

# sculpture

## commissions

MARK REIGELMAN AND JENNY CHAPMAN

*Manifest Destiny!*

San Francisco

Walking down Bush Street in downtown San Francisco, passersby may be surprised to look up and see a wooden cabin jutting from the outer wall of the Hotel des Arts, high above Le Central bistro. The first project created by the "bi-coastal public art collaboration" of Mark Reigelman and Jenny Chapman, *Manifest Destiny!* is scheduled to stay up through the end of October.

Both the artists' working processes and their final product counter-intuitively combine old and new technologies and mind-sets. In *Manifest Destiny!*'s planning stages, Chapman investigated possible sites on her bicycle, while Reigelman perused Google Street View from his home in Brooklyn. As Reigelman points out, "Everything we do is digital; from conversations and sketches, to meetings and site visits...We had so many ways of reaching each other, and used them so frequently, it was hard to believe that there was a country between us." New technologies also play a part in the finished work; solar panels on the roof collect power to light the interior of the cabin at night.

Beyond the unexpected spectacle of a high-rise cabin in San Francisco, *Manifest Destiny!* mounts a subtle investigation into the defining U.S. doctrine behind its name. The siding is salvaged from a barn in Ohio (where both artists are from), and the press release is designed to imitate the style of 19th-century print materials. "We embraced the complexity of the subject matter and found inspiration in both the positive and negative connotations," Reigelman explains. "We are critical of Western exceptionalism, and the arrogance of believing in a god-given right to settle territory despite existing occupants. But at the same time,

Sculpture 31.8

we were inspired by the individual pioneer families who made the daunting journey west...The notion of making that insane journey in hopes of a better life is a very romantic one."

The work also tackles pressing present-day issues. Occupying "one of the last remaining unclaimed spaces in downtown San Francisco," *Manifest Destiny!* represents the housing crisis and rampant homelessness in a state where, only 150 years ago, wilderness prevailed.

