the ordinary drawing-room partitioned off by screens for the purpose of the tea-gathering. The portion partitioned off was called the Kakoi (enclosure), a name still applied to those tea-rooms which are built into a house and are not independent constructions. The Sukiya consists of the tea-room proper, designed to accommodate not more than five persons,… an anteroom (midsuya) where the tea utensils are washed and arranged before being brought in, a portico (machiai) in which the guests wait until they receive summons to enter the tea-room, and a garden path (the roji) which connects the machiai with the tea-room…

The size of the orthodox tea-room, which is four mats and a half, or ten feet square, is determined by… an allegory based on the theory of the non-existence of space to the truly enlightened…

Okakura saw that the tearoom could be useful for collapsing the tensions inherent to a process of modernization centered on imposing a single ideal order on daily life. It introduced lessons that could be universally integrated into any structure because it is highly systematic and, yet, it is not meant to be outwardly viewed and grasped, or replicated in a single, fixed way. It is a structure that emerges, expands, and contracts according to living needs and activity, and its spaces only materialize with interior experience. In this way, the tearoom provided a useful way to demonstrate that what we call space does not actually exist in the first place—space occurs; it has no fixed state or guarantee of “being there,” but rather, is a conditional, shifting manifestation of living processes that unfold in time.

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845 Ibid., 50.
846 Ibid.
847 Ibid., 48-49.
848 Ibid., 39-41; 43-44; 48.
Okakura went on to argue that the “simplicity and purism” of the tearoom “resulted from emulation of the Zen monastery,” which “is meant only to be a dwelling place for the monks.”\textsuperscript{849} The tearoom was not the product of an abstract formal ideal, but an index of “the Buddhist theory of evanescence” that every entity could be seen to embody.\textsuperscript{850} With “its demands for the mastery of spirit over matter,” this theory “recognized the house only as a temporary refuge for the body.”\textsuperscript{851} Equally, [t]he body itself was but a hut in the wilderness, a flimsy shelter made by tying together the grasses that grew around,—when these ceased to be bound together they again became resolved into the original waste. In the tea-room fugitiveness is suggested in the thatched roof, frailty in the slender pillars, lightness in the bamboo support, apparent carelessness in the use of commonplace materials. The eternal is to be found only in the spirit which, embodied in these simple surroundings, beautifies them with the subtle light of its refinement.\textsuperscript{852}

This understanding can be seen as much in the practice of building—marking out—the tearoom as in the practice of crafting each and every element that appoints it. As each entity materializes through living activity, the practitioner is concretely reminded that outwardly perceptible forms always rely upon intangible interior processes. Equally, she is reminded that any form is a collectively-generated, interdependent spatial composition; all forms manifest, evolve, and shift as individual elements come together in an infinitely shifting sequence of relationships over time. Okakura argued that, under the instruction of the tea masters, the lacquer artist had cultivated “a distinct and highly honored [place] among artisans” akin to that of the carpenter, whose work was “no less delicate than that of the makers of lacquer cabinets.”\textsuperscript{853}

If E1027 evokes a tearoom, it is because, as Okakura makes clear, the tearoom is a \textit{living space} that only takes shape in time with the tea ceremony. It is not an

\section*{Notes}
\textsuperscript{849} Ibid., 42-43.
\textsuperscript{850} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{851} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{852} Ibid., 48-49.
\textsuperscript{853} Ibid., 41.
objectively present structure, but a dwelling that emerges with activity and interior experience. In her twenty years of practicing *urushi*, Gray had learned to see every composition in such a way—not as an autonomous aesthetic work outside herself, but as a living space in which the individual dissipated into the harmonies that emerge within an always-changing order. As Gray’s later statements in “Maison en Bord de Mer” make clear, this understanding equally guided her in designing E1027, which she perceived to be as much a dwelling as any *urushi* composition:

…architectural creation is supposed to be self-sufficient without regard for the atmosphere required by the inner life…there is no architectural creation in the true sense of the word that is not an organic unity…The play of lines and colors should be such, it should correspond so exactly to the needs of the interior atmosphere, that any detached painting, any picture, will seem not only useless but detrimental to the overall harmony.\footnote{Gray, as quoted in Adam, *Eileen Gray*, 236.}

Gray saw that, just as any *urushi* composition is a continually-evolving expression of all the individual components that dwell together in a particular space over time, a dwelling is fundamentally the practice of building space in which to dwell—space in which to cultivate a spirit that manifests and shifts with one’s surroundings in time.

**Gray’s Dwelling**

Around 1926, Gray contracted Sugawara to manage Jean Désert in her absence so that she could concentrate fully on building E1027.\footnote{Eileen Gray, “Business correspondence, invoices, notes,” 1913-1936 (Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, AAD 9/11-1980) and Eileen Gray, “‘Journal.’ Cash book containing detailed Accounts for the Galerie Jean Desert,” 1925 (Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, AAD 9/1-1980). Note: records in the business “Journal” indicate that after January 1926, Gray began paying Sugawara his salary of 300 (francs), in addition to the salary of 500 (francs) that she had previously paid out to herself; she also records a substantial check of 2,000 (francs) to Sugawara around this time.} Though she remained, as her correspondence makes clear, in contact with both Sugawara and Inagaki as she lived mainly on site at Roquebrune-Cap-Martin through 1929, Gray turned inward during this period, largely isolating herself from life in Paris as she
became immersed in her immediate surroundings.\textsuperscript{856} Allowing daily life to be guided by the site’s temporal rhythms, she reflected upon what she had learned up to that point.

Though Gray had long been designing the home, E1027’s interiors evolved as she became increasingly receptive to the shifting qualities of light, air, and atmosphere that shape and color the home throughout. Stepping in from the garden, returning from the beach, or emerging from a trek along the cape, someone who has moved through the site does not stop to \textit{think} about how integral its intricacies are to every aspect of the home’s reality because she never \textit{feels} removed from it.

This is in part because Gray invoked “the psychology of light,” engaging the intense French Mediterranean sun in her design in ways that effect a sense of spiritual continuity with it.\textsuperscript{857} She positioned mirrors and light-responsive materials in relation to windows and terraces, inviting us to fully and directly see the world in which we live while reflecting on all that necessarily shapes our own fleeting perceptions of it. She explored the reflectivity and opacity of certain materials in sunlight, often juxtaposing them to create highly-reflective spaces that remind us of our necessity for sunlight and of our unfixed place in a larger natural order.\textsuperscript{858} This is particularly evident in the bathroom, where a large skylight opens above the tub (Fig. 31). This creates an intense effect of illumination as sunlight beams in from overhead and variably helps to define and redefine the small space while perceptually dissolving shifting expanses of its white upper walls (Fig. 100). Bright porcelain enhances visibility where needed, while the tub’s outer face is clad in highly-reflective aluminum that mirrors and expands the compact floor. Lustrous, semi-reflective black

\textsuperscript{856} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{857} Gray, as quoted in Constant, \textit{Eileen Gray}, 95.
\textsuperscript{858} Ibid.
tiles line the walls around the bathtub, bidet and sink, diluting the concentration of entering light while generating soft, fluid reflections that evoke the glow of the moon across a pool of water.

As the sun moves westward, it generates shifting patterns of illumination that define and redefine each of E1027’s living spaces throughout the day. Variably reflective surfaces, materials and light-responsive structural elements interact with deep textures, colors, and recesses to introduce fluctuating contrasts of light and dark and mass and void. Subtle changes in the relationships between the windows’ shutters and pivoting panes introduce infinite interplays of line and silhouette, which shift in harmonious opposition to mutually enhance one another. As discrete spatial compositions continually emerge and fade, you begin to see that the home’s fluid yet always unified character relies upon the sun’s light as much as any Japanese craft, Tanizaki reminds us, “depends upon shadows and is inseparable from darkness.”

In distinction to the tradition of Cartesian rational thought that had abstracted space as having a fixed, objective form independent of time, Gray saw that space arises phenomenologically—in the time that life is lived. The manner in which she conceived E1027 as a sequence of shifting spaces articulated by sunlight might be seen as equivalent to the manner in which “Darkness,” as Tanizaki elaborated,

…is an indispensible element of the beauty of lacquer ware…the lacquer ware of the past was finished in black, brown, or red, colors built up of countless layers of darkness, the inevitable product of the darkness in which life was lived…a superb piece of black lacquer ware, decorated perhaps with flecks of silver and gold… is not something to be seen in a brilliant light, to be taken in at a single glance; it should be left in the dark, a part here and a part there picked up by a faint light…conjuring…an inexpressible aura of depth and mystery…

Like any urushi composition, Japanese spaces are seen as arising out of darkness: their form and reality are as ambiguous and ephemeral as our own temporal place in

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860 Ibid., 13-14.
the universe. Through her urushi practice, Gray had internalized an analogous understanding of space that reflected her own perspective: she came to see that all space and existence are temporal because reliant upon sunlight. As logical as it seems, this concrete understanding of the temporal reality of space and existence had been lost across European contexts pervaded by rationalism, which, in the process of objectifying space, had equally objectified time.

Separated from space, time was necessarily reduced to an abstract concept. It became something that *theoretically* unfolded according to a perfect, predetermined linear logic. It followed an *a priori* order that was inevitable and that remained constant in the absence of the perceiving human subject. Because it has no fixed form, time had to be mathematically measured, represented and understood as continually ticking along in a sequence of fixed intervals. Unable to concretely grasp time, rationalism accounted for it, in other words, by rendering it non-existent. While the significance that this had for understanding space was overlooked from a rationalist perspective that had resolved to accept abstract distinctions between space, time, and lived experience, from a Japanese perspective it was perfectly logical: space was already seen as *being* as non-existent as time itself. As Tanizaki reflected,

> The quality that we call beauty…must always grow from the realities of life…And so it has come to be that the beauty of a Japanese room depends on a variation of shadows…Westerners are amazed at the simplicity of Japanese rooms, perceiving in them no more than ashen walls bereft of ornament. Their reaction is understandable, but it betrays a failure to comprehend the mystery of shadows…Out beyond the sitting room, which the rays of the sun can at best but barely reach, we extend the eaves or build on a veranda…The light from the garden steals in but dimly through paper-paneled doors, and it is precisely this indirect light that makes for us the charm of a room. We do our walls in neutral colors so that the sad, fragile, dying rays can sink into absolute repose…We never tire of the sight, for to us this pale glow and these dim shadows far surpass any ornament. And so, as we must if we are not to disturb the glow, we finish the walls with sand in a single neutral color. The hue may differ from room to room, but the degree of difference in color as in shade, is a difference that will seem to exist only in the mood of the viewer. And from these delicate differences in the hue of the walls, the shadows in each room take on a tinge particularly their own.\(^{861}\)

\(^{861}\) Ibid., 18-19.
Tankizaki went on to contemplate the beauty of submission to one’s own suspension in space: “for me,” he wrote, “the most exquisite touch is the pale white glow of the shoji in the study bay; I need only pause before it and I forget the passage of time.”

Though rationalism’s core assumptions about space, time, and experience came to predominate across modern industrial societies, there were individuals like Gray whose skepticism of rationalism intersected with a phenomenological predisposition in a way that allowed them to see the innate logic of Japanese space. Interpreting this logic relative to her immediate surroundings and own interior needs, Gray concretely grounded E1027’s design in the way that spaces arise in light and shift with the time of day.

As the sun retreats, it slowly illuminates a small, remote alcove (Figs. 101 & 102). An obscure space that emerges and fades from and into its surroundings, it is dark and shallow with a low slanted ceiling and has black floor tiles and crimson-colored walls. Impossible to immediately grasp, its depth only manifests in waning light.

Cast in shadow when a hot, high sun floods the terrace, this alcove faintly glows in the early morning, and flickers as evening falls. Appointed with precision and restraint, it emerges in an always asymmetrical sequence of lights and darks, solids and voids, verticals and horizontals. Discerning white accents help to draw out dark fixtures from the surrounding wall. A narrow panel of cloudy glass absorbs and subdues light, while reflective chrome and plastic inversely respond. As light and air filter in, these devices interact with all the other entities that move around them. The

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862 Ibid., 21.
space layers out, shifting in harmony with the bright limestone floor and white walls that surround.

In “Maison en Bord de Mer,” Gray explained that this alcove was conceived “to serve and clear the dining room” and “can be transformed into a bar.”\textsuperscript{863} It houses, she clarified, a set of simple devices that store the dishes and utensils to be used when serving guests. A unit of shallow wall shelves projects above a circular receptacle for fresh “Citrons” (“Lemons”) from the garden. Below, a clear elliptical bin for “Plateaux” hangs vertically, pointedly devised with interior slots and open sides that ease access to a pair of wooden serving trays. Facilitating the preparation and distribution of food and drink, a narrow cantilevered table with movable wooden platforms steps out near the adjacent wall, its single-foot chrome base built into the alcove floor. When needed, the service space could have been expanded by a mobile “tea table.”\textsuperscript{864} No longer extant, the “tea table,” Gray explained, was “made of tubes that could be retracted, and [was] covered with a cork sheet to avoid the impact and noise of fragile cups. It include[d] disks for fruits and cakes, and a narrower end on which to rest the cup that one is about to offer.”\textsuperscript{865}

This alcove opens off the E1027 “dining room,” which was conceived, not only for dining and serving guests, but also to provide a quiet independent workspace (Fig. 103).\textsuperscript{866} Partitioned, not by masses alone, but by the way that light interacts with a continually shifting composition of colors, materials, and shapes, this space is as perfectly suited to gathering in the company of others as to reading, reviewing plans, or executing drawings. It is compact and discreet, yet evokes a character of freedom and openness. At times, it conjures intimacy and remove, harmonizing with the

\textsuperscript{864} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{865} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{866} Ibid., 243.
momentary conditions of activity and environmental flux to become an isolated, reflective space. On a clear early morning, it might be steeped in sun, its brightness intensifying through the afternoon before receding into the calm, cool light of evening. The atmosphere delicately fluctuates in a sequence of shifting relationships that Gray enhanced with a patch of small gray floor tiles. Subdued in character with a grainy, opaque surface, these tiles intensify the silhouettes cast on the adjacent wall, which, to Gray’s design, was painted white. Like any other work, “Architecture,” she saw, is a living composition that “must be its own decoration.”

Today, this wall preserves one of the nine boldly colored _Graffite à Cap Martin_ murals painted by Le Corbusier, who later justified that his murals “burst out from dull sad walls where nothing is happening” (Fig. 3). Beneath this defensive rationalization lay the reality of Le Corbusier’s fixation on E1027: it threatened him because it turned his gaze back upon himself. His murals were as much an act of vandalism as a reflection of his own troubled existence.

Poignantly subverting Le Corbusier’s firm belief that “our eyes are constructed to enable us to see forms in light,” E1027 had forced him to confront his perception of reality. Le Corbusier saw form like he saw himself: as outwardly fulfilling a role that had been fixed by someone else, with little consideration for the needs of interior life. Gray saw that all forms—and spaces—are as fleeting as our own perceptions. Neither antithetical to nor irreconcilable with Le Corbusier’s rationalist perspective, Gray’s villa destabilized the entire worldview on which he had structured his life. In a way that was both familiar and strange, Gray had applied his own theories to build the dwelling that he himself could not.

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867 Ibid., 239.
869 Le Corbusier, _Towards a New Architecture_, 8.
Though Le Corbusier took this personally, Gray hadn’t set out to subvert his worldview. That subversion was, rather, a consequence of how she had learned to see the dwelling phenomenologically. Not bound by the rationalist’s obedience to order, through her urushi practice, Gray had internalized an awareness of the freedom to be found in submitting to one’s own uncertainty.

Recognizing, after Le Corbusier painted his murals, just how tortured he was, Gray tried to provoke him to see how simply he, too, could free himself from the cage that rationalism had built for him. Hoping that Le Corbusier might reflect upon his own confinement, she urged him to remove the murals, appealing, in a letter that she dictated to Badovici, “What a narrow prison you have built for me over a number of years, particularly this year through your vanity…And you have denied [my hut] its absolute character with such harshness in your writings, disseminating them through your worldwide authority…A correction from you seems necessary.” But Le Corbusier refused to budge. To relinquish his rationalism and remove the murals was to acknowledge the transience of his own existence. Terrified to confront this reality, he continued to ignore, outwardly, at least, the innumerable forms in which space can be seen collapsing into time; he continued to deny his own embodied experience.

Far from alone in this, Le Corbusier was, like other contemporaries, able to outwardly appreciate Gray’s villa, but never able to realize its interior logic for himself. Impossible to efficiently grasp, that logic lay in the understanding of dwelling that Gray had cultivated over many years as an urushi practitioner. She had learned to see the dwelling, like any urushi composition, as a living embodiment of the transience that we can all appreciate. At E1027, this understanding might be seen as being best expressed in spaces that only emerge in isolation.

870 Constant, Eileen Gray, 122-123.
Just beyond the foyer wall that today preserves one of Le Corbusier’s boldest murals, a spiral staircase opens from the E1027 dining and service alcove, which you now see is an open-ended passage that only exists in flux. Pausing here, you see that this alcove is the hallway that connects bedroom to living room, living room to kitchen, garden shelter to sea-side terrace (Fig. 104). Like the inhabitant, it moves through the home to mediate between the reserved spaces of the east and the welcoming spaces of the west. It preserves the spirit that grounds the dwelling, sheltering this staircase that remains out of sight as it extends through the home’s center to connect earth to sky.

Opening at the alcove’s far corner, the staircase leads up to a reflective glass portal and onto the roof terrace. As the dwelling is embraced by land, sea, and sky, space expands into the unknown while returning to the immediate, where you pause to contemplate an arrangement of rocks that punctuate the sea (Fig. 105). Form becoming fluid as fluid becomes form, you become immersed in the phenomenon of interdependent flux that at once grounds and dissolves this space in time.

As it spirals skyward, the staircase simultaneously retreats into the home’s landscape garden, where a quiet open-air platform rests before the dining space (Fig. 106). Pointedly asymmetrical, the platform is composed of black and white tiles, juxtaposing a blank expanse of unpolished limestone to the west with a compressed, darkly-glazed section to the east. The eastern side houses the only fixtures found here: a low wooden bench that is painted white and supported by stone blocks. The bench wraps the platform’s corner to turn, not outward toward the sea, but inward toward the dwelling. Before it, a small fig tree grows un-centered from a patch of earth.

With its thin branches and sparse leaves, the fig tree at first appears an unusual choice for a patio set out in open sun. Yielding little shade, it is a modest figure that is
dwarfed by its surroundings. It provides neither shelter nor a point of particular visual interest. Gray invited contemplation of it in a space where all one can do is stop and sit. “[P]ersonally,” she later wrote, “I am brainless when in contact with people its [sic] only when one feels one can count on being alone, when one can let one’s brain free-wheel, that one has moments of lucidity getting underneath things.”

Suited to places with high elevation, rocky soil, and a warm, dry climate, the fig tree thrives along the French Mediterranean coast, where its deep, sprawling roots find both ample room to grow and an abundant source of water in the porous, humid earth. Yielding a slow-ripening fruit whose maturity relies as much on sunlight as on the tempering effects of cool sea air, most regional species are harvested once annually sometime between August and October, remaining resilient and adaptable as the growing cycle responds to atmospheric flux. Typically peaking in output between the ages of 12 and 15 years, a common fig tree continues to flourish among these environs long after its crop has declined and can live for up to three centuries.

In this time, it develops from a small shrub to become dense and fragrant, lending a welcome effervescence to characteristically hot surroundings as its wide, flat leaves diffuse breeze and moisture. As it slowly decays to help fertilize the earth, fragments of it variably dissolve and transform beneath damp soil, where wood’s organic structure can mineralize and turn into stone.

A mundane product of its environment, the fig tree isolates and expresses the spirit of a place that cannot be captured. Unable to exist autonomously, it is inseparable from the immediate atmosphere of earth, sky, and sea, relying upon each

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874 Ibid.
as it ripens over the course of a year and slowly adapts to assume a changing form and functions over the course of a lifetime. There is no fixed point at which it can be grasped, and no single moment that marks its progress because it is a shifting apparition of space manifesting in time.

Time suspended in the isolated space of the garden patio, the wind’s rhythms shift in harmony with the sun’s path overhead, their movements reflected in a delicate interplay of light and shadow. Whispers of sea air conjure the infinitely variable path to the water that is formed as you step carefully across limestones that are each time different in shape, size, and arrangement (Fig. 107). As space projects in time, a shifting sequence of shadows are cast across the patio’s bright limestone tiles, while the luminous surface of glazed black tiles inversely responds to generate soft, fluid reflections. As the bench lingers to join the composition’s eastern and western sides at their shared edge, it, too, dissolves. It becomes absorbed into the larger order of temporal phenomena with which this space passes in time.

After construction ended on E1027 in 1929, Gray returned, for a time, to Paris. Reflecting on the dwelling, she explained:

The house should not be considered perfect, with all of its problems resolved. It is only an attempt, a moment in a more general pursuit. If certain of the innovations that it provides can be regarded as definitive and should be adopted everywhere, others need further improvements, and still others should be brushed aside. As much as it was both a product and critique of mainstream modernism, E1027 is a living space that cannot be understood without considering how Gray had internalized the lessons of her urushi practice. Through this temporal, collaborative medium, she had cultivated an alternative understanding of enlightenment—one that was much more logical for someone who was skeptical of rationalism and one that Gray’s phenomenological predisposition allowed her to uniquely embrace. That

understanding was grounded in submitting to the reality that all space and existence are ephemeral, uncertain, and shaped by a larger sequence of living activities that we can neither see nor control. As Gray’s reflections on E1027 suggest, she, too, had become absorbed into Okakura’s project to preserve Japanese craft practices by integrating them into modern industrial life.

In 1930, Jean Désert closed and Gray and Sugawara parted ways. Sugawara left his *urushi* cabinet and tools with Gray, who continued to practice throughout her life.

In 1932, Gray and Badovici separated. Gray entrusted E1027 to Badovici, in whose name she had purchased the plot where it was built in 1926. She moved to the outskirts of Menton and continued to build her dwelling. It was called Tempe à Pailla, which might be translated as “Time to Harvest,” for a proverb that she held close: “Avec le temps et la paille les figues mûrisent”—“With time and straw the figs ripen.”

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Chapter Three Images

Fig. 1. E1027 (site of Unités de Camping, Etoile de Mer restaurant, and Cabanon partially visible in background). Author’s photo.

Fig. 2. Cap Moderne Visitor Center. Author’s photo.
Fig. 3. E1027, north wall of dining and foyer area with restored Le Corbusier mural. Author’s photo.

Fig. 4. Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture*. Image Source: [Zucker Art Books](https://www.zuckerartbooks.com), accessed 9 April 2022.
Fig. 5. E1027 Plan. Image modified from: pinterest.com, accessed 14 March 2022.

Fig. 6. Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, photo from ca. late 1920s showing E1027 and Site. Image Source: Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (New York: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2007), 92.
Fig. 7. Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, footpath along Cape Martin. Author’s photo.
Fig. 8. E1027, access gate from footpath. Author’s photo.

Fig. 9. E1027, view southward toward sea. Author’s photo.
Fig. 10. E1027, north wall windows with pivoting panes and sliding shutters. Author’s photo.
Fig. 11. E1027, “entry” wall with letterbox and light fixture; adjacent wall with restored Le Corbusier murals. Author’s photo.
Fig. 12. E1027, view in entry hall looking back toward door. Author’s photo.
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CONCLUSION: THE UNKNOWN

Rather than claim to have reached a set of fixed conclusions, it seems more significant to raise in their place a series of additional questions that have recurred throughout this dissertation: How do we characterize domestic space? Are there certain qualities that remain constant—from the level of the individual body or entity, to a larger environment with which we engage, to a work that we become immersed in crafting? How do we characterize craft? Is craft exclusively defined by the physical act of making or doing something with one’s own hands or expressing something with language? Do we equally craft things through the intangible, unspoken acts of everyday perception? Do whatever we perceive to be domestic spaces remain domestic spaces in the absence of living activity and perception? What is a non-domestic space? Are there ways that we remain bound by our own structural preconceptions, even when we examine things through what is often thought of as a “poststructuralist” lens? To what extent have we progressed beyond the structure of Enlightenment rational thought upon which modern academic disciplines were founded, and to what extent does that structure of thought persist in our living present?

To this end, this dissertation has led me to continually question the depths to which rationalism’s structural logic remains embedded in our thinking, even when we do not see it. Substantiating the problem of fundamental blindness that Roland Barthes identified in Empire of Signs in 1970, both the work of Wright, Loos, and Gray and Japan’s role in shaping it remained elusive, well into the twenty-first century, owing to a tendency to interpret their work from a rationalist perspective. Rationalism obscured what Japan taught these three modernists because it instilled a view of architecture that privileges visual and material properties; identifies space
with the structure that frames it; and relies upon the dialectical synthesis of opposites to propel linear progress. It discriminates between art, architecture, and craft and assumes fundamental cultural differences that preclude seeing the actual complexities of any individual or cultural reality. It informed a tendency to write histories that rely primarily on the assumed truths established by existing narratives, and has limited our ability to allow our interpretations to emerge out of things in themselves, whether they be buildings, texts, or other works of art and craft.

This dissertation has attempted to move beyond the binary judgements, tendency to seek synthesis, and notions of fixed, objective truth typical of a rationalist perspective by revisiting the work of Wright, Loos, and Gray from a phenomenological perspective—a perspective grounded in the knowledge derived from lived experience and the truth expressed by things themselves. Typified by the arguments that Martin Heidegger developed in his 1927 text *Being and Time*, phenomenology negates the rationalist idea that history is fixed, linear, and limited to facts that can be objectively traced. It recognizes that there are no absolute truths to be deduced from objects in space because space, objects, and truth take shape together with our perceptions of them—as much as our own existence, they are phenomena of lived temporal experience. It does not reject structure, but rather, acknowledges that all structures, equally, are continually taking shape, and, therefore, shifting, in a living present. History, for one, is continually being crafted—both as we act and as we revisit, from always shifting perspectives, the innumerable spaces and activities that a rationalist perspective would have us overlook.

I have argued that phenomenology is more pertinent than rationalism for understanding the work of Wright, Loos, and Gray and Japan’s contributions to it because it mediates both the experiential approach to learning that was intuitive to
these architects and the spatial lessons expressed by Japanese crafts. As these case studies have shown, historically assumed rationalist oppositions—between, for example, public work and private life, self and other, objective knowledge and subjective experience—did not apply to these three modernists. They all pushed back against the universalizing structural ideals that other modernists worked, across contexts, to formulate and promote, and they all constructed their own unique identities as they navigated complex networks of national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. They all intuitively rejected and subverted assumed distinctions between art, architecture, and craft as they learned to practice architecture through concrete experience. This experientially-driven approach to learning allowed them to see expressed in Japanese crafts lessons that many overlooked. Most fundamentally, Japanese crafts introduced them to the understanding that there is no distinction between process and product: from a picture, text, or place that engages us to a work that we ourselves literally compose, any work is actively crafted in a practice that is always physical and intellectual, spatial and temporal. For all the differences in the ways that these architects arrived at, interpreted, and applied lessons exemplified by Japanese crafts—from prints to buildings to lacquerware—, Japan introduced them to the common understanding that everything we perceive is domestic space because everything we perceive is a phenomenon of the interior life that unfolds with our surroundings in lived time.

As I have demonstrated, this active, temporal, craft-based understanding of domestic space profoundly shaped the architecture of Wright, Loos, and Gray, all of whom grounded their designs in consideration for the way that space unfolds with each individual’s interior experience. As I have also demonstrated, it was precisely this awareness of the temporal, ephemeral, and subjective nature of space that
distinguished these architects’ work from that of contemporaries in their immediate domestic contexts. That their unique ways of seeing space could have had a shared grounding in lessons learned from Japan remained largely overlooked, however, into the early-twenty-first century—both because their works bear little resemblance to one another’s, and because what Japan taught these three modernists evaded rationalist expectations about how much a Western architect could actually take from Japanese crafts.

Alongside assuming that modernity and modernism originated in the industrially-advanced nations of Europe and the U.S., rationalism reduced space to structure; space came to be viewed as some thing that existed in a fixed state outside the self. Modernist architects and historians therefore talked about space but did not actually address it. They could not see that space had been rendered invisible because rationalism had objectified something that can’t be objectively grasped—time.

Coincident with the objectification of space, time became some thing that ticked along at fixed intervals while historians tallied down through the centuries to pinpoint its most consequential developments. What was actually happening in time wasn’t being accounted for at all. The most progressive historians aligned facts and theories drawn from existing narratives to structurally define modernism as it was being formulated. They missed the innumerable developments that aligned with Albert Einstein’s 1905 and 1913 theories of space-time simultaneity, including the introduction of phenomenology in the 1920s and its significance for understanding the modernism that they were themselves trying to define. They missed the unique contributions of individuals like Wright, Loos, and Gray, who had begun, in the late nineteenth century, to develop approaches to domestic space that were both intuitively phenomenological and logically modern. They missed the ways that—preceding and
paralleling the work of both Einstein and Heidegger—Japanese crafts concretely taught these architects that space occurs in lived time because, in the process of separating space from time, they overlooked the reality of what was occurring in either and both.

This problem persisted into the twenty-first century because rationalism’s inherent logic obscured the significance of phenomenology for writing histories of architecture. In the late twentieth century, historians began to study the philosophy of phenomenology, after linguistic theorists had engaged it to critique Saussure’s notions of binary opposition and inherent meaning, but did not fully embrace it. By then, rationalism’s structural logic so firmly in place that it was difficult to see phenomenology as having substantive merit for the discipline. While historians have variably brought phenomenology to bear in analyzing individual works of art, many have yet to take it seriously as a systematic historical method that is perfectly logical in its own right.

I have attempted to change this perception by demonstrating that the architecture of Wright, Loos, and Gray and Japan’s profound significance for it can only be logically understood from a phenomenological perspective. In this I have taken a cue from Arata Isozaki, who, in Japan-ness in Architecture (2006), invoked both Barthes and phenomenology to elucidate the unseen workings of a Japanese modernism whose intricacies remained obscured, into the early twenty-first century, by structural preconceptions. As he explained, “I struck out to define the phenomenological moment by overturning the ordinary view that space is exactly localizable while time is mere occasion.”877 Quoting his own 1964 essay, “The Space

of Darkness,” he continued, “I believe that ‘space appears only in the time that humans perceive, therefore it is always specific, concrete, flickering, and never fixed’.”878

As I attempt to conclude my summary of what this dissertation has shown, I continue to return to Isozaki’s argument because it continues to provoke reflection upon what I am still in the process of learning. First, it speaks to the literal structural blindness that has equally limited our understanding of European and U.S. modernism. When they were independently named as such, “space” and “time” were abstracted as objects separate from both one another and the rational self. They were assigned meanings that were accepted, learned, and applied without question. Their definitions taken as self-evident, historians used them, together and separately, without stopping to consider what either, both, and the distinction between them actually meant with regard to living reality.

The binary objectification of space and time that became built into the structure of Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and Romance languages has innumerable analogs of similar consequence. The objective definition of culture, for one, assumes that there are innate characteristics that distinguish those who are inside a culture from others who constitute their own culture outside it. This leveling definition of culture allowed it to be pitted against civilization—an as-broadly-defined term that canonically refers to a society that has advanced in line with a universal paradigm of forward-moving innovation and improvement. If the distinction between “being cultured” and “being civilized” today seems unclear, it is because history invented and usefully reconciled the separation between culture and civilization in an ongoing dialectic that justified linear progress: modernist architectural historians, for example,

878 Ibid.
believed it possible to identify and linearly trace, as though fixed, the cultural influences that were exchanged between Japan and the West as they together proceeded to manifest an ever-advancing ideal of civilization whose terms were set in a generalized West. They failed to see that, as Japan translated understandings that had been there all along into modern terms and cultural traditions, it was concretely bridging a series of non-existent gaps—between culture and civilization, active subject and inert object, interior and exterior, past and present, structure and space, and space and time—that they were busy reifying.

Isozaki’s promotion of phenomenology exemplifies this simultaneous process of calculated bridging and unknowing oversight. In his 1978 exhibition and corresponding catalogue *MA: Space-Time in Japan* (1979), Isozaki had used the term *ma* (間) to translate what he argued was a distinctively Japanese understanding of space-time, explaining,

In Japanese, the concepts of space and time have been simultaneously expressed by the word MA. MA, defined by Iwanami’s *Dictionary of Ancient Terms* as “the natural distance between two or more things existing in a continuity”…or “the natural pause or interval between two or more phenomena occurring continuously,”…does not describe the West’s recognition of time and space as different serializations. Rather, in Japan, both time and space have been measured in terms of intervals…[T]his concept is strangely contemporary as it coincides with present day theories that equate space and time.879

Isozaki’s use of *ma* to explain the “coincidental conceptualization of time and space” that he identified as “perhaps the most important element that distinguishes Japan’s artistic expression from that of the West” had a precedent in a 1966 essay by the German architect Günter Nitschke.880 In an expanded version of that essay, published in 1993 as “*Ma—Place, Space, Void,*” Nitschke posited that *ma* best denoted a distinctively “Japanese awareness of polarity, of the yin-yang interaction of

'opposites’…in the subjective domain,” and of “the continuity of space and time…in the objective environment.”

“[T]he character 間,” he elaborated,

originally…consisted of the pictorial sign for ‘moon’ (月)—not the present day sun (日)—under the sign for ‘gate’ (門)...[T]his ideogram, depicting a delicate moment of moonlight streaming through a chink in the entrance way, fully expresses the two simultaneous components of a sense of place: the objective, given aspect and the subjective, felt aspect.

The translation of ma as ‘place’ is my own. The dictionaries say ‘space’, but historically the notion of place precedes our contemporary idea of space as a measurable area.

“One wonders,” Nitschke went on to reflect, “what course Western philosophy would have taken if in any Western language [such] a common denominator had existed.”

In a 2012 recollection of the “origins” of his endeavor “to render the Japanese expression MA beyond its established translations…for the first time,” Nitschke similarly wondered at how, despite the “original hypothesis” of his own 1966 essay, it was Isozaki’s “unusually designed exhibition on MA” that “brought MA to worldwide attention.”

Though Nitschke, who had earned a degree in Japanese while living in Tokyo, was certainly well informed on the subject, his interpretation of ma betrays at least three things. First, a persistent Cartesian understanding of space as fixed and “measurable.” Second, the inevitable limitations of the German and English languages in which he first learned to think and write: he saw ma as reconciling a distinction between an objectively present world and the subjective experience of it. Finally, the oversight, into the late twentieth century, of phenomenology’s import for understanding his own history.

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882 Nitschke, “Ma—Place, Space, Void,” in From Shinto to Ando, 49.

883 Ibid., 58.


885 Nitschke, “Ma—Place, Space, Void,” in From Shinto to Ando, 49.
In light of Isozaki’s 1978 MA exhibition, phenomenology had, however, attracted new interest, particularly among French thinkers, as a useful analog for *ma* that could be applied to analyze this uniquely Japanese understanding of space.\footnote{Mead, *Hypospace*, 473-74.} Picking up the way that Isozaki had invoked phenomenology to inflect Nitschke’s *ma* with a sense of true Japanese knowledge, Augustin Berque, for example, channeled Heidegger’s 1954 essay “Bauen Wohnen Denken” (“Building Dwelling Thinking”) to understand *Le sens de l’espace au Japon: Vivre, penser, bâtir (The Sense of Space in Japan: Living, Thinking, Building).*\footnote{Ibid., 280. Note: Heidegger’s “Bauen Wohnen Denken” was first delivered as a lecture in 1951.} In that 1982 study, Berque validated the merits of a Japanese non-binary understanding of space that, because grounded in experience, collapsed Cartesian separations between subject and object and space and time. The deeper instructive significance of Isozaki’s phenomenological constructions of “Japan-ness” continued to be missed, however, even after he published *Japan-ness in Architecture* in 2006: in the drive to objectively understand Japanese space and culture through the lens of phenomenology, European and U.S. thinkers still did not see that phenomenology had equal relevance for reflecting upon the overlooked value of what was already present in our own past.

I have attempted to reverse this trend by interpreting Isozaki’s arguments to justify phenomenology’s mutual relevance. In contrast to rationalism, the phenomenological approach that I have taken in this dissertation has mediated the experiential perspectives of Wright, Loos, and Gray and the temporal understanding of space that Japan introduced to them. It has also allowed the critical theories engaged and documentary evidence analyzed in each chapter to emerge out of—rather than frame—my readings of the works themselves. By revisiting these architects’
work, the Japanese structures that they came to understand, and the texts engaged in each chapter from a phenomenological perspective, I have demonstrated that, while many European and U.S. modernists were busy viewing Japanese space in ways that reflected their own structural preconceptions, Japanese crafts were teaching these particular modernists to actually see modern domestic space.

Beneath its literal significance, though, Isozaki’s carefully crafted dialectical argument for a phenomenological re-reading of modernism cuts to the core of an ignorance that continues to obscure the manifest density of our narcissism: as self-evident as it might seem that multiple opposing practices and perspectives were taking shape simultaneously, histories of European and U.S. modernism still tend to establish binaries and seek a synthesis that privileges one perspective over others. This dissertation is a case in point.

I have promoted the adoption of a phenomenological approach to writing histories of European and U.S. modernism and have sympathized with modernists like Wright, Loos, and Gray, whose experiential perspectives most clearly reflect what I have come to assume is my own phenomenological bias. At the same time, I have critiqued rationalism and scapegoated Le Corbusier as the typical cold rationalist whose leveling structural ideals Wright, Loos, and Gray were pushing back against. As I continue to learn, through this dissertation, to more clearly see the always more complex realities that shape any domestic space, the distinction between these opposing perspectives has become increasingly unclear.

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, in a family that bridged the U.S. and Egypt, geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries were, as for many, neither concrete nor clearly defined. Yet, they were so deeply learned and conditioned that negotiating such boundaries has been a continual challenge—one that I confronted in
unexpected ways as a post-undergrad waiting tables in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and further as a graduate transplant to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where I had planned to study ‘Modern Latin American Art,’ with a broadly intended focus on ‘Argentinian Social Realism.’ I learned a great deal about my learned ignorance as I wrote my master’s thesis on the Nicaraguan landscape painter Armando Morales. And yet, I believed, more blind than ever, that I had conquered my ignorance as I set out to discover Japan’s unknown contributions to modern architecture. Consistent with the problem that Barthes posed, I have struggled to see the depth of that ignorance as I have written this dissertation while living in Vienna, Austria, from the perspective of someone who has not visited Japan, does not speak or read Japanese, and who has completed her formal academic education in the U.S.

This is to say, my understanding of Japan has, on one hand, unfolded and evolved through and with these three case studies. On the other hand, Japan remains, for me, as-yet unknown. What I do know is that the exposure to Japan that I have had through this dissertation has led me to continually reread and rethink everything I thought I knew.

How much have the intricacies of Le Corbusier’s life and work, for example, equally been obscured by the rationalist assumptions that have been projected onto him? What might we see when we give an assumed pure rationalist the same phenomenological consideration as an individual like Wright, Loos, or Gray? More fundamentally, to what extent does history rely on oppositions that need not be reconciled? How much does the structure of Enlightenment rational thought merit critique, and how much does it continue to create new, as-yet-unseen openings in a history that remains unknown? My concluding thought, then, is this: I hope that this
dissertation might contribute to the ongoing endeavor to write the history of our own obscurity.
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