

# Invisible Women

The Creativity, Influences and Legacies of Women  
in Interior Architecture & Design  
from the Arts & Crafts Movement  
to Early Modernism



**Front Cover:** The women from the Bauhaus weaving workshop on the staircases of the Bauhaus building in Dessau, 1927. (Photo: T Lux Feininger Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin/  
© Estate of T Lux Feininger)

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# Introduction

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in art, architectural design and the decorative arts women are often represented as artists' muse, wife, mother or daughter; they are defined in relation to their role and the men in their life. Arguably, this representation defined and confined their ability to undertake an active role as creators as design emerged as a profession from 1900 onwards.

Generally, the creative work of women during this period has been largely overshadowed by male dominated practice in a patriarchal society that has restricted and under-valued women's contributions. According to Callen, (Callen, 1984:1) the "*sexual division of labour*", first arose during the Industrial Revolution in the shift from home-based cottage industries where men and women were active participants together, to a workplace setting away from home. As work became industrialised, monetised and competitive, men took over the role of 'bread winner' while women, especially middle and upper class women, were socially conditioned to fulfil domestic roles and act as homemakers: the 'Angel in the House' (Kühl, no date). In addition in law from the 13th century until 1882, the ownership of women's financial assets and property transferred to men through marriage. According to Buckley, (Buckley, 1986: 4) there is a "*dependant relationship between patriarchy and capitalism*", which is structurally designed to benefit men.

In spite of this, there were active female creators in the design movements and schools of this period. There were women who challenged the status quo. Yet they are often poorly represented or where they exist their ideas have often become the intellectual property of the husbands or men they worked with and their creative influence is often written out of history. This essay explores the creativity, influences and legacies of female architects, interior architects, designers and decorative artists between the Arts & Crafts movement and the beginning of Modernism. **How visible are these female creators and can they inspire designers in the 21st Century? And can we rewrite the existing narrative?**

## From Pre-Raphaelite Muse to Arts & Crafts Creators

# The Arts and Crafts Movement

The **Arts and Crafts Movement** flourished between 1860 and 1900, commencing with the founding of Morris & Co. Criticising mass industrialisation and the loss of Medieval design craftsmanship, the movement ironically wanted to *“eliminate the split between designer and maker”* (Callen, 1984: 4) however, the Movement marginalised the female’s role as maker.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who painted the Victorian idealised iconography of Medieval England depicted the female muse (fig.1) in a way that subjugated women instead of promoting intellectual equality. The female muse is intrinsically linked to the male gaze, whereas the female creator represents the female gaze. Female creators threatened the patriarchy by challenging male jobs, status and family wages through direct competition, they are subjugated to passive roles to protect the men’s active roles in society. Female employment could not *“disrupt the patriarchal status quo”* (Callen, 1984: 3) thus women’s economic strength was significantly undervalued, however some female creators prevailed.



Figure 1: Jane Morris in ‘The Day Dream’ by Rossetti.

© Victoria and Albert Museum

## From Pre-Raphaelite Muse to Arts & Crafts Creators

# Jane Burden & May Morris

**Jane Burden** and **May Morris** were accomplished embroiderers who practiced the traditional medieval technique, *Opus Anglicanum*, which they applied to the textile designs of Morris & Co (fig.2). Burden was the wife of William Morris and a Pre-Raphaelite model of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She was described as a “sultry beauty” with “earthy sensuality” (Callen, 1984:6), an embodiment of ideal beauty. She is rarely known for her own creativity.

Her daughter May, was an educated bourgeoisie woman who subverted Victorian societal expectations by taking over the embroidery department of Morris & Co in 1885 aged 23 (Callen, 1984: 4). Jill Seddon argues that May Morris’ work has been marginalised because she practiced embroidery, a woman’s occupation. (Seddon, 2003,). However Morris & Co is famous for embroidery so May has arguably been overshadowed because the existing pedagogy and male dominated commercial market needed a male figurehead. According to Roziska Parker and Griselda Pollock, bourgeoisie women were “*beautifiers, civilisers and orderers*” (Parker and Pollock, 1981), there was no room for them to be remembered as innovators.



Figure 2: ‘Spring and Summer’ panel by May Morris.  
© William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest



## From Pre-Raphaelite Muse to Arts & Crafts Creators

# Mary Seton Watts

**May Seton Watts'** mausoleum design (fig.3) at Compton, Surrey is a remarkable example of both Arts and Crafts sensibilities and the sensuality of early Art Nouveau. Created between 1895 and 1904, it is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (*total work of art*), crafted by local workers who she trained in clay terracotta modelling at her evening classes (Hill, 2015). Watts was challenging “*the restrictive parameters of Victorian art and social practice*” according to Seddon (Seddon, 2003), by embodying a strong socialist agenda. The interior, (fig.4), is a microcosm of Celtic, Medieval and Byzantine design influences with friezes depicting motifs of English maidens as angels enclosed by natural imagery. Stephen Smith suggests she was depicting a “*quintessentially English design of Arcadian Albion*”, a 19th century view of Medieval England, depicting the beauty of life and death (Smith, 2012). A member of the Home Arts and Industry Association, she sold her pieces from Compton Pottery at Liberty & Co, which was a unique opportunity to mass produce her version of Art Nouveau.

Watts, Morris and Burden were the founding members of the Women’s Guild of Arts, established in 1907 as a reaction to their denied memberships to the male only Art Worker’s Guild. Their collective wish was to raise the status of the applied arts acknowledging the female as an individual creator (Thomas, 2015).



Figure 3: Watts Chapel Exterior



Figure 4: Watts Chapel Interior

© Jill Orme Photography



## From Pre-Raphaelite Muse to Arts & Crafts Creators

# The Glasgow Style & Margaret MacDonald

The **Glasgow Style** was a variation of the Scottish Arts and Crafts and British Art Nouveau styles which were centred around the Glasgow School of Art between 1880 and 1914. Margaret and Frances MacDonald were part of the Glasgow Four alongside their respective husbands, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Herbert McNair. The group produced some of the defining images of the Glasgow Style.

In this epoch, women were depicted in three categories: *“the pre Raphaelite beauty, the Victorian maiden and Fin de Siècle femme fatale”* (Helland, 1993:17) they were rarely designers in their own right. According to Helland (Helland, 1993: 15) the MacDonalds resided in a society that had *“an established and traditional way of representing woman”*, they were the muse, never the creator, the Glasgow Style challenged this in art and interior design. As bourgeoisie women, the MacDonalds were admitted to study the arts but prevented from working as commercial artists. In 1890s Scotland there was a *“widespread puritanical morality”* (Helland, 1993:15) influenced by a patriarchal and religious Victorian ideology, and art was depicted exclusively through the male gaze.

**Margaret MacDonald** denied the viewer *“the sexual essentialism”* that was dominant in Art Nouveau imagery (Helland, 1993: 15).

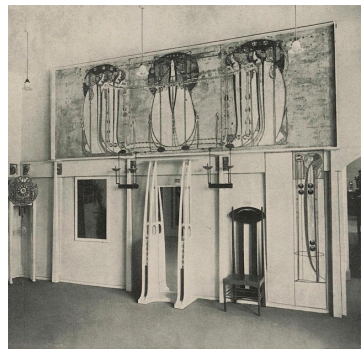


Figure 5 : Scottish Room, Vienna Secession 1900.

© University Library, Ruprecht Karls University Heidelberg

MacDonald controlled the female narrative, removing both Victorian puritanism and Pre-Raphaelite seductiveness by depicting the true form of women through the female gaze. Women were either figures of unavailable sexuality (the unmarried) or lonely and despairing sexuality (the married) (Helland, 1993: 15). Women could not develop as full people because they were oppressed by a patriarchal system of sexism and oppression of their potential. MacDonald, as a *Fin de Siècle* female designer, transgressed this depiction yet her marriage to another artist may partially explain why she continued to work.

Collaboratively, MacDonald and Mackintosh designed the *Haus eines Kunstfreundes* (*House for an Art Lover*) in 1901 for the *Zeitschrift für Innendekoration* competition. Designed in the Modern Style, a form of British Art Nouveau, it is considered to be *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Shapira, 2006). MacDonald also designed interiors for the Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow and the Scottish room, exhibited at the 8th Secession Exhibition in 1900 (fig.5). Josef Hoffmann's admiration of the Glasgow Style arguably influenced the Vienna Secession (Muir, 2014). Fritz Waerndorfer, the Secessionist's main benefactor, owned gesso decorative panels created by MacDonald including the 1902 White Rose and Red Rose (fig.6) which sold in 2008 for £1.75million. Mackintosh believed MacDonald to be the real genius, he said "*in all my architectural efforts you have been half if not three-quarters of them*"; (Panther, 2011), it is design history that has marginalised her contribution.



Figure 6: White Rose and the Red Rose by Margaret MacDonald

## Wiener & Berliner Frauenkunst

# Wiener Kunst im Haus

The 1897 *Vienna Secession* arose from Jugendstil, a form of Art Nouveau and was inspired by the British Glasgow Style. In 1901, the *Wiener Frauenkunst*, (*Viennese Women Artists*), secessionist students of the Kunstgewerbeschule, including designers, Jutta Sika and Therese Trethan, three other women and five men founded the **Wiener Kunst im Haus (Viennese Art in the Home)** (Houze, 2002: 3). A precursor to the *Wiener Werkstätte (Viennese Workshops)*, the group created a commercial market for domestic interior design selling handmade luxury goods to the bourgeoisie of Vienna. Gabriel Mournay, an art critic described the WKIH as “*the only truly modern and national style*” at the 1900 Paris Exhibition (Houze, 2002: 5). Their interpretation of the *Wiener Wohnkultur (Viennese domestic)* is a form of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a term favoured by the Secessionists (Long, 1997).

The popularity of design magazines of the period like *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, *Wiener Mode* and *Das Interieur* show Vienna’s modernist design activities were prescribed by female fashion and textiles (Houze, 2015). Achieving the “*true Viennese interior*”, a form of *gemütlichkeit (cosy comfort)* was considered an “*inherently feminine*” occupation yet was prescribed by male designers (Houze, 2002:4). According to Buckley, (Buckley, 1984: 5) the female was considered to possess “*an innate talent for home beautification*” in part due to their “*dexterous, decorative and meticulous*” personalities. The heavily female *Werkstätte* was ideally placed to interpret the demand of the female consumer.



Figure 7: WW ceramics workshop 1928  
© University of Applied Arts Vienna, Collection and Archive, Photo: Mario Wiberaz

## Wiener & Berliner Frauenkunst

# Jutta Sika

**Jutta Sika** was a skilled ceramicist, embroiderer, fashion and graphic designer, who enrolled at the Kunstgewerbeschule in 1897. She was a member of the *Werkstätte* and *Deutsche Werkbund*. Her work is described as “*simple and tasteful*” (Houze, 2002) including this distinctive coffee set design (fig.8) created in collaboration with Josef Bock, a Viennese ceramics company. The design appears on the 1901 *Wiener Kunst im Haus* exhibition invitation (fig.9) which was probably graphically designed by Sika. Houze notes that Sika was a designer credited for her “*feminine strength*” in the *Wiener Mode*, creating legitimacy to her work in the literature of the epoch (Houze, 2002). Her graphical work included motif postcards for the *Werkstätte* including the Krampus card designed in 1912.



Figure 8: Jutta Sika Coffee Set 1901  
© Art Insitute Chicago

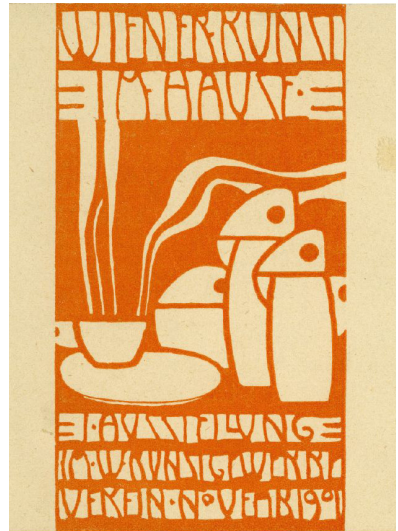


Figure 9: Wiener Kunst im Haus exhibition invitation 1901  
© MAK Vienna

## Wiener &amp; Berliner Frauenkunst

## Therese Trethan

**Therese Trethan** was a student of architecture, painting and ceramics, working at the *Wiener Werkstätte* from 1905-10. In the 1905 programme, Trethan was the only woman listed by her initials as *'Malerei'* (Painter) (fig.10) a rare accreditation given to a woman and arguably proof of her artistic skills and production (Schmuttermeier, 2020). In 1907, Trethan designed pantomime equipment alongside Sika; however this wasn't her first foray into *'Art for the Child'*. Her toy figurines, (fig 11) offer a whimsical appreciation of Trethan's design abilities and illustrate the types of *Mehrfachkünstlerinnen* (*multidisciplinary women*) who were active in the *Werkstätte* (Schmuttermeier, 2020). In 1919, she was awarded the role of specialist teacher for trade training schools.

180 female designers are presumed to have worked at the *Werkstätte*, however, *"countless female employees fell into oblivion"* (Schmuttermeier, 2020), and there is little to no surviving literature about many of them beyond their existence in health insurance records. In 2021, the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna ran the *'The Women of the Wiener Werkstätte'* exhibition; this lost generation of female designers marginalised in favour of five men is finally being acknowledged.



Figure 10: Work program of the WW 1905  
© MAK Vienna

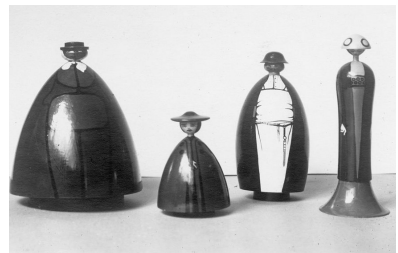


Figure 11: Four wooden figures, 1905  
© MAK Vienna

## Wiener & Berliner Frauenkunst

# The Deutsche Werkbund & Lilly Reich

The **Deutsche Werkbund**, founded in 1907, desired to improve society by uniting art and industry to promote ‘*Qualität*’ and ‘*Sächlichkeit*’ German goods to counteract the influx of cheap products (Rembert, 1997: 57). It would supposedly “*save German culture from bric a brac*” (Stratigakos, 2003), ‘*bric a brac*’ being the term used to describe the *Women’s Employment Association’s* work during the Berlin Secession. It is hardly surprising that by 1910, only 5% of Werkbund members were women. (Stratigakos, 2003) Werkbund theorist and art critic, Karl Scheffer described the Werkbund as “*a campaign to achieve a new masculine reason*” (Stratigakos, 2003) clearly connoting there was no place for women, yet claiming the traditionally feminine domain of interior design. Despina Stratigakos argues that the contribution of women in the Werkbund has been “*all but unrecognised by historians*” explaining why women like Lilly Reich are often overlooked in the published pedagogy (Stratigakos, 2003).

Architect and designer **Lilly Reich** was a member of the Werkbund. In 1914, she coordinated the controversial female only ‘*Haus der Frau*’ project for the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne (fig 12/13/14).



Figure 12: Haus der Frau, 1914

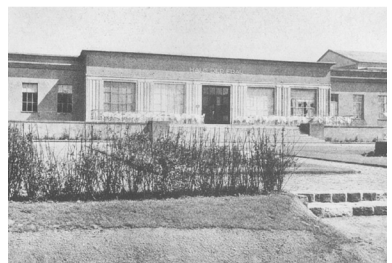


Figure 13: Haus der Frau rear facade



The modern Wohnkultur project was praised as a *“practical and tasteful”* turning point for the Werkbund, whilst also being simultaneously attacked as an *“utter failure of femininity”* (Stratigakos, 2003). Haus der Frau’s lack of ornamentation allowed women to *“emancipate themselves from dilettantism”* (Stratigakos, 2003) argues Stratigakos, thus liberating the design from an association with the decorative arts, towards a ‘masculine’ architectural design code. Anna Muthesius described *‘Haus Der Frau’* as an example of anti fashion, challenging the representation of female architectural discourse and raising the Werkbund into a *“utopian realm of true style”* representing the epoch (Stratigakos, 2003). Ultimately it confronts architectural gender prejudices and patriarchal societal attitudes. The design predates Eileen Gray’s E1027 (1929) and Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye (1931) and yet bears the hallmarks of early Modernist design.



Figure 14: Haus der Frau dining room

Reich collaborated with Mies Van Der Rohe on projects such as the German Pavilion in Barcelona, Tugendhat House and Velvet & Silk cafe (fig.15). McQuaid argues that this collaborative relationship caused Reich to be both *“consigned to obscurity and saved from it”* as Mies Van der Rohe’s legacy has overshadowed Reich’s contribution (McQuaid, 1996). In 1930, Van Der Rohe asked Reich to run the interior design and weaving departments at the Bauhaus, Rembert notes this was an *“almost unprecedented position for a woman at the time”* (Rembert, 1997: 57). At a time when female designers’ work was more heavily scrutinised than men’s, Lilly Reich’s contributions to the Werkbund, Bauhaus and Modernist discourse should be ranked alongside Charlotte Perriand and Eileen Gray yet she remains relatively obscure.



Figure 15: Velvet and Silk Café. 1927.

© MoMA, New York & Mies van der Rohe Archive.



## The ‘Progressive’ Bauhaus

# Bauhaus

The Bauhaus is remembered as a forward thinking and radical institution, which created a new *“artistic and architectural identity”* against the backdrop of the *“traditional social order in crisis”*, admitting women,(fig. 16) challenging the status quo and reimagining a new Utopia after the chaos of World War One (Ray, 2001). In 1919, Bauhaus founder, Walter Gropius stated that *“any person of good repute, regardless of age or sex”* could join the Bauhaus, he went on to clarify that there would be *“no differences between the fairer sex and the stronger sex”* (Otto, 2019). At the heart of the Bauhaus was both a progressive vision and a strong gender bias.

In 1920, there were 59 female students and 78 male students enrolled in the school, prompting Gropius to call for a more rigorous selection process *“particularly in the case of the female sex”* (Otto, 2019). This was achieved by higher fees (180 marks to men's 150 marks), lower quotas and restriction of which departments they could work in. Women were promised social equality yet were still constricted by the patriarchal division of labour, their work described as *“less compelling”* (Otto, 2019) to protect the fragility and position of the male designer as a great artist. This arguably increased female talent and produced women who transgressed the perception of the ‘inferior’ female designer.



Figure 16: Weaving women, 1927.  
© Estate of T Lux Feininger



Figure 17: Bauhaus Masters 1926,  
© The Getty Institute

## The ‘Progressive’ Bauhaus

# Gunta Stölzl & Lucia Moholy

**Gunta Stölzl** was a professionally trained artist, who studied at the School of Applied Arts in Munich. Her progressive parents had supported her decision to join the Bauhaus in 1919. By 1925, she was appointed the first female master of the Bauhaus in the female dominated weaving department (fig.17). Elizabeth Otto notes how she transformed weaving from *“the least respected area of 19th century decorative arts... into modern industrial textile design”* (Otto, 2019) which achieved unprecedented productivity for the Bauhaus. Stölzl recognised the importance of embracing the machine age, hand looms were used to create art (fig.18); prototypes and for teaching and power looms for quicker and cheaper general production. The weaving department became the most commercially viable department of the Bauhaus (BBC, 2019).

**Lucia Moholy**, as an unofficial photographer produced some of the defining images of the Bauhaus Dessau (fig.19). She described her negatives as her *“only tangible asset”* (Katsarova, 2021). However, when she fled Germany, Gropius used those photos to promote the school’s legacy without proper accreditation. In 1957, Moholy won a legal battle for the return of 270 of 560 negatives.



Figure 18: Slit Tapestry Red-Green, 1927.

© Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin



Figure 19: Bauhaus Dessau, Lucia Moholy

© Estate of Lucia Moholy / DACS 2022

## The 'Progressive' Bauhaus

# Marianne Brandt

**Marianne Brandt's** persistence and talent as the only female graduate of the metalwork department transgressed the gender stereotypes of the Bauhaus. Her success can be attributed to a woman who, in her own words, "*was not accepted with pleasure*", there being "*no place for a woman in a metal workshop*" (Ray, 2001). She is renowned for her adjustable Kandem metal lamps, marketed as "*robust, functional and stylishly modern*" (Massey, 2020); and for her photomontages (fig.20) described as "*witty, imaginative and clever*" (Whitford, 2020). Ray notes that Brandt ran the commercially successful metal workshop (Ray, 2001) at a time when women were rarely involved in industrial design, taking over as master from her teacher, Laszlo Moholy Nagy in 1928. Brandt created new opportunities for the Bauhaus, designing the lighting fixtures for the Bauhaus Dessau, for external paying clients, and for the interiors of Karlsruhe Dämmerstock Housing estate - a collaboration with Gropius' architecture department.

After leaving the Bauhaus in 1929, Brandt directed Rupperwerk metal factory, curated exhibitions and lectured in Berlin. Tragically in her lifetime, Brandt wasn't financially rewarded for the majority of her designs; however her silver tea infuser with strainer (fig.21) set a world auction record in 2007, selling for \$360,000 (Whitford, 2020).



Figure 20: 'Mit allen zehn Fingern' 1930

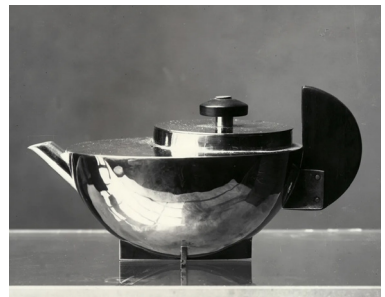


Figure 21: Marianne Brandt teapot  
© Estate of Lucia Moholy

## The 'Progressive' Bauhaus

# Anni Albers

**Anni Albers**, a student of Gunta Stölzl, was a talented textile designer, who created the double weave technique known as the '*Bauhaus style*'. She was initially dismissive of weaving but soon found a way of experimenting with different colours and structures (fig.22). She admired Mayan and Aztec design. Albers and her husband, Josef had a shared passion for innovative materials like glass and metal, allowing them to work collaboratively as a design partnership. Albers' Jewish background and the Nazis' condemnation of the Bauhaus as '*degenerate art*' prevented the Albers remaining in Germany. Creative and teaching opportunities were less restrictive in the USA, allowing the Albers to teach the Bauhaus theories beyond Germany. Elizabeth Otto argues "*her forced emigration furthered her artistic development*" (Otto, 2019) thus influencing further design movements. Most importantly Anni Albers strove to retain her own identity. Her work has been shown in 111 public exhibitions worldwide.

The Bauhaus' female narrative is ultimately diminished by the gender prejudices in the school, architectural profession and conservative society. The Bauhaus' pedagogy remains inherently gendered thus the 21st Century narrative must make visible and celebrate the female designers' success to be truly progressive.



Figure 22: Wallhanging 1926  
© the Josef & Anni Albers Foundation

## Modernism's 'Visible' and 'Invisible' Female Creators

# Eileen Gray

**Eileen Gray**, described in a 1980s MOMA article as “*outrageously avant-garde*”, is a rare female creator whose furniture designs have remained in design pedagogy and commercial production. She admired Japanese lacquerists learning under Seizo Sugawara. Considered “*one of the greatest lacquer artists of all time*” (Walker, 1999), she applied her craft in the pioneering Art Deco Mattieu-Levy apartment interiors, (fig.23) commissioned in 1919. Gray and the Dutch avant garde, De Stijl movement admired each others' work, with Gray feeling a strong affinity for their aesthetic austerity, social philosophy and interest in mass production (Walker, 1999). Gray proved her architectural merit in the design of E1027 in Roquebrune (fig.24) and the Jean Badovici's apartment interior described as a “*revolutionary departure*” (Walker, 1999) from conventional interior design. It incorporated glass bricks, recessed lighting and black ceiling to create a radical new interior architecture much more akin to modern design today. In her lifetime, Eileen Gray imagined “*a built environment beyond gender differences*” (Bhagat, 2006), downplaying gender to compete in a male commercial environment. Gray's aesthetic and business sense is evident in the commercial viability of her surviving designs still being produced by ARAM Designs Ltd, who were granted the manufacture and distribution rights by Gray in 1973.



Figure 23: Mattieu-Levy Apartment, Paris, 1922



Figure 24: E1027, 1929  
© ARAM Designs Ltd.



## Modernism's 'Visible' and 'Invisible' Female Creators

# Clarice Cliff

Stoke on Trent born **Clarice Cliff**, was a pioneering working class ceramic artist in the Staffordshire potteries in the 1920s and 30s. She acquired skills in hand painting, banding and modelling, before releasing her first range, Bizarre, in 1927. According to Beddoe her marketing and understanding of public taste were Cliff's greatest skills (Beddoe, 1990). Each addition was moderately priced with fanciful names, Felicia, Fantasque and Biarritz, aimed directly at the female consumer. Cliff's use of colour, geometry and eccentric shapes (fig.25) symbolise "*the decorative exuberance and excesses of the Art Deco style*" (Duncan, 1998), positioning her as an example of the emergence of the designer in industry. Her position as Art Director at the Newport Pottery, can be juxtaposed with that of her female contemporaries who were exploited through low wages, denied union membership and limited career opportunities. Buckley argues the woman of the potteries were undervalued, exploited and subject to the general mistrust of men in fear of their jobs (Beddoe, 1990). Some may argue, her partnership and marriage to Colley Shorter in 1940 amplified her success, however Cliff's ingenuity in producing moderately priced, modern pieces for the expanding home ownership market shows a truly remarkable business acumen. In 2021, Caspian films released *The Colour Room*, renewing interest in Cliff's life.



Figure 25: Sunburst Conical Teapot 1930

## Modernism's 'Visible' and 'Invisible' Female Creators

# Charlotte Perriand

**Charlotte Perriand** was an iconic 20th Century designer, cited in the French decorative-arts magazine in 1929 as an *“important, independent designer”* (McLeod, 1987) aged 26. Unlike her contemporaries, Lilly Reich and Eileen Gray, Perriand was from a working class family. Her initial application to Le Corbusier’s studio was rebuked with: *“we don’t embroider cushions in my studio”* (McLeod, 1987) yet Perriand overcame the initial prejudice. Her early individual work was described as *“strikingly eclectic”* (McLeod, 1987) but she soon started to adopt a stronger modernist aesthetic in her tubular furniture designs. Anna Novakov notes that Perriand combined traditionally male and female attributes (Novakov, 2005) through strength, lightness, straightness and curves. Her interpretation of Modernism was seen as *“personal, expressive and sumptuous”* (McLeod, 1987) probably because her training was in the decorative arts rather than architecture, her interiors still gave a sense of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Alongside Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret she collaborated on timeless designs such as the Grande Confort, Siège à Dossier Basculant and Chaise Lounge. Her Siege Tournant (fig.26) was attributed solely to her yet carries the name, the *‘Le Corbusier’* chair. McLeod argues Perriand’s background *“created a predisposition for the simplicity of modernism”*(McLeod, 1987) attracting her away from bourgeoisie ornamentation towards a mass produced product more accessible to the common consumer. Her individual designs for Air France’s airport lobbies in the 1950s created an industrial vision of the emerging aviation industry. Perriand’s design role has become marginalised by Le Corbusier; it is important she becomes a visible creator again in her own right so that her contribution is rightly acknowledged.



Figure 26: Siege Tournant  
1928  
© MoMA



# Conclusion

## **Moving forward to 2022 is anything changing?**

In London's Design Museum of 38 featured designers across all disciplines 12 are women and three are exhibited with their husbands: Ray and Charles Eames, Alison and Peter Smithson, and Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir. Given that Dezeen research in 2018 for the Design Museum found that 22% of the design workforce is women (a 4% rise since 2004), one could argue that 12 of 38 is reasonably representative (Fairs, 2018). However, as late as 2014 architect Patty Hopkins was photoshopped out of a publicity photo for a BBC documentary '*The Brits who built the modern world*'; the remaining image was all men including Norman Foster, Michael Hopkins, Nicholas Grimshaw, Terry Farrell and Richard Rogers (Quirk, 2014).

## **Perhaps the #Me too movement of 2017 has proved a catalyst?**

Two recent and current exhibitions are certainly encouraging: *Women Artists of the Wiener Werkstätte* at the MAK in Vienna in 2021 (MAK, 2021) and the current exhibition *Here We Are! Women in Design 1900 to Today* at Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany, (September 21 to March 22) includes 80 women in design including Gray, Perriand and Reich alongside many other women who have been overlooked and are unknown to the public (VDM, 2021). Clearly taking care of a legacy in an archive, museum or through a family that cares is crucial so that women's contribution isn't forgotten. Women designers are then able to act as role models for the next generation of female creatives. In turn this will help to address the unconscious bias which has favoured and promoted male creativity. In addition, it's crucial that educational institutions expand and update their pedagogy and narrative to include women so that they are rightfully presented not only as collaborators in a team effort but as a creative force in their own right!

# Illustrations

Front Cover: Photo: Feininger, T Lux (no date) *Weaving Women on Stairs of the Bauhaus Dessau*. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin Copyright: Estate of T Lux Feininger (available at: <https://www.architonic.com/en/story/dominic-lutyens-anni-albers-and-the-forgotten-women-of-the-bauhaus/20027706>)

Figure 1: Rossetti, D B (1880) *The Day-Dream*. Victoria and Albert Museums Museums (available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O14962/the-day-dream-oil-painting-rossetti-dante-gabriel/>)

Figure 2: Morris M (1895) *Spring and Summer*. Copyright: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest (available at: <https://www.wmgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions-43/may-morris/>)

Figure 3: National Churches Trust (no date) *Watts Chapel Exterior*. Explore Churches. (available at: <https://www.explorechurches.org/church/watts-chapel-compton>)

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Figure 6: Christie's (2008) *White Rose and the Red Rose by Margaret MacDonald* (1902) Christie's Auction House. (available at: <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5066453>)

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Figure 8: Jutta Sika For Jos. Böck Ceramics, Vienna (1901/02) *Cup and Saucer (part of a coffee service)*. Copyright: Art Institute Chicago. (available at: <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/65343/cup-and-saucer-part-of-a-coffee-service>)

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Figure 12: Knappelholz-Roeser, M. (1914) *Haus der Frau, Werkbund exhibition, Cologne, destroyed*. in Stratigakos, D. (2003). *Women and the Werkbund: Gender Politics and German Design Reform 1907-14*. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Society of Architectural Historians, University of California Press, 62 (4), pp. 490–511, (available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3592499>)

Figure 13: Knappelholz-Roeser, M. (1914) *Haus der Frau, rear facade (facing river)*. in Stratigakos, D. (2003). *Women and the Werkbund: Gender Politics and German Design Reform 1907-14*. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Society of Architectural Historians, University of California Press, 62 (4), pp. 490–511, (available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3592499>)

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Figure 17: Photographer unknown, (1926) *Group portrait of Bauhaus masters, from left: Josef Albers, Hinnerk Scheper, Georg Muche, László Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer, Joost Schmidt, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Gunta Stölzl, Oskar Schlemmer*. Newsprint. Das Illustrierte Blatt, (50) 1131. Jan and Edith Tschichold Papers, 1899–1979.  
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Figure 26: Perriand, C (1928) *Revolving Armchair*. MoMA The David Geffen Wing. (available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/2325>)

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**Back Cover:** Vally Wieselthier, Gudrun Baudisch, and Kitty Rix in the ceramics workshop of the WW, 1928 (Photo: Mario Wiberaz. Copyright: University of Applied Arts Vienna, Collection and Archive)

# Invisible Women

