

VIDEO PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS



1.introduction



Hi, I'm Michael Mills. I'm partner with Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects. We're restoration architects for the Louis Kahn Bath House, a very significant building to Lou Kahn, done early in his career, and a very seminal building for his other work at Kimball, at the Kimball Art Museum, at Salk Institute, as well as the Richards Medical Center in Philadelphia. This site would've looked very different had it been built the way Kahn intended. To my right there's a large parking lot. That parking lot would not have been here in Kahn's design. It would've been along the perimeter of the site in front of me. In front of the Kahn Bath House would've been open space and then a grove of trees. Kahn was very interested in the use of landscaping as architectural elements, and what he did here was very similar to what he ultimately did at the Salk Institute. You approach the building through a grove of trees, and not directly from a parking lot. Hopefully the restoration will be able to re-institute some of the ideas of Kahn on this landscape

Kahn designed this building with a Greek cross plan. There are four pavilions arranged at the cardinal points of the compass and within that, within those four pavilions, is open space, an open atrium open up to the sky. Each of the pavilions is capped by a pyramidal roof which is essentially floating on top of the walls that support it. And those four pyramids define the space beneath. The materials are very simple, they are concrete block, concrete and wood

framing. And while the materials are simple, they create a very complex composition, which we'll see when we enter the building in a few minutes.

Many people who are interested in Kahn's career have come here to see this seminal work by the master. We've had several site meetings here, and on one occasion in particular on a snowy day in February, we're sitting around a table and an Asian student showed up, who had just gotten off the plane in New York, taken the train to West Trenton and had walked to this site to see the Kahn Bath House. He made a purposeful visit, and he was fortunate enough to come on the day that we were having our site meeting, and so we took him on a tour and really talked a lot about the building itself and the restoration. But that's just one example of the types of international interest that there is in this place.

So you are here to make the same sort of pilgrimage, so let's take a walk over to the Bath House.