

PRESS RELEASE

Rotterdam, June 30, 2009

Sustainable Giraffe House Opens Doors

On July 8 the mayor of Rotterdam (mayor AbouTaleb) opens the most sustainable building designed for animals in the Netherlands: the Savannah House in the Rotterdam Zoo (Blijdorp).

Cradle to Cradle

The Savannah House is unique: it is the first building designed for animals according to the principles of the sustainability philosophy called Cradle to cradle. An assignment that fits the ambitions of the Rotterdam Zoo, where sustainability is one of the key issues. "It forced us to unite the tensions between the neutral climate requirements ambitions and that of a healthy climate for the African animals. The end result gives a special satisfaction". Says Menno Lam of LAM architects (Wageningen) .

Searching for Warmth

Lam refers to the full energy concept and architecture of the building, where everything is considered. The building is almost free of maintenance and the vast majority of materials is easily used again or recycled. The 330,000 litres of rainwater, which the building collects annually will be used for the plants in an adjacent habitat. Rather than using fossil fuels, wood chips are burned for heating. On cold days the animals themselves search for warmth at special designed 'cuddle-walls' (steel elements with low temperature heating inside). Warming-up the animals makes it unnecessary to heat the whole 4500 cubic meter building. Where possible there are materials chosen with a very low environmental impact.

Comfortable

The building is environmentally friendly, but neither the giraffes or the visitors and caregivers need to suffer. The holistic approach to the architectural design provides a high degree of comfort for all. Concern for animal welfare, we see reflected in the amount of the space and height, the use of non-toxic materials, daylight and the round shape. Because of the latter the animals can not be clamped by each other. The African Coral was the inspiration for the design. The Coral in Rotterdam is oriented at the sun and designed to enjoy daylight and the warmth of the sun to its optimum, during winter as well as during summer. The Savannah House serves as a 'shelter'. It is a building full of solar, shade and daylight. Natural ventilation also contributes to a healthy indoor climate.

Relocation giraffes

Although the Savannah House is suitable to be used by various savannah animals, it is a tailor made design for the size and lifestyle of the giraffes. On June 26 they were the first to set foot over the threshold.

Rotterdam Zoo transforms

Since several years the Rotterdam Zoo is in transformation of the old style (designed by architect Von Ravensteijn) to a larger park with 'continents' and 'biotopes'. These choices reflect the commitment of the Zoo to nature conservation and environmental concerns. Biotopes are exhibits where everything is geared to the life of the animals. This is beneficial to their natural behaviour, the animals have more freedom and it also provides visitors a good insight. The Savannah House belongs to the biotope of the African Savannah.

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Note to editors not for publication

Duty-free photo's and project information can be found here:

(<http://www.lam-architects.nl/bureau/Pers/Opening%20Savanne%20Huis>)

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