

Analysis of minneapolis's idc center as the demonstration of corbusier's modulor ...

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At 80 South and 8th Street in Minneapolis, Minnesota sits the city's tallest skyscraper, the IDS Center. Designed by Philip Johnson and completed in 1972, this structure stretches to 910 feet to serve as an office headquarters. Within this project houses five parts: the 57-story IDS Tower itself, an 8-story annex building, a 19-story Marquette Hotel, and a 2-story retail building. These four attractions are then brought together by the central 7-story Crystal Courtyard. The courtyard serves as a central lobby and shopping area, where limbs of skyways connect the four adjacent blocks. The IDS Center can be related to Le Corbusier's concept, that building should be the concern of heavy industry, and the component parts of structures should be mass-produced, with respect to the human body.

In Le Corbusier's book, *Le Modulor*, he discusses the idea of setting up a standardized and harmonious measurement in respect to the human scale which would be applied to architecture and design mechanics. A grid of proportions would be utilized to unite a project, offering endless combinations for measures of work. This grid is to serve as a basis for prefabrication and would be set above today's standardized metric systems. The term, *Modulor* was delivered to bring forth a measuring tool based on mathematics and the human body. Corbusier developed a diagram to better understand how to cut the human body into sections for pleasant measurements. "A man-with-arm-upraised provides, at the determining points of his occupation of space - foot, solar plexus, head, tips of fingers of the upraised arm - three intervals which give rise to a series of golden sections, called the Fibonacci series".

The result of this brought the natural gift of numbers and a play on mathematics. This creation can be interpreted in Minneapolis's IDS Center through a few different perspectives. As the IDS Center holds five different blocks, these can be seen as measurements derived from the human body. The 57 story itself is looked at as the human figure, standing tall and dominating the city's skyline. Each of the four adjacent structures are then developed into extending limbs, connected by joint-like skyways. The variations in height play a role in respect to Corbusier's Modulor diagram. They show the contrast in the human body where it had been broken up into intervals of measurement to greater unite the block in a much larger scale. The Crystal Courtyard is centered within the spaces, acting as the human head in the fact that the other structures revolve around it in a unified fashion. However, this is taking Corbusier's Modulor concept to a much larger scale. In his text, *Le Modulor*, Corbusier illustrates a six-foot man at the root of this measurement scale, broken up into sections of one, two, and three to create the golden sections. The idea of this is to make measurements more harmonious in the human scale, rather than looking at an entire skyscraper.

To better grasp the interior of the IDS Center, one needs to take into perspective the three golden sections of the human figure. Each floor is roughly two to three human figures, adding greater depth to each level, and is why the center houses 57 floors to reach a maximum height of 910 feet. As the tower dominates the skyline, one can have the same feeling as they enter the various spaces of the block. Entering the structure through small

vestibules and tight skyways delivers a cramped and almost claustrophobic feeling, however, once into the space, the interior opens up leaving the human figure feel dominated by the open volumes within the Crystal Courtyard, that open the view up to the height of the tower.

Besides understanding Corbusier's Modulor concept, it is important to consider the various attitudes this project delivers. Going back to the idea that this structure is the dominant tower in Minneapolis, that feeling is brought through the entire space. The block was designed to be a professional business and corporate sector, yet, with the concept of feeling much smaller than the structure itself. Open volumes and taller floor heights can make a person feel much smaller and powerless over the design. Attitudes in respect to the structure can be seen as confident and powerful, as it is constructed with reinforced concrete and steel engineering, all while being dressed in a sleek glass and steel façade, which reflects the smaller surrounding skyline. In respect to the human figure, the design was constructed to make an individual feel much smaller within the space. A tight feeling, but not constricted.

The position of the block fits well within business district of the Minneapolis skyline. The block stands out without hesitation due to its height, but blends in with its surroundings because of this glass façade constructing which matches its neighboring blocks. The idea of creating a structure with five components, all connected by skyways, differentiates itself by taking up an entire city block, almost creating its own district. The attitudes that this structure can make one feel play a huge role in its design and dominance

over the district, but one also needs to take a look at some of the issues within the Modulor. The Modulor measurement helped bring a universal system of proportions to design concepts while utilizing mathematics and the human form to deliver a harmonious unity within forms. Using a scale figure of six feet can make measurements standardized and more efficient to work with, especially when it is broken down into golden sections. However, the Modulor is almost seen as arbitrary. A six-foot man may be seen as a standard height, and an easy measurement to work around, but Corbusier also pulled that number out of nowhere. Many have argued the height he selected could have been any other number and broken down into various sections. It is understandable that six feet is the height of an average man, yet, how is this number fair to women, or children for that matter?

If everything designed were based around this concept and the golden sections of a six-foot man, objects and structures would only be comfortable for a person of that height and build. However, in a sense, this measurement makes sense, and not just to a six-foot figure. The Modulor creates a standard to go off of, and the golden sections help to create more elegant forms within a design concept. The golden ratio is an idea that many know of, but not everyone follows. There is no evidence that a golden ratio proves any sort of beauty within design, yet it is a concept that is still used whether it was mapped and calculated, or just done to create more beauty. In photography, the rule of third is used in compositions to display more depth, and all around better composition. However, it is an idea that not everyone follows, nor do they have to, to create something harmonious. Corbusier's

idea of the Modulor is simply a concept that can be an aid in the use of everyday designed objects and structures. Constructing proportions can bring out elegance within a space or object, however, it is not something everyone should utilize.

Corbusier's concept of the Modulor Man was designed to create a standardized and harmonious measurement in respect to the human figure. A grid of proportions that is utilized to unite a project, offering countless combinations for measures of work. Serving as a basis for prefabrication to be set above today's standardized metric systems. This tool unites the science and art of mathematics and the human body to bring forth a greater understanding of simplified proportions. This theory can be utilized in everyday design builds to deliver harmony and elegance through golden sections.

Minneapolis's IDC Center clearly demonstrates Corbusier's Modulor through its design. The exterior shows dominance in the skyline, and at a closer level, the entire city block can be broken up into these golden sections, as it is all about unifying proportions. The Center's interior has the same effect, displaying dominance and emphasis over the human figure that evokes a feeling of almost feeling powerless in a space by unity and proportions.