



# CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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## P R E S S      R E L E A S E

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Payne/PM

### **LESLIE PAYNE: VISIONS OF FLIGHT** at the California Museum of Photography September 7 - October 23, 1991

RIVERSIDE—Through imitation and homemade construction, Leslie J. Payne, a poor black fisherman, reinvented himself as Airplane Payne—the proprietor, manager and pilot of the Airplane Machine Shop Company. Included in this special exhibition, organized for the California Museum of Photography by director Jonathan Green, will be extensive photographic and video documentation of Payne and his airfield as well as his restored biplane, machine shop and tower.

*Leslie Payne: Visions of Flight* captures one man's life-long fascination with aviation. Payne began to make what we call art and he called "imitations" in the 1940s. Based on recollections from a trip in his youth to a 1918 airshow featuring World War I biplanes, he began in the 1960s making large-scale replicas of the planes he saw. He used what he found around him—fabricated sheet metal, canvas, remains of old kitchen appliances—and by the mid 1970s turned his yard into an imitation airstrip, complete with instrument towers, an airplane machine shop, and three or four model aircraft. Although he never left the ground, Payne made a series of fantasy flights with invited passengers from the neighborhood, as documented in flight journals and photographs taken by Payne with his Polaroid. According to Jonathan Green, "The airstrip is simultaneously a vast installation through time, a monumental art work, an environment, a theatrical performance, an extended narrative and a photographic book."

After Payne became ill and moved to a nursing home in the late 1970s, his property was left unattended for nearly 10 years. In 1987, under the direction of Green, a project was initiated to rescue Payne's large scale airplanes from oblivion. Photographs of the abandoned site and Payne at his airfield were taken by James Friedman and Bob Jones Jr., respectively; video works by Patricia Lorenz and Mike Lucas.

The California Museum of Photography is located at 3824 Main Street, on the downtown pedestrian mall in Riverside, California. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 5pm, and Sunday, noon to 5pm. Admission is \$2.00 general, \$1.00 for seniors and students. UCR students and children 12 and under are admitted without charge. In addition, the museum offers free admission every Wednesday. For more information call (714) 784-FOTO.