

The Museum of Modern Art

50th Anniversary



NO. 14
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PUBLISHES BOOK ON REDISCOVERED MASTER OF MODERN DESIGN

Eileen Gray: Designer. By J. Stewart Johnson. 68 pages; 62 illustrations. \$12.50 clothbound; \$7.95 paperbound. This book is published and distributed by The Museum of Modern Art.

On the occasion of its major exhibition (February 7--April 1) devoted to rediscovering the strikingly original British modern designer Eileen Gray, The Museum of Modern Art is publishing a book on Gray and her work by J. Stewart Johnson, Curator of Design and director of the exhibition. Drawing on scrapbooks and chronologies that Eileen Gray herself compiled to document her works for a new generation, this elegantly produced volume includes descriptions and plentiful illustrations (62 in all) not only of her early furniture, screens, and interiors, but of the architectural projects that followed. Featured in the book are plans and many fascinating interior photographs of the houses Gray built for herself in the south of France.

Eileen Gray was one of the distinguished designers of the modernist movement. Her surviving works are few, but they reflect the most fastidious standards of excellence. During her long life, she made a transition from exquisite handmade objects to rigorously functional architecture and furniture, exemplifying the most advanced taste of her time. Born in Ireland in 1879, Eileen Gray broke away early from the privileged, provincial society of her family. She studied in London, established herself in Paris soon after 1900,

(more)

made her reputation in France--Le Corbusier was a great admirer--in the years between the Great Wars. She died in 1976 at the age of ninety-seven, still actively engaged in design. Gray's multi-purpose and built-in furniture of metal, plywood, cork, plastic and other industrial materials has recently been recognized as a forerunner of today's design trends.

When looked at as a whole, as Mr. Johnson writes in this book, Eileen Gray's career "is one of ever broadening horizons, of a lively intelligence and genuine talent constantly exploring, testing, and moving on, never satisfied, always on the go.... Her designs, both early and late, speak to us with freshness, intelligence, and integrity. She was, first and last, an original."

The exhibition EILEEN GRAY: DESIGNER has been made possible through generous grants from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation and The British Council, and was prepared under the auspices of the International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. A slightly different version of the exhibition was seen last year at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

J. Stewart Johnson has been Curator of Design at The Museum of Modern Art since 1976. Important exhibitions organized at MOMA by Mr. Johnson include POSTERS BY PAINTERS, THE GRAPHIC REVOLUTION: 1915-1935, NOGUCHI: THE SCULPTOR AS DESIGNER, and BANG AND OLUFSEN: DESIGN FOR SOUND BY JAKOB JENSEN. Mr. Johnson has lectured and written extensively on the decorative arts, and is the author of Silver in Newark and John Jelliff, Newark Cabinetmaker, both published by the Newark Museum, as well as numerous magazine articles.