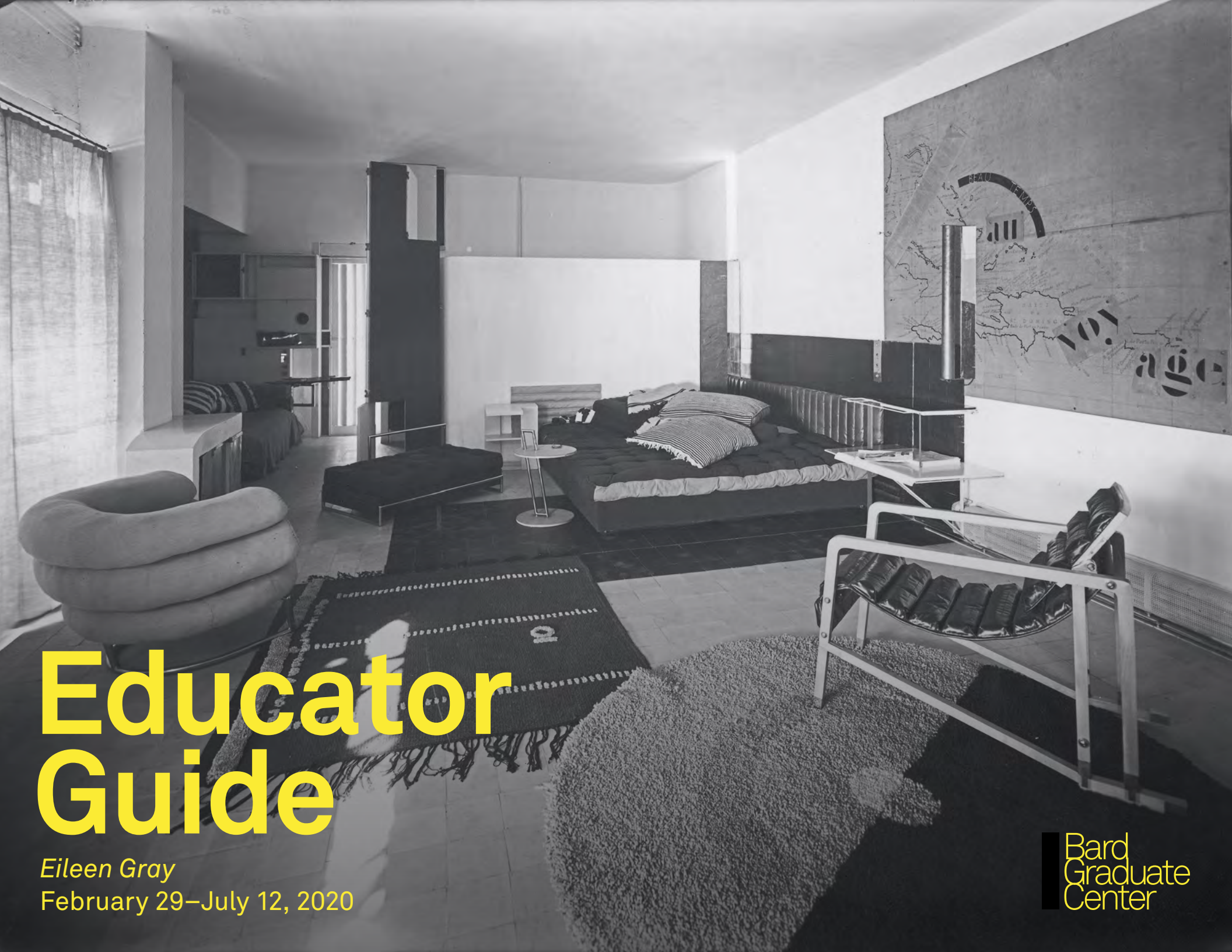

Educator Guide

Eileen Gray

February 29–July 12, 2020

Bard Graduate Center

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[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Table, ca. 1924. Oak, paint, sycamore. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Gift of Sydney and Frances Lewis, 85.114. © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Katherine Wetzel.

Gallery Education at Bard Graduate Center

MISSION

Bard Graduate Center is a catalyst for deep reflection with objects; we build dialogue and imagine new ways of seeing.

VISION

Bard Graduate Center is committed to forming the next generation of museum educators, curators, and historians, who see deeply, think critically, and build freely.

VALUES

See Deeply
We believe in the power of careful observation, deduction, and research. We also acknowledge that audiences bring a wealth of personal knowledge, history, and insight to their relationship to objects.

Think Critically
We value serious, disciplined thinking that is clear, open-minded, and informed by evidence. We want audiences to feel confident about drawing meaning from objects, familiar and unfamiliar. We believe in open dialogue and big questions.

Build Freely
We provide opportunities for people to build relationships and share insights. We hope to build an intergenerational movement of curators, scholars, historians, and visitors, in order to create democratic museums. We believe by reimagining the past we can build an equitable future.

About this Educator Guide

This educator guide is a toolkit for teachers to delve deeply into themes presented by our spring exhibition, *Eileen Gray*. We invite you to use its images (which can be enlarged by clicking the link in the captions), information, and activities with your students in the classroom. We hope this guide will deepen students' investigations of objects, both familiar and unfamiliar. Feel free to take our questions and activities as points of departure and adapt them to your needs.

If you do use this guide, please share your experiences with us! Contact us at public.programs@bgc.bard.edu.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Dressing cabinet in aluminum and cork, 1926-29. Painted wood, aluminum, glass, cork, aluminum leaf. Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris. Purchase, 1992, AM 1992-1-6.

About the Exhibition

Eileen Gray
February 29–July 12, 2020

Eileen Gray (1878–1976), an Irish architect-designer who worked primarily in France, was a pioneer in modern design and architecture and one of the few women to practice professionally in those fields before World War II. *Eileen Gray* is the first in-depth exhibition in the United States to examine her complete oeuvre. The exhibition is largely based on new research, including plans, drawings, sketchbooks, photographs, and letters, that reveal how Gray designed her most famous house, E 1027, and other architectural projects. The exhibition, curated by Cloé Pitiot, features 200 objects, including never before publicly exhibited furniture, lacquer works, architectural drawings, and archival materials from her best-known projects, as well as paintings, photography, and rugs.

Born into a distinguished, upper-class household in Ireland in 1878, Gray studied art and traditional Asian lacquer in London and Paris around the turn of the century. By 1910, she established a workshop in Paris to produce carpets and wall hangings and continued her lacquer studies with Japanese craftsman Seizo Sugawara. In 1922, she opened her Paris shop, Galerie Jean Désert, where she sold furniture and rugs and exhibited modern art, making Gray one of the first women gallerists. Gray also offered interior design services, and her facility with architectural space was evident in the environments she designed for her wealthy clients . Gray's rugs demonstrated her creativity with geometric forms, and by the early 1920s, she was designing furnishings in tubular metal and other modern materials. From then onward, Gray produced architectural projects for private and public commissions, including homes for her own use in the Provence area of France: E 1027 (1926–29), Tempe a Pailla (1931–34), and Villa Lou Pérou (1954–58). In 1976, Eileen Gray died in Paris at the age of 98.

[click image to enlarge]
Berenice Abbott. Portrait of Eileen Gray, 1926. Silver gelatin print. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, © 2019 Estate of Berenice Abbott.

LESSON 1

Designing Spaces for the Everyday

6TH–12TH GRADE

DEEPEN THE CONVERSATION

Eileen Gray designed buildings, interiors, and social spaces that would allow "people to rediscover the joy of feeling perfectly themselves within architectural constructions, as though within a whole that extends and completes the self." Gray wanted spaces to respond to the people who would use them and to their natural environments. Today, approaches like Universal Design seek to make spaces accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. We might take another look at the spaces we use and consider how design elements contribute to their functionality.

Essential Question: How might spaces fit users' needs?

See Deeply

Explore the first house Gray designed and built, E 1027, through this virtual tour. As you pass through the interiors, consider the following questions:

- What types of areas do you notice in this space?
- What types of objects are in each area? Can you guess their functions? What do you see that makes you say that?

Think Critically

- What kinds of activities might a person do in this space? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Who might this space be made for? How do they move through the space? How do we know based on the space and the objects in it?
- What activities or types of people might this space *not* be suited for?

Build Freely

- Think about spaces that are familiar to you: your classroom, your bedroom or living room, the library, a local playground or park. Focus on one of these spaces.
- What is the shape of that space? What is in that space?
- What do you do there? How do you feel in this space?
- Do other people share the space with you? Who uses it, and who can't?
- If you could change this space, what would you do to it?

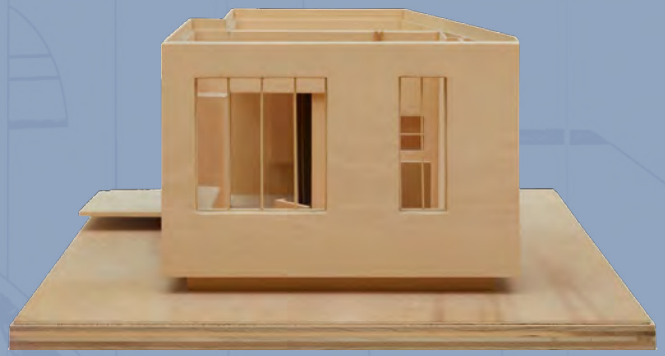
CREATE: COMMUNITY SPACE MODEL

Essential Question: How might you create a space that fits your community's needs?

1. Identify one of the communities you belong to. Write a list of the community's needs. Consider:
    - Who is part of this community?
    - What are their needs?
    - What are their abilities?
2. Choose one or more needs you have listed, then brainstorm ways in which a physical space might help the community meet those needs. Consider the following questions:
    - What is the purpose of the space? How will community members use it?
    - What types of spaces, objects, and accessibility features might the people in your community need to make the space useful to them?
    - Can the space move or change?
    - How does it interact with or affect its environment?
    - What does the exterior look like?
3. Draw your space.
4. Using the materials provided, build a model of the space you propose designing for your community. Be sure to include at least two or three elements you listed in your brainstorm. Remember to consider where they go in the space.
5. Write a paragraph describing your community's need(s) and the tools or features in your design that respond to it.

Suggested Materials:

- Drawing and painting materials
- Drawing paper, construction paper, tag board or cardboard
- Model Magic clay
- Popsicle sticks
- Glue or tape



[click image to enlarge]
Badovici apartment, model reproduction by Bruce Cianci, 1993. Basswood and plywood. Irish Architectural Foundation, Dublin, 2006/15.7.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Camping tent, model reproduction by Matthew Ragsdale, University of Florida, 1993–94. Wood and paper. Irish Architectural Foundation, Dublin, 2006/15.8.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray's bedroom, 21, rue Bonaparte, Paris, early 1930s. Photograph. Collection Gilles Peyroulet, Paris.

LESSON 2

Seats of Power: Chairs and Personality

11TH–12TH GRADE

DEEPEN THE CONVERSATION

Eileen Gray often made chairs for specific people and environments. Depending on its shape and upholstery, Gray's chairs helped her set a particular mood. Later in her life, while designing her home, Tempe a Pailla, in France, she became interested in chairs that could be used indoors and outdoors. She created a special folding chair that moved easily between her living room and her balcony. In all her designs, Gray wanted her furniture, its users, and an interior space to have an interactive relationship.

Essential Question: How might chairs interact with their users?

See Deeply

- Look closely at the chairs Gray designed. What materials do you see? What shapes do you see?
- Choose a chair in this guide to imagine sitting in. How does it feel?
- How can you imagine your body sits in this chair? Where do your arms, head, legs, and feet go?
- What materials or structural elements of the chair make it comfortable or uncomfortable?

Think Critically

- What mood do you detect in the chair you've chosen? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How might the identity of that chair change if you were to alter one material element like the upholstery, frame, or ornamentation?
- What might the chair suggest about the personality or identity of the person who uses it?
- Imagine two of the chairs are engaged in a conversation. What might they say to each other?

Build Freely

- Think of a chair in your own life. What does it look and feel like?
- Who uses that chair? What do they use it for? What effect does the chair have on its sitter?
- What room does this chair live in? Does it live inside or outside? What other objects are in that room or space? Is the chair the most powerful object in that room? Why or why not?

CREATE: DESIGN A CHAIR THAT TELLS A STORY

Essential Question: Create a chair about who you are and what you like to do.

1. Brainstorm by looking at chairs from other cultures (see examples below). Consider the following questions:
    - Who might sit in this chair?
    - Why do you think they might sit in it? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Begin your design by making a sketch. Consider the following questions:
    - What is it made of?
    - How would you use it?
3. Choose your art materials and build your chair prototype.
4. Tell a story about your chair. Consider the following:
    - Does it endow its sitter with any special powers?
    - What makes it powerful?

Examples of chairs from other cultures

- Buli Master, possibly Ngongo ya Chintu, Prestige Stool, 19th Century
- Throne for Statuette of a Deity, 664-332 B.C.
- Ono Niha people, Ritual Seat for a Noble, 19th Century
- Shaker Bench, USA, 19th Century
- Chokwe artist, Ceremonial Seat, 19th Century

Materials

- Model Magic
- Fabric swatches
- Popsicle sticks, pipe Cleaners and/or Twisteez wires
- Construction paper, cardboard, or cardstock
- Hot glue and glue
- Colored pencils and markers

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Transat chair owned by the Maharaja of Indore, from the Manik Bagh Palace, 1930. Lacquered wood, nickel-plated brass, leather, canvas. Private collection. Copyright 2014 Phillips Auctioneers LLC. All Rights Reserved.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. *Bibendum chair*, ca. 1927-29. Wood, tubular steel, canvas. Collection Jacques De Vos, Paris. Photograph: Studio SLB-CH BARAJA.

LESSON 3

It's More than a Chair

K–2ND GRADE

DEEPEN THE CONVERSATION

Chairs are more than just places to sit down. They can signify a special activity, a significant relationship, or even an individual or leader. Eileen Gray designed chairs for specific people and the activities they liked most. Take a moment to look carefully at images of chairs in this guide, and the chairs in your life, and consider how they might be more meaningful than they first appear.

Essential Question: How can chairs be important objects?

Read *Love and the Rocking Chair, by Leo and Diane Dillon*.
Ask students:
- What was special about the chair in the book?
- Is there a special chair in your home?
- What makes it unique?

Next, choose an image of one of Eileen Gray's chairs from this guide and discuss the following questions:

See Deeply
- Who do you think this chair was built for? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Does it look comfortable? Does it look serious? Do you think it is funny?

Think Critically
- What is special or unique about this chair?
- Imagine sitting in this chair. Does sitting in the chair make you feel powerful? Why or why not?

Build Freely
- If this chair could talk, what would it say?
- If this chair could walk, how would it move?

CREATE: CHAIRS IN YOUR LIFE

Draw a picture of your favorite chair. What do you do in your favorite chair? What does it look like? How do you sit in it? Where is it?
Share your picture with your neighbor and tell them a story about why it's your favorite chair.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Siège-escabeau-porte-serviettes (Seat-stepstool-towel-rack), 1930–33. Painted wood. Collection Gilles Peyroulet, Paris. Photograph: Bertrand Prévost.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. *Fauteuil non conformist* (Nonconformist armchair), 1926–29. Painted tubular steel, plywood, upholstery removed. Collection Gilles Peyroulet, Paris.

LESSON 4

Rhythm, Design, and Architecture: Patterns in Space

6TH–12TH GRADE

DEEPEN THE CONVERSATION

Repetition is an important design element in Gray's furniture and architectural projects. The repetition of shapes, textures, and shadows in her chairs, cabinets, and screens creates patterns that affect the feeling of the space they occupy. As a mathematical concept, patterns are codes that can be identified, deciphered, and transposed to new contexts. In fact, patterns are all around us, and we can use them to understand how our environment affects us or what an object is meant to communicate. We can also use patterns to communicate through art.

Essential Question: How can patterns affect a physical space?

See Deeply

Look closely at these furniture pieces and spaces designed by Gray.

- What shapes and materials do you notice?
- Where do you see repetition?
- **Activity:** Does the repetition have a sound? Clap out the rhythm of the repetition!
- What part of the furniture or room does the pattern occupy?
- How might the pattern change depending on how the object is used?

Think Critically

- How does the pattern affect the space it occupies or the function of the object?
- How do patterns communicate a meaning or feeling of an object? (Consider stability, movement, speed, boredom, restriction, infinity.)

Build Freely

- Where do you notice patterns in your daily life? Visually? In your habits?
- Can patterns and repetition affect the way you use an object? Can they affect the way you live?
- Imagine your commute to school. Write a list of all the things you see that repeat (blocks of the sidewalk, windows on a building, lines on the crosswalk, chain links in a fence). What functions do the repeating elements perform? What is the effect of the repetition on the purpose or functioning of the space? Discuss with a partner and share out.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. "Brick" Screen, 1923. Painted wood, metal rods. National Museum of Ireland, NMIEG 2000.10.

CREATE: TRANSFORMING PATTERNS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Essential Question: How can you make something new from an existing pattern?

1. Identify a visual pattern in your world (e.g. your classroom, schoolyard, commute home, park, apartment building, home) and draw the pattern.
2. In class, identify the pattern unit and the pattern rule. See the **Helpful Definitions** and **Resources** sections for more on these terms.
3. Exchange your pattern unit and pattern rule with a partner.
4. Make an artwork that applies your partner's pattern rule in a new way.
5. Compile the class' pattern artwork in a collective document, like a book or a quilt, and ask students to compare the original patterns with the new artworks.

Version for K–3rd Grade

1. Teachers: Choose a visual pattern in the classroom. Illustrate it and break it down with the whole class.
2. Students: Use blocks, Legos, or pieces of felt or construction paper to mimic your teacher's pattern.
3. In small groups or as a class, identify the pattern unit and the pattern rule.
4. Create a new pattern with your blocks, and then share the pattern rule with the class.
5. Can you mimic your neighbor's pattern too?

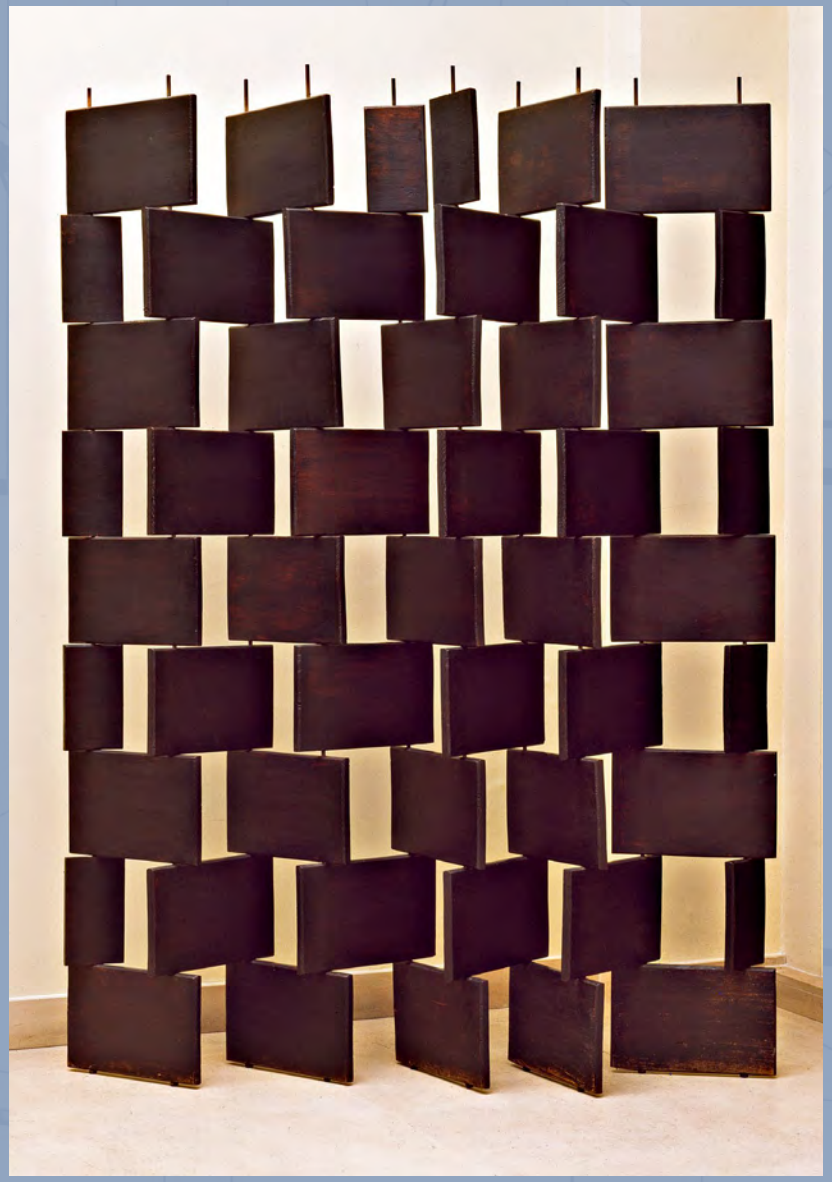
Suggested Materials

- Markers and graph paper
- Felt shapes on a felt board
- Clay - Apply the pattern rule to the decorative elements on a clay pot students build
- Weaving - yarn, cardboard (see this video)
- Rug hooking
- Wooden blocks or Legos
- Construction paper shapes

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Transat chair, 1926-29. Varnished sycamore, nickel-plated steel, synthetic leather. Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, purchase, 1992, AM 1992-1-1.

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. Dining room serving table, 1926–29. Painted wood. Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris. Purchase, 1992, AM 1992-1-4.

[click image to enlarge]
Baron de Meyer. Juliette Lévy in her apartment, published in "A Modern Interior in Paris" *Harper's Bazar*, February 1926, p. 54. Photograph. Archives Gilles Peyroulet, Paris.



[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray. "Brick" Screen prototype, ca. 1918. Ebonized wood, metal. Galerie Vallois, Paris. Photograph: Arnaud Carpentier.

Resources

Deepen your students' knowledge with these resources on topics including Eileen Gray, patterns, cultural appropriation, and privilege.

Eileen Gray

Cap Moderne Association's Virtual Tour of E 1027

Rawsthorn, A. (2013 February 24). Eileen Gray, Freed from Seclusion. *The International Herald Tribune.*

Rykwert, J. (December 1968). Eileen Gray, Pioneer of Design. *Domus.*

Patterns - Information and Activities

Defining a Pattern Rule, YouTube lesson by Colette Mondor

Equations that Describe Patterns, YouTube lesson by Mr. Dan

Visual Patterns, YouTube lesson by Mr. Dan

Write a Linear Equation from a Pattern, YouTube lesson by Dave Whitcher

Write Equations from Non-Linear Patterns, YouTube lesson by Dave Whitcher

Cultural Appropriation

Everyday Feminism: Cultural Appropriation

Tate Museum Art Definitions: Japonisme

Brooklyn Museum, Lacquer: A Panorama of Asian Decorative Arts

MET: Lacquerware in East Asia

Privilege

Racial Justice and a Lesson on Privilege, by Repair the World

Sample Activities & Templates for Exploring Privilege, Power, and Oppression, by College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, University of Michigan

Talking about Race and Privilege: Lesson Plan for Middle and High School Students, National Association of School Psychologists

[click image to enlarge]

Eileen Gray. Pair of chairs for Tempe a Pailla, Castellar, ca. 1935. Nickel-plated tubular steel and leather. The Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, Alice and Tom Tisch, Sid Bass, USM Fondation, and Committee of Architecture and Design Fund, 1070.2015, 1071.2015. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Helpful Definitions

Use this glossary to support your students' conversations about the topics addressed in this educator guide.

Accessibility - the quality or characteristic that makes it possible to enter, use, reach, or understand something.

Architecture - the art or practice of designing and building structures and especially habitable ones.

Art Deco - a popular design style of the 1920s and 1930s characterized especially by bold outlines, geometric and zigzag forms, and the use of new materials such as plastic.

Design - to create, fashion, execute, or construct according to a plan.

Dimensions - a measurable quantity of some kind, such as length, breadth, depth, or height.

Interior - the inner or indoor part of something, especially a building; the inside.

Modernism - a global movement in society and culture that from the early decades of the twentieth century sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life. Building on late nineteenth-century precedents, artists around the world used new imagery, materials, and techniques to create artworks that they felt better reflected the realities and hopes of modern societies.

Pattern unit - the smallest repeating set in a visual pattern.

Pattern rule - a description of the pattern unit

Textures - the feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or a substance.
Visual Pattern - a sequence of shapes, objects, or colors that have been created on a rule.

Universal Design - the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.

Visual Pattern - a sequence of shapes, objects, or colors that have been created on a rule.

About Bard Graduate Center Gallery

As the leading research institute in the United States dedicated to the study of decorative arts, design history, and material culture, Bard Graduate Center and its Gallery have pioneered the study of objects as a means to better understand the cultural history of the material world, drawing on methodologies from art and design history, architecture, art conservation, cultural history, philosophy, anthropology, and archaeology. The Gallery—situated within Bard Graduate Center's historic townhouse on Manhattan's Upper West Side—consists of more than 4,000 square feet of exhibition space on four accessible floors, providing an intimate context for visitors to engage with the works on view. It offers customized tours and a variety of public programs developed in conjunction with each exhibition. Bard Graduate Center Gallery exhibitions and publications win international acclaim. Each year, it serves an audience of approximately 30,000 scholars, students, art and design professionals, and others from all over the world. Bard Graduate Center offers tours, symposia, discussion series, workshops, programs for educators, and events for families and children inspired by the themes of the Gallery's exhibitions and BGC's unique, object-based approach to understanding human history.

To learn more, call 212.501.3011 or email public.programs@bgc.bard.edu.

Maria Baranova.

Book a Tour

SCHOOL TOURS

K–12 visitors see objects up close and make meaningful connections to the world around them. Our student-centered tours are led by graduate student educators who engage young people in lively discussion and hands-on activities that promote critical thinking and visual literacy skills. Tours are adaptable to your school's curriculum and build thoughtful object-based inquiry and powerful learning experiences.

English Language Learners

We offer customized tours for English language learners that explore exhibition objects through touch and hands-on making activities. ELL students are encouraged to draw on their personal knowledge, history, and insight during the object-based tour which builds meaningful learning experiences.

School Tour Fees

NYCDOE school groups: Free
For all other groups the 2019–20 rates are:
$85 | for group of up to 15 participants
$160 | 16–30 participants
$210 | 31–45 participants

School Tour Availability

Tuesdays through Fridays:
School tours begin at 11 am
Advance reservations are required
Tour Length: 45 minutes
Studio Lab Experience: 45 minutes

School Tour Booking

212.501.3013
tours@bgc.bard.edu

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS

Evening for Educators

Bard Graduate Center acknowledges educators as leaders who make important contributions in the arts and humanities and in the lives of students. Our Evening for Educators reflects our commitment to provide teachers with quality interdisciplinary workshops and tours that spark deeper appreciation of the material world and its complex cultural history.

Professional Development Workshop

Bard Graduate Center offers a full-day professional development workshop for teachers each semester. Check our website for upcoming programs.

This Educator Guide was written by Olivia Kalin (Lead Gallery Educator) and Rachael Schwabe (Lead Student Gallery Educator and Teen Program Coordinator), with assistance from Carla Repice (Senior Manager of Education, Engagement and Interpretation), and Emily Reilly (Director of Public Engagement and Associate Gallery Director).

Designed by Jocelyn Lau (Designer).

Special thanks to Emma Cormack (Curatorial Assistant), and Alexis Mucha (Manager of Rights & Reproductions).

[click image to enlarge]
Eileen Gray in her rue Bonaparte apartment, 1971. Photograph. National Museum of Ireland, NMIEG, 2003.543.

Eileen Gray has been organized by Centre Pompidou, Paris, in collaboration with Bard Graduate Center.

Special thanks to the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Exhibition Curator: Cloé Pitiot

Project Directors: Cloé Pitiot and Nina Stritzler-Levine
Project Coordinator: Marianne Lamonaca
Curatorial and Editorial Assistants: Marine Bry and Emma Cormack
Education and Public Programs: Olivia Kalin, Kristen Owens, Emily Reilly, and Carla Repice

Exhibition Design: Ian Sullivan
Graphic Design: Kate DeWitt and Jocelyn Lau
Digital Media: Emma Cormack and Jesse Merandy
Chief Preparator: Alex Gruen
Special thanks to our installation crew.

Advisory Committee: Renaud Barrès, Caroline Constant, Philippe Garner, Jennifer Goff

Lenders to the Exhibition:
Peter Adam Collection
Renaud Barrès Collection
Cap Moderne
Centre Pompidou
Collection Paul Schärer
Diktats bookstore
Galerie Jacques De Vos
Galerie Anne-Sophie Duval
Galerie Peyroulet
Galerie Vallois
Irish Architectural Archive
Kelly Gallery, New York
Kravis Collection
Maryhill Museum of Art
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
Museum of Modern Art, New York
National Museum of Ireland
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Support for the exhibition catalogue has been provided by Elise Jaffe + Jeffrey Brown and Furthermore: a program of the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

Support for the exhibition at Bard Graduate Center has been generously provided by Phillips with additional support from the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, the Selz Foundation, Edward Lee Cave, and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

The exhibition has been supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The exhibition has been made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.