

# IS CHICAGO "MERELY" HISTORY? ROBERT MCANULTY

CHICAGO IS FACILE PRINCEPS [HANDS DOWN], THE CITY OF INDIFFERENCE. NOBODY CARES ABOUT ANYTHING. ITS NOMINAL MOTTO IS "I WILL!" ITS ACTUAL SHIBBOLETH "I WON'T," WITH THE SUBSCRIPTION, "NOT HOW GOOD BUT HOW CHEAP IS THE DEED." POVERTY OF HEART, MIND, AND SYMPATHY ARE HERE CONJOINED. AND THEY GLORY IN THE CONJUNCTION.<sup>1</sup> –LOUIS H. SULLIVAN, ARCHITECT

In this city of broad shoulders,<sup>2</sup> seldom do we acknowledge the full burden of Louis Sullivan's disillusioned bitterness. The slogan of Sullivan's archenemy, the entrepreneur Daniel Burnham, "Make no little plans," is the "I WILL!" order of the day here in the central time zone.<sup>3</sup> Yet this obscure quote from an embittered Louis Sullivan resonates with many of today's architects and designers whose emerging practices will one day re-shape the city's landscape. More often than ever, they are being asked to develop proposals for public projects, only to be told that their work is too conceptual, too unbuildable, too "diagrammatic,"<sup>4</sup> or, most (morally) devastating of all, not "socially responsible."<sup>5</sup> Our resident architecture journalist/moralist rarely recognizes these emerging practices and never tires of criticizing the post-emergent