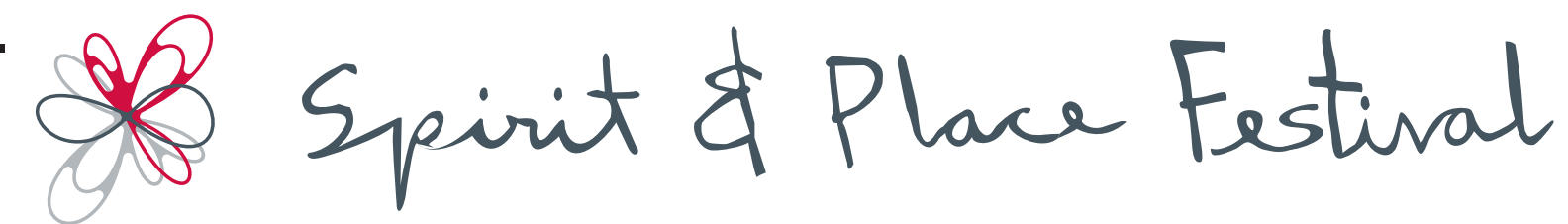


30 YEARS OF CELEBRATING THE ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND RELIGION



1996

Spirit & Place emerges from The Polis Center's Project on Religion and Urban Culture, a Lilly Endowment-funded initiative exploring religion's role in urban life. **Rooted in the arts, humanities, and religion, the Festival launches** with its first Public Conversation featuring Kurt Vonnegut, Dan Wakefield, and John Updike. That same year, writer David Hoppe coins the name Spirit & Place and the festival's signature script is introduced.



2003–2004

Festival expands beyond Indianapolis with events throughout Central Indiana. It quickly grows to **75+ events**, soon **surpassing 100 annually**.

2007–2013

Festival deepens public engagement through theme essays, site-specific games, quirky formats (**Random Acts of Improvisation, GameSpot**), and risk-taking projects including the **\$20K Competition About Race**.



2010–2012



Spirit & Place partners with Indiana Humanities to headline **culinary icons Anthony Bourdain & Eric Ripert** during Food for Thought. Innovative formats explore fashion & urban design (**Dressing Indianapolis**), American burlesque (**Sin's Last Stand**), and playful sidewalk games (**Play theme**).

Festival receives the **NUVO Cultural Vision Award** and **Indiana Achievement Award**.

2000–2001

10th Anniversary Festival (Moving & Staying) features Wendell Berry and Tim Grimm.

2005

Festival becomes a **10-day event** (instead of 17!) with signature bookends, prioritizing quality over quantity.

2009

An evaluation challenges Spirit & Place to reach more diverse audiences. In 2015, the organization **restructures its staff and launches a community engagement initiative** to confront its complicity in upholding structural racism.



2014–2015

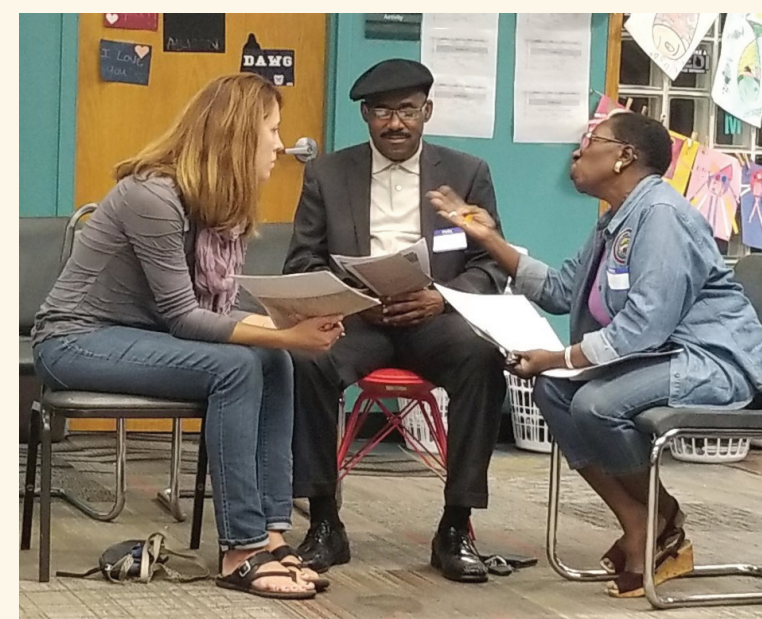
2016

A yearlong partnership with **Kheprw Institute** explores **Gentrify: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**. Spirit & Place launches the **Award of Awesomeness** (2016–2023) and begins the practice of commissioning new art with Tony Styxx's **Dear Indy (Home theme)**. To reduce participation barriers, the \$400 festival fee is replaced with a **sliding-scale structure**.



2018

Spirit & Place launches **Powerful Conversations on Race**, a monthly dialogue series using the Civic Reflection Dialogue method, and **introduces Civic Saturdays** to nurture civic purpose through poetry, song, and reflection.



2020–2021

Spirit & Place responds to COVID-19 with **The Corona Dialogues**, waives all festival participation fees, and hosts its first fully virtual/hybrid festival. The **25th Anniversary Festival (Origins theme)** includes a commissioned work by Mánon Voice, followed in 2021 by Christopher Pitts's jazz piece **The Road**. Spirit & Place also commits to providing **ASL interpretation** at its major events and receives an inaugural **\$10,000 Arago Honors prize** from the Indy Meridian Foundation for Powerful Conversations on Race.



2024

Festival theme: **Gratitude**. Spirit & Place moves from the IU-Indianapolis School of Liberal Arts to **IU Research**. The move provides stronger backing for projects like **Big Tent Talks**, first launched with Nadia Bolz-Weber, which creates a new platform for inspirational voices in faith & spirituality. With support from the Indiana Arts Commission and National Endowment for the Arts, **Spirit & Place commissions Shamira Wilson's Synaptic Array**. Accessibility expands through an audio description of Wilson's work and a **partnership with IUI's American Sign Language Program**.



In collaboration with Groundwork Indy, Kheprw Institute, and EMCArts (with support from MetLife Foundation), **Spirit & Place participates in the Indy Community Innovation Lab**, a national pilot using artistic practices to explore economic inclusion for returning citizens and youth aging out of foster care.



2017



Spirit & Place moves from The Polis Center to the **IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI**. Nikole Hannah-Jones, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist of The 1619 Project, is the **Public Conversation** speaker during the **R/Evolution** themed festival.

2019

By 2022, Spirit & Place **audiences reflected the demographic makeup of Marion County**—a major milestone in its equity journey. Festival themes (**Identify** and **Nourish**) featured the **Laugh in Peace Comedy Tour**, new photography work by Wildstyle Paschall, a traveling Food & Faith exhibit, and a live **Public Conversation podcast** with Black Girls Eating and culinary historian Michael Twitty. Spirit & Place also replaced the Award of Awesomeness with \$200 stipends to strengthen community participation.

2022–2023



In its **30th year**, Spirit & Place explores the theme of **Nature** with another Public Conversation first: **a virtual keynote and communal watch party** featuring climate scientist and evangelical Christian Katharine Hayhoe. Spirit & Place strengthens its partners' event design capacity by publishing **Events That Matter: A Spirit & Place Toolkit**.

2025