Eileen Gray
2. Guéridon table, circa 1922-25, wood and natural lacquer © Archives Galerie Vallois - Paris, Arnaud Carpentier
3. *Wendigen* rug, 1923, hand woven wool carpet, the rectangular field knotted in shades midnight-blue and black © Christies images
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Jennifer Goff, September 2014
Introduction

For much of the twentieth century Eileen Gray remained an elusive figure. Born in Ireland, Gray trained as an artist in both London and Paris and continued to produce artwork throughout her life. She is renowned primarily for her work in France during the 1910s and 1920s as a furniture and interior designer. Gray was also a photographer, capturing artistic images in form, light and shade. Forming a successful partnership with lacquer artist Seizo Sugawara (1884-1937), Gray became the first twentieth-century European artist to adapt traditional Asian lacquer techniques to contemporary Western furnishings. Along with her friend Evelyn Wyld (1882-1973) she designed wall hangings and carpets which were sold at her shop Jean Désert, opened in May 1922. The house E.1027 and its furnishings are undoubtedly her best known work. Despite the house being published in L’Architecture Vivante in 1929, the design was attributed to other architects and the success which Gray had early in her career as a furniture designer and interior designer was soon forgotten. As a direct result Gray was omitted from the canon of modern architecture until her work was revived by a series of articles written from 1968 onwards and the record prices her work began to achieve at auction.¹

Beginning in 1923, Gray experimented with architectural form. She was advised by and collaborated with a number of architects from that period. This resulted in the realisation of interior design projects and new buildings. In her archive there are numerous architectural projects which remain unresolved. As a furniture designer Gray constantly varied the media she used; chrome, celluloid, plastics, perforated metal and cork. Her work was multi-functional, user-friendly, ready for mass production yet succinctly unique, and her designs show great technical virtuosity. Initially she had hoped to mass-produce her lacquer work, but the sheer expense of the process proved prohibitive. As an interior designer, especially in

¹ Eileen Gray, by Berenice Abbott, 1926, black and white photograph © NMI
the commissions from Mme Mathieu-Lévy (Juliette Lévy) for her Rue de Lota and Boulevard Suchet apartments, she excelled in the creation of architectonic environments. The planning of walls, decors, lighting and fixtures created a modern interior concept. The Rue de Lota apartment was completed in two stages – the first from 1919-22 and the second from 1922-24. The Boulevard Suchet apartment was completed from 1931-32 and again Gray used white blocks to cover the wall mouldings. From this simple yet radical interior, Gray continued to show a rare homogeneity of style, exhibiting the Monte Carlo room in 1923. This ambitious project, based on a dual-purpose multi-functional living area with a bedroom boudoir, received much negative criticism from French critics. However, members of the De Stijl art group, set up in Amsterdam in 1917, took notice, praising her. Some, such as J.J.P. Oud (1890-1963), wrote to her requesting copies of reviews of her work and in referring to her native Ireland inquired, ‘Do you have any modern movement in your country?’

As an architect, she was self-taught, and by 1926 had begun to experiment directly with architectural forms, resulting in House for an Engineer, 1926. Her six-year collaboration with Jean Badovici (1893-1956) provided her with the final impetus for an independent career. Gray was introduced to Adrienne Gorska (1899-1969) whom Badovici had met while studying at architectural school. Gorska tutored her in architectural drawing. Gray’s architectural archives reveal over 100 sketches, drawings, plans, elevations, descriptions and notes. Some projects were collaborative – such as the work that Gray completed with Jean Badovici at Vézelay. Some projects were realised such as E.1027, 1926-29; the bedroom renovations of her apartment in Rue Bonaparte, 1930; Jean Badovici’s Rue Chateaubriand apartment, 1929-31; Tempe a Pailla, 1931-34 and Lou Pérou, 1954-61. She produced numerous models for the Ellipse house, 1936; the House for Two Sculptors, 1933-34; Vacation and Leisure centre, 1936-37 and a huge model of the Cultural and Social centre, 1946-47. Sadly, many projects were left unrealised and unresolved. In response to legislation in 1936 requiring employers to grant workers paid leave, Gray designed the Vacation and Leisure centre, including the Ellipse housing in the project. She exhibited her Vacation and Leisure centre, in Le Corbusier’s Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux at the Exposition Internationale des Art et des Techniques appliqués à la Vie moderne of 1937.

Gray took copious photographs of her work throughout her career. In the case of her architectural project E.1027, the photographs were published
along with her architectural ideas. These were articulated in a dialogue, in a special issue of *L’Architecteure Vivante*, in 1929. She exhibited frequently at the Salon d’Automne, was a member of the Société Nationale des Artistes Décorateurs and a founding member of the Union des Artistes Moderne.

Despite such achievements, Gray remained aloof from her contemporaries, and throughout her career her architectural work attracted critical attention only infrequently, although she continued to design throughout her life. Then, in 1968 and 1972, the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert (b.1926) published a series of enlightening articles which reappraised Gray’s architecture. In November 1972, at the auction of Jacques Doucet’s (1853-1929) collection at the Hôtel Drouot, her screen *Le Destin* realised a record price. This revived a global interest in her work which still continues since 24 February 2009 after the *Serpent chair* fetched a world record price at auction. Collectors vie to own her furniture; historians compete to document her life. Many theses, articles, publications, catalogues raisonné and exhibitions examine the artist, designer, architect, her oeuvre, her buildings and her legacy. Some emphatically authenticate her work while others refute it. Collections of Gray’s work exist in museums and private collections across the world. Of those who met her towards the end of her life, some got to know her, while others assumed they did. During her later years Gray attempted, and mostly succeeded in destroying her personal papers, as she wanted to be remembered for her designs and her architecture rather than her personal history. From the archives and ephemera that remain, another fact becomes clear: despite having an aristocratic family background and an illustrious career in France (where she remained all of her working life) Eileen Gray was born in Ireland and she remained throughout her life an Irishwoman at heart.

The primary source material for this publication is drawn from the Eileen Gray collection and archives at the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), which were acquired from 2000–2008 and consist of 1,835 objects. Secondary material was consulted in the collections and archives of the following institutions; the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Tate Gallery Archives, Trinity College Dublin (TCD), the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI), the Irish Architectural Archive (IAA), The National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL), the Centre Pompidou, the Fondation Le Corbusier, the Musée Rodin, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and Columbia University. Relevant Eileen Gray material was also researched in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Virginia Museum of Fine
Art, the Getty Centre, Los Angeles, the Portsmouth, Leicester and Bristol City Art Galleries, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, the Mairie de Menton, the Musée National de la Marine, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet and the Vitra Design Museum, Germany. Private collections were also consulted through galleries and through the auction houses of Christie's, Sotheby's, Bonham's and the Maison Camard.

Gray's reputation has been consolidated by galleries and museums acquiring collections of her work since the early 1970s and through retrospective exhibitions at the Royal Institute of British architects, London, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the Design Museum, London, the Centre Pompidou, Paris and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

The Eileen Gray Collection at the National Museum of Ireland represents a veritable anthology of Eileen Gray's varied career as a designer and architect. This collection embraces so many different disciplines which interested Gray throughout her life, including art, photography, graphic art, new media, lacquer work, architecture and furniture and carpet design. It represents the stream of consciousness of Gray's design process through a variety of media. It is an intensely personal collection — coming directly from Gray herself. It is Gray’s own assembly of souvenirs, furniture and architecture, which she kept until her death in 1976. The wealth of documentation, correspondence, magazines, books, exhibition catalogues, personal archives, photographs, portfolios and oral history which emerged from this collection provided the information in this book on Gray's work, probing into her design and architectural thinking. This sheer mass of documentation, which testifies to the lengthy, meticulous process that she applied to every aspect of her design, marks her out not as a feminised subject ruled by emotions and materials, but rather a designer and architect guided by logic and order.

It also affords the opportunity to examine her early years as an artist and her recent past in the latter years which up until now was still lacking in the publications on Gray and how these periods contributed to her career and to her philosophy. This collection, viewed as an ensemble, offers a beacon of light into understanding Gray, the woman and the professional. It gives an appreciation of the world that shaped her, however hard she attempted to shape it, or hide it, by destroying a large amount of her work and documents. It gives an understanding into the one area for which Gray wanted to be remembered: her work.
Eileen Gray was Irish. Numerous documents, letters and papers from her personal archive reveal unremittingly that she was incredibly proud of this fact. Notes on her life and work, which she kept as records of dates of various important projects, reveal that despite her family background that Gray constantly referred to herself as ‘Irish’ and viewed herself as an Irish expatriate. Towards the end of her life, when her work was revived with global enthusiasm, Gray sought to rectify a number of issues surrounding her life and work. As a result she wrote numerous notes or lists regarding projects and dates which were important to her career. She also addressed the issue of her nationality. ‘Born in Ireland (South) Co. Wexford’, she wrote, and again in another document, but this time in French, she typed ‘Né en Irlande à Enniscorthy’ (Born in Ireland at Enniscorthy).1

Eileen Gray’s family history was unconventional. However much she affirmed her Irish patrimony she also could not escape or ignore that her family, on her mother’s side, was very distinguished. Her grandmother, Lady Jane Stuart (1802–1880) was the granddaughter of Francis Stuart (1737–1810), the ninth Earl of Moray and his wife Jean Gray (1743–1786). On Francis’s father’s side of the family the first Earl of Moray, James Stewart,
was the illegitimate son of King James V. Jean Gray was a descendant of the first Lord Gray who was the first master of the household of King James II of Scotland.²

Lady Jane was fifth in the line of succession after her four brothers to the title of Baron of Lord Gray. However, her four unmarried brothers all died without issue and she then inherited the title becoming Baroness Lady Gray. Lady Jane Stuart married Sir John Archibald Drummond Stewart (b.1794) of Grandtully on 25 January 1832. He died on 20 May 1838. Just three months after his death she married Jeremiah Lonsdale Pounden (d. 3 March 1887), Eileen Gray’s grandfather, on 25 August 1838. Pounden was an Irishman and a Doctor of Medicine. The couple renewed their vows at the end of 1840 when Jane was pregnant with their only child, a girl. Eveleen Pounden was born in Dresden on 3 May 1841, but was baptised in Ireland.³ Eveleen caused quite a scandal when she eloped to Italy in 1863 to marry a 31-year-old middle-class painter, James Maclaren Smith (d.1900) who was from Hazelgrun in Lancashire.⁴ Though this union, which did not last, was not welcomed by the family, the couple returned to live at Brownswood House, in Enniscorthy, County Wexford.

Gray’s grandfather Jeremiah Lonsdale Pounden, having amassed a large fortune, had bought Brownswood estate at the beginning of the nineteenth century for £5,500.⁵ The Georgian manor was an elegantly proportioned early nineteenth-century house with two storeys and five bays. The centre bay broke forward and the house had a pillared porch and an eave roof.⁶ Eileen Gray was born on 9 August 1878 at Brownswood, the youngest of five children.⁷
Her well-documented childhood was spent between the family’s London residence at 14 Boltons in South Kensington, a brief spell at school in Dresden, and Brownswood House in Ireland. Photographs and memorabilia reveal trips to Milan, Genoa, Paris, Nice, Egypt, America and skiing trips in the Alps. There are numerous photographs also of the family’s life in Ireland which she kept with her throughout her life. These included images of her brother Lonsdale using the horse and trap, Gray horse riding through the Brownswood estate, on a picnic with her sister Thora and the family with friends playing croquet on the lawn in front of the family home. On the back of one photograph Gray purportedly reports that the family had the first Fiat in Ireland.

Different descriptions of her childhood have materialised. In some, Gray describes her upbringing as ‘lonely and unloved’ at the estate. ‘Despite considerable wealth and many servants, life was far from comfortable at Brownswood. In the cold wet weather the children had to put on coats to cross the icy halls and staircases’. Gray herself stated that ‘even the nursery seemed never to warm up’. However, in an interview in 1976 with Irish journalist and writer Maeve Binchy (1940-2012), Gray recollects...
Eileen Gray's father, James Maclaren Smith was an artist, a minor figure in Victorian painting of portraits and landscapes. He was also quite an accomplished watercolourist. Her father was well connected in the art world and corresponded with great artists of the time such as William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), John Brett (1831-1902), William Powell Frith (1819-1909) and John Everett Millais (1829-1896). He sublet his studio to Hunt. Eileen Gray often travelled with her father in Italy and Germany as he painted a lot in these countries, and in Switzerland. When her parents separated he remained in Italy permanently except for a few visits. Gray 'couldn’t understand why he (her father) had to spend such a long time in hot landscapes where even the ground and walls looked parched in villages instead of painting cool green things that were shiny and silky in Wexford'.

After her father’s departure, many things began to change. On 23 July 1888 Gray’s eldest sister Ethel (1866-1946) married Henry Tufnell Campbell (d.31 January 1945), the Earl of Lindsay and the grandson of Sir Henry Bethune, first Baronet of Kilconquhar, Scotland. The 1891 census reveals
that 33-year-old Henry was a stockbroker and married to 25-year-old Ethel. The couple divided their time between England and Brownswood. Throughout the 1890s Henry and Ethel lived in London at 1 Creswell Gardens and then moved to 7 Collingwood Gardens. Eileen’s relationship with Ethel and her husband would remain a tentative one throughout their lives.

On the death of her uncle George Philip Stuart, fourteenth Earl of Moray and eighteenth Lord Gray, on 16 March 1895, Gray’s mother Eveleen stood to inherit the title Baroness Gray in the peerage of Scotland and her son-in-law Henry persuaded her to claim it. Following this Gray’s father received royal licence in 1897 to change his name from Smith to Gray and the children’s names were changed accordingly. This news appeared in Irish newspapers at the time. On 27 April 1895 *The Enniscorthy News* and *County of Wexford Advertiser* reported, quoting from an article in the *Dundee Advertiser* on 10 April 1895:

Mrs. MacLaren Smith who in consequence of the death of the fourteenth Lord Moray has succeeded to the Barony of Gray is a granddaughter of the tenth Earl and the vicissitudes of families have been remarkably illustrated in her case, in as much as her mother, through whom she inherits, was originally only the seventh in the succession to the title as she had six brothers, all of whom however died without issue. She married first Sir John Archibald Drummond Stewart of Grentully and after his death Mr. Lonsdale Pounden of Brownswood, County Wexford, who had amassed a large fortune, and the present Baroness Gray being the only child of the marriage. Lady Gray married in 1863 Mr. MacLaren Smith of Hazelgrun Lanchashire and has two sons (the second of whom is an officer in the Carabineers) and three daughters.

Another article appeared in the same newspaper on 11 July 1895 under
A somewhat curious case came before the committee of privileges of the House of Lords on Tuesday, in which a Mrs. Eveleen Smith, the daughter of Mr. Jeremiah Lonsdale Pounden of Brownswood Co. Wexford, established her claim to the title of Baroness Gray, in the peerage of Scotland. Mr. Lindsay who appeared on her behalf said that the only difficulty in connection with it was that of finding direct formal documentary evidence of the petitioner’s birth. Her mother was Lady Jane Stuart daughter of the 10th Earl of Moray, and sister of the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th Earl of Moray (all of whom died unmarried), was united in matrimony to Sir John Archibald Drummond Stuart (sic) of Grantully who died in May 1838 without leaving issue. Three months after the death of Sir John Stewart, the lady married again by license to Jeremiah Lonsdale Pounden, a physician of Irish birth. In 1840, two years after the original marriage the lady having reason to believe she was about to become a mother, again went through the marriage ceremony with Mr. Pounden. That was in August 1840, and the only issue of that marriage was the present petitioner, who had always been led to believe that she was born in Dresden on or about the 3 May 1841 nine months after the date of the second ceremony, which second marital ceremony had been gone through in consequence of some doubts having been suggested as to the validity of the first. In those days there was no official registration of births and deaths. There was however a registration of baptisms and it would be proved that the petitioner was baptised in Ireland as the daughter of Mr. Pounden and Lady Jane Stuart. She was not however baptised in infancy, and therefore the certificate of baptism was not direct evidence of the date of birth. Except as to the latter point the proofs were conclusive and the Earl of Moray had promised to state the facts, which had always been accepted by the family. Evidence was then adduced and
several letters written by the late Earl of Moray were put in to show that the deceased peer fully acknowledged the relationship with the petitioner.

Gray herself would rarely use her own title ‘The Honourable Eileen Gray’; she was not close to her sister Ethel or Henry Tufnell Campbell due to this situation of her mother reclaiming the title. Gray’s mother was also persuaded by Henry to redevelop Brownswood House. This work was carried out between 1895 and 1896 by the architect Sir Thomas Drew (1838-1910) making it ‘a magnificent specimen of Elizabethan architecture, with a charming parterre laid out in faultless style; the entrance lodge, which has recently been completed, is quite a gem’. In Gray’s opinion it was an ostentatious mock-Tudor structure. New additions were added, firstly a new stable block, 1889, a new cowshed, 1890, and additional stable buildings, 1892, by Drew’s close friend architect William Mansfield Mitchell (1842-1910). Throughout her life she was unable to forget this act of vandalism; the destruction of Georgian purity for flamboyant Elizabethan decoration. ‘It was the destruction of her childhood home, more than anything else that finally drove her from Ireland’. In the final years of her life Eileen Gray remained upset at the changes that occurred to her family home. She described the style of the house as ‘unimaginative’ and constantly showed visitors two images she kept of the early Irish Georgian house and the later nineteenth-century conversion.

Many believe that Gray never returned to either Brownswood or Ireland after the death of her mother on 24 December 1918. Due to the previous death of Gray’s father and both her brothers the Brownswood estate was inherited by her sister Ethel and Henry. On 17 July 1926 The Irish Times advertised the sale of Brownswood estate by Battersby and Company. The description is quite impressive:

Brownswood Co. Wexford on 150 acres freehold for sale with possession. Beautiful modern country house overlooking the River Slaney which flows through the property, with magnificent views of Mount Leinster and Blackstairs. Two and one half miles from the station and 24 miles from Rosslare harbour. Lands including gardens, pleasure grounds, farming land, woods etc in all about 150 acres, if
desired or less. The pleasure grounds are unusually beautiful, containing terraces, formal Italian garden, walks, pergola, herbaceous borders, kitchen garden etc. Five reception rooms and winter garden, 20 bed and dressing rooms, 3 bathrooms, excellent white tiled offices, electric light, central heating, excellent water; also magnificent stabling for 20 horses, garages, out houses etc. All most up-to-date and fitted with electric light. Three lodges, four cottages. Good hunting with two packs.

The family’s connection with Brownswood finally ended on 4 March 1929 when the estate was sold to the Wexford Health Board for £5,000. By 5 September the Health Board had tendered for conversion of outbuildings at Brownswood into a residence and for half a century the house served as the County Medical Hospital’s sanatorium.

In the 1976 interview with Maeve Binchy Gray stated, without giving specific dates, that she had returned to Ireland:

Yes, she had been back to Ireland a few times, but very briefly, and once by chance when she found that a plane was going to stop there. She also returned to her beloved Brownswood. She decided to get off and go look at her old home, and she thought she would have again all these lovely feelings of peace and innocence like she had as a child. But it had changed, and nothing was the same. It wasn’t just that everything the lawns, the fields, the river were smaller, she knew that would happen, it was all knocked down and built again, in a most unimaginative style. It made her sad.

Gray admitted to Binchy that on seeing her old home in this condition she never went back again.²¹

Later Binchy recalled that despite her illustrious career in France,
Gray simply refused to tell her about all the great and famous things she had done in her life. She was much more interested in ‘what I (Binchy) thought of County Wexford, and who were the bright young designers in Ireland’.22

Despite her grandfather being Irish, Gray was a young lady from an aristocratic Protestant-background family. Her family belonged to a faith which had always been a minority one in Ireland, and which symbolised wealth and power. Gray benefited from growing up in a politically secure Ireland and in a period of cultural optimism. As was usual as a member of her class Gray’s formal education came from governesses and a period of study at a boarding school abroad, in her case in Dresden. Local newspapers in Wexford reported frequently on the art world in London and Paris, advocating the new improved approaches to art education.23 The fashionable art schools that proliferated during this period in London were widely accepted as suitable finishing schools for young ladies before they married. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, for artists to achieve recognition or status, they had to go abroad to gain experience and education. This was partly due to the social, political and economic situations then prevailing in Ireland. They went to London and mainland Europe, most notably Paris, many returning once they had honed their craft and technique.

By the 1890s Gray was a very striking and fashionable young woman.24 As a young lady from an aristocratic Anglo-Irish Protestant background she was seemingly destined for marriage to an eligible bachelor. During her lifetime there was no shortage of suitors, many of them quite famous.25 Gray’s intentions for art school were delayed after the loss of her father and later her brother Lonsdale in the Boer War in 1900.26 After a brief diversion with her mother to Paris for the Exposition Universelle, Gray enrolled in the Slade School in London in 1900 and remained registered as a student studying fine art until 1902. English schools were full of young ladies from the upper and middle classes. The choice of school was important, and social propriety was paramount. Gray’s choice was quite unconventional as
the Slade was considered ‘advanced’.27 From its creation in 1871, the school had admitted women. Initially, women were only permitted to work from the draped model and the antique. By the 1870s rules were relaxed to the extent that students could have access to the partially draped living model. By 1901, the practice of separating the sexes was no longer enforced, except in life drawing classes. Models and students were strictly forbidden to converse, and communication was restricted to short words of command.
One of Gray’s contemporaries Randolph Schwabe (1885–1948) who attended fine art classes at the Slade the same years as Gray did observe that the teaching of female students had progressed from the days when the Slade Professor of Fine Art could not be seen with students in the women’s Life Room while a nude female was posing. Women students had to file out when he came in, and he then could enter, write his criticisms, in their absence, around the margins of their drawings. Gray was one of 168 women students in a class of 228. Classes varied from antique drawing to life classes. Attendance at these classes was granted to the more proficient artists. However, while women from the working or artisan classes were accepted into schools for the applied arts, the study of fine art was yet to be recognised as a suitable profession for them. Fine Art was regarded as the preserve of the middle and upper class that were looking for a suitable pastime. Upper middle class women who showed talent in fine art in the state-sponsored system were steered away from pursuing art as a profession, as public education was regarded as charity for the poor. During its early years the Slade School, with over half of the student body being taken up by women, had been at the centre of the debate in relation to the rights of professional female artists and in the rights of education for women.

The ‘Sladers’ had a somewhat flamboyant, bohemian character with a disregard for reputation. Slade women were described as ‘new women’. However, Eileen Gray remained unimpressed with the academic approach of the teachers. Her professors were renowned painters of the period, Wilson Steer (1860–1942), Henry Tonks (1862–1831) and Frederick Brown (1851–1941). Steer had been influenced by the Impressionists, especially Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Edgar Degas (1834–1917), during his Paris sojourn in 1882, and he had attended the Académie Julian, Paris, in 1882. Yet he insisted on structural drawing and emphasis on the old masters. Brown and Tonks were influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites and the writings of Ruskin. Brown avidly advocated the return to the practice and draughtsmanship among the old masters including Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867). Brown destroyed many paintings that did not satisfy him – Gray later would continue his practice, destroying almost all of her early student works. Students did charcoal diagrams and sketches continuously on drawing paper. Brown emphasised drawing more so than painting enforcing his motto ‘action, construction, proportion’. Gray worked mostly in charcoal or sanguine in his classes. Brown was renowned
for recognising talent and promise with female students, having himself become an admirer of and patron of the work of Ethel Walker (1861-1951). Tonks emphasised faithful reproduction to scale in drawing and sketching. He set high standards for his pupils continuing a Slade tradition of pre-eminence in drawing. He was described as ‘dour and irascible ... an unfortunate development that cut him off from the more gifted of his pupils’. He also berated students and was noted for his sarcasm. However, it was recorded that in one of Gray’s classes ‘a certain woman student used, when she considered herself unjustly bullied, to reason gravely and firmly with him, and this from her, he tolerated’. Tonks’s paintings were noted for their dryness of technique, known as ‘Tonking’. It consisted of soaking up the absorbent material with excess material. This technique Gray used later in many of her collages. Steer’s area of expertise was painting – especially watercolour. But Steer was criticised for not taking a lively interest in his teaching, so if a student persisted in questioning him, his acute judgement and great knowledge would be brought to bear.

Gray’s frustration with the Slade School may have stemmed from the fact that students seldom spent more than a day on one drawing, where hours were spent in the crowded Antique Room until four o’clock. Then from four until five o’clock students drew short poses in the Life Room. There were also stories of students never moving from the Antique Room to the Life Room, drawing with unabated zeal for three or four years. Her dissatisfaction with the Slade School was apparent from her lack of attendance. She recorded that she first met Dean Charles in 1901, in Dean Street, Soho in London. Charles was a furniture restorer and was the first to introduce Gray to lacquering techniques. Whilst at the Slade Gray solicited lessons from the firm in traditional Asian lacquer techniques, making numerous notes. She remained friends with Charles for years afterwards. Dean Charles used mostly coloured European varnishes to repair screens but also had red Chinese lacquer which Gray began to use.

Her attention turned to the artistic centre of Paris, but the friendships she formed in London would influence her artistic propensities and her thinking for years to come. Gray departed for Paris along with several friends, including Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), Gerald Festus Kelly (1879-1972), Kathleen Bruce (1878-1947) and Jessie Gavin (1876-1939). She had settled there temporarily by 1902, with Gavin and Bruce, at a pension at 7 rue de Joseph Bara in the artist quarter near Montparnasse. Gray told
Maeve Binchy that she ‘arrived as an Irish immigrant to Paris in 1902. She didn’t really intend to stay there forever, but somehow things worked out that way. It was very different to home in Wexford’. They continued their drawing studies, enrolling at the École Colarossi in late 1902 to 1903, a popular art school among foreign students. Rivalry among students was apparent but also considered engaging. Gray, Kelly and others soon transferred to the Académie Julian by 1903, a private fee-paying school, where students were trained primarily for admission to the École des Beaux-Arts. The Académie prided itself on segregated studios, yet women were taught by the same professors as their male counterparts.

Gray had many admirers during this period of her life, Kelly being one of them. ‘To Eileen he seemed someone quite extraordinary, and she took to this talkative Irishman, he was good company’. Kelly was born in London in 1879; however, his Irish ancestry could be traced back to the tenth century. His father was of direct Irish descent while his mother was half Irish. Kelly said, ‘I’m of Irish blood, you know, and apparently in France they imagined that Ireland being damp, was full of people with gout’. He was educated at Eton College and then Trinity College Cambridge. He attended the Slade School at exactly the same dates as Gray. He went to Paris in 1901, where he remained for many years. He exhibited at the Salon in 1904. He travelled extensively during his lifetime, to exotic locations such as Burma and Africa, as well as closer countries such as Italy and Spain for his inspiration. He painted many pictures of young Burmese ladies, sometimes dancing, often posed. Although he had a somewhat varied subject matter he is renowned primarily for his portraits. He executed several State portraits, paintings of society ladies and gentlemen, bishops and lords of the time, among them a portrait of
Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932) and a fine three-quarter length portrait of Sir Hugh Lane (1875-1915). He exhibited over 300 works at the Royal Academy in London between 1909 and 1970 and held the Presidency there from 1949 to 1954.

Though they had a number of close mutual friends, Kelly was responsible for introducing Gray to a much wider Parisian circle. His cousin wrote a letter of introduction that brought about an invitation to the home of the great art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922). Through Durand-Ruel he befriended the artists Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and the French sculptor Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) among others. In 1902 Gray was introduced to Rodin by Kelly and wrote to him looking to purchase one of his bronze statues – the Danaid. Kelly also owed many glowing Parisian memories to the Jewish essayist and critic Marcel Schwob (1867-1905) and his wife the actress Marguerite Moreno (1871-1948). Kelly drew her hands. He introduced Eileen Gray to the Schwobs at their house. They were concerned for Kelly’s welfare, and Marguerite was worried because Kelly’s French was poor. As a result they organised for him to dine twice a week with a young writer, Paul Léautaud (1872-1956). Eileen Gray also met Léautaud at the Schwobs while visiting with Kelly some time during 1904. According to his diaries Léautaud pursued Gray with amorous intent, albeit unsuccessfully.

Gray remembers spending many evenings in Kelly’s studio listening to him describe a meeting with Rodin, or the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, or the actresses Eleonora Duse (1858-1924), and Maillol or just waiting with Aleister Crowley for something ‘magic’ to happen. In Cambridge Kelly had befriended the controversial figure Aleister Crowley (1875-1947). Crowley was an influential English occultist, mystic and ceremonial magician responsible for founding the religious philosophy of Thelema. He was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as well as a co-founder of the spiritual organisation the A A and leader of Ordo Templi Orientis. A controversial poet, playwright and social critic, he
revolted against the moral and religious values of the time through a hedonistic lifestyle espousing a form of libertinism based on the rule of ‘Do What Thou Wilt’. When he left Cambridge in 1896 Crowley severed all ties with Christianity and began to read up on the subject of occultism and mysticism, reading books by alchemists and mystics and books on magic. In May 1896 Crowley met and befriended Kelly. Their friendship was fostered by shared artistic ambitions and parallels in their background. Occultism was fashionable in intellectual circles at the time and in their first years of friendship Crowley enticed Kelly to dabble in magical ritual.

Not everyone in their circle was considered respectable. Crowley was also a notorious Lothario and womaniser. Kathleen Bruce describes the Englishmen of the quarter as ‘an unsavory collection’. Many ladies feared the loss of their reputation if Crowley displayed an interest in them and it was said that ‘no young thing could remain alone in the same room with him in safety’.

Crowley had come to Paris in 1902 and Kelly introduced him to Gray. In his autobiography Crowley comments amusingly on Kelly’s ability in portraiture. ‘He (Kelly) once picked out an old canvas to paint over and had gone some distance before he discovered that it was his favourite portrait of the Hon. Eileen Grey (sic)’. This portrait is now unknown.

Initially Crowley was a figure of amusement in Gray’s early years in Paris. At times she found her sessions with him rather boring and full of nonsense. However, Gray owned a series of publications by him which she kept throughout her life. His writings and ideas influenced her early lacquer work and carpet work. They also developed her ideas in philosophical thinking. His ideas regarding the occult were intriguing and she acquired a copy of The Mother’s Tragedy, one of Crowley’s earliest books on poetry and drama. This publication is one of the earliest to incorporate the occult teaching of the Golden Dawn, and was written in the years following Crowley’s initiation into the order, largely during his travels in Mexico and Asia. She eventually designed a rug in homage
Eileen Gray
to his dark arts called *Magie Noire—Black Magic*. By the end of 1902 Crowley had become somewhat fascinated by Gray, gifting her a diamond brooch.\(^\text{57}\) Firstly he gave her a copy of his book *Tannhäuser, a Story of All Time* which tells the tale of a knight and a poet who discovers the home of Venus, where he spends a year worshipping the goddess. Inside Crowley wrote an inscription ‘To Eileen Gray from Aleister Crowley’. The book was described by Crowley as a self-portrait, however it was more the philosophical aspects of the play that appealed to Gray. *Tannhäuser* is ignorant of his identity with the Supreme Being or God. The various characters in the book all form parts of Tannhäuser’s consciousness, and are not real persons at all. All of these characters either help or hinder his realisation of his true unity with life. Crowley explained that it was through Tannhäuser’s love of Venus refined to pity that he at last attains Supreme Knowledge. Crowley says that play is ‘a series of introspective studies; not necessarily a series in time, but in psychology, and that rather the morbid psychology of the Adept than the gross mentality of the ordinary man’.\(^\text{58}\) Since childhood, Gray had nurtured a deep and profound interest in philosophy, studying the ideas of other dimensions, the conscious and subconscious mind, and the mind being able to create other personas or even worldly realms. Crowley’s controversial approach intrigued her.

Gray may have been interested in his philosophy but not in relation to his ideas regarding men and women. In his poem *The Star and the Garter*, of which Gray also owned a copy,\(^\text{59}\) Crowley satirised a number of their friends and clearly defined his opinion of the role of man and woman. ‘Sometime later I added an appendix of a very obscure kind. The people of our circle, from Kathleen Bruce (since Lady Scott and Mrs Hilton Young) to Sybil Muggins and Hener Skene (later accompanist to Isadora Duncan) are satirised. Their names are introduced by means of puns or allusions and every line is loaded with cryptic criticism. Gerald (Kelly)
and I, as educated men, were frightfully fed up with the presumption and poses of the average ass – male or female – of the quarter.60 He continued; ‘Another affectation of the woman art students was to claim to be treated exactly as if they were men in every respect. Gerald, always eager to oblige, addressed one of his models as old fellow, to her great satisfaction. Then he excused himself for a momentary absence in the terms which he would have to use for another man. On his return, the lady had recovered her “sex and character,” and had bolted. Women can only mix with men on equal terms when she adopts his morality lock, stock, and barrel, and ceases to set an extravagant artificial value on her animal function. The most high principled woman (alleged) insists on the supreme value of an asset which is notoriously of no value whatever in itself. *The Star and the Garter* deals frankly with this problem’.61

A surprise turn of events occurred in late summer 1903 when Crowley eloped with Rose Kelly (1874-1932), sister of Gerald Kelly. Kelly was furious. Despite describing this as the happiest day of his life in letters to Auguste Rodin, Crowley gave little consideration to his wife’s feelings in his autobiography when describing his brief engagement nine months earlier to an unnamed Englishwoman in January of 1903.62 Referring to the unnamed fiancée in his autobiography, Crowley informs us that, ‘This lady claims the notice principally as the model for several of my poems’. He informs the reader that ‘this Englishwoman was “the Star” in *The Star and the Garter* which I wrote at this time’. He claims that this woman served as the model for several poems, notably in the publication *Rosa Mundi and other Love Songs*, written under the pseudonym of H.D. Carr, in 1905. Of the list of poems which he dedicates to this secret fiancée, one was titled *The Kiss* and the other *Eileen*. This poem was dedicated to Eileen Gray. Whether Gray was Crowley’s secret fiancée is speculative, however she returned the gift of the brooch, not wanting to cause embarrassment to Rose, Crowley’s wife.

Prior to his arrival in Paris, Crowley was in India and on 20 and 21 March in 1902 where he composed *Berashith An Essay in Ontology and Ceremonial Magic*. It is Hebrew, meaning ‘in the Beginning; the first word of Genesis’. The book reflects Crowley’s interest in nineteenth-century philosophy and in Buddhism. His ideas again had an influence on Gray as the book discusses the theory of the universe according to Crowley. Included is a discussion of ceremonial magic where magic is viewed as a
preparatory training for yoga. His theory explores the divergences between the great forms of religion – Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity – adapting them to ontological science through mathematics. Crowley finishes the publication with ‘Om Mani Padme Hum’ the six sounds of the sacred Buddhist prayer meaning ‘Hail the Jewel in the Lotus’ – this being the title of one of Gray’s lacquer screens, exhibited in 1913. The book was eventually published privately in Paris in 1903. In the Paris edition the author is given as ‘Abhavanda’. This was Crowley’s chosen Hindu name during his yogic tutelage under Allan Bennett (1872-1923). By December 1903 Gray and Crowley were amicable to the point that Crowley once again sent her a copy of his book, writing his pseudonym ‘Abhavanda to Eileen Gray 9 December’. Crowley’s ideas on yoga also influenced Gray later, as she developed her theories on meditation which culminated in the Meditation Grove project, in 1941, where she designed a meditation garden on a hypothetical site outside St.Tropez. Gray purchased other publications on the subject, but starting with Crowley such publications form a part of Gray’s philosophical thinking in relation to her more socially motivated projects.

 Many of the group to which Kelly and Gray belonged frequented both the Café de Versailles and an upper room at the Chat Blanc. Included were Wyndham Lewis; William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) whom Gray also met; one of Kelly’s best friends, Clive Bell (1881-1964) who stated that Kelly was his close friend during the summer of 1904; Enoch Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) whom Kelly had met through Schwob; Aleister Crowley, and Stephen Haweis (1878-1969), a friend of both Gray’s, Kelly’s and Crowley’s. Gray states that sometimes she was brought along to these soirées. The Chat Blanc in the rue d’Odessa was also popular with a circle of Anglo-American painters, sculptors, illustrators, writers and their female friends. Between 1904 and 1906 regulars at the restaurant included novelists Bennett, Maugham, Bell and Crowley. Among the many artists were the Americans Thomas Alexander Harrison (1853-1930), Penrhyn Stanlaws (1877-1957), Robert Root (1864-1937), Paul Bartlett (1865-1925), Canadian James Morrice (1865-1924), Welshman Gabriel Thompson (1861-1935), Englishmen George Barne (1887-1972) and Joseph Milner Kite (1864-1946). The Irish artist Roderic O’Conor (1860-1940) also visited the Chat Blanc. Gray’s attendance at the Chat Blanc is only indicated in her biography and in Maugham’s book The Magician, 1908. Maugham’s main
protagonist in the novel is Oliver Haddo, who was Crowley, and he describes a young lady, Margaret Dauncey, who had come to Paris from London to study art. Dauncey’s character dined frequently at the ‘Chien Noir’ – Maugham’s fictionalised name for the Chat Blanc. The similarities with Gray in this novel are purely coincidental. It is possible that the character of Margaret is an amalgam of Gray and Gerald Kelly’s sister Rose.

Even if she had not met O’Conor at the Chat Blanc, Gray would certainly have known about this Irish painter through her circle. O’Conor came from Castleplunket, County Roscommon. He attended Ampleforth College in York and by 1879 had enrolled in the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art and then later at the Royal Hibernian Academy. To further his education he studied first in Antwerp at the Académie Royale des Beaux Arts in 1883 and went to Paris in 1886. He travelled and painted between Grez and Brittany for some years and finally moved back to Paris in 1904. He had participated in the inaugural exhibition of the Salon d’Automne in 1903 and continued to exhibit there, with the exception of a few years, until 1935. It was during this period that O’Conor met Bell, Maugham, Bennett, Crowley and Kelly. Maugham did not like O’Conor and O’Conor compared Maugham to ‘a bed bug, on which a sensitive man refuses to stamp because of the smell and the squashiness’. Many of the habitués of the Chat Blanc wrote about O’Conor and by all accounts he apparently reigned there as the accepted pontiff. Maugham often used fictional characters as devices with which to comment on or to attack his enemies, as he seems to have done in The Magician in the case of Crowley and possibly Gray. Similarly, he used O’Conor as the model for his character the painter O’Brien, also in The Magician. O’Conor like Gray became a permanent expatriate and lived the rest of his life in France, chiefly in Paris. And like Gray he suffered the fate of being ignored, until recently, in his native land.
It was also during this period that Gray met the English artist Stephen Haweis. Kelly was a mutual friend from Cambridge as was Crowley. Both Kelly and Gray had a lengthy correspondence with Haweis in the later part of his life. His best friends were the Scottish painter Francis Cadell (1883-1937) and the Irish artist Paul Henry (1876-1958). Belfast born, Henry had arrived in Paris in 1898 and like Haweis and Cadell enrolled immediately in the Académie Julian. It was here at the Academy that the three struck up a close friendship. In both Henry’s and Haweis’s memoirs a number of people are mentioned as attending the Académie at that time. Constance Gore Booth (1868-1927), the future revolutionary from Dublin and her husband Casimir Markievicz (1874-1932); the Chilean painter Manuel Ortiz de Zárate (1887-1946); Lucien Daudet (1878-1946); Francis Cadell; the Birmingham-born portrait artist Katherine Constance Lloyd (op.1923-1940), who had also attended the Slade School in 1896-1897, and the woodcut artist Mabel Royds (1874-1941).

When and where Gray and Henry were first introduced remains unclear and is only hinted at in letters from Haweis to Henry in their renewed correspondence during the 1950s. Haweis lived in Paris until 1914; however Henry, in his memoirs, records Haweis as briefly returning to London sometime in 1901-02. It is during this period that Gray and Henry became acquainted, either in London prior to her leaving for Paris, or in Paris before Henry left for London. Gray is listed in Haweis’s memoirs as being part of their social circle in the 1900s, along with Henry, Cadell, Crowley, Maugham, Kelly, Kathleen Bruce, Jessie Gavin, Katherine Constance Lloyd and others. It is suggested in Haweis’s letters that it was at Kathleen Bruce’s salon that Paul Henry met Gray. It was also at Bruce’s salon that Gray was introduced to John Lavery (1856-1941), who also corresponded with Haweis.

Of this circle of friends that Gray developed during these formative art school years it was a Reverend’s son from London, Stephen Haweis, who gave much insight into Gray’s life during this period and would continue to have an influence on Gray’s work for the rest of her life.
ENDNOTES


3 *The Enniscorthy News and County Wexford Advertiser*, Saturday 11 July 1895.


7 NMIEG 2000.205 and NMIEG 2000.206, the Gray family, circa 1879. James McLaren Stuart, Gray's eldest brother, was born in 1864 and Ethel Eveleen, her eldest sister, was born in 1866. Gray's second brother Lonsdale was born in 1870, but died in 1900 from drinking poisoned water during the Boer War. Her sister Thora Zelma Grace was born in 1875 and finally Eileen in 1878.

8 NMIEG 2000.219-226 and NMIEG 2003.566, the Gray family, Pre 1900.


10 NMIEG 2000.242, a Fiat car.

11 Ibid, Adam, p.12.

12 Ibid, Adam.


16 Ibid, Adam, p.17.


18 Ibid, Adam.

19 Ibid, Binchy.

20 Aquarius Interview, Thames Television Production, 11 November 1975. Gray illustrates photographs of the original Georgian house and the Mock Tudor house of 1896.

21 Ibid, Binchy.


23 In the *Enniscorthy News and County of Wexford Advertiser*, the *Enniscorthy Correspondent* and the *Enniscorthy Recorder*, from 1890 to 1900 there are regular articles concerning art and architecture, leading artists of the day, contemporary exhibitions, theoretical proposals and a new approach to teaching art being put into practice at London Art Schools.


25 NMIEG 2000.238, Eileen Gray with Henry Savage Landor, possibly at the Villa Gherdisca near Florence. Savage Landor was a serious suitor, one that the family approved of, and had studied at the Académie Julian. He was an explorer and when they were introduced he had already travelled quite extensively. The Landors lived in Italy and owned a large villa, the Villa Gherdisca, near Florence. NMIEG 2000.236, Eileen Gray with an unknown gentleman. NMIEG 2000.245 and NMIEG 2003.565, Eileen Gray with three gentlemen.
26 NMIEG 2000.216, James MacLaren Smith taken towards the end of his life. Gray has written lovingly ‘papa’ on the back. NMIEG 2000.217, Lonsdale Gray. Lonsdale Richard Douglas Gray was born 3 March 1870. He died while on active service, unmarried, on 10 June 1900 at aged 30 whilst in South Africa. He fought in the Boer War and gained the rank of Captain in the Sixth Dragoon Guards. Gray was heartbroken at his death.


32 Ibid, Schwabe, p.146

33 Ibid, Schwabe, p.141.

34 Ibid, Schwabe, p.142.

35 Aquarius Interview, London Thames Television Production, November 1975. Eileen Gray states that she studied initially with D. Charles on Dean Street in Soho.


37 Ibid, Adam. pp.23, 34. Adam states that Kelly was at the Slade and this is where Gray befriended him. However, there is no mention of Kelly attending the Slade in Derek Hudson’s biography on Gerald Kelly. In the Slade School records there is an F.M. Kelly registered to study fine art in 1900-1901.


40 Ibid, Adam, p.35.


45 Musée Rodin Archives, three letters from Eileen Gray to Auguste Rodin, December 1902, January 1902 and 20 January 1902.

46 Ibid, Adam, p.38.


48 Ibid, Adam, p.37.


54 Ibid, Crowley, Aleister, p.370.


57 The Warburg Institute Archives, the Yorke Collection, OS D6, letter from Aleister Crowley to Gerald Kelly, 12 August 1903. Crowley denies to Kelly in this letter that they were lovers – however the fact that he gave her the brooch was an indication of affection on his part. It is insinuated that Gray and Crowley were engaged.


62 Musée Rodin Archives, Aleister Crowley papers.


64 Ibid, Adam, p.40.

65 Ibid, Adam, p.38.


68 Ibid, Crowley, p.364.

69 Tate Gallery Archives, Prunella Clough Collection and Archive, letter from Alden Brooks to Denys Sutton, 12 July 1936.


71 Ibid, Bennington, p.93.

72 TCD Archives, Paul Henry Papers – 7429.2, transcript of Paul Henry’s autobiography.
