

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MODERN ENGLISH ARCHITECTURE

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces that an Exhibition of Modern English Architecture and an Exhibition of Posters by E. McKnight Kauffer will open to the public Wednesday, February 10. Both exhibitions have been directed by Miss Ernestine M. Fantl, Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Industrial Art. In addition, two galleries of the Museum will be devoted to recent acquisitions; one will contain abstract works given to the Museum by its Advisory Committee; the other, miscellaneous gifts from various donors. The acquisitions and the two exhibitions will remain on view through Sunday, March 7.

The Exhibition of Modern English Architecture will consist of enlarged photographs of private houses, low cost apartment developments, luxury apartments, hospitals, factories, schools, seaside pavilions, restaurants, weekend cottages, stores, underground stations and zoo buildings. One section will show not only photographs but charts and graphs of slum clearances and housing developments. The section on housing and town planning has been assembled through the courtesy and cooperation of the Housing Center in London.

An integral part of the Exhibition of Modern English Architecture will be the showing of a motion picture of the new buildings at the London and Whipnade zoos. The motion picture entitled New Architecture for the London Zoo was made for the Museum of Modern Art, with the cooperation of the London Zoological Society and the Architecture Department of Harvard University, by the noted Hungarian artist, L. Moholy-Nagy, assisted by Cyril Jenkins and Hazen Sise.

As the motion picture will show, the new zoo architecture provides the 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. There will be four showings of the picture daily on the third floor of the Museum, at 11 a.m., 3,4 and 5 p.m. and at 3,4 and 5 p.m. Sundays. These showings will be free to the public.

Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., has contributed two articles: The British 19th Century and Modern Architecture and Modern Architecture

in England to the catalog of the exhibition. Catherine K. Bauer has written an article on Elements of English Housing Practice. In his Modern Architecture in England, Mr. Hitchcock writes: "The International Exhibition of Modern Architecture held at the Museum of Modern Art five years ago consisted in the main of buildings in France, Holland, Germany and America. England was barely represented. Today, it is not altogether an exaggeration to say that England leads the world in modern architectural activity.....Modern architecture had won a foothold in England as in America before the depression began, but the newer English architecture of the late twenties reflected chiefly a European half-modernism already past its prime.

"'International Style' is peculiarly descriptive of the current English architecture scene. To London, even before the depression showed signs of lifting, Lubetkin came, drawn from Paris where construction had all but ceased. Later Gropius, Mendelsohn, Breuer and Kaufmann, to mention but the best known, came from Germany after the revolution of 1933 cut off in its prime the largest and most materially successful school of modern architecture in the world. Lescaze, from America, was also active in England from 1931 on. Yet, for all its international personnel, the English school of architecture must not be considered an alien phenomenon. It is artificial and misleading to make a sharp distinction between the current work of the foreign-born architects and that of men like Connell, Ward and Lucas, or Wells Coates, who themselves owe their architectural principles ultimately to the Continent. The English school of modern architecture may therefore be fairly considered as a coherent entity.....

"Since English modern Architecture has developed in a period of economic recovery, the types of building which the architects have been asked to provide have rarely been of advanced sociological interest. Middle-class houses and apartments, large stores, recreational structures, casinos, cinemas, zoos, schools and factories, rather than low-cost housing, have been demanded. Since the practice of modern architecture is concentrated in London, its patrons have been chiefly metropolitan but not mainly of foreign origin. While it would be absurd to say that the predominant conservatism of English taste had been basically modified, the public support of modern building seems assured. The British public has proved effectively open-minded in patronizing modern architecture. One might now hope

that the general esthetic forces of the nation may soon be educated and mustered for a solid front. Then the good work of the past would still receive its due--which it does not always today--and the good work of the present would be supported against blatant revivalism, sickly traditionalism, and pseudo-modernism.

"The work of the English contemporary school in the last few years, still so evidently expanding and improving, sets a mark which we will not easily pass in America. It sets that mark, moreover, under cultural conditions more like our own than those of most other countries of the world. We can understand what the obstacles have been in the way of these men, what temptations to compromise, what general distrust, what whimsical building regulations, what indifference to earlier national steps toward modern architecture they have had to overcome. The psychology of recovery is generally conservative rather than experimental, and in a world of rising nationalistic prejudice England's hospitality not only to Continental ideas but to foreign architects has been amazing.....One can end a consideration of English architecture in the winter of 1937 not merely with the conclusion that its present achievement is almost unique and could hardly have been foretold even five years ago. One can also prognosticate that this achievement very probably represents the opening stage in an architectural development of prime creative significance."