

Kimbell Art Museum

Fort Worth, Texas

Photographs by Alan Ward 2008, 2023

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Louis Kahn was an architect that I much admired while I was studying for my undergraduate degree in architecture. I was inspired by his design of simple and timeless masonry buildings with natural light ingeniously admitted into the spaces. When I first visited his design of the Kimbell Art Museum in 2008, I had expected a larger, more monumental structure, based on photographs of Kahn's iconic 1972 building. It is actually a modest building composed of a repetition of barrel vaults - spaced only twenty feet apart to make human-scale rooms and galleries. It has an elementary beauty and calm, subtle quality of natural light in the gallery spaces. Within the museum, there are two small courtyards open to the sky - made by carving away segments of the vaults (1,2). The site was an integral part Kahn's vision for the Kimbell with designs by landscape architects George Patton and Harriet Pattison. A long glass wall on the west side opens to an outdoor terrace under a vault, which allows the landscape to flow under and engage the building (3,4). The museum transitions into the grounds with a pair of additional terraces and low rectangular basins of water paralleling the building on each side of the entry (5-8). A path passes through a grid of yaupon hollies to allées of elms and oaks, where the dark branches contrast with Kahn's light-colored concrete structure with travertine infill.

I photographed the exterior of the museum in 2008 with a 2 ¼" X 6 ½" medium-format panoramic camera which seemed appropriate for this horizontal building consisting of sixteen parallel vaults. I was fortunate that

an overcast day reduced the contrast range between the dark trees and light toned building, allowing for a delicate range of grays in black and white. I found views showing the trees, fountains and building - based almost on an immediate reaction, rather than an overly analytical process. There is value in first impressions followed by expeditious decisions about the technical means to achieve the image.

I was in Fort Worth for a planning and design project in early 2023 and revisited the museum and photographed interior spaces in Kahn's original building, including two small courtyards (1,2), and the large sunken south courtyard with a Noguchi sculptural grouping (11,12). In addition, a significant expansion of the Kimbell by Renzo Piano was completed in 2013. It was in winter with dormant lawns and deciduous trees without leaves, which opened up visibility between the two buildings. The Piano design respects Kahn's original vision by positioning the expansion underground, along with a similarly-scaled pavilion approximately two hundred feet west of the original building, thereby preserving an intervening landscape between the buildings. The underground construction required replanting the allées, and there were other minor adjustments to the landscape (18-22). My aim on the second trip to the Kimbell was to show the original design for the museum and site, along with a new layer added by Renzo Piano - to form and define a museum campus with the landscape central to the overall vision and plan.

List of Photographs

1. Sculpture by Aristide Maillol in building courtyard, 2023
2. Fountain and sculpture by Bourdelle in courtyard, 2023
3. View from Kahn's original building to the west terrace, 2023
4. West terrace and tower to the south of the site, 2023
5. Yaupon holly grove, 2008
6. View north of barrel-vaulted terrace and rectangular pool, 2008
7. View south of terrace and yaupon holly grove, 2008
8. View south to original building, holly grove, pool and allée, 2008
9. View east of original building, allée, and south pool, 2008
10. View north of allée, hedges and original building, 2008
11. View north of Moore sculpture and original building, 2023
12. Sunken courtyard with Noguchi sculptural grouping, 2023
13. Crape myrtle grove south of sunken courtyard, 2023
14. Crape myrtle grove and sunken courtyard, 2023
15. View east of north façade and live oak grove, 2008
16. Path north to Camp Bowie Boulevard, 2008
17. View south to original building and live oak grove, 2008
18. View south of original building and Piano Pavilion, 2023
19. View across lawn and allées to Piano Pavilion, 2023
20. View south of original building and Piano Pavilion, 2023
21. Maillol sculpture at Piano Pavilion and original building, 2023
22. Landscape between Kahn's building and Piano Pavilion, 2023













































Notes

The first time I went to the Kimbell Art Museum was in 2008 with architect, educator and architectural photographer Craig Kuhner. Craig was my mentor, thirty-plus years earlier, who taught me large format architectural photography. I learned to appreciate the subtleties of technical proficiency from him, but also to appreciate the work of other photographers, including his own beautiful work. Early on with a very limited budget, I collected books on the great photographers of the past. After studying those books many times, the images became engraved in my consciousness. At times, I feel that the framing in those photographs and the way Craig framed views, comes forward and influences how I organize complex information in the frame, just as Craig's technical approach continues to allow me to make competent images that match my visualization. When it came time to photograph my own design work at Sasaki, I wanted Craig Kuhner's interpretation of these designed landscapes. As a result, he made some exceptional images of significant Sasaki civic projects such as the rehabilitation of the landscape at the Lincoln Memorial and Reflecting Pool, as well as private developer work, such as *The Avenue* – a mixed-use development project on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC.