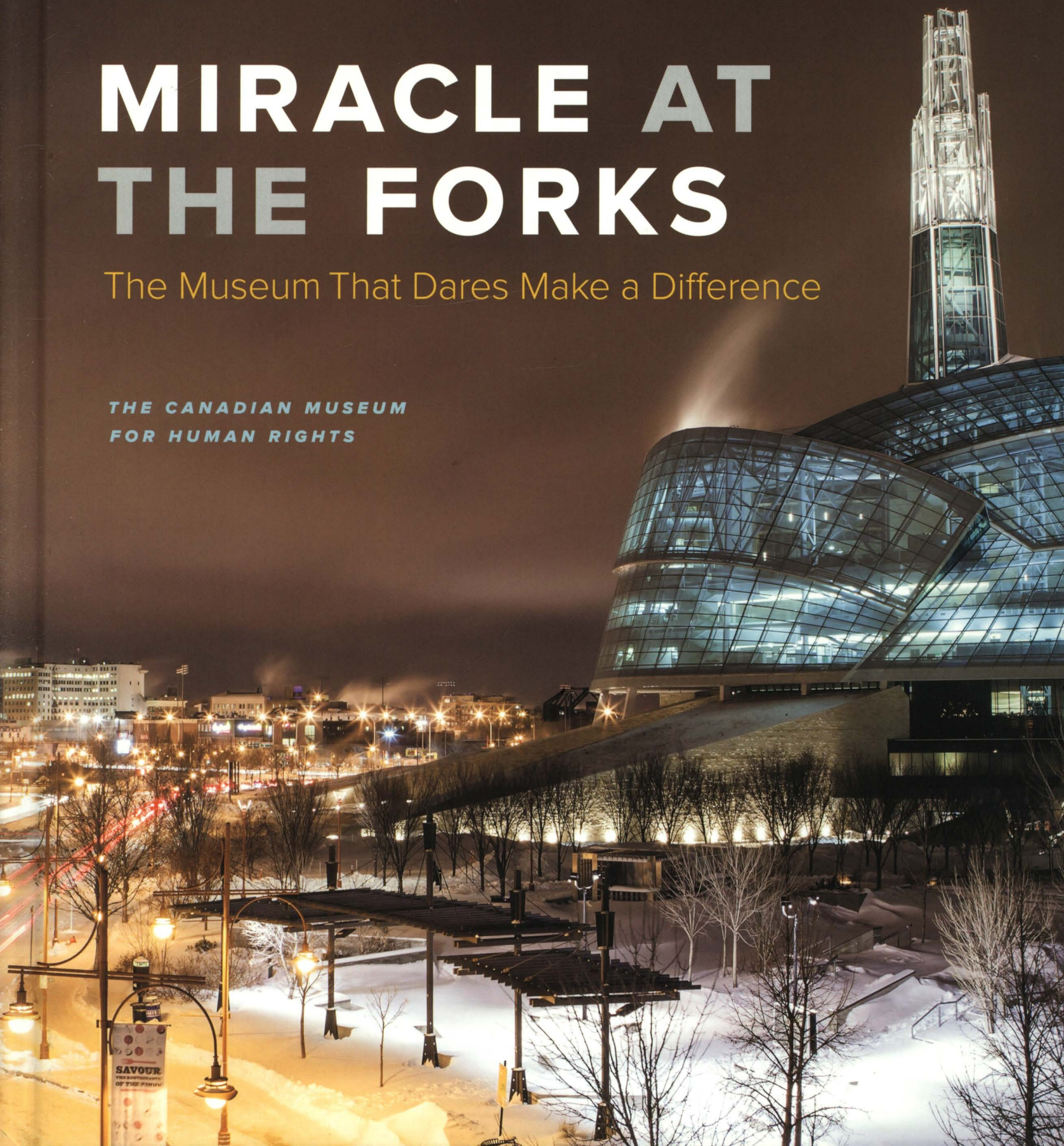


PETER C. NEWMAN | ALLAN LEVINE

MIRACLE AT THE FORKS

The Museum That Dares Make a Difference

THE CANADIAN MUSEUM
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



Miracle at the Forks















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The Museum That Dares Make a Difference

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Figure.1

Vancouver / Berkeley

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Cataloguing data available from Library and Archives Canada
ISBN 978-1-927958-21-6 (hbk.)

Editing by Sarah Brohman
Copy editing by Judy Phillips
Design by Jessica Sullivan
Cover photograph by Aaron Cohen
Slipcase photographs by Patrick Coulie

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens
Distributed in the U.S. by Publishers Group West

Figure 1 Publishing Inc.
Vancouver, BC Canada
www.figure1pub.com

*Dedicated to the memory of Israel Asper, OC, OM, LL.D. (1932–2003)
and Ruth “Babs” Asper (1933–2011), whose imagination, vision,
dedication, and perseverance transformed the Canadian Museum
for Human Rights from a dream to a reality.*

*And to the more than 7,800 generous donors and hundreds of
supporters who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the dream
did not die.*

xiv Foreword
1 Introduction

01

9 Reaching for the Stars

02

21 Winnipeg: Dreams and Realities

03

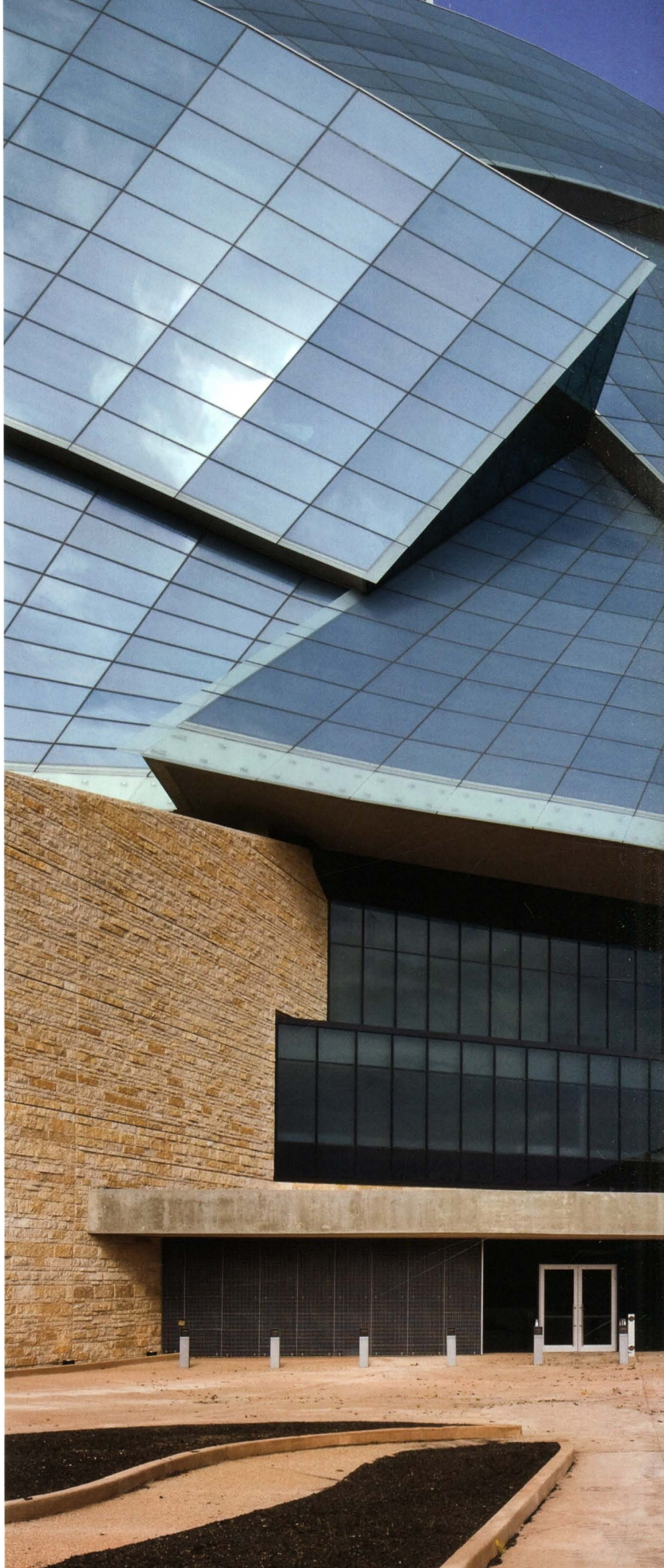
33 A Magnificent Conception

04

55 From Despair to Limbo

05

83 A Shining Hour





06

105 Designing a Dream

07

115 A New Mexican Grabs the Prize

08

123 Building the Museum

09

155 A Gallery Guide

165 Afterword

172 Acknowledgments

174 A Note on Sources

175 Select Bibliography

177 Photo Credits

179 Index

FOREWORD

xiv

WE WOULD LIKE to thank our late chair of the Asper Foundation, Ruth (Babs) Asper, who thought this story contained many lessons to be learned of perseverance and unwavering optimism and who encouraged the publication of this book. Our appreciation goes to her and to our other trustees, David Asper, Leonard Asper, and Richard Leipsic, for believing in us along this long journey that was fraught with many risks. We applaud the trustees for committing over \$20 million to the project and taking on all the development costs for the eight years before the museum was formally established as a national institution.

We thank the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, who believed that we needed a national project, the first outside the capital region, which would stand as a symbol of Canada's commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We owe the creation of Canada's fifth national museum to him. We also thank the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien

for his pivotal support in the beginning and for giving us the opportunity to build on this idea, and the Right Honourable Paul Martin for taking us to the next level of support and encouragement. To all the ministers of Western Economic Diversification and Canadian Heritage and their staff, thank you for over a decade of tireless work, for believing in this project, and for helping make it a reality.

To the premiers of Manitoba, Gary Doer and Greg Selinger, and Mayors Glen Murray and Sam Katz and their staff, who eagerly signed on to this important project, thank you for recognizing the importance in the museum and for investing the necessary funds required to make it happen.

To our small team at the Friends of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, board members, campaign teams, and volunteers across the country, we and Canada owe you our greatest appreciation. To the many thousands of donors from across Canada, whether for the

\$5 sent lovingly with an inspiring note or the many other millions donated, this is your museum. Thanks also to all the various communities that came together to speak with one voice in support of the museum.

To the chairs of the CMHR Board of Trustees, first Arni Thorsteinson and now Eric Hughes, and to the members of the board past and present, thank you for your leadership, courage, and commitment to ensure that all Canadians will regard this as an important investment in their future. And many thanks to Stuart Murray and his team, who have taken on one of the most complex and difficult challenges in museum making.

As we finish this long journey that started over fourteen years ago, we now take great pride in seeing the spectacularly designed Antoine Predock wonder and the brilliant exhibit design work of Ralph Appelbaum and his team as it unfolds.

Finally and most important, we reserve our deepest appreciation for our families—our

spouses, Michael Paterson and Barbara Levy, and our children, Stephen and Jonathan Paterson, and Adam, Samuel, and Sarah Levy—who endured our many absences and who gave us the encouragement over the years to pursue this dream.

We hope that when you read this book and follow the journey, so brilliantly written by Peter C. Newman and Allan Levine, it will serve as an inspiration and acknowledgment that anything is possible when you have passion, persistence, and an outstanding team committed to excellence. As the late Israel Asper noted many times, “Here we are reaching for the stars . . . to create an international architectural icon, a symbol of Canada.”

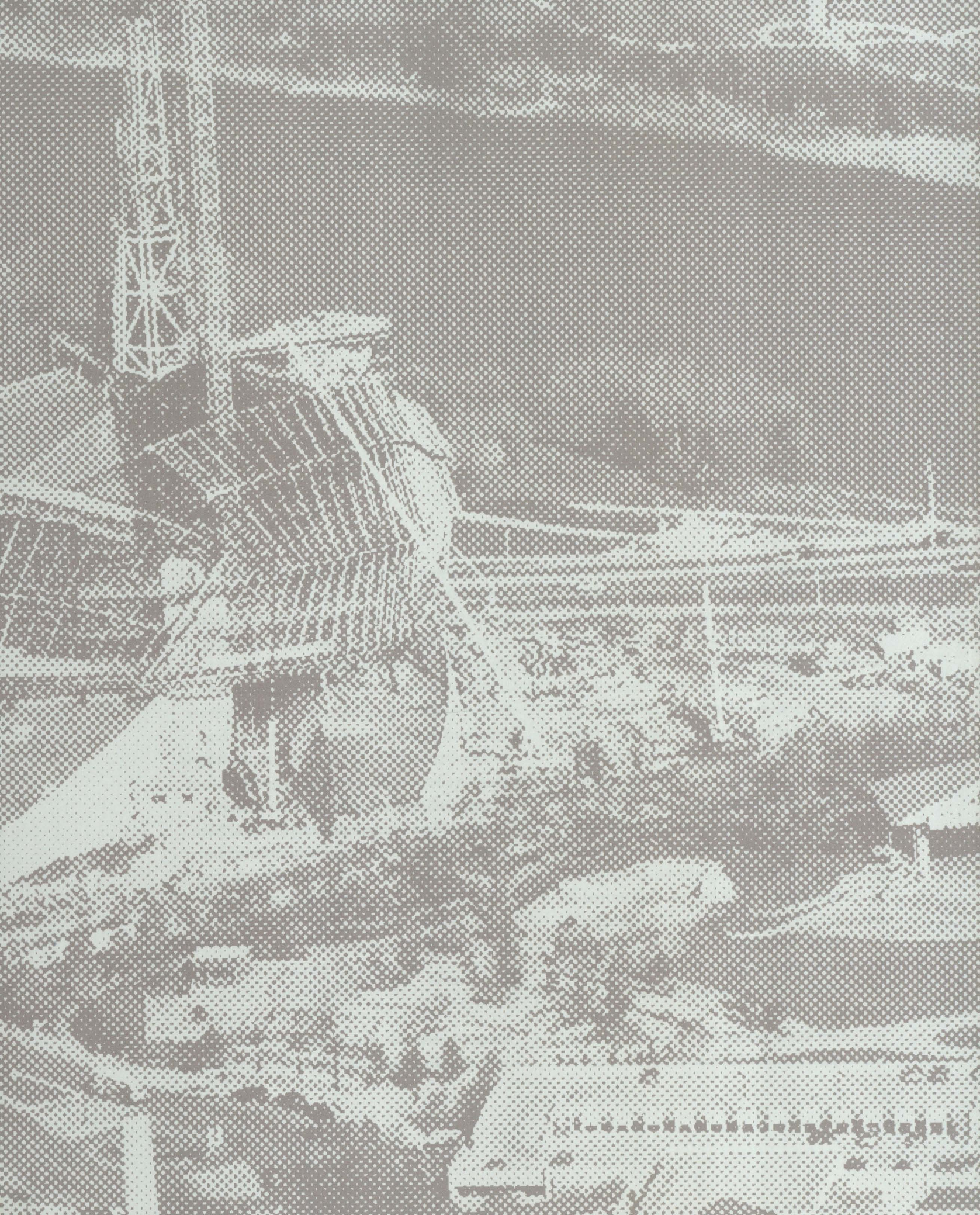
We hope and believe that we have delivered on this dream.

GAIL ASPER, O.C., O.M., LL.D.

President | The Asper Foundation

MOSES (MOE) LEVY

Executive Director | The Asper Foundation



INTRODUCTION

THE KEY TO reading this book is remaining open to discovery. It is designed to replicate the lively journey of a wanderer traversing the wilderness of the Red River's backcountry, and suddenly encountering a palace. The building has no recognizable shape, and seems to be wrapped in candy floss, but it draws the wandering visitor into its vertical embrace through a symbolic "pillar of fire" that pierces the prairie sky. Only at the last moment does the building reveal itself to be the world's first museum for human rights.

Standing among its mighty architectural roots and looking up, you are confronted by the visual impact of the structure's elephant-sized reality, located at the forks of two mighty rivers in the heart of Manitoba. Designed to astonish any visitor who expects to see the usual stuffy, square silhouette of a museum, its awesome dimensions hypnotize. This promises to be a unique institution for which there are no comparables. It is, quite simply, a dramatic architectural statement equal in originality to Australia's famed Sydney Opera House.

Its architecture expresses the commonality of mankind—a symbolic apparition of ice, clouds, and stone set squarely in a place where Aborigines have walked, talked, and traded for an estimated six thousand years.

Journalist Dan Lett accurately summed up the museum's key puzzle in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on December 24, 2011, by asking, "Whenever it finally opens, will one of the museum's displays be as compelling as the story of how it got built?" Most people won't have a problem agreeing with Lett's observation.

The lofty mission of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) is to place the issue of human rights under pressure—their past (to learn lessons); their present (to monitor progress); and their future (to resolve tensions between reform and inaction). According to its guiding principles, the CMHR also

aspires to offer its visitors an inspiring encounter with human rights while exceeding Canadians'



top The museum pierces the prairie sky and can be seen far and wide across the city.

above Israel and Babs Asper each devoted the last years of their lives to the dream of the CMHR.

expectations for balance, transparency, sound business practices and meaningful public consultation; fosters an appreciation for the importance of human rights, spurs informed dialogue and invites participants to identify the contemporary relevance of past and present human rights events, both at home and abroad; the museum exemplifies Canadians' commitment to freedom and democracy and aims to ignite an informed, ever-evolving global conversation; provides a safe and engaging space to cultivate respect, gratitude, understanding and ongoing improvement of this human rights inheritance... [and] connects its visitors with opportunities to explore the global development of human rights concepts and Canada's important role within it.

Such is the narrative arc of this amazing undertaking: how to discover and disseminate the notion of living and acting according to