

## jeff carter

### Chicago

Wooden packing crates, motorized so that the lids of the boxes continually undulate in a wavelike pattern, have come to best represent Chicago artist Jeff Carter's investigation into the notion of contemporary tourism, an ongoing concern over the past four years. These cleanly constructed plywood forms, stenciled with black arrows pointing skyward and titled *A Vague Sensation of Paradise*, fold together the psychological, economic, and educational aspects of travel. In Carter's recent exhibition *Landscape*, three of these crates were installed on the floor of the main gallery along with another work called *Earthquake*, a complicated-looking tripod contraption upon which was mounted a Lonely Planet guide to Bali and Lombok. Every ten minutes the book was violently shaken by its aluminum support. Carter also hung *Demon Goggles*, an Indonesian ritual mask with popping eyeballs, high on the wall in the gallery's hallway. He completed the show by mounting a white neon piece near the ceiling in the project room. Entitled *Azimuth (Mecca)*, this suspended, glowing arrow, tucked into the corner of the

seemingly empty and dark room, pointed in the direction of Mecca. Carter has spent a significant amount of his life traveling in the East, and his work reflects the compounded sociological impact that tourism has on an individual. What makes the artist's research into these issues unique is that it positions itself from the traveler's point of view. He does not frame the third world as a victim, nor does he privilege the act of traveling for pleasure as some sort of edifying exercise to obtain cultural enlightenment. Beyond the obvious economic effects of today's tourist industry, Carter is reevaluating the repercussions of distance, time, and memory in a globalized world. These questions tend not to be asked, for tourism depends largely on perpetuating outdated, romantic notions of erudite privilege and alluring exotica. Carter challenges these assumptions with irony, invention, and the occasional humorous gesture.

Michelle Grabner

Jeff Carter *A Vague Sensation of Paradise* (detail), 2001, wood, aluminum, stainless steel, motor, nylon, 109.2 x 104.1 x 66 cm each.

