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defining the style of his films. His modern offices on the rue Boissy-d'Anglas in Paris were completed in 1923, and a prominent feature of his apartment on the avenue Émile-Deschanel (1924-31) was its game room, complete with exercise equipment and punching bag. The modern film director, like the progressive scientist Einar Noorsen and the ideal inhabitants of a Corbusian villa, would have to prepare to enter the future healthier and stronger than his predecessors.

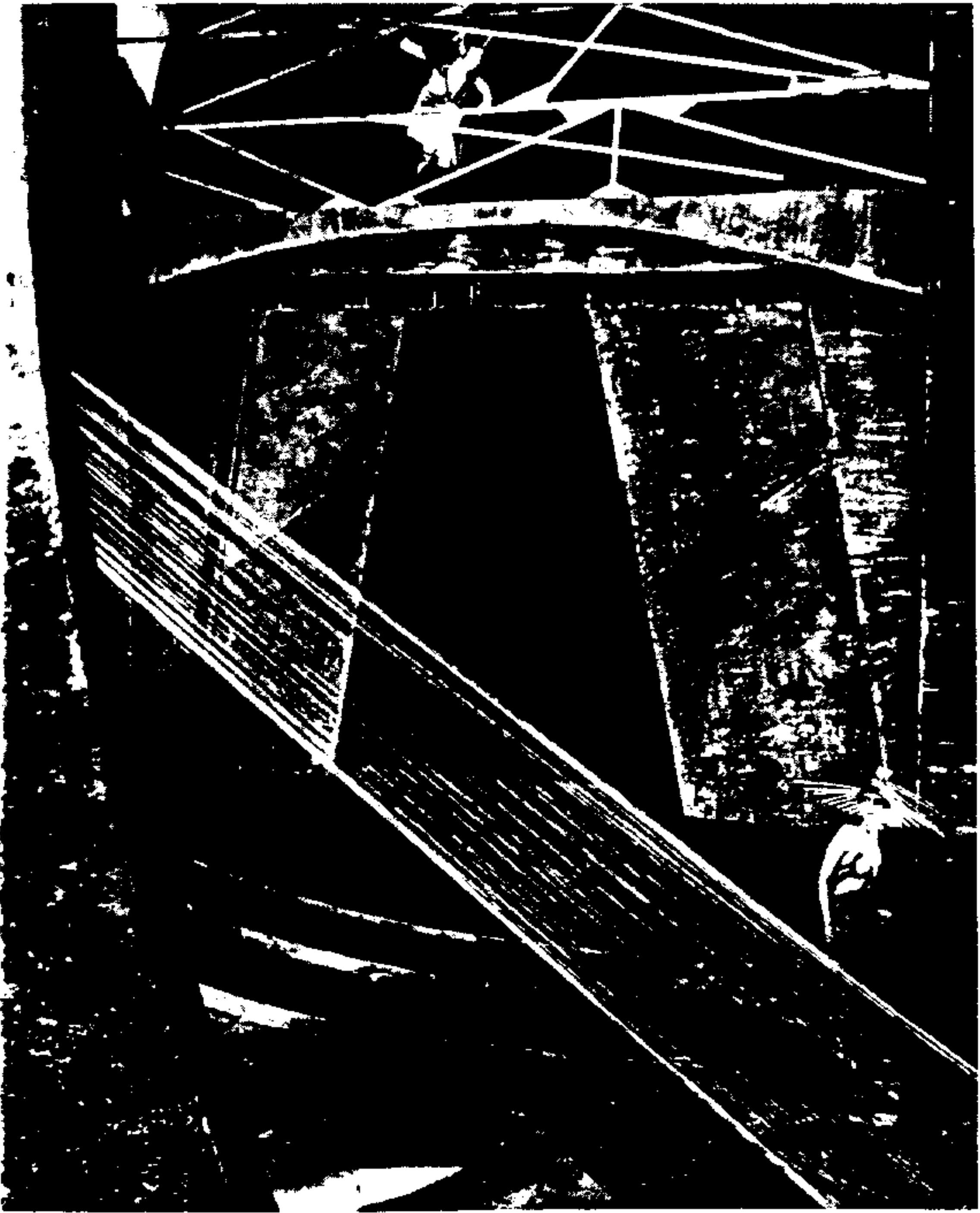
With his new living quarters under way and a series of celebrated modern films behind him, L'Herbier turned his attention to *L'Argent* (1928). Updating the setting of Émile Zola's nineteenth-century novel to the 1920s, L'Herbier's epic canvas pits the greed of unscrupulous financiers, money-hungry speculators, and decadent aristocrats against the idealism of a Lindberghesque aviator, a "modern" man not unlike *L'Inhumaine's* Einar Noorsen. The apartment dwelling of *L'Argent's* Baroness Sandorf—played by the twenty-year-old Brigitte Helm—is the film's best design by Lazare Meerson and André Barsacq. Its luxurious black lacquers, leathers, chrome, and animal skins, which temper the set's hard-edged cubist geometry, were a remarkable anticipation of Paul Ruaud's 1932 apartment for couturière Suzanne Talbot, as was the incomparable luster generated with indirect lighting. The triangular pilasters in the raised game room (Illus. 46), the chevron wall decoration in the living room, the translucent wall enclosing an aquarium, and even the gambling table are lit from within.

L'Herbier with notable success uses light as a dramatic device in *L'Argent*, particularly for the confrontation between wealthy banker Nicolas Saccard and Sandorf, his ex-mistress, during a wild party. Sandorf's feline stalking (Illus. 47) around Saccard's lumbering figure reaches a climax when,

trapped, she finally throws herself on a daybed, its animal skins accentuating the iridescence of her dress, cloche, and shoes. Suddenly, she lunges into space; the moving camera, tracking her closely, captures the shift of every muscle under her silvery gown until, once again, she falls onto a low, curving sofa (Illus. 48), where the final recriminations occur. Sandorf writhes under Saccard's pressure, while beyond and above them the frenzied shadows of the gamblers flicker on the parlor ceiling.

L'Argent's attention to kinetic detail displayed another facet of film's potential that was exploited during the 1920s—namely, the ability to use movement as a dynamic element in composition. One of the first movies to use costumes and decor responsive to the range of human movement was a Russian production. *Aelita* (1924), a science-fiction fantasy set mainly on Mars and directed by Yakov Protazanov, featured sets and clothing designed by Alexandra Exter, a pioneer in Soviet Constructivist stagecraft, Sergei Kozlovsky, Isaac Rabinovich, and Victor Simov. An enormous success with the general public, *Aelita* brought Constructivism to the screen (Illus. 49). Its designs also show the influence of French cubism and Italian Futurism; Protazanov had lived in Paris before making *Aelita*, while Exter had maintained extensive contacts with the Western avant-garde since 1908. Two especially striking conceptions of Exter's are a vibrating headdress of metal sticks and a skirt of hinged metal bars attached to the waist and ankles, which give clear expression to the dynamic force field generated by the body in motion (Illus. 50).

Perhaps the most outstanding examples of kinetic design during the period were the costumes and setting prepared by one of Exter's fellow Russians in France, Sonia Delaunay, working with her husband Robert, for René Le Somptier's serial *Le P'tit Parigot* (1926; Illus. 51). Sonia Delaunay's openness



49. (ABOVE) *Aelita* (1924, Yakov Protazanov). Art Directors: Alexandra Exter, Sergei Kozlovsky, Isaac Rabinovich, and Victor Simov.

50. (RIGHT) *Aelita* (1924).

51. (OPPOSITE TOP) *Le P'tit Parigot* (1926, René Le Somptier). Art Directors: Robert and Sonia Delaunay.
52. (OPPOSITE BOTTOM) *Le P'tit Parigot* (1926).



Dreaming Dreams