

# MIX

## interiors

Sinta Tantra

# The height of design



**Sinta Tantra** is an artist known for her colourful large scale public artworks and geometric paintings; bringing a creative dimension to the built environment. Living and working between her two studios in London and Bali, Tantra's work varies in scale and examples of this can be seen at the Al Majaz Waterfront in Sharjah (2019), Lee Tung Avenue in Hong Kong (2018), and across a 300-metre bridge in Canary Wharf in London (2012).

[sintatantra.com](http://sintatantra.com)

### The item:

Eileen Gray, Screen, 1922

### The why:

The screen embodies all that I love about modernism, an object that fuses the disciplines of art, design, architecture and sculpture. Minimalist yet human in its scale and sensibility, I see this piece as a moving Cubist painting – the various pivotal parts framing moments that conceal and unveil themselves to the viewer. I love the compositional lines, the positive and negative spaces and the highly glossed lacquered surfaces. Walking around, I find myself drawn to its magnetic power of form and function.

### How does it inspire you or your work?

Gray perfected the Japanese tradition of lacquering, first in London and then with master craftsman Sugawara in Paris. So dedicated was she to the demanding time-consuming practice that she developed 'lacquer disease' on her hands. More than a design classic, the screen demonstrates how Gray subverted the cultural stereotype of what it meant to be a Western woman – an aristocratic one at that – exploring and experimenting with traditional techniques 'other' than her.

### What do you think has been the impact?

A heavy, albeit decorative item, the screen reads more like an erect building than an ornamental object made (one would assume) by a man. At a time when it was incredibly challenging to carve a career as a female designer, to be noticed as a woman in a man's world, one sometimes had to appropriate masculine attributes. Gray's bravery in pursuing her practice as one of the first female architects certainly led the way for future generations of women.

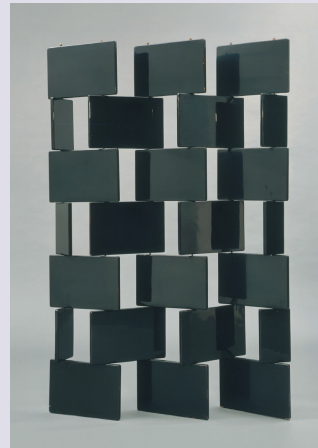


Image: MOMA

### The personal connection:

My fascination with Gray's work led me to develop my own series of screens in 2015. These ranged from three to four-part panels of various shapes and sizes. Created from individual paintings, interconnecting and self-supporting, they stood in the middle of a room, displaying both the front and back of the canvas – the back rarely seen by viewers. Developing these Gray-inspired screens shifted my thinking, enabling me to introduce the more public art side of my practice into the gallery space.