

Lubetkin, Berthold 1901 - 1990



Berthold Romanovich Lubetkin [commonly known as Berthold Lubetkin] was born in Tbilisi, Russia Empire [now Georgia] on 14 December 1901*. From 1920 to 1922 he studied under Alexander Rodchenko and Vladimir Tatlin at the VKhUTEMAS in Moscow and the SVOMAS in Petrograd. He then attended the Bauschule at the Technische Hochschule and the Höhere Fachschule für Textil und Bekleidungsindustrie in Berlin in 1922-23; Warsaw Polytechnic School of Architecture from 1923 to 1925; the École Speciale d'Architecture in Paris in 1925; at the Atelier Auguste Perret and at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1926-27; the École Supérieur de Béton Armé in Paris in 1927; and the Institut d'Urbanisme, Sorbonne in Paris from 1927 to 1929.

Lubetkin began to practice as an architect in Paris in the mid-1920s. Projects from this period included the conversion of a warehouse as the Club Trepèze Volant on Rue de Volontaires in Paris (1927-28); and, with Jean Ginsberg, apartments on the Avenue de Versailles in Paris (1928-31).

In 1931 Lubetkin emigrated to the UK and settled in London. Very soon after his arrival in London he rounded up a group of six like-minded recent graduates of the Architectural Association School: [Godfrey Samuel](#) (1904-1982), [Valentine \(Val\) Harding](#) (1905-1940), [Michael Dugdale](#) (1905-1970), [Anthony Merlott Chitty](#) (1907-1976), [Francis Skinner](#) (1908-1998.) and [Lindsay Drake](#) (1909-1980) and formed [Tecton](#) (or TECTON Architects) a London-based architectural partnership. In 1935 Samuel and Harding left the partnership to form their own firm, and

Chitty and Dugdale also left. In 1937 Denys Lasdun joined the practice and later became a partner. Although Tecton was supposedly run on democratic lines, because of his age and experience and his charismatic personality, Lubetkin was to dominate the partnership.

Projects by Tecton included several buildings for London Zoo, including the Gorilla House, the Penguin Pool, a refreshment bar and the Elephant House (1932-37), two houses at Whipsnade Zoo in Bedfordshire (1933-36), High Point I and II Flats in Highgate, London (1933-35, 1936-38), buildings for Dudley Zoo in Dudley, Worcestershire (1936-37), Finsbury Health Centre in Finsbury, London (1938) and the Spa Green housing estate in Finsbury, London (mid-1940s). Between 1937-39, Tecton developed an Air Raid Shelter Plan for Finsbury which was published as 'Planned A.R.P. Based on the investigation of structural protection against air attack in the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury' by TECTON Architects (London: The Architectural Press, 1939).

Tecton was dissolved in 1947 and the following year Lubetkin joined Francis Skinner and Douglas Bailey in a new partnership - Skinner, Bailey & Lubetkin.

During the early 1930s Lubetkin was also in partnership with [Ammon Vivien Pilichowski](#) (1907-1982) as B. Lubetkin & A. V. Pilichowski. A house they designed in Plumstead, London in 1934 is discussed in *The Book of the Modern House*, edited by Patrick Abercrombie (1939 pp. 68-69).

Lubetkin retired from architectural practice in 1952 and from 1952 to 1959 farmed in Upper Kilcott, Gloucestershire. In 1969 he abandoned farming and moved to Clifton, Bristol.

Lubetkin was a founder-member of the [MARS. Modern Architectural Research Group](#). He was awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 1982. He became a naturalised British Citizen in 1939. He died in Bristol, England on 23 October 1990.

* "A different place and year of birth—Warsaw, 1903—are noted in several student certificates and in Lubetkin's British passport: these were explained by Lubetkin himself as false information to eliminate an early period of cadet service with the Red Army about 1919-20. An authenticated birth certificate has not been traced" [John Allan. Berthold Romanovich Lubetkin. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*]

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