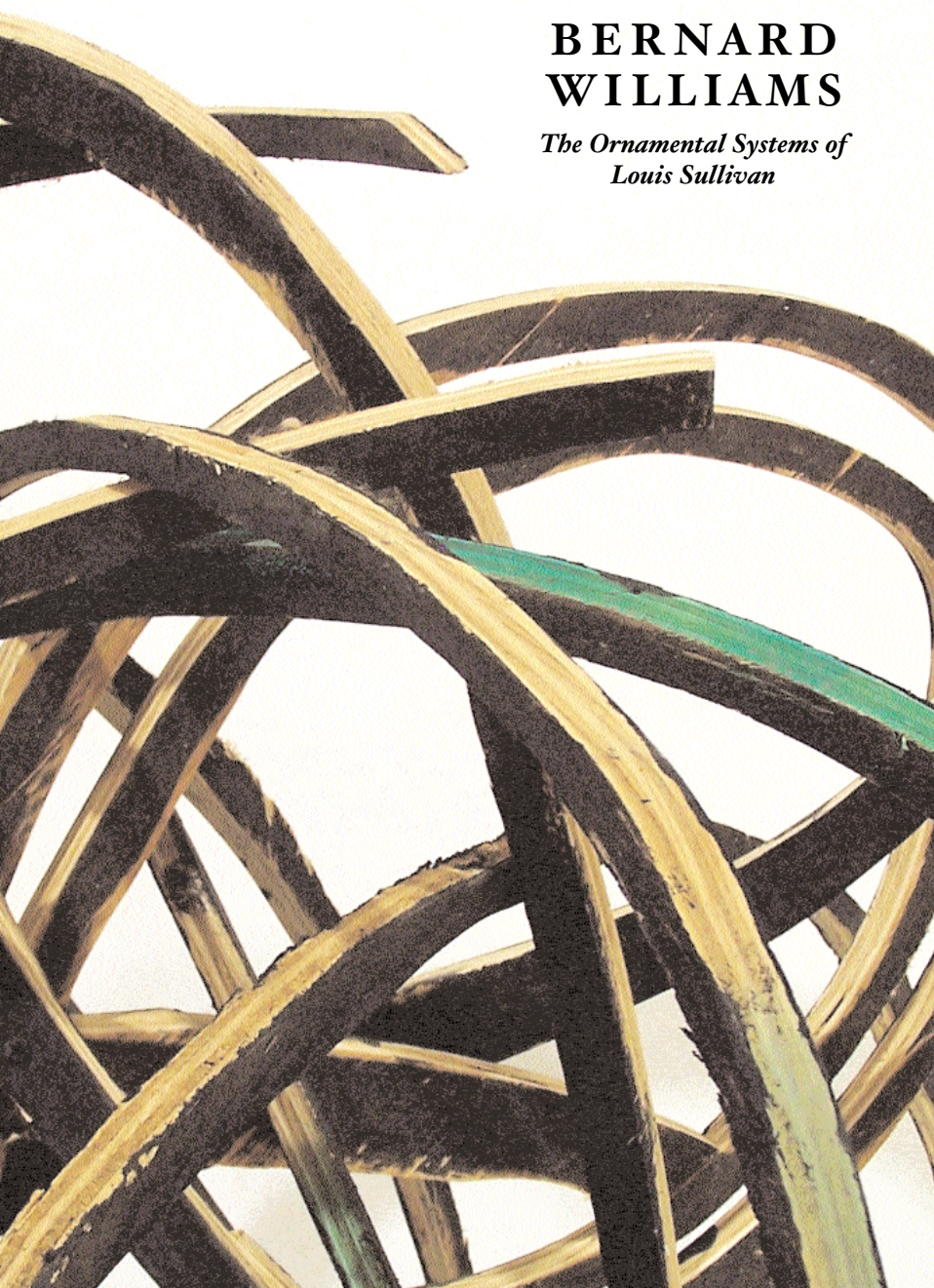


BERNARD WILLIAMS

*The Ornamental Systems of
Louis Sullivan*



The Ornamental Systems of Louis Sullivan at the Hyde Park Art Center presents a exhilarating moment of growth in the work of Chicago-based artist Bernard Williams. For the first time, Williams has created a series of sculptures and drawings that reconfigure well-known architectural embellishments into freestanding sculptures in-the-round. These careful arrangements of organic patterns and bold lines salvaged from local buildings are totems of American cultural heritage. While remaining true to his focus on ethnographic and historical exploration, Williams has found a new visual source to mine for emblems of collective identity—urban architecture.

Chicago has a global reputation for its innovative buildings. Bernard Williams not only looks to the designs and philosophies of Louis Sullivan for civic substance, he also references the many other architectural pioneers that have left their mark on the city's psyche, such as Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright and Frank Gehry. The following essay by Daniel Schulman gives context to the artist's fascination with Sullivan and the modernist aesthetic.

The Hyde Park Art Center has been invested in exhibiting experimental art by Chicago artists for over 65 years. Presenting solo exhibition opportunities to artists on the cusp of a conceptual, stylistic, material or technological breakthrough in their art practice allows the Art Center to

fill the much-needed role of the institution as an art laboratory. Along with exhibiting contemporary art, the Art Center provides art instruction at all levels and champions public access to contemporary art. Williams' experience as a Chicago Public Art Group member, an art educator for the Chicago Public Schools, and a nationally exhibited artist inform his notions of public art, public space and community preservation. Both through this exhibition and the concurrent exhibition of his outdoor sculpture at the Evanston Art Center (Summer 2005 – Spring 2006), Williams has been able to expand the scale of his work and revise the vocabulary of symbols he uses while reaching a larger audience.

The Art Center thanks Michael and Sandra Perlow for their generosity in supporting the exhibition and catalogue of Bernard Williams. Our gratitude also goes to Daniel Schulman, Tim Samuelson, Tom Van Eynde, and JNL Graphic Design for lending their knowledge and professional expertise that has made the entire project a success.

Allison Peters
Director of Exhibitions

BERNARD WILLIAMS

The Ornamental Systems of Louis Sullivan

AUGUST 28 – OCTOBER 6, 2005

Presented with generous assistance from
Michael and Sandra Perlow

COVER
Untitled #7, 2005, acrylic on wood, 48 x 48 x 48"

FOLLOWING PAGE
Untitled, 2005, acrylic on wood, 8 x 12 x 4"

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**
5307 S. Hyde Park Blvd., Chicago, IL 60615
hydeparkart.org



BERNARD WILLIAMS: *Reclaiming Louis Sullivan*

BY DANIEL SCHULMAN

Intellectually curious and technically fearless, Bernard Williams is driven by the desire to gain a better grasp of both collective and individual identity. Drawing on a vast repertory of forms, signs, and symbols, Williams has devoted his artistic career to probing the complexities of American history and culture.

As an artist who has in previous work explored the sweeping cultural and historical matrix of the West—the western hemisphere, the United States as whole, and the idea of the West in American culture—it might seem strange to see Williams focus his interest on a single figure, such as the renowned architect Louis Sullivan. But for Williams, part of what makes history interesting lies in its connections to communities and individuals in the here and now. To Williams' mind, history is local; and few figures have affected the civic landscape of Chicago to the degree that Sullivan has. Perhaps no Chicago architect has had a greater

influence on modernist architectural theory and practice. Williams also has a special gift for unearthing the most overlooked, enigmatic, and esoteric products and symbols of our past. The tragic and mythic side to Louis Sullivan's reputation may have equally elicited Williams' fascination.

Born in Boston in 1856, Sullivan came to Chicago in 1875 after brief study in Paris at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, and in Philadelphia, with the eccentric architect Frank Furness. In partnership with Dankmar Adler, he produced the Auditorium Building (1886-90), the

Chicago Stock Exchange (1893-94, demolished 1972), and extraordinary buildings in St. Louis and Buffalo, the Wainwright (1890-92) and Guaranty (1894-96), which established a model for modernist skyscraper design of the twentieth century. Sullivan broke decisively with the practice of his peers when he rejected the use of historicizing styles to adorn steel frame tall buildings. Instead, he developed an idiosyncratic system of ornament, based on a marriage of geometry and forms derived from nature, which he used expressively in the stead of the classical orders or gothic stylistic motifs. Sullivan's most recognized building today,

ABOVE
Buffalo Soldier #9, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 56 × 72"
Courtesy of G.R. N'Namdi Gallery

AT RIGHT
Untitled #5, 2005, acrylic on wood, 21.5 × 29.5 × 11"



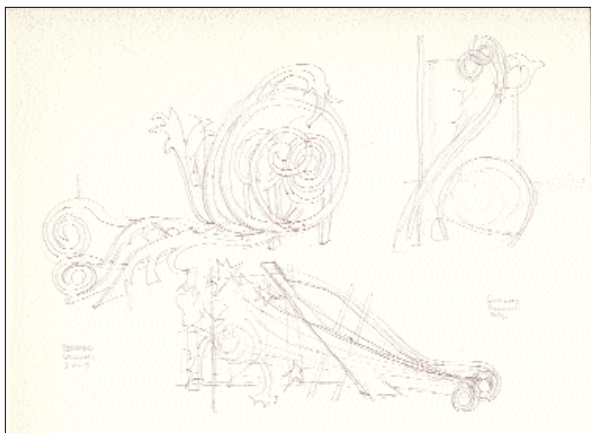
the Carson Pirie Scott Store (1899) on the corner of State and Madison, is a perfect example of the architect's use of lush and exuberant ornamental ironwork to complement the geometric clarity of the façade.

Scholars and critics have long found it a challenge to reconcile the contradictions in Sullivan's work—particularly that of his celebrated utilitarian or rationalist dictum, "form follows function," with his reliance on opulent ornament. Referred to as the "prophet of modern architecture," he has been thought of as a kind of Moses of design—the teacher of Frank Lloyd Wright, who never quite reached the "promised land" of modernism. Adding to the quality of tragic myth and mystery that hovers around his reputation is the fact that Sullivan ended his career impoverished and alone, forgotten by the public and misunderstood by his peers.

Sullivan, whose work is most often seen today in fragmentary form in museum collections—one thinks of the decorative elevator door grills or disembodied stair railings salvaged from the demolished Chicago Stock Exchange Building—remains an enigmatic, contradictory figure. His brilliant marriage of exuberant and original ornament with rationalist structure is truly lost to us. And that makes it of interest to Bernard Williams.

The sculptures in the exhibition inspired by Sullivan's designs for ornament are full of surprises and novel juxtapositions. Interestingly, some of Williams' pieces refer to roots of modern sculpture, resembling the geometric and modular works (also in wood) by Russian constructivist Alexander Rodchenko. Others bring to mind the bristling shapes of Italian futurists Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla. The appearance of unforeseen but ultimately sensible cognates with early modernist masters occurs in other works by Williams—such as the similarities between Williams' Buffalo Soldiers and black cowboys with Marsden Hartley's boldly painted figures of wrestlers and fisher folk from the Northeastern provinces of Canada. Williams' work has aptly been termed a kind of archaeology. Yet it is the most creative kind of recovery, in which symbols and myths of the past are re-imagined and given new life and currency.

— Daniel Schulman is a writer and art historian who lives in Chicago



ABOVE

From the *Sullivan Studies*, 2003, ink on paper, 9 x 12"
 From the *Sullivan Studies*, 2003, ink on paper, 8 x 10"

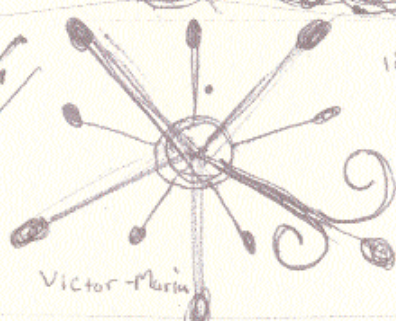
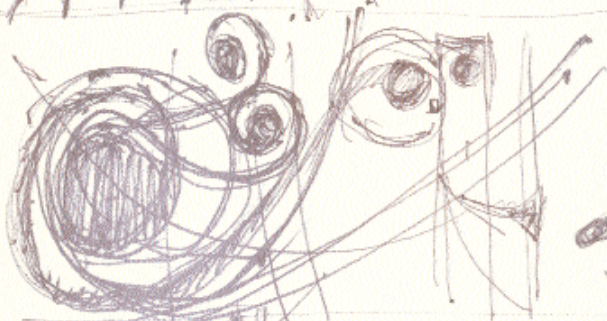
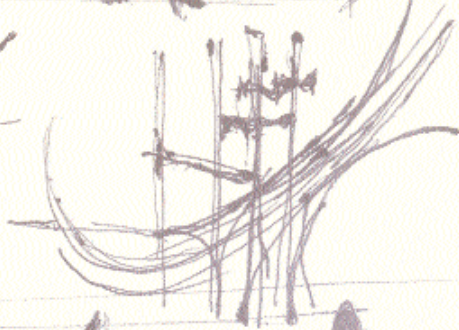
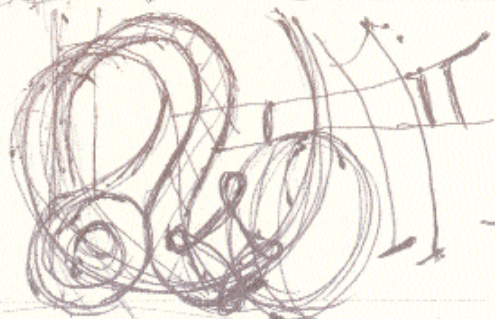
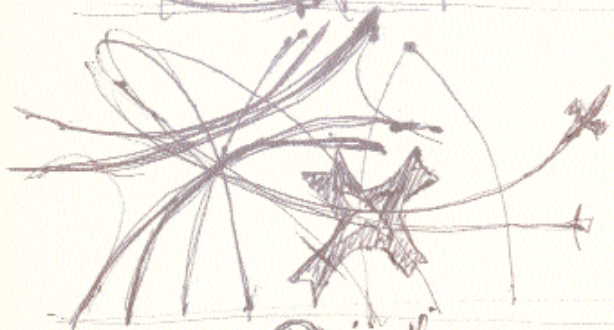
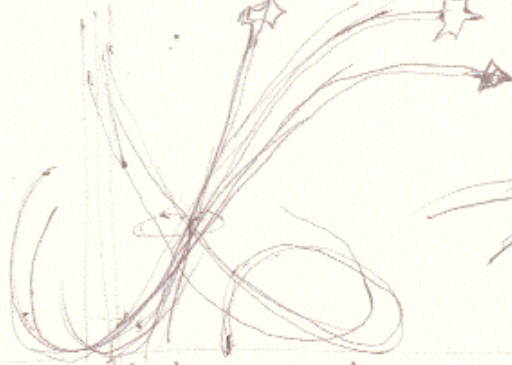
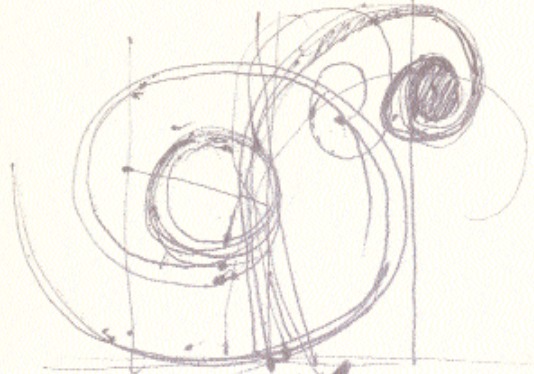
AT RIGHT

Untitled, 2005, acrylic on wood, ? x ? x ?"

FOLLOWING PAGE

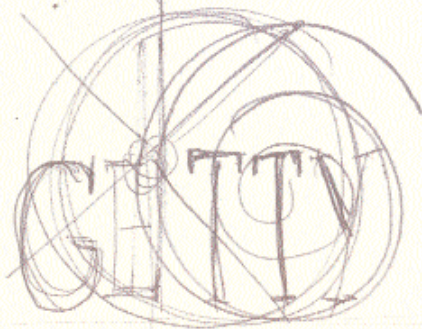
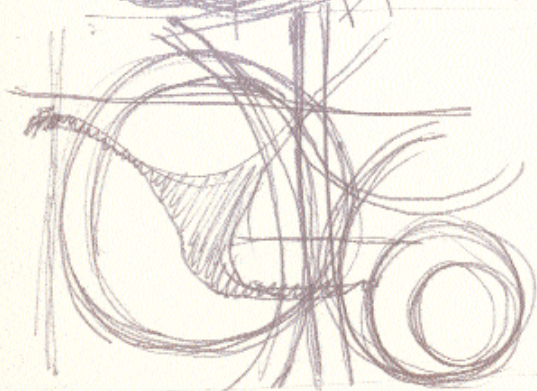
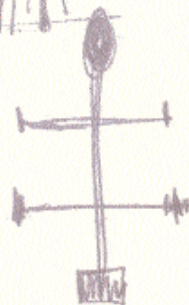
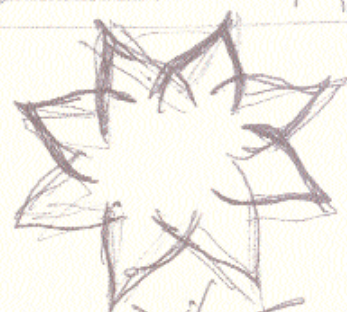
From the *Sullivan Studies*, 2004, ink on paper, 8 x 10"



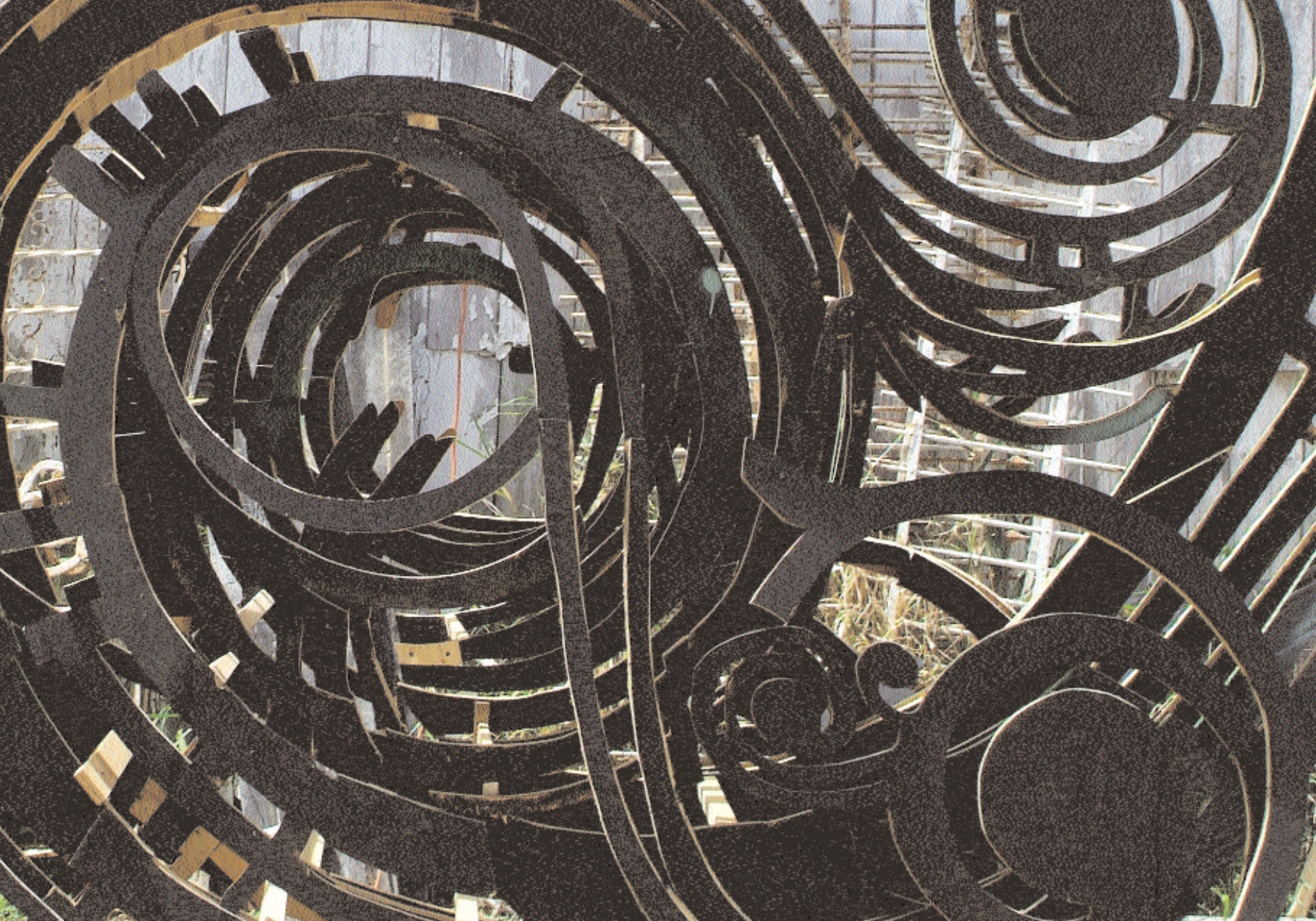


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Victor-Maria



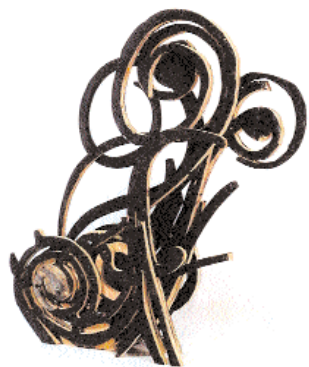
BERNARD
WILLIAMS





Schlesinger Myer #1
2004, acrylic on wood, 30 × 28 × 17"

Untitled #6
2005, acrylic on wood, 22 × 14 × 20"



Untitled #3
2005, acrylic on wood, 15 × 15 × 13"

McVickers
2004, acrylic on wood, 25.5 × 26 × 5.5"



McVickers Rebuilt
2004, acrylic on wood, 21 × 29 × 11"

Untitled #2
2005, acrylic on wood, 27 × 30 × 26"



Schlesinger Myer #2
2004, acrylic on wood, 24 × 46 × 11"

Untitled #1
2005, acrylic on wood, 14.5 × 16.5 × 6"



BERNARD WILLIAMS



EDUCATION

Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois
MFA, 1990
University of Illinois
Champaign-Urbana, Illinois BFA, 1988

WORK EXPERIENCE

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Instructor: Mural painting, 2002 - 2003
2-D drawing 1990 - 1998
Chicago Public Art Group (CPAG)
Muralist, mural restoration 1992- Present

GALLERY REPRESENTATION

George N'Namdi Gallery, Detroit, MI
Ethan Cohen Fine Arts, New York, NY

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

Residency, Fine Arts Workshop Center,
Provincetown, MA (Oct.-May 2003-2004)
Grant Recipient, Illinois Arts Council,
\$7,000. Award 2003
Cortland College, Cortland, NY, 2002
Grant Recipient, The Art Council,
San Francisco, CA \$10,000. Award, 2001
Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS, 1999, 2000
Seagram's Gin Cash Award, 1996
The Atlantic Center for the Arts, Florida, 1990
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
Skowhegan, Maine, 1987

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL
Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, IN
Snite Museum of Art, Notre Dame Univ.
South Bend, IN
South Shore Bank, 1999
Cook County Hospital, 2002

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

2005

(September) Solo Exhibition, sculpture and wall installation,
Chapman University, Orange, CA
The Ornamental Systems of Louis Sullivan, new sculpture,
Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
Legendary Tales, solo exhibition, G.R. N'Namdi Gallery,
Chicago, IL
Art LA, Exhibiting with Ethan Cohen Fine Arts, NYC,
Los Angeles, CA
A War Like People, group show, curator Lara Taubman,
Phoenix, AZ

2004

Solo Show, Painting and Sculpture, I SPACE, Chicago, IL
Scope Art Expo (NYC-MIAMI), represented by Ethan
Cohen Fine Arts, New York, NY
Solo Show, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA
Mural Commission, collaboration with students, Indiana
University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne, IN

2003

Installation, Southern Illinois University, Charleston, IL
Solo Show, Fine Arts Center Gallery, Northeastern Illinois
University, Chicago, IL
Mural Restoration Commission, sponsored by The Chicago
Public Art Group, Bank One, Chicago, IL
Mural Commission, Robinson Community Learning Center,
South Bend, IN, sponsored by The Snite Museum at Notre
Dame University

2002

2 person Show, Beyond Stereotype, Dowd Fine Arts Gallery,
SUNY College at Cortland, Cortland, NY
Mural Commission, Robinson Community Learning Center,
South Bend, IN, sponsored by The Snite Museum
Solo Show, African-American Museum in Dallas, TX
(September)
Mural Commission, Jackson Public Schools, Jackson, MS
Group Show, Here and Now, Chicago Cultural Center

2001

Solo Show, The Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS
Publication, *New American Painting*, Vol. 35, A Juried
Exhibition in Print, Wellesley, Massachusetts
Solo Show, G. R. N'Namdi Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan
Solo Show, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL (June 2001)

2001

2 person show, 2 *Views*, at Visual Arts Gallery, University of
Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL
Group Show, *Southern Roots - Artists with Alabama Ties*,
Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, AL
Group Show, *Emblem and Sequence in Contemporary Art*,
Creative Arts Workshop, New Haven, CT

2000

Mural Commission, collaboration with students at Earle
Elementary School
Mural Commission, collaboration with youth at Center For
New Horizons, Ida B. Wells Housing Project
Group Show/Traveling, *Our New Day Begun, African-
American Artists Entering the Millennium* (LBJ Library-
Museum in Austin, African-American Museum in Dallas,
Texas Southern Univ. in Houston), catalog
Solo Show, *Charting America*, 10 Paintings at Christ
College/Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN

1999

Travel to Salvador-Bahia, Brazil for Latin American Cultural
Festival
Travel to Paris and London, 2 weeks, summer
Mural Commission, collaboration with students at Noble
Elementary School (5'1" x 14'0" mural)
Solo Show, Columbia College, Hokin Center Art Gallery,
Chicago, IL
Solo Show, *Charting America*, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago,
IL

1998

Group Show and Cultural Exchange Project, Talleria
Espacio, Mexico City, Mexico
Mural Commission, Visitation School, Sponsored by GATX
and CPAG
Mural Restoration, Meat Packers Mural Charles, Hayes
Family Investment Center, CPAG
Group Show, *Semantic Images*, Prairie State College, Chicago
Heights, IL



Untitled #7, 2005, acrylic on wood, 48 x 48 x 48"

Bernard Williams:
The Ornamental Systems of Louis Sullivan
 August 28 – October 6, 2005

**Presented with generous
 assistance from
 Michael and Sandra Pelow**

**Conversation with the Artist:
 Friday, September 16, 6-8 pm
 in the Ruth Horwich Gallery**

Tim Samuelson, Cultural Historian for the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and Bernard Williams will discuss the social values of Sullivan's stylistic forms and reveal examples of the adaptation of these forms in contemporary art and everyday objects.

The Hyde Park Art Center
 5307 S. Hyde Park Blvd.
 Chicago, IL 60615
 773-324-5520
www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; Polk Bros. Foundation; Alphawood Foundation; The Orbit Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Gaylord and Dorothy Foundation; The Woods Fund of Chicago; The Smart Family Foundation; Kraft Foods; Field Foundation of Illinois; The Chicago Community Trust; LaSalle Bank; Regents Park by the Clinton Companies; Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation, and the generosity of its members and individual donors.

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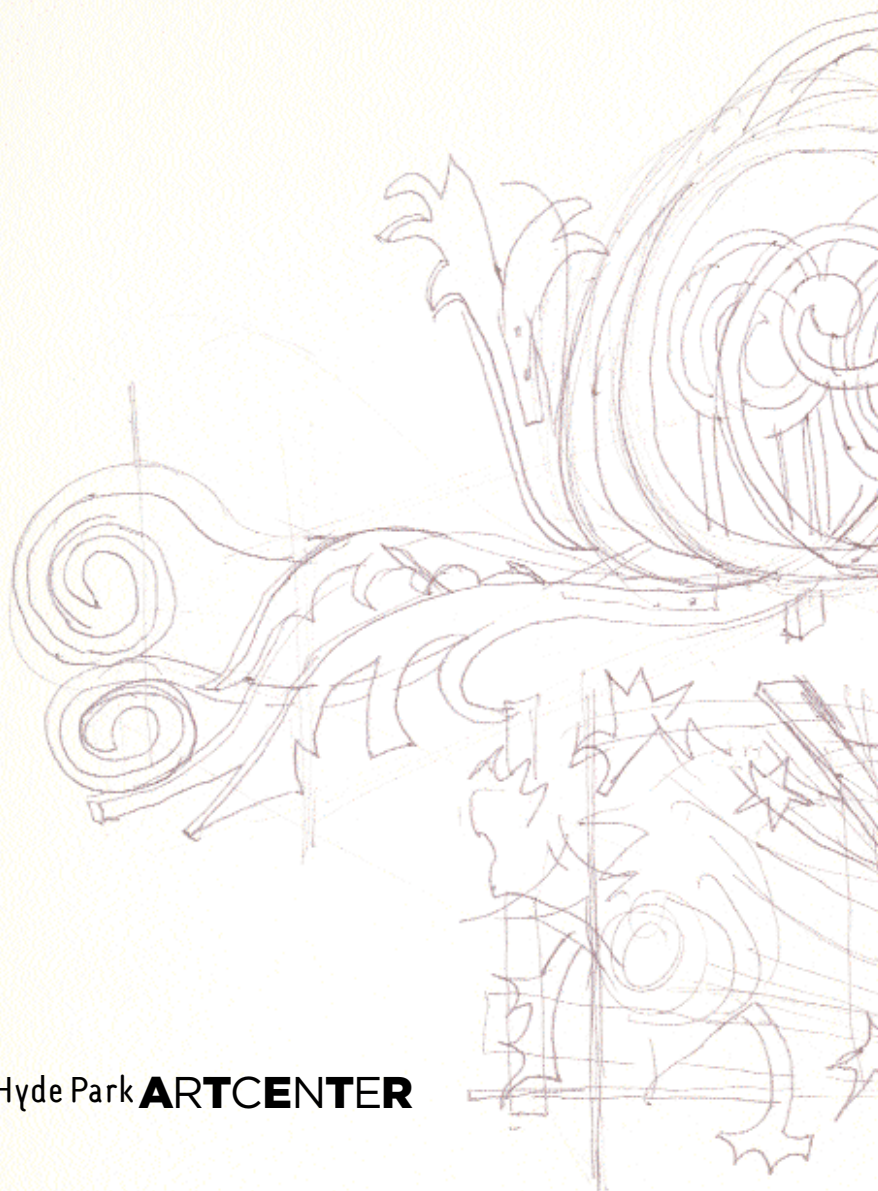
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