

# Tecton at Dudley Zoo

Following the installation of his innovative architecture at London Zoo, architect Berthold Lubetkin was asked to once again apply his Modernist principles to the housing of animals. RIBA Photographs Curator *Justine Sambrook* explores the story of Dudley Zoo, the largest collection of Tecton buildings on a single site.





**I**n 1936, following the success of their work at London Zoo and its sister site

Whipsnade, Berthold Lubetkin and his colleagues at the architectural practice Tecton were offered the chance to design a new zoo in Dudley. The project would allow them to explore the principles initiated in London on a much more ambitious scale. Among these was Lubetkin's 'geometric' approach to zoo design, which consisted of "designing

architectural settings for the animals in such a way as to present them dramatically to the public, in an atmosphere comparable to that of a circus".

The Zoo commission also offered scope to provide amusement in an area where "opportunities for outdoor recreation are almost non-existent", as Lubetkin noted when he travelled through the Black Country during the 1920s.

The idea for the Zoo, to be built in the grounds of the

ruined Dudley Castle, was conceived by three men. The Earl of Dudley, keen to find a use for his ancestral property, and Ernest Marsh, a local meat producer who saw the commercial opportunities, joined with marmalade manufacturer Frank Cooper, who was looking to dispose of his own zoological collection. It was Cooper's links to the Zoological Society of London that led to Tecton's employment.

**Previous: entrance to Dudley Zoo; view from the hillside of the Bear Ravine. Above: Bear Ravine, Dudley Zoo. Right: Berthold Lubetkin, 1948. Photographs courtesy of RIBA Collections.**

