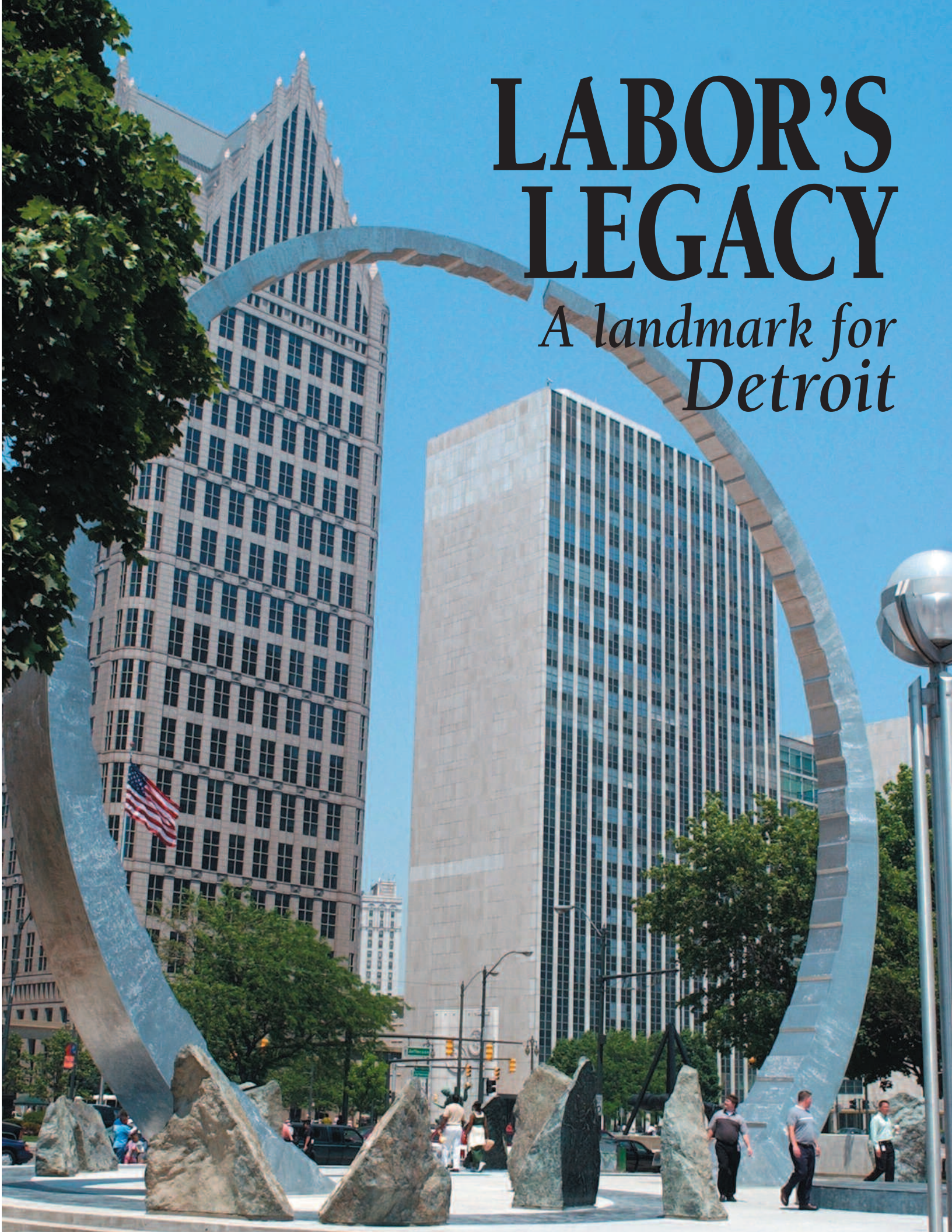


LABOR'S LEGACY

*A landmark for
Detroit*



A VISION — Rises —

More than 120 artists and sculptors from throughout the U.S. gathered in downtown Detroit in early March 2001. Under a bright winter sun, they walked along the river side of Jefferson Avenue just west of Woodward with cameras and sketchbooks in hand imagining what they could build there to tell the story of working men and women.

The Michigan Labor History Society had invited the artists to Detroit after deciding to present a gift of public art to mark the city's tri-centennial. Detroit officials were enthusiastic, and designated the Jefferson site, just north of Hart Plaza, as an appropriate place. It was a location rich with history. A few blocks west, at Third Street, Huron Indians had established a community at the time of the arrival of French settlers in 1701. Fur traders, ship builders, and other workers had plied their trades nearby. In the modern era, auto and other industrial plants had set up shop just a few blocks to the east. And whenever the labor movement rallied, downtown Detroit was a magnet. The big organizing rallies of the 1930s, the Labor Day parades of the 1950s, and the historic civil rights march of 1963 all had taken place within a few blocks of this site.

At the nearby UAW-Ford National Programs Center, the artists met with Labor History Society officers who laid out a challenge: come up with a work of art to inform the public about labor's history, honor the working women and men who built our city, and inspire visitors with labor's vision for a better future.

Two months later, 55 proposals ranging from simple sketches to complex drawings had been received. A panel of five jurists — Graham Beal, director of the Detroit Institute of Arts; Camille Billops, director of the Hatch-Billops gallery in New York; Bill Black, community affairs director of the Teamsters Joint Council; Melba Boyd, poet and teacher; and Paul Krell of the UAW President's staff pored over the submissions on which the names of the artists had been masked out to insure impartiality. After selecting three semi-finalists, the jury agreed on a joint collaboration by David Barr and Sergio De Giusti, both of whom have created public art installations throughout the world. "It was," said Detroit 300 Director Maud Lyon, "a wonderful example of democracy in action in selecting a plan for a major work of art."

Transcending, as Barr and De Giusti named their design, was to rise 63 feet above street level in the form of two stainless-steel arcs, geared on the inside to reflect Detroit's industrial might, and open at the top to symbolize labor's unfinished work. At night, the gap would be lit as a reminder of the energy of working people. A spiral walkway at the base would lead visitors to eight granite boulders split in half, with the inside faces holding bronze reliefs telling labor's story. Embedded in the walkway would be milestones describing labor's achievements. A raised dais would include quotations from prominent activists for labor rights and social justice. Beneath the dais would be a time capsule holding letters, badges, newspapers, and other labor mementos of the first years of the 21st Century.

The Barr-De Giusti vision excited the labor community, and over the next several months, unions, rank-and-file members, and various enterprises would contribute some \$1.6 million to bring the vision to reality. Members of several building and construction trades unions laid the foundations, erected the arcs, and embedded the tiles that, two years later, would complete *Transcending*. On August 22, 2003, hundreds gathered under a blazing sun to dedicate the new landmark, hailed as the largest work of public art in the nation honoring workers. At the dedication, members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, represented by the Detroit Federation of Musicians, composed and played an original fanfare.

Since its dedication, *Transcending* has been visited by thousands of residents and tourists and has been hailed in local and national news media both for its artistic merits and for the story it tells. On any day, you can find people sitting on the benches that surround the Landmark, walking along the spiral pathway past the bronze sculptures, or standing on the dais to read the words that reflect hopes for a better world. Visitors often pause in front of one of the two engraved tiles at the base of each arc to read the moving words of Martin Luther King Jr.:

"The arc of history bends toward justice."





‘TRANSCENDING’

A Guide to the Michigan Labor Landmark

The spiral walkway at the Labor Legacy Landmark takes visitors past 16 sculptures that tell the stories of labor. Here is a guide to the sculptures. A map is on the next page.



I-A & I-B Entry stones to “Transcending:”

As you enter the spiral walkway, you will see the title “Transcending” and bronze castings of the hands of artists Sergio De Giusti and David Barr. De Giusti’s hand holds the sculpture tool that he used to create the panels on the stones along the pathway. The opening panels also hold the date, 2002, when the artists started the project as well as their signatures.





2-A

Our Roots, Our Traditions: From its founding in 1701, Detroit has been a city of workers. Fur trading, farming, and lumbering in the 18th Century gave way to small factories employing skilled workers in a variety of trades. By the end of the 19th Century, Detroit had developed a thriving shipbuilding and carriage-making industry; soon after, it would begin its development as the Motor City.



2-B

The Birth of Industrial Unionism: The Great Depression that started in 1929 left thousands of workers without jobs. In 1937, a wave of sit-down strikes hit auto and parts plants, cigar factories, retail shops, and hotels as workers sought higher wages and union recognition.



3-A

Our Crafts, Our Skills:

These are the tools used by the skilled trades workers who construct our homes; who design and build our buses, trains, ships, and autos; who teach our children; who work in our hospitals, and who do all the other jobs that improve our lives.



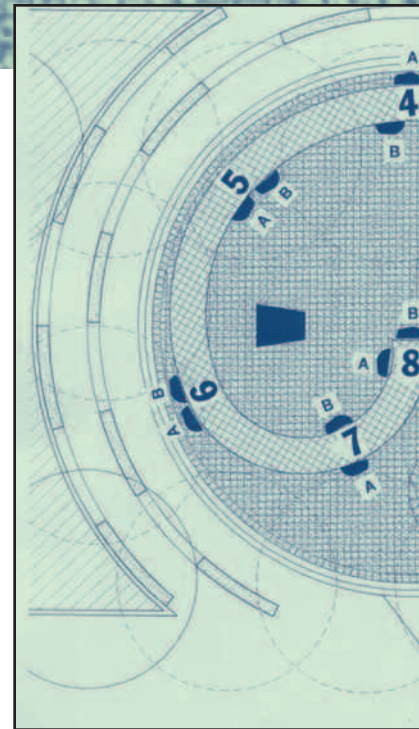
3-B

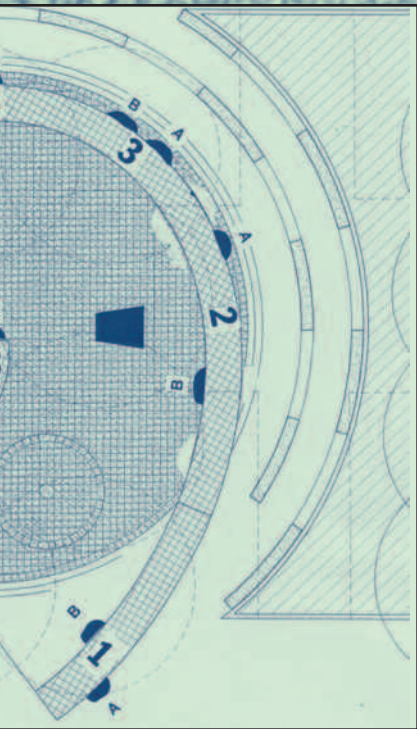
The Art of Labor: Art and music have been a part of Detroit's labor movement for decades. Today, composers, musicians, artists, actors, writers, photographers, and film-makers — many of them union members — continue to enhance our lives with their art.



4-A

Labor and Civil Rights: On June 23, 1963, 125,000 people marched down Woodward and Jefferson. At the conclusion of that Detroit Walk for Freedom, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, two months before he gave it on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.





4-B

Our Movement Grows: This sculpture represents some of the growing occupations at the start of the 21st Century, including jobs in electronics, computer programming, retail stores, health care, science, agriculture, and education. Workers in these fields are building unions and winning collective bargaining contracts.



5-A

The Builders: Skilled construction trades workers who build the skyscrapers and other buildings surrounding the Landmark are depicted in this sculpture.

5-B

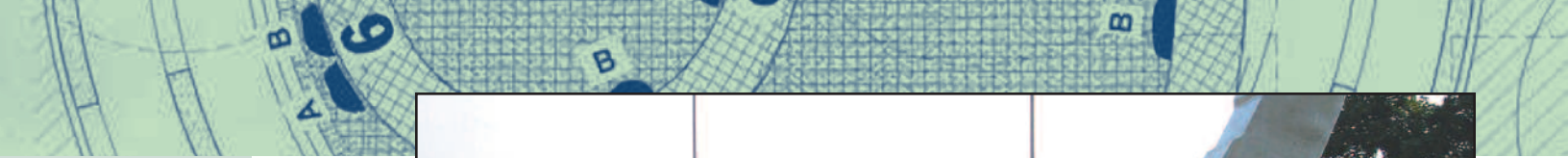
The Assemblers: For over a century, workers in the auto industry have left an indelible mark on Detroit — putting us on the map as the “Motor City.” Workers in auto and auto parts factories in Michigan turn out millions of vehicles annually.



6-A

The Transporters: By truck, rail, air, and ship, workers in the transportation industries carry Detroit’s products to the nation and the world. The Detroit River is one of the links between the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway, while rail lines and interstate highways fan out to the rest of the U.S.





6-B

Serving the People: Public service workers keep our community a safe and pleasant place to live. They include teachers, nurses, and firefighters, as well as the workers who clean our streets, who maintain our parks and roads, who light our neighborhoods, who keep our drinking water safe, and who do all the jobs that enhance our lives.

7-A

Solidarity Knows No Borders: Union workers in Detroit are linking up with workers all over the world to effectively fight for labor rights, living wages, and better working conditions for all.

7-B

We Can Bring To Birth a New World:

The anthem of the labor movement, “Solidarity Forever,” inspires us build a world where all are free: “When the union’s inspiration through the workers’ blood shall run, there can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun. For what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one. For the union makes us strong.”



8-A

From Slavery To Freedom: As a stronghold of abolitionism in the 19th Century, Detroiters helped break the chains of slavery and usher in an era of free labor and worker rights. The city was a terminus of the Underground Railroad, leading slaves across the river to freedom in Canada, an event commemorated by a monument just south of here on the river’s edge.

8-B

The Future Belongs to the Young: At the end of the walkway, the final sculpture bears the handprints of children cast in the year 2002, reminding us that today’s young people will be tomorrow’s workers, carrying on the traditions of the labor movement for economic justice, social progress, and peace.

