

## MONACO REPORTER

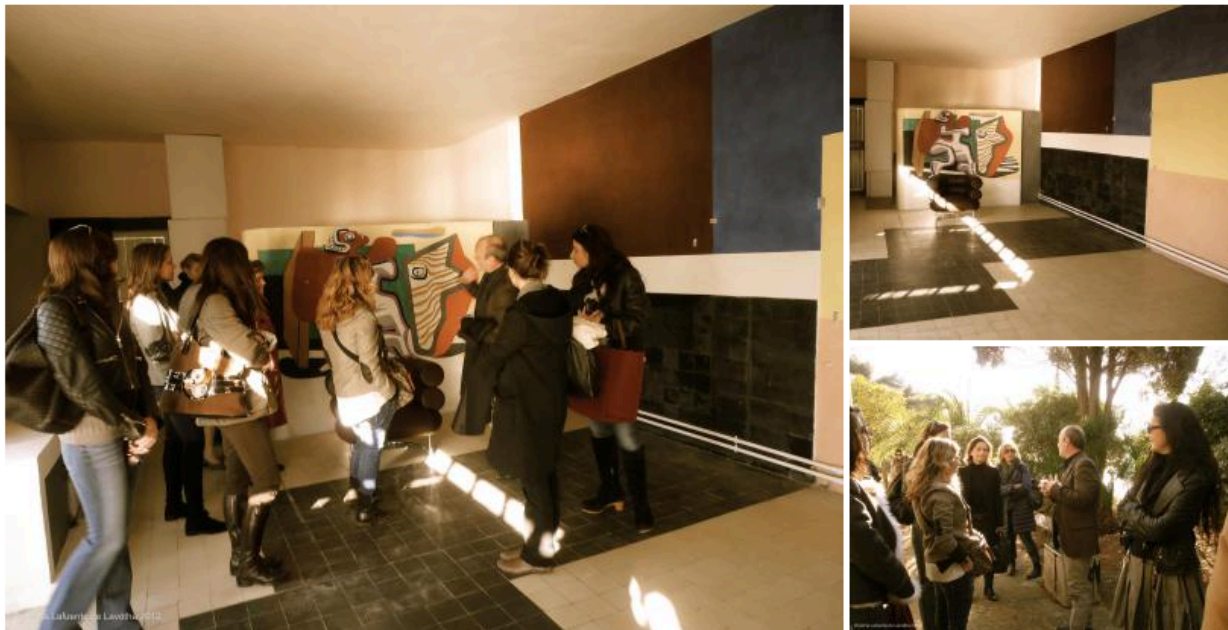
FROM THE HEART OF THE PRINCIPALITY

### The Eileen Gray project – The architect's sun kissed villa on a cliff reborn

BY CELINA MAY 22, 2015

#### E1027 opens its doors to let the sun shine in

It was back in **January 2012**, when I first had a glimpse of **E1027**, the minimalist white villa on a cliff in Roquebrune Cap Martin on the coast of France, on a private tour organised by the Monaco Project for the Arts, when the villa and the rest of the complex was inaccessible. It was a unique and rare opportunity to see this piece of modern architecture by the Irish artist. So when my friend and filmmaker Marco Orsini, in **April 2013**, suggested I did an **interview of Mary McGuckian**, who was working on the feature film *The Price of Desire*, about Eileen Gray, I did not hesitate and it launched my involvement with this interesting project. It was only recently, going through photos taken during that first visit in 2012 that I realised Mary McGuckian had been part of our art group. Our encounter was certainly in the cards!



On **Monday, May 11, 2015**, I had the privilege to be invited for a private shooting of E1027 in the presence of Mary McGuckian, Marco Orsini and Michael Likierman who is heading the restoration of the complex. The photos below are a result of that recent visit, before E-1027, together with the rest of the complex – the Cabanon of Le Corbusier, the Camping units and the Etoile de La Mer – opened to pre-arranged guided tours and later on to the general public.

# Friends of E.1027





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## A multidimensional project

The Eileen Gray project is multidimensional and purposely designed to bring the life and work of the Irish architect to the public attention. In the center of it all is E1027, the modern villa entirely conceived and built in 1926-29 by Eileen Gray, towering majestically on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The name E1027, is a code of Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, where 'E' stands for Eileen, '10' Jean, '2' Badovici, '7' Gray, a way of showing their relationship as lovers at the time it was built.

In 1999 the villa was saved from bulldozing by the *Conservatoire du Littoral*. As a result of a restoration and restitution study conducted by the Association Eileen Gray-etoile de la Mer-Le Corbusier, the villa was decorated with furnishings designed by Eileen Gray and modern furniture by retailer Zeev Aram, who knew Gray at the end of her life and who is licensee for many of her key designs, and who has acted as consultant and donated furniture.

The house has gone through a long, bureaucratic and contentious refurbishment, but since September 2014 the restoration project, representing 5 million Euros, has been run by the *Cap Moderne Association* through a trust, that includes the whole complex (E-1027, Etoile de la Mer and the Le Corbusier's Cabanon), overseen by conservation architect *Claudia Devaux*. Michael Likierman, a retired British entrepreneur who is based in nearby Menton, is the trust's chair with Rebutato's son Robert as vice-chair, working to safeguard and promote E1027 plus the rest of the compound. It was indeed Likierman, alongside designer Terence Conran, who was responsible for establishing *Habitat* in France. Likierman brought business know-how to the project with plans to build a visitor center in the future. He even put together a group of independent advisors to oversee the ongoing restoration of the compound.

## The Price of Desire by Mary McGuckian

The feature film *The Price of Desire* by Mary McGuckian, tells the story of the inception of 20<sup>th</sup> century Architecture through the life of Eileen Gray. The movie was shot partly in E1027, authentically cast, with Orla Brady as Eileen Gray, Vincent Perez as her nemesis Le Corbusier, Francesco Scianna as the architect Jean Badovici, Alanis Morissette as the French singer Marisa Damia, Dominique Pinon and Elsa Zylberstein. The film is a *ménage à quatre* between Le Corbusier, Gray and her two lovers, Badovici and Marisa Damia. The film explores the insidious chauvinism experienced by this remarkable bisexual Irish artist, architect and designer as a universal female experience, while cinematically evoking the essential aesthetic of Eileen Gray. I had the chance to be *on the movie set of the film at E1027* in the summer of 2013 and published an article about this experience.

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## Gray Matters by Marco Orsini

The broadcast length documentary *Gray Matters* by Marco Orsini – that counts with the participation of the most significant world experts – is an all-inclusive account on Gray's career. It explores the long, fascinating life and complicated career of the architect and designer, whose uncompromising vision defined and defied the practice of modernism in decoration, design and architecture. Making a reputation with her traditional lacquer work in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gray became a critically acclaimed and sought after designer and decorator, before reinventing herself as an architect, a field in which she labored largely in obscurity. Apart from the accolades that greeted her first building –persistently and perversely credited to her mentor Le Corbusier- her pioneering work was done quietly, privately and to her own specifications. But she lived long enough (98) to be re-discovered and acclaimed. Today, with her work commanding extraordinary prices and attention, her legacy, like its creator, remains elusive, contested and compelling. I was **on location with Marco Orsini** when he shot part of his documentary at the villa and published an article.



## Set of Stills by Julian Lennon

A handsome limited edition **box set of stills by Julian Lennon** of portraits of the characters from the Eileen Gray film *The Price of Desire*, was published in a limited edition box set by world-renowned fine-art printers, Stoney Road Press of Ireland.

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## The architect's biography by Jennifer Goff

*Biography – Eileen Gray: Her work and her world*, by Dr. Jennifer Goff PhD, National Museum of Ireland's curator, is Goff's definite and revisionary biography, has been published by Irish Academic Press and is available internationally.

The renowned and highly influential architect, furniture-maker, interior designer and photographer Eileen Gray was born in Ireland and remained throughout her life an Irishwoman at heart. An elusive figure, her interior world has never before been observed as closely as in this ground-breaking study of her work, philosophy and inner circle of fellow artists.

Jennifer Goff expertly blends art history and biography to create a stunning ensemble, offering a clear beacon of light into truly understanding Gray – the woman and the professional. Gray was a self-taught polymath and her work was multi-functional, user-friendly, ready for mass production yet succinctly unique, and her designs show great technical virtuosity. Her expertise in lacquer work and carpet design, often overlooked, is given due attention in this book, as is her fascinating relationship with the architect Le Corbusier and many other compelling and complex relationships. The book also offers rare insights into Gray's early years as an artist. The primary source material for this book is drawn from the Eileen Gray collection at the National Museum of Ireland and its wealth of documentation, correspondence, personal archives, photographs and oral history.

## The Retrospective at Center Pompidou

The Center Pompidou in association with the National Museum of Ireland organised an Eileen Gray Retrospective from April 29, 2015. The Pompidou's Eileen Gray exhibition will travel to the Bard Graduate Center Gallery in New York and other venues across 2015 to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Le Corbusier.

## Visiting E1027

Only guided visits can be arranged through October 31, 2015. For information: [contact@capmoderne.com](mailto:contact@capmoderne.com), Telephone: +33 (0)6 4872 9053 (Tuesday through Sunday, from 10:00 to 17:00). From June 26, 2015 there will be a more extended opening. For additional information visit: [www.capmoderne.com](http://www.capmoderne.com)