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Twin Day of the Dead Exhibits bring Mexican culture to the fore

October 13, 2017 (Fort Wayne, IN) -- The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is proud to present two exhibitions celebrating Latino heritage and contemporary art and culture with its annual Day of the Dead community altar exhibit, and new for 2017, Day of the Dead artwork from the collection of Dr. Gilberto Cardeñas. The altar exhibit will be on display October 21-November 12 and the Cardeñas collection opened October 7 and will remain on view through December 3.

Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, is a traditional Mexican holiday centered around home-grown altars honoring deceased loved ones and celebrating their lives. Even if the traditions of Día de los Muertos are not familiar, many will recognize its images—brightly decorated sugar skulls, dancing skeletons still wearing the bright clothes of their less ghostly pasts, and marigold-like flowers, called *cempasúchil*.

On display October 21 - November 12, the altar exhibit will feature traditional Mexican altars with sugar skulls, colorful tissue paper cutouts, photos of deceased relatives and their personal effects to honor their lives. The Day of the Dead, an ancient religious celebration that originally honored children and the dead, has evolved to feature a blend of Meso-American and Christian elements. The celebration is considered a festive time when family members remember and honor their dead and the continuity of life. The Museum is working with local artists and community groups to create both small and large altars for the exhibit, honoring the memories of our ancestors and other loved ones. This year, a special memorial will be created remembering children lost in the recent earthquakes in Mexico.

On display now through December 3, *Los Vivos y los Muertos* presents a private collection of work inspired by the Day of the Dead. For centuries, artists have drawn from the rich imagery and symbolism rooted in indigenous Aztec traditions as well as the symbolism of Christianity and Catholicism of the Spanish conquistadors. The artwork in this exhibition is from the extensive collection of Dr. Gilberto Cardeñas, representing some of the finest Latino art both past and present, and exhibit text will be presented in Spanish and English. Cardeñas is the Executive Director of the Notre Dame Center for Arts and Culture and a faculty member in the department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame.

“It is incredibly gratifying to see the continued collaboration of community advocates, artists, students, and performers who create a fantastic día de los muertos event for all citizens in Fort Wayne and the region. Our organizers and community members take pride to honor and celebrate this traditional holiday with indigenous roots over millennia. I’m grateful to the FWMOA staff, día de los muertos committees, and sponsors for their annual support for what is becoming a fantastic opportunity for education and commemoration of loved ones. This event creates a spark of awareness about our own family history, special recipe meals, colorful mementos, unforgettable memories, thus allowing a space of goodwill, cooperation, and transferring the tradition to the next generation. And this truly fulfills my heart and spirit every time!” said Palermo Galindo, community liaison for the mayor’s office of the City of Fort Wayne.

The FWMoA will present two events related to these exhibitions. On **October 26**, Dr. Karla Zepeda will present a public presentation, “Day of the Dead in its Cultural Context.” The presentation is at 12pm at FWMoA and is free with museum admission. For families, a Family Celebration will be held on **October 29** from 2-6pm and will feature children’s activities, treats from George’s La Baguette Bakery, live mariachi, folkloric dancers, storytelling, food trucks, and Day of the Dead costumed characters. Admission is free, although a \$3 donation is suggested.

Major sponsors for these events include Wells Fargo, 3 Rivers Credit Union Foundation, Parkview Health, Partners 1st Federal Credit Union, and the Greater Fort Wayne Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

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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