



Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor*, 1950 (Foto, © Centre Pompidou / Dist. RMN-GP/ Ph. Migeat © FLC, ADAGP, Paris 2015 mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Centre Pompidou, Paris)

K watching guard over King Haakon VII of Norway. At Oslo Military Society (some time at the first half of the 50s). So, about the same time as the left exhibit.

The reason I am showing you Le Corbusier's *Modulor* (1950, top left) is that conveys a sense of *material* that is likely to have some interest across our 3 specialisations at KHiO. It is also because it deals explicitly with *formats*: measures, proportions, colour, paper-quality. In sum, affordances that this collage-drawing proposes to open up the doors to modernism as a quality of life, that could be developed and expanded in the wake of WWII. Rebuilding society and its measures. Le Corbusier's *modernism* proposes to be the measure of all things, working *for* and *with* society.



K's residence (affordable villa by Le Corbusier)

Above, to the right, a picture of *King Haaakon VII* of Norway, flanked by his adjutant and guarded by K; expressing the workings of society at about the same time as Le Corbusier proposed *Le Modulor*.

About 13 years later K (now a diplomat) was living in a Corbusier house in Switzerland: it was *not* a luxury villa, but one designed at an affordable price. The floors were covered with linoleum, the walls were of brick, and the heavy roofing—typical of the late Corbusier—featured a wooden ceiling. Each sleeping room had a *separate* door to the garden outside, and had each their *walk-in* cabinets.

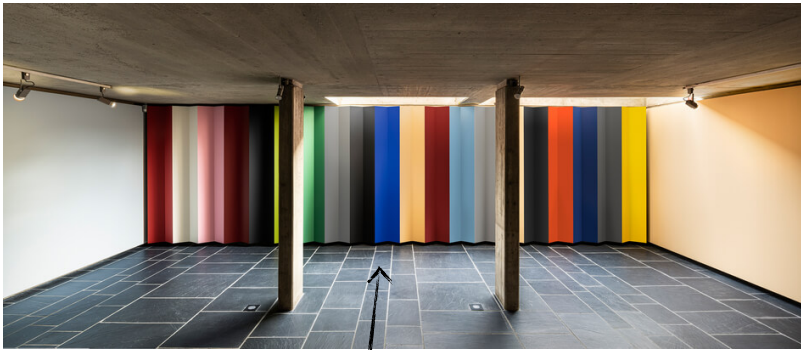
The measures and proportions were according to the Fibonacci sequence—or, the golden section—and the colours according to the palette which Le Corbusier called a *keyboard*: featuring a quite specific blue on the back wall of the master bedroom. The language of the [Unité d'habitation de Marseille](#) was similar: this was too a *machine for*

*living* but at a much larger scale. Apartment buildings conceived as vertical villages. And evoked

by the architect in the opening in 1952—5 years after the project had started in 1947, responding to the housing problem after WWII:

“Made for humans, on a human scale, with the robustness of modern techniques, manifesting the new splendour of brute concrete, with the purpose of putting the sensational resources of the era at the service of the home.” (from Le Corbusier’s speech inaugurating the *radiant city* in Marseille).

What we are focussing on here is *not* the realism in the social profile in this housing project—especially not in the *long run*, with the history of gentrification that came with time—but rather how a canon of *modern living* was launched from the *domestic* sphere, with an immediate impact on how it began becoming possible to make a life in a home that could hold the world-news and local/other life-ways: take interest in these without being run down by them. In other words, what they had to offer was *liberty*. Being involved without taken hostage.



The blue from Le Corbusier’s colour keyboard featuring in the K’s master bedroom: at the centre-left.

The sense of *progress* that developed from the 50s to the early 70s was incubated by these ways of living: that is, the *domestic* sphere became a harbinger of *change*. For instance, is ample evidence that modern living facilitated the development of postwar feminism. Equality before the law, equal opportunity on the job-market, equal salary, divorce rights and the right to abortion. [Masters & Johnson’s](#) research into the nature of human sexual response was part of the scene.

As already mentioned, however, my errand *here* is not to enter deeply into the topic of social justice and gender. But rather to ponder on the kind of *fiction* that was facilitated by *formats*: the possibility of modern architecture as a new and different way of living, that would engage with the world as it is (and be responsive to it). It is very important to *distinguish* fiction *from* illusion at this point: while *illusion* is a world to itself and contains its own reality, fiction is *marked* by the real.

The locals in Marseilles called the *radiant city* of Le Corbusier, la Maison du “fada”: thereby indicating that whole project—the modern living machine—had been touched by the *fairies*. Indicating by this that it was unhinged from reality and *mad*. And to a certain extent they were right. Modern living was not rooted by *blood* and *soil* in the same way as traditional life-forms. But people who changed their lives to modern, would readily be *interested* in historical traditions.

What I would like you to reflect on is how much of this is *already* present in collage-drawing of *Le Modulor* (above). It makes a big difference whether we see it as a *piece* attempting to match the boldness of Picasso’s *cubism* in architecture: as exhibited at the Pompidou Centre for instance, or if we see it as citation from a sketch/logbook as an *architectural reference*. In our theory course we are venturing to make this *difference*: which is important to design students in an art school.

If so, we have to ask how the multiple layers of the hyper-surface proposed by Le Corbusier in *Le Modulor* will proceed when conveyed to geometric x-y-z axes. In other words, how in the *process* of collage-drawing this specific item, the *performance* of the living-machine in it, the *production* of modern bodies is the centre of our concern (rather than less viable ‘strategies of entering the art-scene’ with this kind of work). That is, how a sheet in a logbook is *not* a plan to be realised in the future, but instead holds an idea that, in the sheet, modern living is already on its way.

While life in traditional societies was based on honour/shame, modern architecture may well have made a credible proposition of life based on *dignity*. In our present situation it would seem well advised to understand *whichever virtues might be left of modernism*.