

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 7-7470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A motion picture showing new architecture in London zoos will be an integral part of the Exhibition of Modern English Architecture which opens to the public Wednesday, February 10, at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street. The motion picture, which runs about 10 minutes, will show the new buildings designed by Tecton, a firm of architects in London, for animals in the London Zoo and its branch at Whipsnade, thirty-four miles from London. The picture will have free public showings at 11 a.m., 3,4, and 5 p.m. daily and 3,4, and 5 p.m. Sundays in the third floor gallery of the Museum.

The film, entitled New Architecture for the London Zoo, was made for the Architecture Department of Harvard University, the London Zoological Society and the Museum of Modern Art by L. Moholy-Nagy, assisted by Cyril Jenkins and Hazen Sise. The architects of Tecton and Julian Huxley, Secretary of the Zoological Society of London, have worked out a new theory of modern housing for wild animals. Instead of erecting artificial reproductions of the animals' natural habitats --which deceive neither them nor the public--the most efficient modern means have been used to reproduce the essential forms of the animals' natural surroundings. This new zoo architecture provides <sup>the</sup> / setting hygienically and organically most suited to the animal and against which the animal's natural characteristics, its shape and color and movement, are best displayed to the public.

The most striking example is the penguin pool at the London Zoo. No attempt has been made to imitate the penguin's natural terrain of ice and snow. Instead, a low wall surrounds an oval pool along the edge of which are steps and ramps leading to platforms at different levels. Over the middle of the pool are flung narrow ribbonlike ramps which interlace around a central fountain. Up the steps solemnly waddle the penguins to the ramps from which they dive or on which they sun themselves or promenade with characteristic dignity. The sliding planes of the ramps provide a surface very like that of the planes and angles formed by antarctic ice. The entire structure is of poured concrete. The motion picture presents an amusing sequence of the penguins enjoying their modern pool and the public enjoying the penguins.

In the research and experiments made by the architects and

zoologists of the London Zoo it was found that one of the principal necessities for most wild animals is to give them a sense of security. Their surroundings must be such that they can have the feeling of protection that comes with a wall at one's back and the knowledge that no enemy can approach from behind. The giraffe, however, is content merely with a large rectangular paddock with a fence that seems more to keep the public out than to keep the giraffe in. His house, of woven strips of wood, brick and glass, is placed at one end of the paddock near a wood. The giraffe enters his house through a narrow door on either end beside which is a measuring rod marked so clearly that the public can tell exactly how tall each of the giraffes is.

The gorillas, which are highly susceptible to contagion from human diseases, are more protected. They are housed in a circular building, the front section of which is composed of a grille of bars. In the winter the public is admitted into the house, the gorillas being protected by a sliding wall of glass. The half of the building behind these doors is raised several feet and equipped with hanging bars, etc. on which the gorillas exercise and play. The public stands in the lower half. In the summer the section of walls and ceiling behind the bars swings back on a circular track behind the gorilla section. The entire space is then occupied by the animals and the public watches from the outside.

Tecton's departure from traditional forms, the full advantage taken of modern methods and materials, and <sup>the</sup> esthetic handling of function in the buildings which this firm has designed for animals, parallel the best practice in modern architecture for human beings.