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Exhibits at FWMoA Chronicle Louis Kahn's Fort Wayne Legacy
Globally renowned architect's mid-century vision for the arts in Fort Wayne comes to life

March 8, 2017 (Fort Wayne, IN) – The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is pleased to announce a series of two exhibits that tell the fascinating story of the late Louis I. Kahn's architectural journey in Fort Wayne which concluded with the completion of his only theatre for the performing arts in the world, the Arts United Center. The first exhibit opens April 29 with the second opening July 22, each ending October 15, 2017.

The first exhibition, *On the Pursuit of Perfection: The Legacy Architecture of Louis I. Kahn in Our City*, discovers through his final blueprints the depths of Kahn's intensive process that lasted almost fifteen years and culminated in a sublime artwork, the Arts United Center. During the mid-century, globally renowned architect Louis I. Kahn envisioned the design for a chimerical arts campus consisting of 8 buildings for the arts in Fort Wayne. The Arts United Center, the only building that was ever realized from his designs of the campus, dramatically exemplifies his numerous pioneering methods.

The second exhibition, *Becoming Present: Louis I. Kahn and the Arts United Center*, pays homage to Kahn by sharing the chronological and biographical history of Fort Wayne's Arts United Center. From the art campus's inception in 1959 until now, a pivotal time for the regeneration of cultural change, a much-needed light is shed on the many reasons to support and maintain Louis Kahn's oft-overlooked, albeit monumentally significant, contribution to Fort Wayne. *Becoming Present* explores the integrality of supporting the arts for a stronger, more vibrant community and the exigency of helping the Arts United Center move with Fort Wayne into the future.

Commissioned in 1961 as part of a larger performing arts master plan, the Arts United Center is an iconic work in Louis Kahn's influential portfolio. It is the only theatre designed by Kahn and the only Kahn facility located in the Midwest. The theatre began construction in 1970 and was inaugurated in 1973. In response to the challenge of railroad lines running along the northern edge of the site, Kahn designed the theatre to be an isolated box or "concrete violin" within an exterior shell or "brick violin case". This building isolation fascinated him and is often attributed to his interest in castle ruins. Kahn chose durable materials, concrete, brick and wood, used in their authentic states creating timeless spaces which endure today. The main façade of the building bears anthropomorphic qualities and is often described as a mask. Whether this was Kahn's intention is debatable, but there is no denying that the brick arches and nibbed concrete beams are signature Kahn, seen in much of his later work.

Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974) is known around the world for his monolithic, monumental, mid-century designs marked by structural and material simplicity. He drew inspiration from Greek and Roman architecture, Scottish castles, and even the play of natural light on Egyptian tombs.

Kahn taught architecture at Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania and was awarded the AIA gold medal for architecture in 1971. His other notable designs include the Yale University Art Gallery, the National Assembly Building of Bangladesh, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies at La Jolla, the Phillips Exeter Library, and the Kimbell Museum of Art in Fort Worth. He died six months after the Arts United Center was completed.

“The artists and architects of Kahn’s generation were committed to pushing the boundaries of their work in terms of its form and the materials that could give shape to that form. There was a great deal of interest in forcing modern industrial materials into artistic uses and aesthetic concern that those materials were presented honestly, with regard to their nature. Kahn’s use of concrete with brick forged a new aesthetic vocabulary as the ancient clay rectangles were integrated with modern, poured cement forms. In the case of the Arts United Center, the warmth of the brick exterior is punctuated by the cold, grey cement that forms the monolithic entrance lintel and emphatically points you to the entrance doors. Inside the building the expanse of stark concrete walls with all the surface evidence of their cast creation helps focus the visitor’s attention on the function of the building with virtually no superfluous embellishments to distract the eye. Kahn was an aesthetic genius who successfully ‘married’ unlike materials in spare, breathtaking buildings like nothing we have ever seen,” said Charles Shepard, President & CEO of the Fort Wayne Museum of Art.

"This is such an exciting time of rebirth and vitality for Fort Wayne. We can draw similarities to the era in which the leaders of the Fort Wayne Fine Arts Foundation (now known as Arts United) boldly selected a world-renowned architect to envision a multi-building Arts Campus in downtown Fort Wayne. I am tremendously excited that the Fort Wayne Museum of Art will share the story of their vision for our community and the influence that Kahn's mid-century design philosophies continue to have on architecture world-wide," said Susan Mendenhall, President of Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne.

These exhibitions are organized by the Fort Wayne Museum of Art in cooperation with Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne, led by FWMoA Curator of Special Collections Tiffany Street.

About the Fort Wayne Museum of Art

Beginning with art classes in 1888, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art has evolved into the leading visual arts institution in Northeast Indiana. Regularly exhibiting nationally acclaimed artists, the FWMoA also boasts a permanent collection including works by Mark di Suvero, Andy Warhol, and Kara Walker. The FWMoA is committed to the collection, preservation, and presentation of American and related art to engage and educate broad and diverse audiences throughout the community and region, and add value to their lives. The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is funded by Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne. This activity made possible, in part, with support from the Indiana Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. www.fwmoa.org

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