

II January 1990

Dr. Edmund Pillsbury, director
Kimbell Art Museum
3333 Camp Bowie Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

Dear Sir:

This is a letter from two citizens of Fort Worth who have been beneficiaries of the Kimbell bequest for almost twenty years. It is a letter in support of the expansion plan.

Although Scott and I had seen the original conceptual sketches of the new Kimbell Museum expansion when it was first announced and we had a good general sense of what it was going to look like, I was very favorably impressed last tuesday by Giurgola's presentation which included many wonderful details not revealed earlier. I know that people will in this case see what they want to see in the new building, and few minds will be changed. However, I hope you can remain firm with your plans and convictions and not yield to the criticism of people who seem to have little understanding of what the Kimbell Museum really is.

I can understand your slightly apologetic presentation for diplomatic reasons and your leaning over backwards to show skeptics the depth of your respect for Louis Kahn's original design, but I truly believe that if the Giurgola plan is built, what the public will see and experience will indeed be a new building no matter how it honors the original. And this new building will be — dare I say it — a better site endowing, handsomer building than the original with more flexibility and increased function for Kimbell exhibitions and educational programs and, quite frankly, a visually more interesting structure, with the visual music of the architecture greatly enhanced. Scott explains it this way:

" In the new building neither the key nor the harmony has been changed, and since the proportional progression stems from and is expanded from the basic mode of Kahn's design, we have a beautifully governed larger whole absolutely grounded in its origins much like the musical principles of continuous expansion of a theme in which a composer like J.S. Bach chooses to enlarge a germinal idea into a unified movement and by further expansions in subsequent movements into a unified and complete whole. In short, it works.

I think what might be most disturbing to the critics of this project.

is that it will work so well. I personally feel that the expanded building will convey a sense of greater dignity in its new and more appropriate relationship to the elongated greenspace of the west mall, and it will do this without sacrificing any of that intimacy which has always made the Kimbell special. "

I agree with my brother Scott that what may bother many architects (who should be servants of the client and the program, not the masters) is that the new building is so sympathetic to Kahn's ideas and will be so harmoniously integrated with Kahn's design that Louis Kahn's original " signature " will somehow disappear. To some extent this may be true as it should be when the building enters this new phase in union with the Giurgola design, a plan which very much respects the original structure by adroitly separating it from the greater whole with twenty foot glassed-in passages. What will stand will be a new building carrying on Louis Kahn's visual music with the modular harmonies and proportions of the 1972 structure intact and with the materials and lighting and — yes — scale that are the hallmarks of Kahn's architectural language.

I also believe that the new building will not only respect the building site itself but will greatly enhance it by covering a parking area on the north and a seldom seen or visited sunken garden on the south which has always appeared to be an architectural afterthought or stop-gap in lieu of future expansion. Infact I think the new Kimbell will fit so naturally into its expanded setting that passersby would hardly notice the change if the new building could be built in one night and be standing there for everyone to see the next morning. I just wonder what the outcries of those same skeptics and purists would be if the original building had been built with the Giurgola additions and you and the museum board decided to remove these extensions in order to create a more " artistically perfect " structure.

Kay and Velma Kimbell bequeathed their collections and their fortune to create for the people of Fort Worth and the world a first class Museum that would bring the arts of past cultures from around the world to this city to expand the educational horizons and art experience for all the people here who care about such things. This is the real legacy the Kimbells and Louis Kahn and Richard Brown and Edmund Pillsbury and a host of dedicated people will leave behind. The Kimbell Museum's real monument, then, is not in a

building but in the lives of countless people who are touched in a profound way by a museum continuing to grow in importance into the next century when the arts of the past more than ever may be needed to enhance the meaning of life. This expanded museum will be very much needed in the decades ahead and as such will itself meet one of Mr. Kahn's own definitions of what great art is about. He said that great art does not just fullfill a need; it creates a need. It is precisely the success of the Kimbell Art Museum which has created the present need for it own expansion.

Sincerely yours,

Stuart Gentling
Stuart Gentling

Scott Gentling
Scott Gentling

cc. Janet Tyson, Fort Worth Star Telegram