Queer Interwar Design: Eyre de Lanux and her Sapphic Spaces

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the designed interiors of Elizabeth Eyre de Lanux (1984-1996), an American writer, artist, and designer expatriated in Paris during the interwar period. Active primarily from 1928 to 1932, she designed her interiors collaboratively with her romantic partner, the British textile designer Evelyn Wyld (1882-1973). This thesis looks to interior design history, queer studies, and decolonial theories within the decorative arts to frame the analysis of de Lanux's work and, when relevant, her life. This thesis posits that she designed hybrid spaces—rooted in Art Deco, gleaning from Modernism—as a reflection of her own hybrid identity, as a queer woman engaged in female masculinity, same-sex intimacies, and polyamories. The first section explores de Lanux's gendered, sexual, and stylistic hybridities in her early collaborative interior displays with Wyld, exhibited at various Parisian Salon exhibitions, positioning them as imagined spaces for the modern queer/sapphic woman. Serving as blueprints for her designed modern Parisian dwellings, her displayed interiors prompt the study of the *pied-à-terre* apartments designed for queer, single, or widowed women, serving as the second and final chapter of this thesis. While these interiors remain decorative in nature, they demonstrate an engagement with, and subversion of, modernist sight, while also employing a kind of queer performance of identity, navigating queer in/visibility of space. The visual and material analysis of her designed attempts to create for the modern queer/sapphic woman—both as imagined spaces on display and subsequent inhabited apartments—allow for creative interventions into the understanding of modernism and identity politics in interwar Paris.

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INTRODUCTION

"For nothing was simply one thing."
— Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

The history of interior design has long been understood and studied through a series of binaries, such as: exterior/interior, masculine/feminine, modern/decorative, civilized/uncivilized, architect/decorator, public/private, seen/unseen, visible/invisible, fixed/unfixed, architecture/interior decoration. When those distinctions are blurred, a hybridity emerges that is ambiguous and complex, and is often misidentified, overlooked and under-researched for its lack of clear legibility and its evasion of categorization. I posit that Elizabeth Eyre de Lanux (1984-1996)—an American interior designer, furniture maker, as well as visual artist and writer, expatriated in Paris during the interwar period—designed hybrid spaces as a reflection of her own hybrid identity, as a queer woman engaged in female masculinity, same-sex intimacies, and polyamories. This hybridity presents itself across a spectrum through a fluid expression of gender, sexuality, as well as stylistic choices within her interiors—with the aim of, what queer scholar Jasmine Rault characterizes as, "crafting very different living spaces for […] very different bodies."[1]

A Spectrum of Hybridities: Gender, Sexuality, and Style

Hybridity, by definition, signifies a *mélange* of two, often contrasting, parts. In his seminal book, *The Location of Culture* (2004), postcolonial scholar and theorist Homi Bhabha explores the concept of hybridity, a "process of splitting as the condition of subjection" to colonial powers, "where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different—a

[1] Jasmine Rault, "Losing Feelings: Elizabeth Eyre de Lanux and Her Affective Archive of Sapphic Modernity," *Archives of American Art Journal* 48, no. 1/2 (April 2009): 61.

mutation, a hybrid."[2] He explains that, through the process of mimicry and translation, this mutated, hybrid subject becomes ambiguous, no longer easily visible or identifiable. In part, it is due to its 'doubling;' the subject is newly and simultaneously located in two conflicting spaces that, in turn, result in a singular liminal space. In this way, "it resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups […] as homogeneous polarized political consciousnesses."[3] While Bhabha examines hybridity in the context of race, the theory behind the concept can apply to various parameters of identity and culture, such as gender, sexuality, as well style in the case of de Lanux. It can function as a strategic reversal of power, turning the gaze of an oppressive authority back onto itself, as well as a subversive means to infiltrate, expose, undermine, and alter that same power. According to Bhabha, it is the margins of this hybrid space "where cultural differences 'contingently' and conflictually touch [that] becomes the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience,"[4] and has the power to shift and confuse narratives of oppression.[5]

De Lanux's gendered hybridity can be understood through female masculinity, expressing a spectrum of both typically feminine and masculine traits. She has been consistently described and portrayed as a '*beauté androgyne*,'[6] characterized by her distinctive short hairstyle and sharp features, showcased in Man Ray's famed portraits of her (1925) [Fig. 1]. Notably, de Lanux substituted her family name for her first name, which can be interpreted as a move to towards professionalism. However, this renaming can be attributed more specifically to Rault's claim that a central aspect of the "modern artist-designer identity was 'the rejection of received ideas about

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[2] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 159.
[3] Ibid., 269.
[4] Ibid.
[5] In the case of de Lanux, this becomes more complex and difficult to navigate, as her work participates in ongoing trends of cultural appropriation and, in turn, colonial oppression, while also experiencing the effects (albeit at varying degrees) of that same dominant system as a queer woman. See pages 13-16 of this thesis for more on the intersection of race and sexological science, and its impact on racialized people and homosexuals.
[6] Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 2.

what it meant to be a woman.'"[7] In forfeiting her first name, Elizabeth (Liz), she prioritized and favoured the patriarchal surnames associated to her identity. She acquired "de Lanux" from her husband, French writer and diplomat, Pierre Combret de Lanux (1887-1955), and "Eyre" from her father, Richard Derby Eyre, as well as her architect uncle, Wilson Eyre, associating herself with a patriarchal lineage of ambitious and creative men she felt akin to.

Furthermore, de Lanux was married to a man but had affairs with both men and women, including her collaborative designing partner, British rugmaker Evelyn Wyld (1882-1973), as well as American writer Natalie Clifford Barney (1976-1972)[8] and French poet Louis Aragon (1897-1982).[9] In her examination of de Lanux, feminist art historian Bridget Elliott highlights the complexity of interwar sexual identifications, stating that the liminality and ambiguity of the lives and work of modern queer female artists suggest "that the boundaries between lesbian, bisexual, and straight have been more fluid than our current use of these terms imply"[10]—a fluidity representative of an intertwining gendered and sexual hybridity. Rault suggests that modern female artist-designers refused "to be governed by the norms of heterosexuality"[11] as an extension of their rejection of femininity and so-called womanliness. Hence, the term bisexual may not be best suited to de Lanux's intersection of female masculinity and same-sex desires, but rather *queer,* as more inclusive and encapsulating, or *sapphic* as a more historically specific alternative, linked to the experience of modernity.

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[7] Jasmine Rault, "Designing Sapphic Modernity," *Interiors* 1, no. 1 (July 2010): 31.
[8] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 46.
[9] "A Finding Aid to the Eyre de Lanux Papers, 1865-1995," Archives of American Art, accessed July 15, 2021, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/eyre-de-lanux-papers-6668/biographical-note.
[10] Bridget Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars Two Double Acts: Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher/Eyre de Lanux and Evelyn Wyld," in *Sapphic Modernities*, ed. Laura Doan and Jane Garrity (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006), 110.
[11] Rault, "Designing Sapphic Modernity," 31.

In cultural historian Tirza True Latimer's analysis of the lives and works of lesbian artists in the Parisian interwar period, she surveys the various terminology referencing queer women in French: *inverti*, *uranien*, *homosexuel*, *lesbienne*, and *sapphiste*. The author explains that there was an entire "lexicon of terms used to describe independent, strong, ambitious, or accomplished women, […] overlapped with those insinuating lesbianism, and included everything from the relatively neutral *modern woman*, to the more colorful *amazon.*"[12] Although "the term *lesbianism* […] fails to do justice to the rich spectrum of erotic practices and identities that it presumes to describe,"[13] and despite Latimer's cautioning that "to unite same-sex relationships […] under a single rubric is to create an illusion of coherence and uniformity,"[14] she employs the term lesbian as a "free-floating signifier"[15] in order to do just the opposite. She uses it to refer to the "various alternatives to normative (patriarchal) relational and social models imagined by women together and apart in Paris between the wars."[16] Lesbian, she argues, is more gender-specific compared to *homosexual.* However, she also employs "period vocabulary" like *sapphist*, which "articulates a cultural heritage as well as an explicit sexual practice," as well as the "more clinical *invert*"[17] when appropriate. She does so while acknowledging that these "women-loving women" would have "disdained categorizing labels,"[18] for they would have been too constraining, especially as lesbian and invert do not adequately account for the complexity of their gendered expressions, like female masculinity.

[12] Tirzia True Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris* (Rutgers University Press, 2005), 4.
[13] Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart*, 3.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

Cultural historian Laura Doan explains that "for lesbians in particular, the blurring of categories of gender and the greater dissemination of sexual knowledge [in the 1920s] made possible new paradigms for self-understanding." [19] Doan's work emphasizes how deeply intertwined female masculinity (gender) and a wide range of same-sex intimacies (sexuality)—from lesbianism to bisexuality—were in the interwar years, especially in the formation of modern queer identities. She describes how the era was in a state of gendered and sexual flux, especially in relation to masculine and feminine fashions, professions, and activities, allowing "women who might later identify themselves as lesbians an opportunity to test the boundaries of sartorial expression without proclaiming sexual preference to the culture at large." [20] While Doan specifically addresses a lesbian culture, the implications for a modern—queer or sapphic—woman are of equal relevance.

Typically targeting homosexual men,[21] female homosexuality remained largely omitted from British and French law for decades to come,[22] a consequence of being deemed insignificant and occurring largely in the private, domestic sphere. However, a shift occurred in 1929, when the British writer, Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943), "or John, as she insisted on being called,"[23] was tried for 'obscene libel' following the publication of her novel, *A Well of Loneliness* (1928). While Hall

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[19] Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), xix.
[20] Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, xxii.
[21] The Labouchère Amendment (1885) was a British law condemning "gross indecency" among homosexual men. The British playwright Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was infamously prosecuted for his sexuality under this legal amendment, using descriptions of the dark and decadent interiors of his peer, Lord Alfred Taylor, that he frequented, as proof and expression of his moral corruption and illicit sexual activities. John Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain*, Studies in Design (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2014), 116.
[22] Prostitution or "crimes against chastity" were "often cloaked [as] lesbianism," even if it was mostly ignored in criminal justice systems compared to male homosexuality. Hackett positions a 1921 British jurisdictional decision as the first historical mention of female homosexuality in legal discourse, even if it ultimately "opposed […] legal sanctions against lesbian sexuality" in order not to "taint" the public "by exposure." Robin Hackett, *Sapphic Primitivism: Productions of Race, Class, and Sexuality in Key Works of Modern Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 34-36.
[23] Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 76.

could not legally be prosecuted for her sexuality, she was nevertheless persecuted for "daring to publish a novel that treated the subject [of lesbianism] with unprecedented frankness."[24] The increasing number of women adorning 'men's' clothing, in female masculine fashion, as Hall did—and possibly even passing for them in public—as well as their seeking of professionalism beyond the domestic sphere, likely contributed further to the moral panic associated to the novel.

Doan highlights that "the intense publicity, not to mention notoriety, generated by these trials culminated […] in the successful grafting of a narrow set of cultural signifiers onto an ostensibly legible homosexual body."[25] Hall was identified through her "distinctive fashion sense, manner of self-presentation, and understanding of female sexual inversion," providing "the public with a provocative image of lesbianism."[26] Previously "vary[ing] accordingly among those who knew, those who knew nothing, and those who wished they didn't know,"[27] the trials of seminal queer figures like Hall, as well as the British playwright Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) in 1895,[28] formed "the material cultures of space (i.e.: drapes, clothes, furnishings)"[29] as oversimplified, publicly known identifiers of queerness. The prosecution and the press framed Hall's novel as 'immoral', rather than outright homosexual, likely in an attempt to discourage these queer ways of being. In a way, their mission was accomplished: while these trials did not dissuade queerness, they resulted in the private, sexual lives of queer women in the interwar period to be propelled into public sphere. In turn, complex gendered and sexual identities, from female masculinities to same-sex intimacies, previously seen as chic or avant-garde, were collapsed into a single static, 'degenerate,' lesbian identity.[30]

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[24] Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, xvi.
[25] Ibid., xii.
[26] Ibid., xv.
[27] Ibid., xiv.
[28] See footnote 21.
[29] Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort,* 210-211.
[30] Rault, "Designing Sapphic Modernity," 31.

Meanwhile, the same year as Hall's prosecution, a woman in France could not legally "leave her husband" or "dress in men's clothing."[31] Latimer explains that, although Paris "offered unparalleled educational and professional opportunities in the arts to women, […] French law denied most civil rights to women."[32] She identifies a new populace of women that were "not anticipated in the law," like widows, "unmarried adult women, celibates, bachelors, lesbians – in short, women without men," who emerged after the "wartime decimation of France's male citizenry."[33] They "opt[ed] out the heterosexual contract" in order to pursue "both personal and professional fulfillment"[34]—exemplifying the quest of the modern (queer) woman involved in *sapphic modernity*, collectively directing their energies toward themselves and other like-minded individuals.

Sapphic Modernity: Experience of Queer Time and Space

In *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (2001), Doan configures a study of what she terms, sapphic modernity, exploring "the presence of women variously known by terms such 'Sapphist,' 'female sexual invert,' 'masculine woman,' 'homogenic,' the 'intermediate sex,' or 'homosexual'–though rarely as 'lesbian.'"[35] She justifies the use of sapphic in the context of modernity, as it "efficaciously denotes same-sex desire between women and, at the same time, because it is less familiar to us today, reminds us that the 'lesbian,' as a reified cultural concept or stereotype, was […] as yet unformed."[36] In turn, Elliott claims that the examination of de Lanux and Wyld's collaboration as a couple and their "desire to redesign

[31] Latimer, *Women Together/Women Apart*, 7.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 8.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, xiii.
[36] Ibid., xvii-iii.

everyday life for the modern woman"[37] fits neatly within the parameters of sapphic modernity, while also "adding further layers of complication" and "interesting challenges and opportunities for the recently charted field."[38] She claims that their work aids in "reconceptualiz[ing] an aesthetic field that has been governed by an opposition between modernism and Art Deco with its attendant binaries of avant-garde/historicist, exterior/interior, structural/decorative, industrial/handmade, mass/elite, and male/female"[39] through their gendered, sexual, and stylistic hybridities.

Across her extensive research on the Irish designer-architect, Eileen Gray (1878-1976),[40] and singular article on de Lanux,[41] Rault argues that sapphic modernity locates itself precisely in "this slippery space between – comprised of 'a mixture of possibility and closure, dissolution and formation,'"[42] broadening what it meant to be modern. Rault explains further that these modern designing women "designed to enable the possibility of living sapphic lives, not only divorced from the confines of conventional heterosexuality but also intimately connected to the modern,"[43] even if no female designer of the interwar period—other than Eileen Gray post-1926 and perhaps Charlotte Perriand (1903-1999) (both of whom had working relationships with Le Corbusier)—was considered modernist enough for the design canon, as a result of their inherently feminine ties to a decorative past. In other words, "while some historical case studies neatly occupy the centre of a field, others haunt its margins, moving in and out of the space in ways that reinforce and undermine its explanatory power."[44] It is this 'slippery,' contradictory, and ambiguous spatiality

[37] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 110.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Jasmine Rault, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity: Staying In* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).
[41] Jasmine Rault, "Losing Feelings: Elizabeth Eyre de Lanux and Her Affective Archive of Sapphic Modernity," *Archives of American Art Journal* 48, no. 1/2 (April 2009): 56–65.
[42] Rault, "Designing Sapphic Modernity," 31–32.
[43] Ibid., 35.
[44] Elliott, 110.

that also characterizes Bhabha's notion of hybridity, rendering sapphic modernity an ideal framework to situate and examine de Lanux's life and work.

Furthermore, Rault claims that sapphic modernity uniquely allows for a tracing of patterns among the plethora of queer female designers that created "a sense of modernity out of attachments to, rather than rejections of, past aesthetic and cultural moments."[45] This pastness speaks to de Lanux's—and Art Deco more broadly—inclusion of historical motifs, materials, and techniques, as well as the appropriation of non-Western cultural traditions in her work. The couple's use of aesthetics of appropriation allies them with longstanding cultural traditions of making and design that 'hold civilized society's cultural evolution back' [46] through past historical styles and decoration. Within a modern colonial discourse, indigenous cultures were often synonymous with the past or a younger version of civilization that had yet to fully develop; they were not seen to have continuity, a present, or a future, except through the incorporation and transformation of their aesthetics into European modern art in its own quest for modernity.[47]

Of relevance is queer scholar Elizabeth Freeman's *chrononormativity*, the understanding that time is constructed in the industrial, organizing "individual human bodies toward maximum productivity." [48] This includes the temporal constructs of sex, love, marriage, reproduction, consumption, and legacy, which queer individuals continuously 'fail' to adhere to.[49] While not specific to sapphic women, Freeman's theories address the experience of queer temporality[50]—the

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[45] Rault, "Designing Sapphic Modernity," 37.
[46] See page 18 of this thesis for further context on Adolf Loos' ideas on historical, decorative styles in "Ornament et Crime," *Cahiers d'aujourd'hui*, no. 5 (1913): 247-256.
[47] Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[48] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Duke University Press, 2010), 3.
[49] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011), 88–89.
[50] For more on queer temporality, see Jack Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Space: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (NYU Press, 2005), and Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).

understanding of queerness in relation to time and space—and its inception alongside modern temporality. Freeman states that the "homosexual identity was simply the product of a historical moment in time. But sexual dissidents have also in many ways been produced by, or at least emerged in tandem with, a sense of 'modern' temporality."[51] She explains the symbiotic relationship as such:

> […] rather than evoking timelessness, it trafficked in signs of fractured time […] flickering signs of other historical moments and possibilities that materialized time as always already wounded. Thus gay men, lesbians, and other 'perverts' have also served as figures for history, for either civilization's decline or sublimely futuristic release from nature, or both.[52]

Just as Freeman explains the use of "past-ness to resist the commodity-time of speedy manufacture and planned obsolescence,"[53] perhaps de Lanux did the same, resisting a present world view that was not aligned with her understanding of sapphic love, partnership, and time within modernity. Freeman claims that this queer temporal experience creates a 'fracturing of time,' which aligns with the couple's appropriative inclinations, as well as with queer scholar José Esteban Muñoz's positioning of queerness, within the context of queer utopia, as "an ideality [...] that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[54] In this same utopian vein, Doan claims that "sapphic modernity in the 1920s—as 'a quality of social experience'—constituted, for some sapphists, not a cultural condition so much a destination, a new and better world, a coveted end point."[55] In this way, queer experience—and more specifically sapphism, in de Lanux's case—becomes intimately intertwined and connected to the modern.

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[51] Freeman, *Time Binds*, 7.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 9.
[54] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (NYU Press, 2009), 1.
[55] Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, xxiii.

In turn, queer temporality and sapphic modernity uniquely address and overlap in their reference to same-sex orientations, as well as their temporal and utopian concerns. While sapphic proves to be a more historical and gender-specific term, queer encapsulates the ambiguous, contradictory, fluid, and complex 'otherness' that de Lanux's intersection of identity and work embodies, tying together the female masculinity, same-sex intimacies, and polyamories that she engaged in. While a contemporary term, queer—as noun, verb, and adjective, referring to anything or anyone that deviates from normative gendered and sexual structures—offers this thesis the flexibility to borrow from queer methodology as much as scholarship on sapphic modernity. As stated by queer scholar J/Jack Halberstam, queer methodology in itself "attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and […] refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence."[56] While the oversimplification of the term can ignore the complexities and specificities of queer identities, as Latimer adamantly urges against in regards to lesbianism, its encapsulating and inclusive definition is useful for that exact, contradictory, and problematic reason: it factors in the fluidity and, particularly, the mutability that these queer identities and bodies, including sapphic ones, may have experienced over modern time and space.

Like Elliott, I wish to specify that, while this thesis examines the relationship between identity and design, it does not serve as an explicit examination of the private lives of these women who, within the field of sapphic modernity, did "not seem to have self-identified as lesbian, sapphic,"[57] or queer in any explicit way, even showing a reticence "about questions of sexuality,"[58] "more absorbed in the practice of art than in sexual politics."[59] However, it becomes a difficult task to ignore the close and intertwining relationship of art and life—both private and public—that

[56] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 13.
[57] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 110.
[58] Ibid., 111.
[59] Ibid.

de Lanux and Wyld engaged in, as romantically-involved collaborative partners, as well as the close friendship they had with their patrons and numerous collaborators. Like many designing women involved in sapphic modernity, informed by their own positionality, de Lanux and Wyld were "working with the modern woman in mind," who lived "sometimes on her own or with other women instead of a traditional family,"[60] a lifestyle that could be read and coded as queer in its rejection of a prescribed heteronormative, reproductive lifestyle. Elliott further stresses this woman-centered approach not only in de Lanux's designed interiors, but also through the couple's choice to "work in organizations controlled by other women rather than men:"[61] their clients consisted largely of women who frequented Barney's "well-connected lesbian salon."[62] For de Lanux, this woman-centered approach would have been necessarily queer. As explored by Doan and Elliott, the modern queer woman's pursuit of modernity was deeply related to a gendered, as much as sexual experience, and required spaces that reflected these newfound, exploratory desires and needs—in other words, a modern, queer or sapphic space—as "reconfiguring interior design was also a means of reconfiguring bodies, sexualities, and possibilities for being—[…] interventions about who could count as modern and be accommodated within modernity."[63]

Regardless of the patron, a creator's same-sex interest cannot be erased, rendered inexistant, nor separated from their identity and, in turn, their designs. Even if underlying or subconscious, queer desires are ever-present and integral to one's identity. In *Queer Phenomelogy: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2008), feminist and queer scholar Sara Ahmed explores "how spatial orientations (relations of proximity and distance) are shaped by other social orientations,

[60] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 119.
[61] Ibid., 122.
[62] Ibid., 123.
[63] Rault, "Losing Feelings," 64.

such as gender and class,"[64] as well as sexuality. She examines "how compulsory sexuality operates as a straightening device, which re-reads signs of queer desire as deviations from the straight line." In "rethinking the place of the object in sexual desire," she demonstrates "how the bodily direction 'toward' such objects affects how bodies inhabit spaces and how spaces inhabit bodies,"[65] and, in turn, how "orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitants, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward."[66] Therefore, the intersecting marginal identities of queer women, like de Lanux, directly impacted their view, understanding of, and navigation of space—and importantly, the spaces they frequented, inhabited, and designed—providing a unique perspective to the re-interpretation of design movements like Art Deco and Modernism, whose hybridization can, in turn, be 'read' as queer as a result of their queer identities and experience.

Sapphic Primitivism and its Aesthetics of Appropriation

Rault refers to "attachments to past aesthetics and cultural moments"[67] as integral to sapphic modernity—as well as the understanding of queer temporality—expressed in de Lanux's designs through a decorative style, including the use of, what has been historically termed, *primitive* aesthetics. 'Primitive' is "a highly charged term," with a complicated and racist history, where people of African descent, as well as various Indigenous communities across North and South America, were considered "irrational, uncivilized, and not-yet-modern,"[68]—the opposite of discipline, order, rationality (all that modernist design was striving for). While this negative history

[64] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 23.
[65] Ibid., 23.
[66] Ibid., 3.
[67] Rault, "Designing Sapphic Modernity," 37.
[68] Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*, 4.

and legacy should not be ignored, unlike the term 'queer,' 'primitive' was never reclaimed by the targeted group and therefore continues to perpetuate trauma and reinforce stereotypes. In an attempt to be respectful, as well as acknowledge the complexity and need for nuance, they will be referred to as aesthetics of appropriation more broadly, citing each culture respectively (e.g., African-inspired aesthetics) when the context permits.

There is a long history and study of avant-garde male artists appropriating African designs within modernism, but little in the way of studying how women artists responded to similar colonially imported artifacts, in different and complex ways that require further research and nuance. Of note is Hackett's important work, *Sapphic Primitivism: Productions of Race, Class, and Sexuality in Works of Modern Fiction* (2004), which explores the construction of "symbolic linkages between lesbianism and male homosexuality, blackness, disease, criminality, working-class status, degeneracy, taint, pollution, and prostitution"[69] in the context of modern queer female writers, like Radclyffe Hall. Hackett explains that these links were a consequence of psychoanalytic and sexological studies that sought universal truths and moral guidelines for humanity, using "primitive societies as testing grounds."[70] In doing so, they illustrated "specifics about white middle-class European homosexuality against a backdrop of remarks about generalized, uncivilized peoples, lower races, lower classes, savages, and primitives as well as reference to places frequently outside of Western Europe,"[71] making "the indirect argument that people of color, the working classes, and the non-Western cultures can produce homosexuality."[72] Later infiltrating and informing modernist design, the conclusion of these studies positioned the built environment as a site representing and affecting one's mental and physical states, with the

[69] Hackett, *Sapphic Primitivism,* 21.
[70] Ibid., 22.
[71] Ibid., 23.
[72] Ibid.

potential to display and incite deviancy, and could, in turn, be used to reform these deviancies.[73] Therefore, Hackett's study of race, sexuality, science, and fictional literature provides a useful framework in examining the problematics of, what she terms, *sapphic primitivism*, characterized by the 'primitive' inclinations that modern queer female creatives had in the interwar years. The phenomenon, however, was not exclusive to writers—as I hope to show through de Lanux's work—and yet, has not been equally nor fully explored in the works of artists and designers of the period. Perhaps this is due to the fact that narratives of appropriation can be difficult to navigate, especially when it occurs in the creations of an artist-designer with shared experiences with both the oppressor and the oppressed.

In the context of hybridity, Bhabha speaks to this relationship between oppressor and oppressed, as "a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification—the subject—is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness."[74] He specifically highlights how hybridity—and hybrid space—"bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation, so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain meanings."[75] It therefore becomes vital to acknowledge that "black, or African-inspired, expressions […] played a seminal role in the shaping of modernism,"[76] including a queer, hybrid alternative like de Lanux's. In *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (1998), cultural and literary historian Sieglinde Lemke states that her intent is "to paint a picture of modernism that stresses a chiaroscuro effect, the interplay between black and white [cultures]."[77] This interplay is not dissimilar to de

[73] See page 20-22 of this thesis for more on the relationship between modernist design and degeneracy.
[74] Jonathan Rutherford, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 211.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*, 4.
[77] Ibid.

Lanux's hybridity in her blurring of modernist/decorative, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, civilized/uncivilized, as certain "expressions of modernism assumed their shape only through the incorporation of black forms[;] the 'other' [being] an integral part of modernism from its origins."[78] Based on Lemke's framework, it can be argued that de Lanux, feeling a certain kinship as an similarly 'othered' individual within psychoanalytic, sexological, and subsequently modernist frameworks, incorporated aesthetics from non-European cultures in order to 'achieve' a kind of modernity, as previous male modern artists had.

While this thesis frames de Lanux's use of aesthetics of appropriation as a tool of subversion against a system that categorically rejected and excluded her, it in no way removes the problematic implications of the cultural appropriation. As defined by professor of art and philosophy James O. Young in *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (2008), cultural appropriation refers to an "appropriation that occurs across the boundaries of cultures," where "members of one culture take for their own, or for their own use, items produced by a member or members of another culture."[79] Problematically, Young's definition does not sufficiently distinguish the act from cultural exchange or borrowing, as it does not adequately account for colonial power as a parameter of imbalance between two cultures, dictating the dynamic and effects of the appropriation. However, he constructively demonstrates, nevertheless, multiple forms of cultural appropriation that find themselves along a spectrum, each with varying negative and harmful impacts.

Of relevance to de Lanux's work are Young's three types of cultural appropriation. The first, *object appropriation*, refers to "when the possession of a tangible work of art (such as a sculpture or painting) is transferred from members of one culture to members of another culture."[80]

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[78] Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*, 4.
[79] James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 5.
[80] Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts,* 6.

Style appropriation occurs when "artists produce works with stylistic elements in common with the works of another culture."[81] Lastly, *motif appropriation* transpires "when artists are influenced by the art of a culture other than their own without creating works in the same style."[82] De Lanux's interiors feature each of these in varying degrees. For example, her direct inclusion of masks and totems from colonized Black and Indigenous communities, such as the generically labeled[83] 'American-Indian' totem pole in the Union des Artistes Modernes display for the 1930 exhibition, as well as the African mask placed above the bar in Helen Simpson's Gît-le-coeur apartment, exemplifies object appropriation, as it takes the item, removes it from its original context, and alters its meaning [Fig. 2 and 3]. As such, the objects now function as works of art on display in an interior, rather than their intended, often ritualistic or spiritual use.

Style appropriation is of equal concern in de Lanux's engraved, lacquered tables and bed frames, as well as in Wyld's rugs—the latter of which were featured in each of her designed interiors. However, these appropriations are further complicated by their technical authenticity. Wyld traveled to North Africa alongside Gray in 1907 to learn "the process of weaving and dyeing wools with natural colors"[84] firsthand from local Arab women, while de Lanux produced alongside master Japanese lacquer artist, Seizo Sugawara (1884-1937). Finally, her Cubist-style chairs and frames typify motif appropriation, as the appropriated patterns are of vital and traceable inspiration but are ultimately transformed in the designing process, furthering them enough from the original form to be considered 'new' [Fig. 4]. De Lanux's appropriations find themselves along a spectrum,

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[81] Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts,* 6.
[82] Ibid.
[83] While not entirely inaccurate, the terms "American Indian" and "African" lack specificity in the identification of the objects' origins, as there is a multitude of Indigenous and Black communities across North America and Africa and a diversity within the cultural production of their respective locales. However, as no further information was provided by the designer and my own research has not provided further insight, these remain the primary means of reference.
[84] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 122.

much like her gendered and sexual hybridities. In turn, they become crucial to her stylistic hybridity, relying on the 'pastness' of the decorative cultural aesthetics she appropriates as a means of propelling herself into an alternative, sapphic modernity, resulting in a multi-temporal, queer design aesthetic intimately tied to her identity.

Aesthetic Quest for Modernity: Art Deco and Modernist Design

De Lanux's stylistic hybridity is composed of both decorative and modernist design influences – styles canonically positioned at odds with one another. Often overlooked is the nuanced designation of the *moderne* style, on display at the *Exposition International des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* (1925), referring to "art deco and modernism respectively[,] as both embodied a new, modern tendency in design."[85] Queer design historian John Potvin claims that "the style moderne sought a new language to represent the contemporary, modern world while at the same time anticipate an alternative future,"[86] in both its modernist and decorative iterations. Each did so by speaking to a new consumerist landscape with a shared aim of democratization in design. However, their utopian ambitions were expressed in different and conflicting ways: while modernist design embraced industrialism and collectivism through mass-production and standardization, Art Deco concentrated its efforts on luxury and individuality through the haptic and visual sensory dimensions of craftsmanship.

Potvin describes the Art Deco moderne as "a decorative, sensual love affair with luxury, exotic and rare skins, pochoir printing techniques, rich fabrics and variegated surface [that] played on people's desire to touch, to connect and get closer to the lifestyle ensemble being proposed,

[85] John Potvin, *Deco Dandy: Designing Masculinity in 1920s Paris* (Manchester University Press, 2021), 29.
[86] Ibid., 13.

even if only within the realm of fantasy and desire, ideals dismissed by modernism."[87] For example, de Lanux employed a method of lacquering—an east-Asian sap traditionally applied to wood surfaces—known as *lacquer arrachée* "to create furniture with matt surfaces that appeared rough yet remained incredibly smooth to the touch,"[88] playing on both the visual and tactile in her designs. However, "the moderne's association with the decorative arts and unique craft-based objects" became quickly "associated with feminine endeavours and ephemeral products,"[89] which functioned "in contradistinction to the clean, functional and purist programmes"[90] of its modernist interpretation, causing a rift between the two moderne styles.

A few years prior to the 1925 Exhibition, Swiss-French architect and theorist Le Corbusier (1887-1965) published *Toward an [New] Architecture* (1923), a "defence of modernist theories"[91] establishing the home as a 'machine for living'—the pinnacle of a rational, streamlined, 'one-size-fits-all' lifestyle. He claimed that "it was not a question of taste (whether it be good or bad), but of the 'moral health' of the 'new man.'"[92] A clear disdain for the subjectivity, sensuality, and individuality of the decorative moderne can be inferred from this rhetoric, "prioritizing men's experience over that of the majority of women,"[93] and other decoratively-inclined persons. While modernist design was attempting to address issues of class in its democratization of material goods through mass production, it ignored the intricacies of other marginalizations, such as feminine, queer, and racialized experiences. In their quest to eradicate decoration and degeneracy, women, homosexuals, and racialized people became the unintended casualties, not of décor's "last spasm

[87] Potvin, *Deco Dandy*, 13.
[88] Anna Jackson, "Inspiration from the East," in *Art Deco, 1910-1939*, ed. Charlotte Benton and Tim Benton (London: V&A Publications, 2003), 76.
[89] Potvin, 14.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 92
[92] Ibid.
[93] Penny Sparke, *As Long as It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (Halifax, N.S.: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2010), 50.

of a death already predictable"[94] as proselytized by Le Corbusier, but rather of their own, intentionally oppressive words, acts, and designs.

The oppressive ideals that fuelled and justified modernist design's mission stemmed from the work of proto-modernist architect and writer Adolf Loos (1870-1933) and, in turn, German sociologist Werner Sombart (1863-1944). At the turn of the 20th century, within an ever-expanding capitalist and industrialist context, Loos claimed in his divisive essay, *Ornament und Verbrechen (Ornament and Crime)* (1908),[95] that ornamentation was waste of human labour and money.[96] Therefore, he advocated for simple, streamlined, well-made, mass-produced goods and, in turn, for a complete rejection of dated, decorative styles. Loos' so-called 'degenerates'—women, homosexuals, racialized people, criminals, and the mentally ill—were faulted for impeding the modern advancement of aesthetics and civilization due to their fundamental primitivity and decorativeness.[97] A few years later, Sombart pushed Loos' theories further, concretizing the link between sexuality, decoration, and degeneracy. His book *Luxury and Capitalism* (1913) states that "it is our sexual life that lies at the root of the desire to refine and multiply the means of stimulating our senses, for sensuous pleasure and sexual pleasure are essentially the same."[98] In a more explicit tone, Sombart wrote: "indubitably, the primary cause of the development of any kind of luxury is most often to be sought in consciously or unconsciously operative sex impulses."[99] This becomes of even greater relevance in the context of the 1925 Exhibition and its attempt to "reassert, in an international forum, France's authority as an arbiter of taste and producer of luxury good, and Paris

[94] Le Corbusier, *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 98.
[95] Le Corbusier republished a French translation of Loos' essay (with a favorable preface) in his magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau* in 1920. A French translation also appeared in *L'Architecture vivante* in 1926—an architectural journal close to Le Corbusier, as well as Jean Badovici, Eileen Gray's partner at the time.
[96] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 92.
[97] Adolf Loos, "Ornement et Crime," *Cahiers d'aujourd'hui*, no. 5 (1913): 247-256.
[98] Werner Sombart, quoted in Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, "On Luxury," *AA Files* 58 (2009): 25.
[99] Sombart, quoted in Merwood-Salisbury, "On Luxury," 25.

as the world centre of fashion."[100] In its display of goods, it was participating in "the art of marketing, or more precisely the art of seduction,"[101] invoking the kind of sensuality—and queer sexuality—linked to excess and decoration that modernist design sought to eradicate.

Importantly, Le Corbusier participated in the 1925 Exhibition, presenting his *Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau* (1925) as a purposeful affront to the other, more decorative pavilions, in its alienatingly bare, predominantly white, and square structure, its use of commercially, mass-produced furniture, and its minimal display of art (select cubist works and a mural on its exterior façade). His contribution epitomized modernist utopian aims for the (moral) health and hygiene of spaces, in order to reform the 'perversities' of its inhabitants.[102] This Darwinian objective was to be accomplished through spatial whitewashing,[103] expanded windows, as well as open-floor plans, allowing for a totalizing, unobstructed view of spaces—one could more easily identify dust, dirt, disease, and, in turn, 'degeneration,' in order to combat the growing spread of tuberculosis, 'infertility,' as well as sexually-transmitted diseases, like syphilis and gonorrhea. This prioritization of sight enabled newfound means to police behaviour, morality, and any kind of trait deemed deviant through the design of space, remaining cleverly silent in regard to comfort and privacy [104] —notions associated with the domestic sphere and, in turn, femininity and homosexuality. As a result, Rault argues that "modern architecture was not simply creating new

[100] Charlotte Benton, "The International Exhibition," in *Art Deco, 1910-1939*, ed. Charlotte Benton and Tim Benton (London: V&A Publications, 2003), 141.
[101] Potvin, *Deco Dandy*, 13.
[102] This eerily foreshadows the atrocities to come in WWII, a fascist and authoritarian cause Le Corbusier was later proven to be sympathetic of through his involvement with the French Vichy regime in the 1940s. Mary Caroline McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1985), 6; Simone Brott, "Architecture et Révolution: Le Corbusier and the Fascist Revolution," *Thresholds*, no. 41 (2013): 147.
[103] For more on the use, intention, and significance of the color white in modernist design, see Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995).
[104] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 92.

places for people, but creating new people for their places,"[105] reforming not only its spaces, but its occupants.

To achieve this regenerative vision, modernist design believed a *tabula rasa* was required, "ritually [tearing] apart the conventions—be they traditional perspective or architectural decoration—which, for centuries, had held culture together."[106] It decreed a 'return to order,' deferring to "science, technology, and rationality,"[107] deemed ultimately "superior 'to the brutal pleasure of the senses'"[108]—its reliance on male-dominated fields of knowledge ultimately resulting in "the rule of a masculine cultural paradigm."[109] In their "desire for total urban transformation"[110]—the sphere in which this masculine cultural paradigm reigned—the city became the locus of their desired modernity, prioritizing experiences of the public sphere and implanting them in the private, domestic sphere, creating a rational household comparable to the "modern factory rather than the domestic haven."[111] Design historian Penny Sparke frames Le Corbusier's understanding of the home as such:

> [A] house was, essentially, 'a shelter against heat, cold, rain, thieves and the inquisitive. A receptacle for light and sun.' […] As for the number of rooms, there should be 'one for cooking and one for eating. One for work, one to wash yourself in and one for sleep.'[112]

This exemplifies modernist design's desire for functionality and practicality, establishing set uses for spaces, eliminating "if only by implication, the housewife's role as 'beautifier of the home,'"[113]

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[105] Rault, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity,* 29.
[106] Sparke, *As Long as It's Pink*, 49.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 92.
[109] Sparke, 49.
[110] Ibid., 68.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 69.
[113] Ibid., 70.

"custodian of the home," and "guardian of the past,"[114] consequently removing her power, control, and agency in the one space she had dominion.

However, this modernist vision of/for the city and the home was complicated by the fact that there was a new "fascination with Paris as a 'woman's city'" in the mid to late 1920s. According to Potvin:

> With its intimate arcades, shop windows, department stores, independent galleries, palaces of entertainment, dance halls, salon exhibitions, lavish periodicals and, of course, its chic citizens, Paris has long boasted a preeminent position as a, if not the, uncontested capital of modern art, interior design, fashion and luxury. If the city represented all things fashionable and modern, then it was also personified in an idealized image of the *parisienne*, advertised and perpetuated to countless consumers both at home and abroad.[115]

The shared connotations of Paris and the modern woman "signified a burgeoning consumerism that offered women new fantasies of freedom and liberation,"[116] even if, ultimately, somewhat illusory. This resulted in a "version of Paris [that] designated a modernity in which, to a limited but growing extent, women appeared prominently as cultural producers," spearheaded by figures like French designer Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) and her bold, geometric fashions, donning the bodies of modern women photographed parading the 1925 Exhibition grounds.[117] Importantly, visual art historian Tag Gronberg states that "the 1925 Exhibition involved not merely, as so many commentators reiterated, a 'city-within-a-city' (a 'dream' city superimposed on the urban fabric of central Paris) but also the staging of different and conflicting cities."[118] Here, Gronberg speaks to the divide between masculine/feminine, modernist/decorative, industrial/handmade, but also to the dichotomy between the illusory and staged realities the Exhibition promised—a "brilliantly lit,

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[114] Penny Sparke, quoted in Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 120.
[115] Potvin, *Deco Dandy*, 2.
[116] Tag Gronberg, "Paris 1925: Consuming Modernity," in *Art Deco, 1910-1939* (London: V&A Publications, 2003), 162.
[117] Ibid., 162-163.
[118] Tag Gronberg, *Designs on Modernity: Exhibiting the City in 1920s Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 19.

enticing spectacle"[119] of performance and display—versus the rising wave of staunchly opposed, standardized, and mechanized urban environments to come.

While seemingly at stylistic odds, de Lanux's work engages with aspects of modernist design, like its emphasis on the visual landscape of the senses, while also situating herself concretely within the material, decorative, and appropriative traditions of Art Deco. In this way, the dual stylistic association of the moderne, as well as its shared utopian intentions, becomes well-suited to her designs. As of the early 1930s, later iterations of this hybrid style have also been termed 'decorative modernism,' in its pairing of avant-garde, modernist aesthetics and techniques within decorative schemes, most closely resembling de Lanux's approach. I argue that Art Deco—and more specifically its evolutionary decorative modernism—provided a unique avenue for de Lanux to experiment stylistically, integrating aspects of a design movement who actively sought to reform her, and engage in a queer and sapphic version of modernity. While these stylistic mergings were perhaps not unique to her, I argue that she was one of few to do so for queer, sapphic means, in an attempt to create spaces conducive to sapphic life and its enaction.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis examines how de Lanux's 'othered' experience of modernity played a role in her creative life and informed her approach to design, creating for a kindred demographic of modern queer/sapphic women. The first chapter is dedicated to her early collaborative interior exhibition displays with Wyld. I posit that these spaces tie in the concepts of the Art Deco ensemblier, modernist and queer utopias, as well as the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in their inceptions as imagined spaces for the modern queer/sapphic woman. Their displayed nature connotes modernism's

[119] Gronberg, *Designs on Modernity*, 18.

hierarchal favouring of sight, while also employing a kind of queer performance of identity, navigating queer in/visibility through the visuality, as much as the materiality, of the space. While continuing to examine the relationship between visual and material dimensions of de Lanux's interiors, the second and final chapter looks to the *pied-à-terre* apartments she designed for queer, single, or widowed women, and how her previous interior displays served as blueprints for these modern Parisian dwellings. No longer in the realm of imagined spaces in the context a Salon exhibition, these realized interiors still connote the queer, modernist, and utopian themes of her displays, but also demonstrate an evolution in her understanding of the gaze and its subversion toward queer means. This occurs in the shift from a visitor's unidirectional view of a display to an occupant's traveling and embodied vision, offering new possibilities of looking/being seen and feeling/being felt within the small, confined, and impermanent spaces of the *pied-à-terre* apartments.

Vital to this thesis are the photographs of de Lanux's interiors, as many were ephemeral spaces by design: displays for yearly exhibitions and *pied-à-terre* apartments for the nomadic individual. However, this research also relies on the analysis of performance and identity within these spaces, which cannot be so explicitly read within photographs or texts. Potvin stresses the 'moods' or 'feelings' of a space:

> Residing in the unmarked, where moods, atmospheres, feelings and the ephemeral give or enhance the meaning and significance of spaces and objects provides a hidden language for a community outside and yet within the bounds of normative structures and meanings; below the radar, if you will.[120]

Along these same lines, Muñoz states that "queer acts, like queer performances, and various performances of queerness, stand as evidence of queer lives, powers, and possibilities," which

[120] John Potvin, "A Queer Feeling and Its Future in/for Design History," in *Design, History and Time: New Temporalities in a Digital Age*, ed. Anne Massey and Zoë Hendon (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 106.

provides a unique visual, material, and spatial medium in which to understand, in de Lanux's case, a cross-section of queer/sapphic identity, modernity, and expatriatism.

While this research focuses on the gendered and sexual marginalities of queer women as influential factors in creative and cultural production, the link to race and coloniality is important due to the designer's use of primitivism and the shared association to degeneracy, especially with recent calls to decolonize design that have yet to fully permeate the history of interior design, a field riddled with cultural appropriation and theft. While this will not be the focus of this thesis, my aim is to elucidate the problematics of queer women's appropriation throughout my analysis of their work, recognizing their shared allyship within oppressive design, sexological, and legal systems and its ensuing precarities, in an attempt to mediate its consistent and glaring omission from scholarship.

This thesis looks to interior design history, queer studies, and decolonial theories within the decorative arts to frame the analysis of de Lanux's work and, when relevant, her life. As surveyed in the introduction of this thesis, queer and sapphic understandings of modernity provide useful frameworks to examine phenomena more common than has been explored. De Lanux serves as a prime case study for the analysis of female masculinity, same-sex intimacies, hybridity, the intersection of Art Deco and Modernism, as well as cultural, aesthetic appropriation, which can, in turn, serve as a blueprint and illuminate further pathways of research on the work of female interwar artist-designers like Eileen Gray, Evelyn Wyld, Phyllis Barron, Dorothy Larcher, and others at the margins who have yet to be identified.

I
Queering Modernist Utopia: Spatiality, Materiality, and Display

While de Lanux remained married to Pierre until his death in 1955, she was often "left to her own devices,"[121] as he regularly traveled for diplomatic work. Occupying the third floor of an apartment building overlooking Natalie Clifford Barney's 20 rue Jacob residence, "from her windows she observed, stunned, the uninterrupted stream of celebrities of every tendency coming to visit"[122] the infamous salons every Friday. According to de Lanux, Barney "was the first to break the ice: 'we are neighbors, I believe.'" This encounter blossomed "into an amorous friendship [and a brief romance] lasting more than 40 years."[123] Reportedly, a year prior to de Lanux's and her husband's transatlantic move to Paris, Le Corbusier himself resided in the same building as Barney, on the third floor "literally overlooking [her] home and garden."[124] He was inevitably privy to the happenings of Barney's salons, the tension of this proximity perhaps fuelling and inspiring the 'return to order' he so adamantly advocated for in his modernist manifestos.

Paris and its artistic and queer social circles—the likes of Barney's salons—facilitated the meeting of other modern queer women like Eileen Gray and de Lanux's collaborative and romantic partner, Evelyn Wyld. The Grays and the Wylds were old family friends, whose daughters both moved to Paris after World War I. In 1922, Gray opened *Jean Désert*, an interior decoration shop where Wyld, who began exploring simple colour and texture on curtains, upholstery fabrics, and rugs, sold her creations. Craft and design historian Isabelle Anscombe states, in one of the earliest articles mentioning the designing couple, that Wyld met de Lanux in 1927, as she was writing a piece on decorators in Paris for her monthly *Town and Country* column 'Letters of Elizabeth,' a

[121] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 43.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 92.

feature from an American expatriate's perspective, set in France. De Lanux visited Gray's shop and interviewed Wyld who "was too determined and energetic a woman to see an artist like Elizabeth write about design when she could be doing it, and invited her to collaborate."[125]

Anscombe claims that this opportunity to collaborate would not have been a risk for de Lanux because Wyld had an "existing business framework"[126] established with Gray. With prior formal sculptural training, under the tutelage of the 'patriarch of modern sculpture' Constantin Brancusi, de Lanux progressed to furniture design, a similar artistic medium in its negotiating of volume, space, and physics. Similarly, the design of interiors becomes equally sculptural in practice and concept through de Lanux's manipulation of spatiality, blurring the boundaries of space through mirroring, photography, a/symmetry, texture, and color—and eventually, the recessing of furniture into, as well as the inward extension of walls within, pre-existing architecture. Part of her approach to design also recalls that of an *ensemblier*, featuring not only her own designs as well as Wyld's, but those of her various collaborators and peers, such as Sougawara and French designers Jean-Michel Frank and Adolphe Chanaux.

Originally, the Art Deco *ensemblier* was a professional decorator who "assemble[d] and therefore construct[ed] the illusion of a complete, whole image, an entire design lifestyle that is at once identifiable and comprehensive in thought and execution." [127] The *ensemblier* is of importance as a figure in a queer context, as "his ensembles were riddled with contradictory gendered implications,"[128] which in turn equally imply sexual ones in the case of sapphic modern women, whose gendered and sexual identities were intimately linked.[129] Potvin states that "this

[125] Isabelle Anscombe, "Expatriates in Paris: Eileen Gray, Evelyn Wyld, Eyre de Lanux," *Apollo*, no. 240 (February 1982): 117.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Potvin, *Deco Dandy,* 11.
[128] Ibid.
[129] See page 3-5 and 11-13 of this thesis for more on the relationship between gender and sexuality in the identities of modern queer/sapphic women.

modern profession was largely populated by men and yet their labour involved the traditionally female pursuits of consumption and working for a beautifying of the domestic interior,"[130] hence blurring a gendered, heteronormative line. Conceptually, an ensemble designates not only "a set of furnishings that together create a cohesive interior design scheme, but also equally refers to a fashion ensemble (or complete look) or a dance or a theatre ensemble (a group of performers)."[131] Of relevance is Potvin's analysis of English playwright, actor, and director Noël Coward and his queer 'stage-set' modernism, staging "a queer sort of modernity through his scripts, characters and stages."[132] He describes the phenomenon as such:

> After all, interiors from the 1920s and 30s constructed a 'stage-set modernism', suggesting that spatial divisions between reality and fiction were blurred while the borders marking private from public were collapsed. In the theatrical space of the home and home as stage for modernism, Coward advertised modern design as much as he played out modern sexuality. What he staged, in other words, was modern living itself.[133]

Potvin frames Coward's interiors—of both theatrical and domestic nature—as spaces where sexuality and modernity were consciously performed and staged. In de Lanux's engagement with both sexuality, modernity, as well as display within her designed spaces, she evokes a similar kind of queer, modern performance through space as Coward does. I posit that her spaces are a queering of select modernist values and techniques as well, not only through their integration into Art Deco-inclined interiors, but also in her fostering of queer, or rather sapphic, performance, interaction, and life within her designed spaces.

Furthermore, Potvin states that "the whole [of the ensemble] takes precedence over the individual components to conjure something greater than its parts,"[134] speaking to the totalizing

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[130] Potvin, *Deco Dandy,* 11.
[131] Ibid., 12.
[132] Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 200.
[133] Ibid., 200-201.
[134] Potvin, *Deco Dandy*, 12.

effects of an assembled interior, from its visual effects – what is seen/unseen – to the materials used – what is felt/not felt. Importantly, this recalls the concept of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a German term popularized by the opera composer Richard Wagner, referring to a 'total work of art.' In architecture, the term often denotes a total environment, employing various mediums and art forms—including performance—to create a cohesive and complete whole. In this sense, it overlaps in meaning with utopias as fully conceptualized places, which becomes vital to the understanding of de Lanux's work in its hybrid form. Recalling the task of the Art Deco *ensemblier* and the modernist designer's utopic ambitions, de Lanux's conceptualization of space in service of the modern queer, sapphic woman evokes not only the design aspects of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but also its performative qualities.

The couple's first collaborative interior, exhibited at the *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs* (1928), Grand Palais, Paris, serves as de Lanux's initial exploration and exposure to this hybridity [Fig. 5]. It demonstrates a modernist approach to the design of space in its overall bareness. Wyld's rug is the only item of a decorative and appropriative nature, employing what has been imprecisely labeled as 'American Indian' aesthetics. Of the only two surviving photographs of the interior, located in de Lanux's personal archive, one has the following details inscribed on the reverse side:

> Exhibition Société des Artistes Décorateurs / Evelyn Wyld / Eyre de Lanux / (Grand Palais) / Paris (1927?). Table: rough glass (without support of any kind) green. Chairs: Black leather on whitened sandblasted wood. / White leather on black sandblasted wood. Rug: American Indian design, deep brown, light gray (Evelyn Wyld). A posted card of NYC blown up. Mirrors at right angle. Table bought, but I do not know by whom. E. L.[135]

Importantly, both Wyld and de Lanux are listed as co-authors of the space, with an additional specification citing Wyld as the maker of the rug. As this was their first collaborative interior, the more modernist inclinations of the space can clearly be attributed to de Lanux, while responsibility

[135] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 134.

for the rug's appropriative aesthetics lies with Wyld. Clarifying the issue of authorship within their collaborative partnership, de Lanux herself described the nature of it as such:

> Eve. [Evelyn] A remarkable woman. She knows how to do everything, takes care of everything; she organized, found the craftsmen, the clients, did everything naturally without ever talking about it. She is the one who handled everything about our exhibitions. If I had a few ideas, she knew how to make them happen. She was the ideal partner.[136]

This would suggest that de Lanux was the creative force behind the conceptualization of their interiors, while Wyld tackled the practical and organizational needs of the design and display, as well as the rugmaking and upholstery. It is perhaps more accurate to suggest that Wyld's experience and training within the field—having worked extensively with Gray as a rugmaker, as well as learned authentic techniques and modes of textile production in North Africa[137] (likely Morocco and/or Algeria)[138]—informed Wyld's interpretation of de Lanux's creative direction, rather than it directly resulting from de Lanux's taste for these aesthetics of appropriation—at the outset, at least.

This argument can be furthered by looking at the evolution of their interiors. In de Lanux's words, she describes her overall approach to space as "expensive bareness,"[139] characteristic of a late moderne style, or decorative modernism, that integrated aspect of modernist design with Art Deco, like that of her friend and collaborator Frank.[140] This is accomplished by using minimal furnishings, leaving the space uncluttered, rather using "large and serene forms balanced by areas

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[136] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 94.
[137] For more on North African textile production, see Irmtraud Reswick, *Traditional Textiles of Tunisia and Related North African Weavings*, Folk Art Monographs 1 (Los Angeles: Craft & Folk Art Museum, 1985); Niloo Imami Paydar and Ivo Grammet, eds., *The Fabric of Moroccan Life* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2002).
[138] "Eileen Gray Chronology," Museum of Modern Art, n.d., https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/5792/releases/MOMA_1979_0092_79.pdf.; J. Stewart Johnson, *Eileen Gray, Designer* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1979), 11-14.
[139] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 116.
[140] Joel Sanders, "Curtain Wars Revisited," *PINUP*, Fall 2016.

of super alert patterns,"[141] like Wyld's rugs, for maximum impact. However, the couple's collaborative relationship proved more influential and reciprocal than Wyld's with Gray, perhaps, in part, due to their romantic entanglement. De Lanux's early furniture, as this thesis will explore, focuses more on its materiality rather than overt decoration, but progressively evolves in its integration of geometric, decorative, and appropriative aesthetics, likely gleaned from Wyld's consistent and unwavering style. Perhaps, this can also be explained by Wyld's more established education and longstanding career, resulting in a more coherent style over time, while de Lanux was new to the field of interior design, still learning, experimenting, adapting, and highly influenceable.

At first glance, the minimal setup of their first interior at the *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs* (1928), including but four pieces, in addition to the mirrored and photograph-covered walls, can be undoubtedly attributed to the lack of funds of a newborn partnership. Regardless, this would have been a bold and radical move for "the display of a stand at an exhibition of this importance,"[142] as it spoke to modernist concerns and values within the context of a decorative arts exhibition. Soon, this minimal inclusion of furniture became a hallmark of their displayed interiors, repeated at the *Salon d'Automne* (1929), with 6 pieces of furniture and a rug, and at the first exhibition of the *Union des Artistes Modernes (*UAM*)* (1930), with 5 pieces and 6 rugs (mostly serving as wall-hangings) [Fig. 6 and 7]. While these displayed interiors demonstrate the early development of her stylistic hybridity, they exemplify, first and foremost, de Lanux's manipulation of space and sight, attention to sensory experience through materiality, as well as an overall concern for, and prioritization of, an (imagined) dweller's needs, balancing practicality and functionality as much as aesthetics.

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[141] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 116.
[142] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 134.

Salon des Artistes Décorateurs (1928): Blurring the Limits of Space

Modernist design suggested, and encouraged, the disappearance of walls, as it often conceptualized them as a "psychological barrier"[143] in an "enclosed, womb-like space."[144] It was contended that, when the domesticity and privacy of a space was removed, it could then serve multiple functions, making it more conducive to productivity, and therefore more economical, contributing to the prosperity of 'all.' With advancements in architectural construction, materials such as steel, concrete, and glass enabled architects, and interior designers, to organize space in new ways, such as removing walls, in an attempt to provide an unobstructed, complete view of a space. De Lanux utilizes this modernist concept and alters it, exerting a perception-altering mastery and control over the viewer's experience of the display at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs:

> […] the photographic background reflected by the mirrors on the sides, the white lacquered floor, the plush pile rug climbing two steps like the carpet at a gala event leading one's gaze to the massive table, whose transparency does not block it, and which continues and is lost in the skyscrapers of New York…This stand is without limits.[145]

Rather, she eliminates the idea of the wall altogether by replacing the center background with an enlarged photograph of a NYC skyline, and its adjacent perimeter with mirrors facing each other, creating an infinite reflection of the designed space and its 'skyline.' In doing so, there is an illusion of outward expansion, while simultaneously bringing the outside world in, importing a cityscape within the confines of an interior space, collapsing the barriers between exterior/interior. This is further complicated by the fact that this was intended as the office space of "a studio apartment on the forty-ninth floor of a skyscraper,"[146] a private space put on display for the public in a Salon

[143] Sparke, *As Long as It's Pink*, 74.
[144] Ibid., 73.
[145] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 134–35.
[146] Rault, "Losing Feelings," 61–62.

exhibition. This effect was amplified by "the floor lighting reflecting from Eyre de Lanux's stacked glass table ma[king] the photographs seem real by extending the dramatic chiaroscuro in the virtual space of the photograph into the real space of the exhibit,"[147] creating a liminal space between what is in the frame and what is beyond in the space of the Salon, turning visitors lurking between displays into active participants.

De Lanux's powerful spatial control is amplified by the disorienting symmetry of the armchairs, placed on each side of the table, serving as "inverted reflection[s] of each other" as well as "an exercise in style contrasting their fragile straps with the solidity of the sandblasted oak."[148] The sea-foam green table in the center of the space contributes further: not only does its transparency allow for an extension of the space and a nearly uninhibited view of the photographic skyline, but de Lanux shifts the expected, and deemed otherwise necessary, support system of a traditional table, choosing glass for the top – and for the legs:

> stacks of thick glass squares, […] lacking a proper system for gluing them at the time, […] held in place by the simple cumulative effect of their weight, […] completing this sketchy arrangement with glass cut with diagonal pliers, which caused a seafoam green mirroring effect on the surface of the columns supporting the tabletop.[149]

This creates a sculptural effect that is reflected in her subsequent table designs, likely a remnant of Brancusi's influence and training. An equally striking feature of the space in its overall bareness is its lack of signs of habitation, of life. If it were functioning as a real, rather than imagined (or ideal) office space, it would likely be adorned with pens, paper—perhaps a vase with flowers, adorning subsequent, inhabited interiors—and, most importantly, a chair behind the table, rather than two at its extremities. Alternatively, the chairs could be moved to face each other, placed at the back and front of the table, for the sake of practicality and functionality. However, their

[147] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 114-116.
[148] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 135.
[149] Ibid.

placement in the room is likely intentional, as they precisely mirror each other in color and, subsequently, in the reflection of the walls.

In her article "Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interiors of Adolf Loos" (1990), architectural historian Beatriz Colomina illuminates the role of mirroring in "promot[ing] the interplay between reality and illusion, between the actual and the virtual, undermining the status of the boundary between inside and outside."[150] This is of relevance to the illusory nature of exhibition displays, as explored previously by Gronberg, as well as the potential sapphic realities de Lanux's is attempting to foster. In addition, it speaks to the modernist preoccupation with the visual landscape and the collapse of outside/inside. In her examination of Loos' interiors, Colomina suggests that "this ambiguity between inside and outside[,] intensified by the separation of sight from the other senses," creates "a visual connection that does not correspond to the physical connection."[151] This disconnect, between visuality and materiality, is what comes to plague modernist designs, in their de-prioritization of comfort and leisure. However, I argue that de Lanux uses a modernist-inclined visuality to enhance the materiality of her spaces. The visual provides the eye-catching intrigue, inviting the visitor/inhabitant in, but the material provides a fuller sensory and, in turn, embodied experience that entices the occupant to touch, interact, feel, and perhaps, ultimately, stay/reside in the space.

Of concern is the visual focus of modernist design, as Colomina states: "Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant."[152] She highlights a strategy of framing, which, in Loos' interiors, literally translates to the use of "curtains, enhancing the stage-like effect[;] what

[150] Beatriz Colomina, "Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interiors of Adolf Loos," *AA Files* 20 (Autumn 1990), 11.
[151] Colomina, "Intimacy and Spectacle," 11.
[152] Ibid., 8.

is being framed is the traditional scene of everyday domestic life."[153] While curtains only become relevant in de Lanux's later interiors, the stage-like effect that Loos produces through framing speaks to the visuality of design as a medium, as well as its photographic quality. In de Lanux's 1928 exhibition interior in question, particular importance is placed on the photographic background that allows the occupant to be transported elsewhere, into a new reality—a feeling signalling at once metropolitanism, her expatriated status, and (queer) utopia—and, in turn, a new frame. Colomina claims that Loos' interiors function much in the same way:

> The theatricality that we sense […] does not depend on the buildings alone. Many of the photographs, for instance, tend to give the impression that someone is just about to enter the room, that a piece of domestic drama is about to be enacted. The character is absent from the stage, from the scenery and the props—the conspicuously placed pieces of furniture—are conjured up.[154]

Here, Colomina infers that the materiality of the space becomes vital, as the 'characters' of the 'stage' are often not pictured. Few photographs remain of de Lanux's interiors, and only one featuring an occupant, the designer herself [Fig. 8]. Potvin urges caution "not to fall into the trap of the visibility of representation,"[155] in relation to archival evidence such as this. However, he also restates German philosopher Walter Benjamin's claim that "photography made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being,"[156] not only when the occupant is featured, but especially when they are not: the visual materiality of their space in photographic form functions as 'traces of [their] inhabitation.'

The second photograph of this space features the designer herself, standing at the center back of the room, behind the glass table, seemingly surveying and reigning over the space, sporting crossed arms and a fixed gaze. The air of authority and prowess depicted in this photograph is not

[153] Colomina, "Intimacy and Spectacle," 10.
[154] Ibid., 8.
[155] Potvin, "A Queer Feeling and Its Future in/for Design History," 106.
[156] Ibid.

dissimilar to the one she exudes as an Amazonian huntress in Romaine Brooks' portrait of her, *Chasseresse* (1920) in which she is positioned in a powerful stance set against a rugged, mountainous landscape [Fig. 9]. De Lanux is not adopting the pose of an inhabitant 'working' in the space, but of one knowingly photographed and on display, as both author and potential inhabitant of the space. Like Brooks' painting, de Lanux is of similar height to the highest points of the background landscape (whether they are skyscrapers or mountains); she positions herself as a piece of the designed space, as one with the designed environment. In the photograph, she is aligning herself with the modernity of the skyscrapers, playing "on the French obsession with Manhattan;" [157] in the painting, she is aligned with the seemingly uncolonized, perilous, mountainous landscape. Importantly, in the former, she is turning the gaze of the viewer or onlooker back onto itself, signalling a kind of performativity, of a gendered and sexual nature. This also suggests that the space was never meant to be an existing, useable office, but rather an imagined space for modern (queer) identities to be performed—a potentiality or dream, rather than a reality.

Salon d'Automne (1929): Comfort and Leisure

De Lanux's display for the Salon d'Automne (1929) once again evokes the "sparsely arranged furniture" and "restrained lines" of modernist design—featuring two tables, three chairs, a sofa-swing atop a mezzanine, and single carpet of Wyld's on the main floor—while evoking the "richness" of Art Deco materiality in her use of "pony skin, cowhide, lacquer, and African patterns." [158] Emblematic of the designer's stylistic hybridity, and a decorative modernism, "reviewers were struck by the dramatic intensity that was achieved with so little in the way of

[157] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 114.
[158] Ibid., 116.

furnishings."[159] The chosen theme of the 1929 Salon exhibition was "'Terrasse du Midi' (Terrace in the South of France), a taste of *la dolce vita*."[160] In adherence to its theme, de Lanux created a place for leisure and retreat, a utopian escape from the travails of city-living. She hung "squares of sky-blue cotton canvas surrounded by a thin, somewhat lighter border,"[161] its subtle *dégradé* giving the impression of a nondescript, abstract view of the sky and/or the ocean. It is unclear whether the mezzanine terrace, on which this canvas-covered background was located, was intended as an outdoor or indoor terrace. Therefore, the blue surface could be symbolic of a direct and open view of the landscape or one mediated through a floor-to-ceiling window; like the New York skyline of the 1928 Salon display, this background could have been envisioned as a real or metaphorical window.

Potvin discusses the interdependent meanings of a background, similar to de Lanux's blue pane, first as a "backdrop that helps to set in relief the personality or character of the home's owner, that is, the stage on which his modern identity is performed," and secondly as one that "exposes how the various *objects d'art* as a whole provide a material index, that is, a narrative—or history—of the man himself."[162] Both imply a shift from private to public narrative through the background and objects of an interior. However, the latter specifically addresses exposure, of great concern to queer and non-queer occupants and designers alike. He states: "through space and objects, identity is not only performed, but also clearly—or unclearly as the case may be—exposed."[163] Within a modernist framework, this exposure can equate to the "openness achieved by way of large-scale windows and the linear architecture of modern homes […] born out of a desire for exposure and

[159] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 116.
[160] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 136.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 219-221.
[163] Ibid.

revelation, leaving little in the way of spaces in which to hide."[164] In de Lanux's implication of large scale window, she is appealing to the modernist concern with openness, exposure, and revelation. However, this acknowledgement can be interpreted as an awareness of this gaze, rather than a concession to, as a means of subverting it.

Of equal possibility: de Lanux simply intended it to be a blue wall, with added dimensionality through its color gradient, that could be transposed to any existing space for future commissions, like the eggshell blue employed at Jan Heiliger's apartment [Fig. 10].[165] Regardless of its symbolic value, its size demonstrates a prioritization of 'natural' light and a blurring of the exterior/interior divide. In this way, it aligns with values of modernist design, but is altered in its ambience of calm, comfort, and leisure—an anti-productive, arguably queer, lifestyle that resists chrononormative, industrial time. Like the 1928 Salon interior, de Lanux pays equal attention to the walls as she does to the floors of the Salon d'Automne. The terrace floors are of a matte white, set in contrast to the "shiny mineral black floor"[166] of the main room, reached by descending four steps. This is reminiscent of Gray's use of black tiling in *E.1027* (1926-29) [Fig. 11]. Gray sketched out the 'choreography' of a dweller throughout the day and took "the daily transit of the sun"[167] in consideration when designing the space. As a result, Gray chose to inlay black tiles in select areas of the main living space, so that the tiles would absorb and emanate the heat radiated from the sun, warming the inhabitant's feet as they walked. This choice demonstrates a concern for the comfort of the dweller through the materiality of the space.

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[164] Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 224.
[165] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 158.
[166] Ibid, 136.
[167] Caroline Constant, "E. 1027: The Nonheroic Modernism of Eileen Gray," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53, no. 3 (September 1994): 270.

The sofa swing, "with a framework in sandblasted and bleached oak, rounded on both ends, equipped with a canopy in a low back (in bleached oak)," functions in a similar capacity toward comfort, as the piece "was padded with a mattress and oversized cushions covered in wool with thick fringes,"[168] credited to Wyld. It reinforces the atmosphere of retreat and leisure, but also of eroticism in its encouragement of the supine. Located on the platform by the imagined window, it was "suspended from the ceiling with thick leather strips like a porch swing,"[169] further complicating the distinction and intended function of the space as either an indoor or outdoor terrace. However, its dual usage and purpose allow for a multiplicity of scenarios in which this piece of furniture could be purchased and used by a client. While modernist design encouraged the private use of furniture from the public sphere, as well as the multiplicity of uses, in its attempt to eliminate domesticity and privacy, it stemmed from a masculinist perspective that disdained the very sense of touch and comfort de Lanux is prioritizing. In addition, its "system of leather strips allowed for raising or lowering it and even placing it on the floor,"[170] its adjustable height permitting further customization by the user. Once raised, a sitter would only be able to see the blue of the imagined view and not the rest of the room, transporting them to another world, providing an illusion of free floating.

Visible-Invisibility and Queer Performance

De Lanux's displayed interiors appeal to the hierarchical importance modernist design places on the visual. But, rather than doing so with the intent of policing morality and 'degenerate' identities, de Lanux seems to be using this control to her advantage, purposefully disorienting her viewer,

[168] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 136.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.

evading a certain legibility, evoking a kind of queer "visible-invisibility."[171] In this manipulation of sight, de Lanux provides alternate perspectives and gazes, and "develop[s] other ways of looking […] both in appearing and seeing."[172] In this way, this work speaks to the visual codes and dynamics of hiding/coming out and passing/not passing at stake in queer identities. Alice T. Friedman states that

> [i]n the making of place, those who stand outside the power structure or who do not conform to accepted norms—women, gay men and lesbians, people of colour—are frequently expert at navigating the treacherous waters of public imagery and representations, choosing when to reveal themselves and remain hidden.[173]

This is precisely what de Lanux seems to be doing, expertly constructing the viewer's impression of the space, using built-in performative codes, meant to be read and understood only by those who know what to look for, like those read on the bodies of queer individuals. This blurring of modernist spatiality can be symbolic of the way that de Lanux avoids clear definition and boundaries with her other gendered, sexual, and stylistic hybridities.

The ambiguity of spatial boundaries in de Lanux's work speaks to Ahmed's understanding of queer orientation, direction, and the notion of 'home'. She suggests that direction is more than "going this way or that way,"[174] rather it is also "something one gives"[175] on an individual or collective level. Direction, in its shortened, related form, 'direct,' "relates to 'being straight' or getting 'straight to the point,'" imbuing the concept with 'straightness:' "to follow a line might be a way of becoming straight, by not deviating at any point."[176] This directionality becomes vital to the understanding of de Lanux's desire to re-design space for the modern woman, a task of queer

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[171] Rault, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity*, 118.
[172] Ibid., 94–95.
[173] Alice Friedman, "Your Place or Mine? The Client's Contribution to Domestic Architecture," in *Women's Places: Architecture and Design 1860-1960*, ed. Penny Sparke and Brenda Martin (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 80.
[174] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 16.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.

origins with queer results. However, this imposed, directional heteronormativity is imbedded within modernist design, as modernist "architects preferred stripped-down buildings, which they compared with 'naked men,' over ornamented structures, which they likened to over-dressed women,"[177] of which Art Deco was heavily compared to, "through prominently sensuous, lithe, elongated, elegant and thin female bodies."[178] Architect and writer Joel Sanders restates and specifies that "they found their archetypal model in the image of the male nude ("naked and unadorned"), the very antithesis of the female masquerader, embellished with clothes and makeup."[179]

The notion of a mask or masquerade had specific connotations for "the performative nature of gender and sexuality" [180] in the interwar years, with British psychoanalyst Joan Rivière publishing her controversial essay, "Womanliness as Masquerade," in 1929 (the same year as Hall's trials and de Lanux's participation in the Salon d'Automne). Rivière expresses a fear that womanliness could be used as façade or a mask by "women who wish for masculinity," in order to "avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men,"[181] specifically targeting "professional women in certain circumstances in which she was made to perform in front of male colleagues."[182] While Freeman states that "Judith Butler has shown how the rhythms of gendered performance—specifically, repetitions—accrete to 'freeze' masculinity and femininity into timeless truths of being,"[183] Rivière concluded much earlier "that gender—identity itself—was nothing more than a mask we don, a performance we enact in myriad different circumstances."[184]

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[177] Joel Sanders, "Curtain Wars Revisited," n.p.
[178] Potvin, *Deco Dandy*, 13.
[179] Sanders, n.p.
[180] Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 235.
[181] Joan Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," in *Female Sexuality: The Early Psychoanalytic Controversies*, ed. Russell Grigg (Routledge, 1999), 173.
[182] Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort*, 235.
[183] Freeman, *Time Binds*, 4.
[184] Potvin, 235.

In de Lanux's blurring of the symbolic and physical boundaries of modernist space, she subverts its prescribed straightness. In this directional movement, Ahmed states that the experience of "'getting lost' still takes us somewhere; and being lost is a way of inhabiting a space by registering what is not familiar: being lost can in its turn become a familiar feeling."[185] Of equal importance to Ahmed is the "disorientation of being out of place," as much as "the ways we have of settling; that is of inhabiting spaces that, in the first instance, are unfamiliar but that we can imagine–sometimes with fear, other times with desire–might come to feel like home."[186] As those engaged in queer lifestyles continuously fail to adhere to heteronormative directionality, the experience of un-belonging and failure results in a disorientation, in both space and time; this unfamiliar feeling caused by disorientation can, in turn, become familiar. De Lanux's hybrid spaces, where boundaries and delineation of space, time, and style are blurred, come to offer the unfamiliar-familiarity and a possibility of comfort, reassurance, and 'home' for queer individuals.

As the traditional home contains "full of traces of heterosexual intimacy," its queer inhabitants naturally feel 'out of place,' turning to "other places, even ones that have yet to be inhabited."[187] Therefore, de Lanux's blurring of architectural, spatial, and experiential lines becomes not only symbolic of imposed heteronormative lines, but also of a kind of migrancy and fluidity between here/there, outside/inside, heterosexual/homosexual, civilized/deviant, and, to a certain extent, West/East. This becomes all the more relevant with de Lanux's expatriated status. Ahmed describes migrant orientation as "the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home."[188] It suggests a spatial and temporal in-between that is reflective of queer and migrant experiences, of both hope and longing.

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[185] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenolgy,* 7.
[186] Ibid., 10.
[187] Ibid., 12.
[188] Ibid., 10.

This multidirectional pull is clearly expressed in de Lanux's hybrid designs in her dual embrace of conflicting and contradictory styles for a singular queer aim. However, its directionality is equally representative of queer utopia.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), Muñoz states that "we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds."[189] While this statement is a characteristic driving force behind all utopian conception, like modernist design, the author is proposing it in the context of queer utopias. In many cases, the utopian desire to conceptualize new realities and futures often materializes itself alongside the intention of surveilling, controlling, reforming, and/or eradicating deviance and moral corruption through the meticulous design of spaces. What seems to differentiate queer utopias from its singular, traditional form lies in its conceptualization as a space that enables its inhabitants to exist *away from* oppressive gazes, rather than *under* them; it allows for a simultaneous freedom and privacy, rather than control and surveillance. In de Lanux's subversion of the all-knowing modernist gaze, she is, in turn, creating her own queer, hybrid utopia.

The queer utopian vision is complicated by the fact that these interiors by de Lanux were displays, which contradicts the understanding of queer utopia as a space away from oppressive gazes. However, in directly engaging with these systems of display, her interiors showcase a queer potentiality intended only to be legible and decipherable to the 'right' viewer. As many of those involved in sapphic modernity engaged in lifestyles outside of the norm like de Lanux, they also required spaces to suit those lifestyles, and this could be interpreted as one of them. In Friedman's study of women patrons "who were single, divorced, or living in partnerships with other women,"[190] she concludes that "the conventions of planning and design in all periods respond not

[189] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 1.
[190] Friedman, "Your Place or Mine?" 66.

only to patterns of use (programme, circulation, sitting, etc.), but are also markers of social values, gender identity and class status[191]—and I would add: sexuality (or queerness). As modern queer women, who were in a romantic and business relationship, and not necessarily monogamous, the standard regimes of a so-called normal household would have differed greatly for de Lanux and Wyld.

Muñoz continues: "Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house."[192] This passage speaks to the oppression that queer individuals faced (and continue to) and how it results in a desire to move past, beyond, to exist elsewhere—other than now. As modernist design framed itself as the path for the evolution of civilization, it becomes clear why de Lanux was attracted to its futuristic, utopian potentiality, but adjusted it to suit her own queer needs within decorative-inclined interiors. Muñoz is hopeful in queerness' and queer utopia's ability to "propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative toiling in the present."[193] He emphasizes the power of the arts that enables us to "glimpse the worlds proposed and promised in the realm of the aesthetic […] especially the queer aesthetic, [which] frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity,"[194] which I propose, here, is precisely what de Lanux's interiors accomplish, catering to the modern queer/sapphic woman and her need for a modern, individualized, comfortable, and functional space, artistically navigating Rault's 'visible-invisibility.'

It can also be argued that de Lanux's blending of aspects of modernist design, with Wyld's influence of appropriated aesthetics, be read as epitomizing Muñoz's queer utopian imagining. These interiors act as a testament to de Lanux's desire and need to create a lifestyle that suited her,

[191] Friedman, "Your Place or Mine?" 67.
[192] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.

and the modern queer women she consorted with. Her spaces bring forth a notion of elsewhere, of traveling, or being transported, not only through a photographic view of a bourgeoning metropolis, but also the eclectic blend of styles from a distant and 'past' 'elsewhere' (Africa, North America, South America). Interestingly, Barney "shared a utopian desire to establish a lesbian colony"[195] on the mythical Greek island-haven of Lesbos. While Barney did not write utopian literature, she moved to Paris in the early 1900s with the aim of establishing a "woman-centered utopia reviving the spirit of Sappho's Lesbos"[196] with her partner at the time, Eva Palmer Sikelianos, an actor and director fascinated by ancient Greece and its culture. Her salons were the result of that goal. This link to utopian worlds and discourse in the queer context of Barney's salons, indicates that de Lanux would have likely been exposed to utopian concepts and positing them, even if subconsciously. Taking from Muñoz, I argue that de Lanux created spaces for sapphic lives to be lived out, employing styles from the past and present, in order to inhabit a potential future reality, separate from the world.

[195] Katarina Bonnevier, "A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027," in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005), 171.
[196] Artemis Leontis, "Artemis Leontis on Eva Palmer Sikelianos: A Life in Ruins," accessed March 17, 2021, https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/artemis-leontis-on-eva-palmer-sikelianos-a-life-in-ruins.

II
Pied-à-terre: Designing for the Modern (Queer) Woman

While utopias are often plans of ideal, imagined worlds that rarely come to be, the utopian concepts explored in de Lanux's early displayed interiors act as blueprints for what was to come in the designs of her Parisian *pied-à-terre* apartments, etymologically temporary spaces linked to impermanence, travel, and escape. Historically, utopias, like that of Thomas More's early imagining[197] and Sappho's queer iteration, were often located on secluded islands, positioned as self-sufficient societies, separate from the corrupting influence of outside civilizations. In the case of modernist design, its utopian future existed free of decoration, degeneration, and the oppressive weight of history—hence Le Corbusier's advocating of a *tabula rasa* and his positioning of homes as 'machines for living in,' inferring the removal of all domestic aspects of an interior. In direct response to him, Gray claimed that "a house is *not* a machine to live in," but rather, it should "encapsulate the most tangible relationships, the most intimate needs of subjective life."[198] Rault concludes that "these relations and intimate needs cannot, for Gray, be reduced to one standard or all-encompassing type,"[199] as desired by modernist designers.

Like Gray, de Lanux's inclusion of tactility and lush materiality resulted in a sense of comfort, but also underlying sensuality and eroticism—reflective not only of gendered concerns, but sexual ones as well. De Lanux's utopian imaginings are made queer in her embrace of the leisurely aspects of seclusion and escape, embracing comfort through the tactile, the visual, and customization based on the dweller's individual needs, ultimately rejecting modernism's desire toward collectivism and maximum productivity. The spaces she envisioned in her displayed interiors, intended for similarly expatriated modern queer women, came to fruition in the

[197] Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516.
[198] Rault, *Eileen Gray and the Design of Sapphic Modernity,* 104.
[199] Ibid.

apartments of Mrs. Helen Simpson and Mrs. Emily Sherfesee, acquaintances presumably made at Barney's salon. This posed a new challenge for the designer, for she previously worked with the customizable walls, doors, stairs, platforms, and windows of imagined spaces on display, rather than the set limits of pre-existing architecture. Working with real patrons, rather than imagined ones, also posed a new set of limitations on de Lanux's artistic vision. A pre-established space required an adaptation of methods, demonstrating de Lanux's ability to evolve and adapt her approach to spatiality, functionality, and materiality toward a 'real,' habitable space and its dweller's unique needs.

Despite their decorative and tactile inclinations, the designing couple "wanted to rid domestic spaces of an accumulated clutter that was difficult to clean and did not comfortably fit into the small-scale flats and houses that characterize the interwar years,"[200] like the *pied-à-terre* apartments they were designing. This aligns with the decorative modernism of the early 1930s, accomplished through "the elimination of mouldings and cove ceilings, and the introduction of streamlined furniture,"[201] as well as lighter or reduced color schemes in De Lanux's interiors. While not to the extent of British interior decorator Syrie Maugham's singularly white spaces, Elliott suggests that "this reduction of color was probably fuelled by a desire to distance themselves from traditional female stereotypes, which since the renaissance had associated colour with the sensual, irrational, and intuitive in contrast to the more cerebral qualities of line."[202] Interestingly, Elliott recalls the British furniture, textile, and interior designer, Betty Joel, who believed that "what was more important than the 'so-called modern movement in design' was the taste of the individual female owner who should be encouraged to select and eclectic mix of furnishings that

[200] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 119.
[201] Ibid., 119-120.
[202] Ibid.

appealed to her."[203] Joel is emphasizing women's agency as cultural producers and patrons over a strict style or design movement, a sentiment that can be seen in de Lanux's interiors, especially in her prioritization of the house's inhabitants, their bodies, their lifestyles, and their identities. Her designed spaces are imbued with sensuality through an embodied and kinaesthetic understanding of space, with a deep concern for tactility through materiality and surfaces, as well as a manipulation of (modernist) sight, that seems to be deeply reflective of her marginalized identity, shared by her patrons.

1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris (n.d.)

The ownership of de Lanux's "first real interior"[204] (in her own words), has long been debated. Sara and Gerald Murphy, American expatriated socialites known for their decadent Parisian parties, owned two apartments at 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris. The largest sold to American heiress and patron of the arts, Alice de Lamar, and the smallest to Helen Simpson (previously Helen Knickerbocker Porter). The speculation over the ownership of the Gît-le-coeur apartment de Lanux designed was later settled with a simple inscription on the verso of a photograph of the interior in her archive, designating a 'Mrs. Helen Simpson' as the patron. In a letter to her husband in 1927, while she was traveling in the U.S., de Lanux referred to Helen using her maiden name, Porter, as someone who expressed an interest in "having Eyre decorate her apartment."[205] It is curious that de Lanux would refer to her using her maiden name, as she would have already been married to Mr. Kenneth Farrand Simpson, a Republican congressman in the United States, two years prior. While it is impossible to 'prove' Helen Simpson's participation in a modern, queer lifestyle, she

[203] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 120.
[204] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 148.
[205] Ibid., 144.

and her husband did regularly frequent artistic circles—he was an avid lover of modern art, as well as an attorney representing modern figures like Cubist artist Pablo Picasso and, notably, queer writer Gertrude Stein—which often overlapped with the queer cultures of interwar Paris. In de Lanux's initial deferral to her maiden name (rather than her husband's) and subsequent indication of her sole patronage (rather than her husband's), it can be inferred that, in her view, Simpson qualified as a modern woman, regardless of inherent queerness, identifying a certain kinship in their woman-oriented quest for modernity.

Few records remain of Simpson's connection to de Lanux, but it is presumed that they would have been acquainted through Barney's salons, as was de Lamar.[206] It becomes clear that these salons fostered the connection of like-minded artistic and modern, often queer, women—resulting not only in patronage, but in life-long support and friendship. While modernists were attacking class issues through design, these women used alternative, queer means to counteract the disparity: "the richest took care to assist those in need,"[207] as is evidenced throughout de Lanux's life. For example, Brooks, a supposed rival in love (referring to Barney), sent de Lanux funds in the mail, without explanation, after an automobile accident.[208] Upon de Lanux's husband Pierre's death, de Lamar also provided the artist-designer with the equivalent of a pension and, by 1983, bequeathed a small inheritance to de Lanux "that allowed her, as well as Eva Le Gellienne, Alice's lifelong companion, to live out her old age comfortably."[209] This demonstrates a simultaneous resistance and adaptation to the capitalist and industrial constraints imposed on non-heteronormative lifestyles, aligned with sapphic and queer understandings of temporality.

[206] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux,* 48.
[207] Ibid., 148.
[208] Ibid., 48.
[209] Ibid.

De Lanux was therefore commissioned to design the smaller of the two apartments at 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, its size making it "an ideal experiment for a decorator just starting out."[210] The need to maximize the practicality and the use of the space was crucial in de Lanux's design process, comparing it herself to the design and layout of a boat. Gray's E.1027 functions similarly, translating the boat inspiration into that of an overall maritime theme, complete with "the use of sailcloth in awnings and deck chairs, the extensive use of white, the built-in headboards for the beds, even the flagpole on the roof," as well as a Caribbean map. Atop the map, "INVITATION AU VOYAGE" is printed in large letters, which could be a reference to Charles Baudelaire's poem of the same name from the 1860s. In the poem, one of the characters is asked to travel to a place where "'*tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté / Luxe, calme et volupté*,' which can be interpreted as a description of the distant Greek island-haven of Lesbos."[211] Interestingly, the map and poem tie into Wilde's quote, used in the epigraph of Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*: "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth glancing at."[212] It becomes clear that boats and their nautical themes have clear ties to utopias, as means of transportation to reach these often secluded islands, while equally connoting the feeling of leisure and retreat that de Lanux's interiors (as well as Gray's) evoke.

De Lanux's inscription on the verso of a photograph of this rue Gît-le-coeur apartment describes how its spatiality, through the maximizing of limited space with foldable, moveable furniture and storage units, allowing a multiplicity of uses, and its materiality, like the use of white rattan, further "suggests a yacht."[213] The bar 'room,' of approximately 2-square meters, adjoining the dining room, was

[210] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 148.
[211] Bonnevier, "A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray's E.1027," 171.
[212] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[213] Huybrechts and Castor, 148.

> equipped with everything such a facility required: two taps, a double sink in zinc (*à la francaise*), a storage area not just for glasses (cabinets above) but also for the inevitable blocks of ice in the ice chest (under the sink, to take advantage of the flow of the water caused by its melting), which could be easily delivered via the service door that opened directly into the room [Fig. 12].[214]

The practicality of the design extends beyond the built-in storage to the iron folding garden table, which allows the item to be easily moved for access to the service door or lower bar storage, as well as a flexibility and customization based on a specific activity. The use of an outdoor garden table plays on the divide between interior/exterior and private/public often at play in de Lanux's work, placing an item traditionally found outdoors inside. In lack of traditional, fixed furniture (both in terms of use and position), the space feels nomadic and impermanent, which further connects de Lanux's designs to Muñoz's understanding of queerness as 'not yet here'. The small bar space also featured a mirrored backsplash and lower storage area. Similarly employed at the 1928 Salon des Artistes Décorateurs, the mirroring effect serves to expand the space, reflecting the larger adjoining room and, once again, offering new perspectives and alternative gazes within a confined interior.

The living area was originally designed around an unframed painting by Catalan artist Joan Miró, placed above the fireplace mantelpiece, seemingly uncentered—rather, it is aligned with the border of the wall on the left, resulting in the painting's over-extension, beyond the mantel toward the right—an asymmetry uncommon for de Lanux [Fig. 13]. Various design elements throughout the space guide one's gaze toward the painting: the first is accomplished through the varying shades of white used on the walls, ceiling, fireplace frame, creating a stark contrast with the Miró, leaving the surfaces "as blank as possible"[215] and pulling your attention toward the darkness and dynamism of the painting. Reminiscent of one-point perspective, the angularity, geometry, and

[214] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 148.
[215] Ibid., 150.

linearity of the furnishing lead one's gaze toward the painting, the focus, the vanishing point. The guiding lines emanate from the waxed walnut armoire, angled in the left corner of the room, as well as Wyld's simple beige and blue parallel-lined rug, centered directly in front of the fireplace, and the beige wool cube-shaped armchairs, on either side of the fireplace's frame.

This photograph, however, implies a secondary gaze that is not focused on the painting: while the armchair on the left is angled toward the painting and fireplace, the one to the right is facing the other chair —or perhaps, the imagined sitter of its opposite chair. While de Lanux often used symmetry as a spatial tool in displayed interiors, she seems to do the opposite here: in basing the room off the Miró that does not quite fit atop the mantelpiece, she is embracing the lack of symmetry to create something equally striking. Alternatively, this space has been photographed with a Giorgio De Chirico painting (in place of the Miró), smaller in size, in a cubist-style frame designed by de Lanux herself, placed purposefully off-centre above the fireplace mantelpiece [Fig. 14]. The design also differs in its change of rug, using one of Wyld's more elaborately printed ones, *Engrenage*—a French mechanical term meaning "gears," as a reference to the intertwined, structured geometric lines of the design—perhaps a choice made to compensate for the new painting, whose size commands less space and attention.

Like the adjoining bar room, the walls of the dining area are painted with the same shade of terracotta red, giving the rooms a sense of continuity [Fig. 15]. While the contrast of materials, between natural and handmade, initially feels mismatched, it becomes clear that she "employed materials for their natural colours, of course, but also for the feeling of comfort they provided when in use."[216] Perhaps, as with most of her interiors, this room acts as a showcase for her own workmanship, as well as those of her peers and collaborators. It is furnished with wicker chairs,

[216] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux,* 151.

modeled by interior designer Jean-Michel Frank and manufactured by the Chanaux workshops, as well as a brown, grey, and beige carpet with beige linen curtains by Wyld. Of particular interest, however, is the dining table she designed of blackened wrought iron and terracotta plaques of varying sizes, fitted together, to comprise the tabletop. The prioritization of practicality is clear: by using terracotta as the table's surface, she renders it easy to clean and allows for a hot pot to be placed directly on the table, removing the need for a tablecloth—an omittance "which would have been unusual for the period."[217] This pragmatism is also obvious in the large closet built into the adjacent wall, not visible in the photograph, which included "sliding doors for storing dishware."[218]

Given the lens of the period and the distance of the photographer, it has been estimated that the bedroom would have been no more than 2.5 meters in width [Fig. 16]. However, de Lanux "found a clever way around this drawback[,] she took advantage of the situation to treat the bedroom as concisely as a cabin on a boat."[219] As the building itself dated from the sixteenth century, it did not originally have a bathroom, which was added later, taking space from the kitchen; the bathroom is assumed to have been quite small. De Lanux opted to place "elements the bathroom could not contain" elsewhere, like the bedroom, designing a "multi-purpose piece of furniture that ran along the wall, at the end of the bed and extending in a right angle on the wall to the right."[220] This custom unit functioned as both storage space, with sliding doors, manoeuvred open and closed using carved rectangles as recessed, "invisible doorknobs,"[221] and a bedside table, with a built-in light fixture and drop-down tabletop. At the edge of the frame, a matching wood

[217] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux,* 151.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., 152.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.

stool, upholstered in handwoven natural wool, is pictured facing the continuation of the unit that serves as a dressing table, "equipped with drawers in front and the same system of a mirrored drop down top."[222] According to de Lanux's records, the walls and ceiling were not painted like the rest of the apartment, but rather, "covered in squares of natural raffia sewn together in opposing patterns."[223] By covering the surfaces in fabric rather than paint, de Lanux is not only creating an interesting textured surface and geometric pattern, but a renewed sense of comfort, using natural materials, matching the bedspread of black and white wool, woven by Wyld.

Jardin Luxembourg Apartment, Paris (1929)

Upon the completion of Simpson's apartment, de Lanux was commissioned to design the apartment of Mrs. Emily Sherfesee (previously Mrs. Arthur Larned Ryerson). Sherfesee was a Titanic survivor, along with her 4 children, tragically widowed by the disastrous 1912 event—she never re-married and resumed using her maiden name, residing in the U.S., France, and Uruguay until her death in 1939. While not explicitly queer, Sherfesee's identity as a single, widowed woman, living alone, fits within Latimer's and Friedman's frameworks of modern women that engaged lifestyles away from, and opposed to, heteronormativity more broadly, a woman-oriented approach equally aligned with Rault and Elliott's understanding of sapphic modernity.

Her Parisian apartment overlooked the Jardin du Luxembourg, of which only photographs of the large and small drawing rooms remain. De Lanux remembered it as such: "It was an exercise in simple extravagance. We decorated it with almost nothing, but it was the best. […] The custom-made rugs by Evelyn Wyld rang out like exclamation points in the neutral décor;"[224] words that

[222] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux,* 152.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid., 154.

came to exemplify the couple's signature style. It is important to note that part of the interior's simplicity is not only reflective of de Lanux's designing style, but can also be attributed to the fact that the photographs were likely taken upon completion of her designs, prior to the inhabitants moving in, due to the lack of personal objects (e.g., lamps, ashtrays, books, vases, flowers, etc.). While the decor may have been simple, it was in no way bare, its textured surfaces elaborating on the technique used in Simpson's bedroom, with its "burl walnut clad walls, simply waxed [in contrast to] the opaqueness of the dark oak floors laid in a herring bone pattern," creating a "discreet rhythm to the surface."[225] This renewed attention to materiality emphasizes the tactile experiences of the dweller, prioritizing touch as much as sight, manipulating modernist's total view while including the feminine and queer-coded sense of touch.

The disorienting, yet familiar symmetry of de Lanux's designs remerges in this space, where an ottoman-style divan, made of a wood base, "covered in natural, vegetal-tanned and saddle stitched oxhide (by a Hermès leather craftsman),"[226] serves as its centerpiece [Fig. 17]. It offers a symmetry reminiscent not only to the centering of the glass table of their 1928 Salon display, but also an additional mirroring effect, without mirrors, rather using the alcove-like wall separation as the reflective line. Both sides of the separation feature paralleled items: rugs by Wyld, cube-style armchairs in contrasting colors (one pale leather-upholstered armchairs by Frank, the other upholstered in a handwoven flossy grey silk by Wyld), and woven natural silk curtains, filtering light from the windows without blocking it. The entirety of this space, in its horizontality and rich materiality, encourages comfort, lounging, and supine (perhaps even sensual and sexual) positioning, whether it be on the "thick mattress covered in wool fabric with comfortable cushions

[225] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux,* 151.
[226] Ibid.

thrown around, to be arranged by guests as they saw fit,"[227] the various armchairs, or directly atop one of Wyld's rugs, the larger variation of the *Romano* (seen previously in the Union des Artistes Modernes display and Mrs. Simpson's bar room), African-inspired in its "set of small, dark brown and labyrinthine graphics contrasting with the cream-coloured background,"[228] or the unnamed, linear and geometric rug in shades of terracotta red and vanilla.

Beyond the frame of this photograph, leading to the smaller drawing room, the wall extends outwardly, creating a secondary, smaller alcove-like space, with interior corners of approximately 135° degrees. This spatial extension gave de Lanux the opportunity to design a custom wrought-iron table to fit the transitional space, reminiscent of Simpson's dining table in design and materiality. Instead of covering it with terracotta plaques, she preserves the iron top, but recalls the same material combination by using the table to display a "collection of Mexican pottery in natural terracotta,"[229] their opacity contrasting the translucent grey and white curtains [Fig. 18]. Interestingly, the shape of the table, its curtain-framing, and the positioning of the pottery "in a way […] evoke[s] earlier religious altarpieces." Elliott suggests that, "like the furniture, a few unusual artifacts were carefully choreographed for maximum impact."[230] While there are no records of de Lanux religious beliefs, it recalls her early Salon interiors, playing with the effects of display and the legibility of *objets d'art*. Exceptionally, the table has twelve legs, atop which separators emerge, splitting the surface area, outlining various geometric sub-units, similar to those in Simpson's custom bedroom storage unit. The separators limit where the terracotta pieces can be displayed on the table, dictating a set numbers of variable options for the inhabitant to display the works.

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[227] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux,* 155.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid., 156.
[230] Elliott, "Art Deco Hybridity, Interior Design, and Sexuality between the Wars," 116.

While seemingly paler in the photograph, de Lanux's records indicate that the walls of the small drawing room were painted a terracotta color, its uniformity in texture contrasting the patina of the brushed hand-hewn oak French door [Fig. 19]. The door frame, enclosed at a right angle, rather than the traditionally mitered design, employs a technique reminiscent of the cubist-inspired frame designed by de Lanux, used for the De Chirico painting in Simpson's living room —but rather than framing an artwork, this frame delineates an entrance, or an individual's anticipated arrival. While the door is striking, a work of art in itself, it serves a secondary function, framing the inhabitants and their guests as they enter the room.

Correspondingly, all design elements signal the entrance as the centerpiece of the room, directing the gaze of those inside toward it, as much as at each other. First and foremost, the *Zèbre* rug creates an arrow-like shape pointing toward the seam of the doors, "with the brownish black zebra lines radiating outward against a white background and enlarging the perception of the space by giving it a centre."[231] Pieces of furniture – like the dark-stained oak coffee table, rectangular with rounded edges, adorned with a Chinese-inspired lamp by Frank, as well as the de Lanux-designed armchair, upholstered in matching fabric to the flossy silk marl-tobacco colored sofa – are angled toward the door, rather than the presumed sitters, further reinforcing the centrality and focus of the door. This emphasis on the door and its frame becomes relevant in the context of Ahmed's queer and migrant orientations, as she states that "homes are effects of the histories of arrival,"[232] "reflecting on […] how bodies arrive and how they get directed in this way or that way as a condition of arrival, which, in turn, is about how the 'in place' gets placed."[233] It brings to

[231] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 156.
[232] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 9.
[233] Ibid., 10.

question what ‘home’ and ‘arrival’ designate in the pied-à-terre apartments of these modern, queer, expatriated women.

CONCLUSION

As a queer/sapphic designer, de Lanux largely directed her energies toward the designing of spaces conducive to her lifestyle and that of her similarly othered patrons. While primarily employed for queer means, her flexible, inclusive, hybrid style was not exclusively reserved or applicable to modern queer women. In her final designs, de Lanux was forced to expand her distinct style for 'all,' in the Parisian apartment of Jan Heiliger, Dutch art critic, collector, and musician—importantly, her sole male patron—and the couple's gallery-boutique, *Décor* (1932), in Cannes [Fig. 20]. Her selective inclusion of modernist principles within a decorative moderne style resulted in a hybrid, fluid, inclusive, customizable, comfortable style, rather than a unified, rigid, controlling, oppressive, 'one-size-fits-all' model. In turn, it can be translated to and understood as an overall humanizing of modernism through a queer perspective, especially in its prioritization of the inhabitant's unique and individual needs, desires, and lifestyle.

Importantly, her final designs demonstrate the culmination of her design experience, informed by her displays and small-scale apartments. She further explores spatiality and materiality, no longer simply manipulating interior space but expanding outwardly to play with its very architecture through various built-in additions, alcoves, and recessed furniture, blurring hierarchical distinctions between the profession of architect/decorator, the spatial boundaries of public/private, the materiality of civilized/uncivilized, and the style of modern/decorative. While de Lanux did not have the budget, training, nor patronage (or the guidance of male counterparts, as did Gray) to build an entirely new architectural entity from the ground up, she utilized her capabilities in design and sculpture to create the closest thing to a *gesamtkunstwerk*.

In 1930, Gray closed Jean Désert and moved to Roquebrune-Cap-Martin (on the border of France and Monaco), having completed her modernist home, E.1027, the year before. As de Lanux

and Wyld had been relying on Gray's 17 rue Visconti studio for their low-cost production model, they could no longer maintain their practice in Paris after her departure. In 1931, the couple moved to Cannes, "where Evelyn Wyld owned a country house she had acquired when business was much better and prices more reasonable: The Bastide Caillenco."[234] By 1932, they opened a boutique-gallery, *Le Décor*, at 2 quai Saint-Pierre along the Old Port area. The space was formed by two open, adjoining rooms, featuring items for sale used in previous displays or interiors, with select variations of original models. Seemingly displaying as much as possible to maximize profit, the space verges on feeling cluttered, by de Lanux's standards. However, the *Décor* gallery was short-lived and closed its doors in 1933, marking the end of de Lanux and Wyld's romantic and creative partnership, remaining lifelong friends. Prior to its closing, de Lanux was also commissioned to design a little restaurant grill bar, *Le pavillon bleu* (1932), on rue des Belges, in Cannes, but few documents to analyze remain.

While the documentation and scholarship on de Lanux and her interiors is sparse, there was enough to fuel the exploration of queer time, space, and style that this thesis strove for. In the examination of these select interiors, spanning less than 5 years of production, it becomes clear that Lanux's otherness generated different needs and views, allowing her to design spaces that defied, redefined and contributed to the formation of an alternative, hybrid modernity—one that allowed for sapphic identities, bodies, and realities to be lived out. It acts as a testament to the importance of broadening our understanding of what it was to be modern, in all its ambiguity and complexity, especially in relation to intersecting marginal identities. Furthermore, in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, this research becomes all the more relevant with recent shifts in collective thought and discourse regarding health, hygiene, gender, sexuality, race, and the realities and

[234] Huybrechts and Castor, *Eyre de Lanux*, 168.

spaces we wish to inhabit. Her designed attempts to create for the modern queer/sapphic woman allow for creative interventions into the understanding of modernism and identity politics in interwar Paris, yielding inspiring possibilities for design nearly a century later.

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FIGURES

Fig. 1. Man Ray, *Portrait of Eyre de Lanux*, 1925. Source: http://willyhuybrechts.com/en/artists/eyre-de-lanux. Accessed March 31, 2021.

Fig. 2. Eyre de Lanux, *Union des Artistes Modernes* (detail), 1930. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 142.

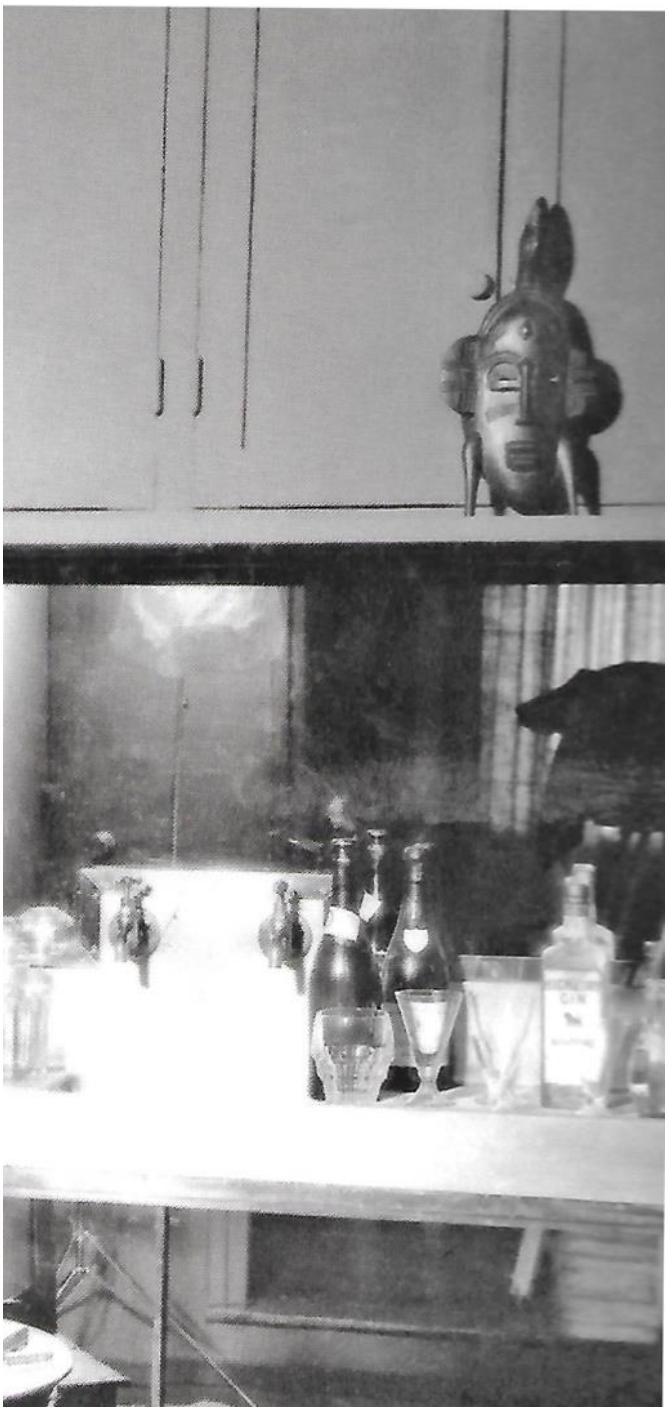

Fig. 3. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (detail), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d.
Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 149.

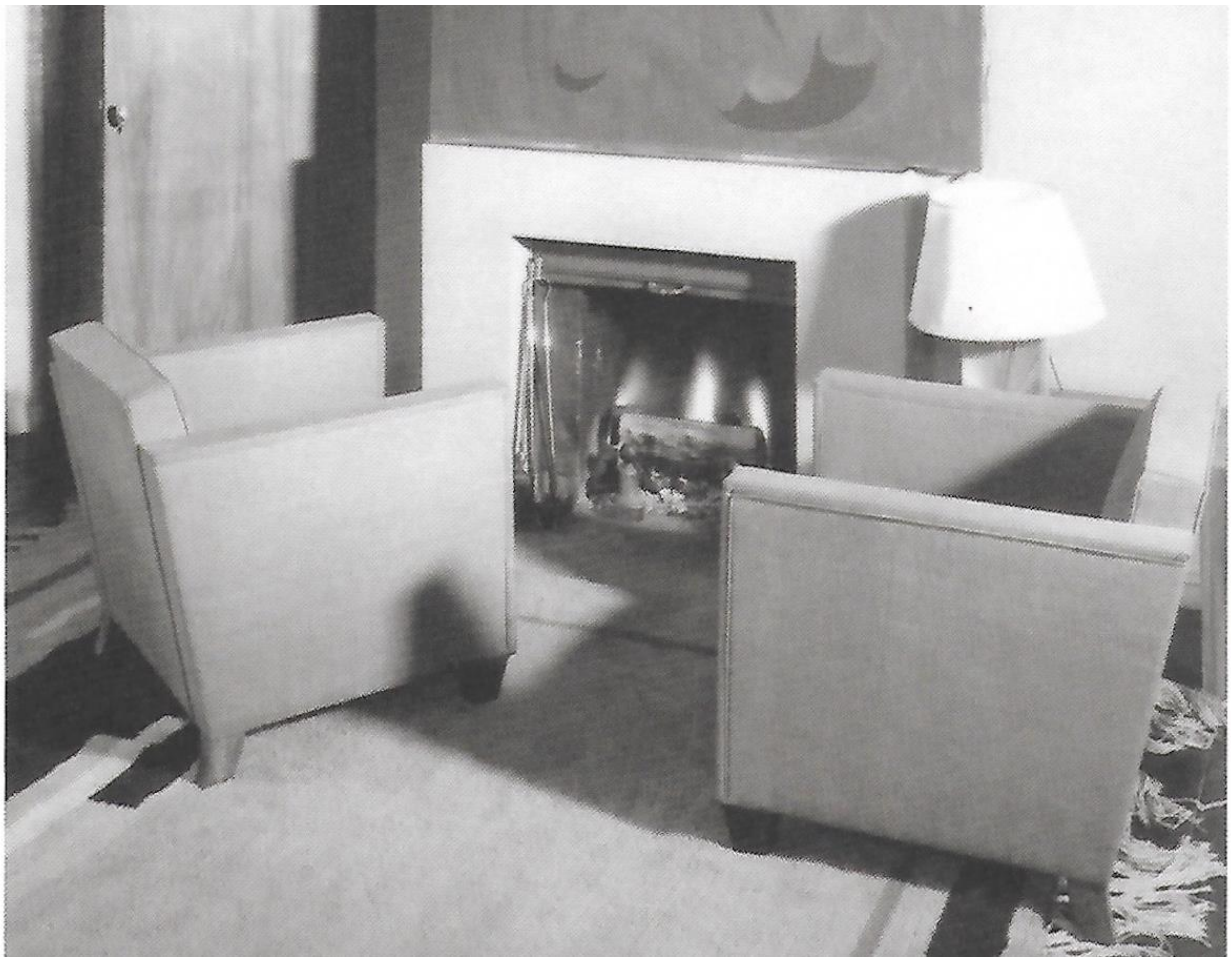

Fig. 4. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (detail), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 150.

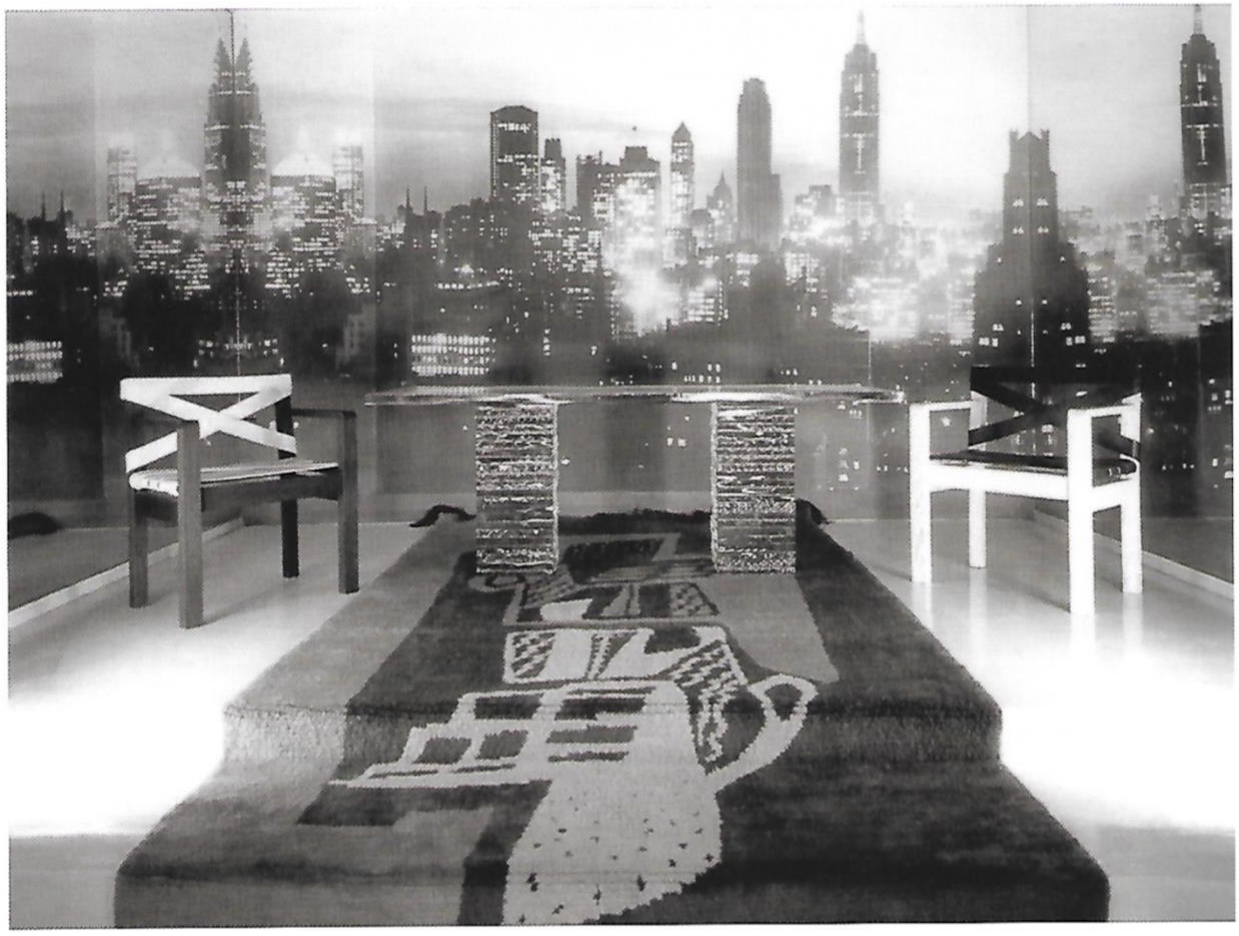

Fig. 5. Eyre de Lanux, *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs*, 1928. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 135.

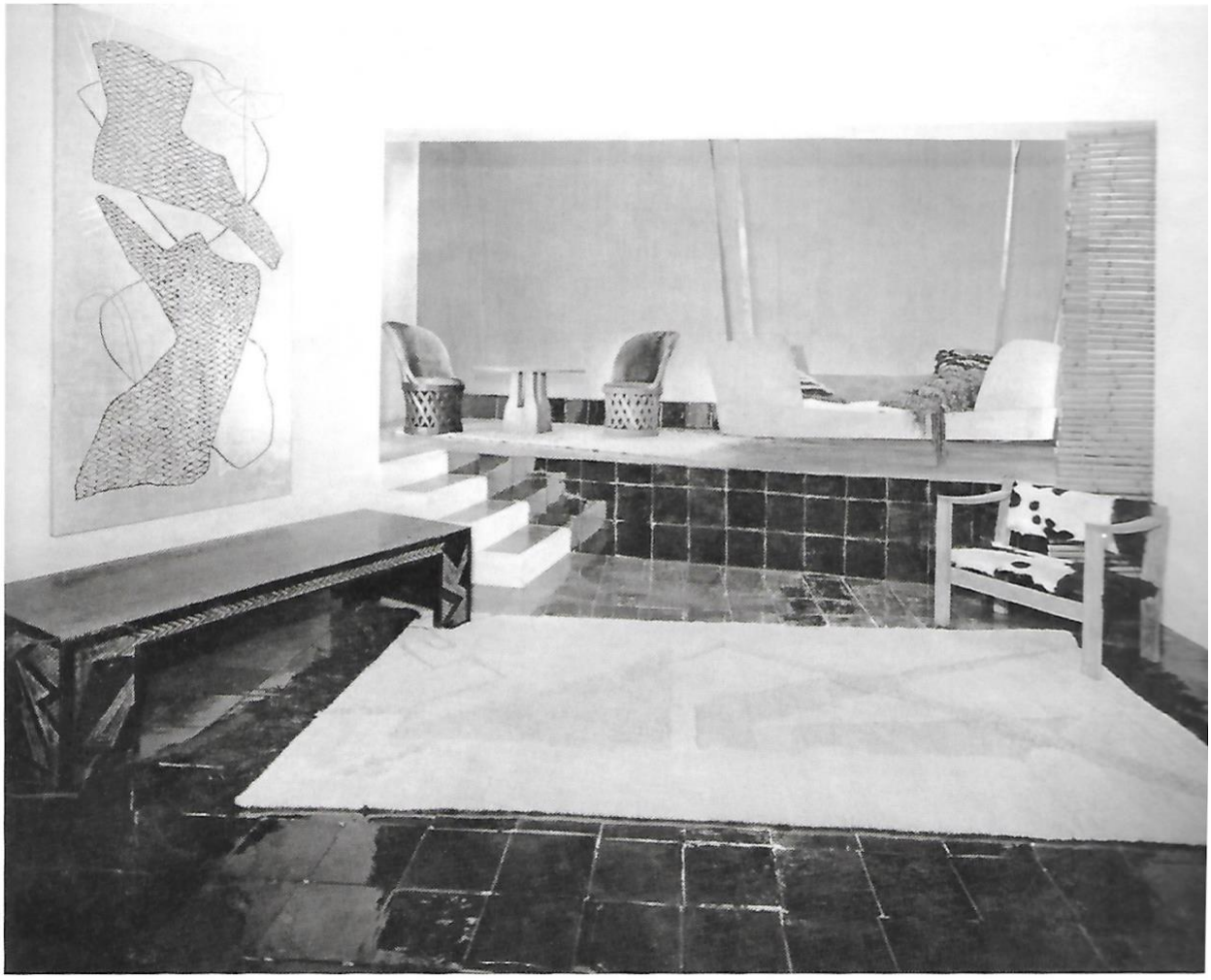

Fig. 6. Eyre de Lanux, *Salon d'Automne*, 1929. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 137.

Fig. 7. Eyre de Lanux, *Union des Artistes Modernes*, 1930. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 142.

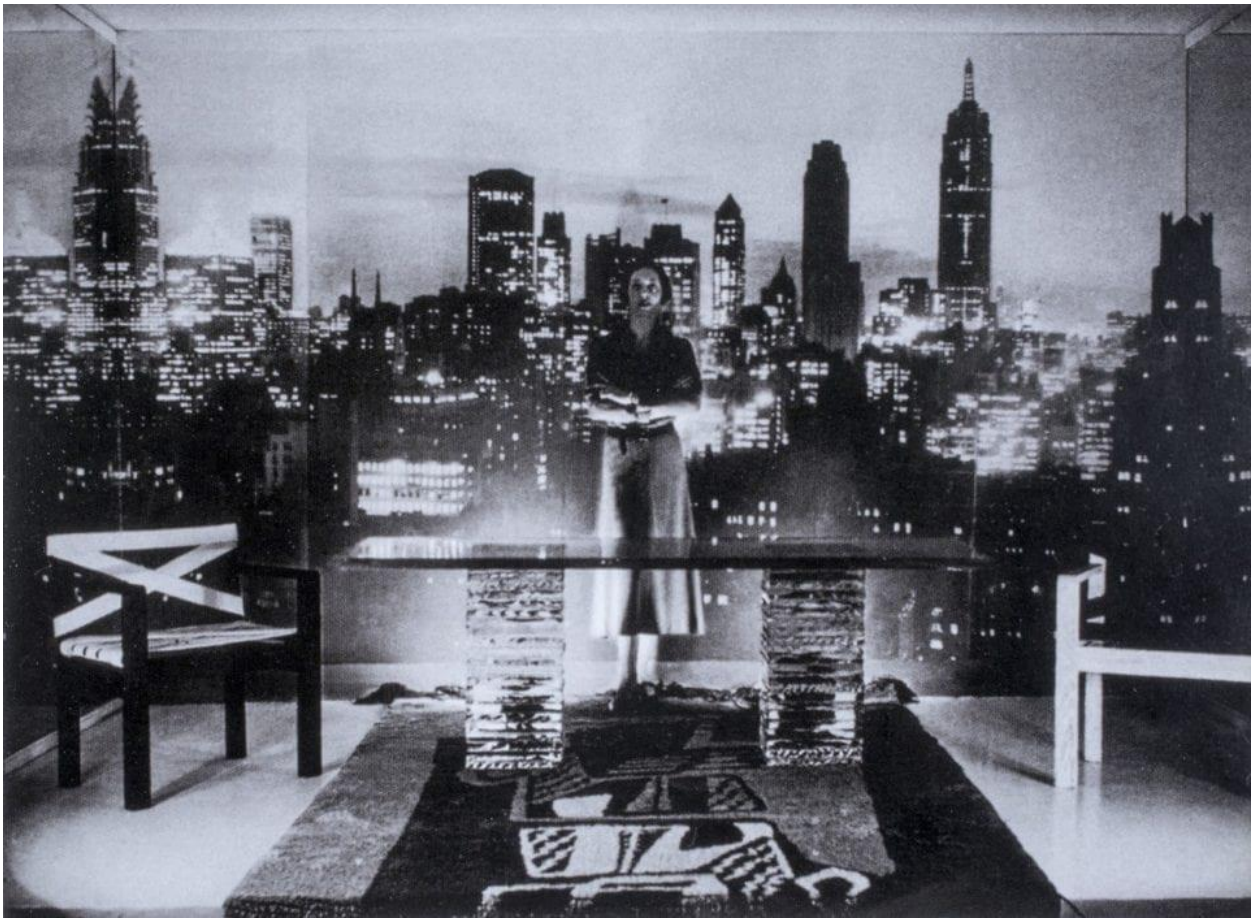

Fig. 8. Photograph of Eyre de Lanux, *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs*, 1928. Source: https://aestheticamagazine.com/resonant-ideas/. Accessed May 22, 2021.

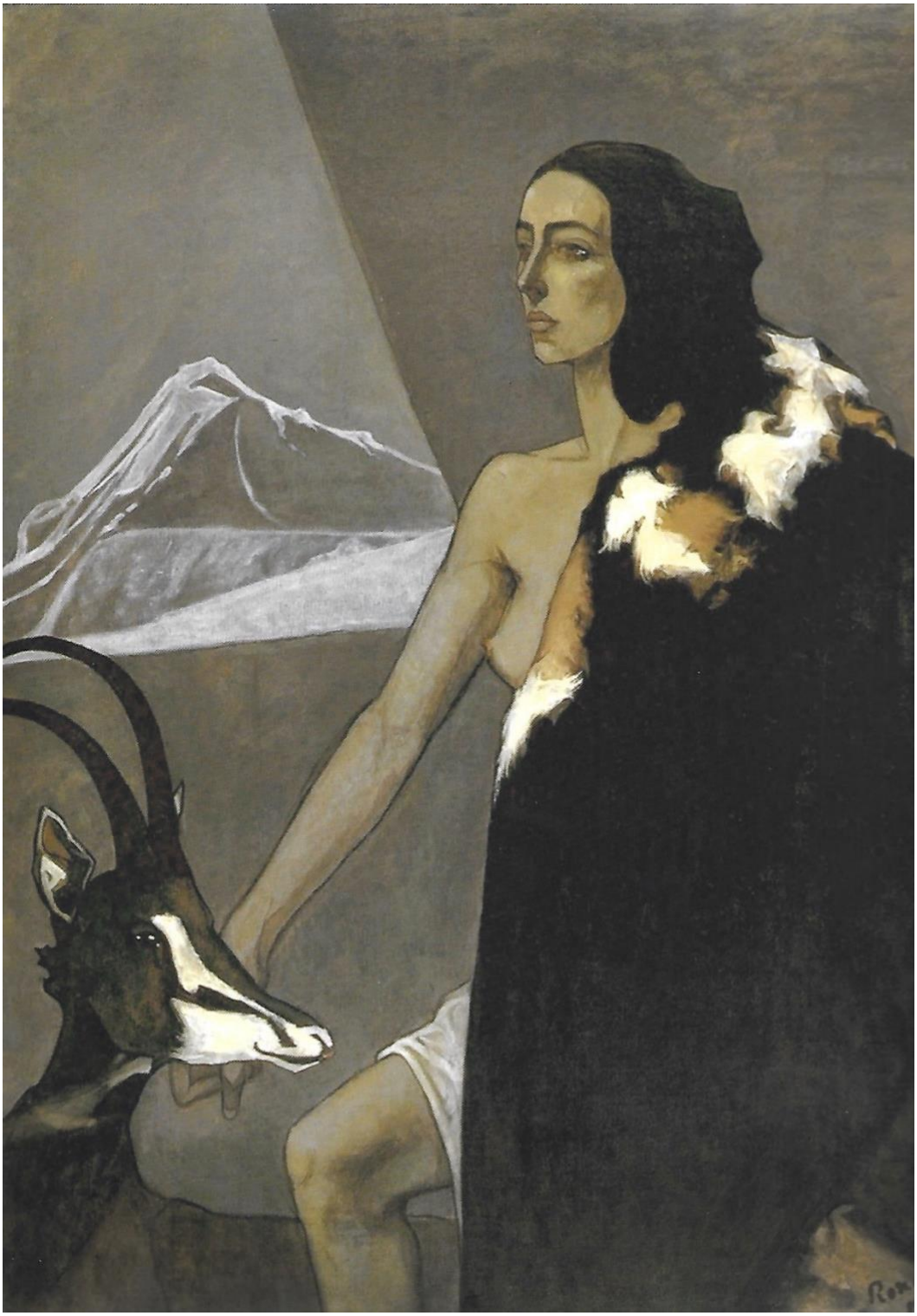

Fig. 9. Romaine Brooks, *Chasseresse*, 1920. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C, https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/chasseresse-2875. Accessed March 31, 2021.

Fig. 10. Eyre de Lanux, Jan Heiliger's Apartment (office), Île Saint-Louis, Paris, 1930. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 159.

Fig. 11. Eileen Gray, E.1027 (partial living area), 1926-29. Source: Katarina Bonnevier, “A Queer Analysis of Eileen Gray’s E.1027,” in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005), 165.

Fig. 12. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (bar room), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 149.

Fig. 13. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (living area), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 150.

Fig. 14. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (living area), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 150.

Fig. 15. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (dining area), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 151.

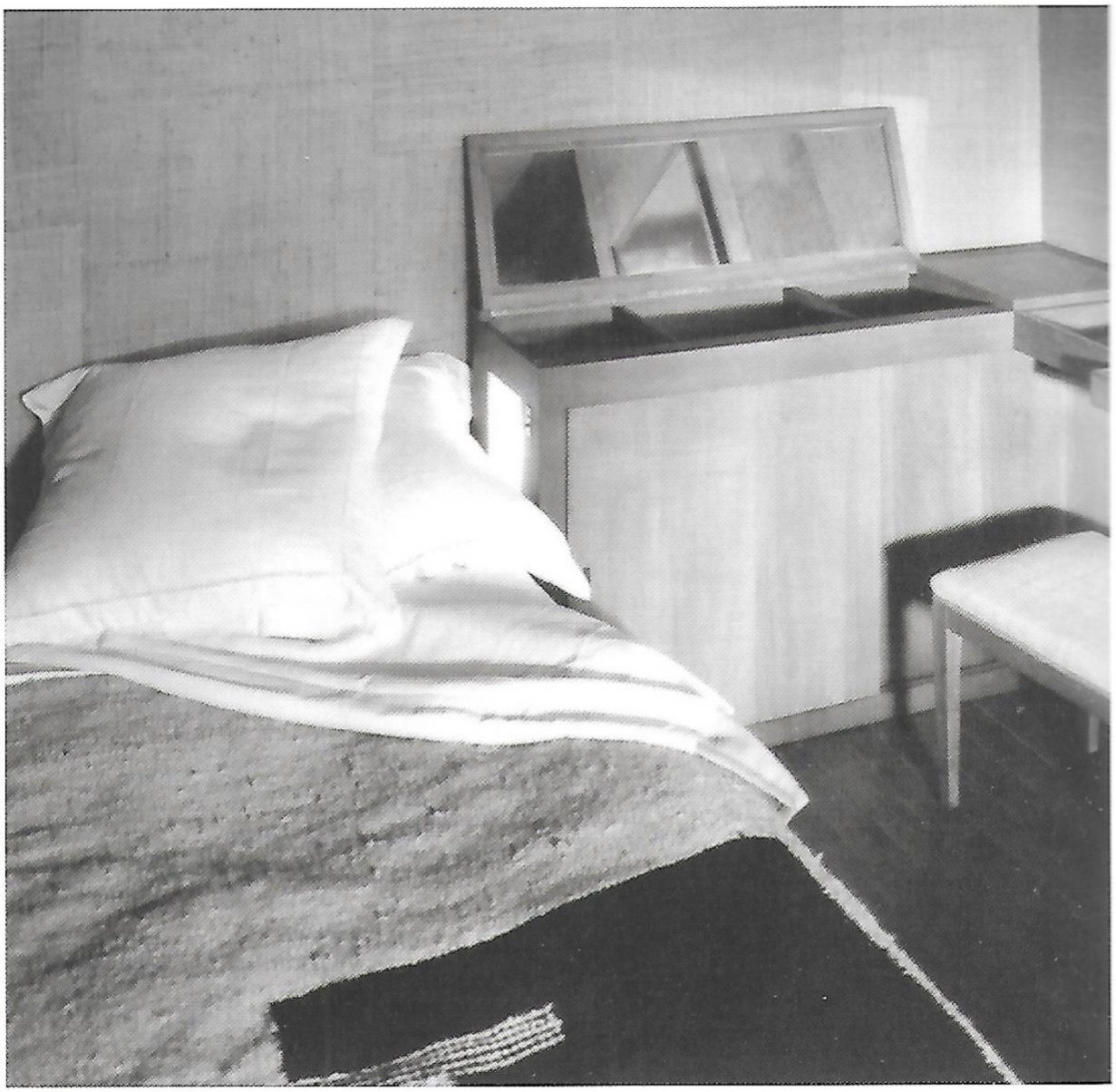

Fig. 16. Eyre de Lanux, Helen Simpson's Apartment (bedroom), 1 rue Gît-le-coeur, Paris, n.d. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 152.

Fig. 17. Eyre de Lanux, Emily Sherfesee's Apartment, Jardin Luxembourg Apartment (large drawing room), Paris, 1929. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 154.

Fig. 18. Eyre de Lanux, Emily Sherfesee's Apartment, Jardin Luxembourg Apartment (transitional space), Paris, 1929. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 157.

Fig. 19. Eyre de Lanux, Emily Sherfesee's Apartment, Jardin Luxembourg Apartment (small drawing room), Paris, 1929. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 156.

Fig. 20. Eyre de Lanux, *Le Décor* boutique, Cannes, 1932. Source: Willy Huybrechts and Louis-Gérard Castor, *Eyre de Lanux: An American Decorator in Paris* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2015), 169.