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What would we see if we adopted God's perspective on the world? Photographer Jeffrey Milstein, 71, has a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of California at Berkeley and is fascinated by aerial views. Flying and photography are the two pillars of Milstein's life.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF LA & NY



當空拍地景化為文明織錦

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PHOTOS / JEFFREY MILSTEIN
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About the Artist —



Jeffrey Milstein's aerial photography focuses on the two most important cities in his life, Los Angeles and New York, to highlight urban geometry and human activities.

攝影藝術家 Jeffrey Milstein 以超越常人的上帝視角來欣賞城市的豐富地貌，並以人生中 2 個重要的城市洛杉磯與紐約為題，展示城市由建築與人類生活軌跡所累積的幾何地景。

On his 17th birthday, Milsten received his pilot's license after spending every Sunday training at Santa Monica Airport. He then flew across the Los Angeles Basin while making an 8mm film of the terrain below.

At the University of California at Berkeley, he earned a bachelor's degree in architecture but remained a committed photographer. He went on to found his own company, Paper House Productions, which steadily grew to employ over 700

people in the late 1990s. In 2000, Milsten sold his company to focus solely on photography.

Milstein took action photos of aircraft as they took off and landed at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). A total of 34 of his works were featured as part of a year-long photography exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

"The miracle of flight is surely the greatest invention in the history of humanity," he said.

His aerial works focus on the two most important cities in his life: Los Angeles and New York. From helicopters hovering 1,000ft to 2,000ft above the cities, he took photos of the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, cargo ports, airport ramps, train stations, and amusement parks, highlighting the urban geometry and human activity. By presenting this unusual perspective, his works inspire people to think about the tremendous impact human activities have on the environment.

「人類一思考，上帝便發笑。」若由上帝的視角俯瞰世界，會是怎樣的景象？畢業於加州大學建築系的 71 歲攝影藝術家 Jeffrey Milstein，因為建築專業背景而精於透視圖的描繪，並對「從上往下看東西」之舉深感著迷，對於熱愛創作的他而言，飛行與藝術，成為串連他生命的 2 大核心元素。

一切是怎麼開始的呢？故事必須從 Milstein 在洛杉磯成長、學習飛行的青少年時期，大學畢業後移居紐約、展開建築與藝術創作生涯的日子說起。歷經青少年時每週日在聖塔莫尼卡機場的飛行課程，Milstein 在 17 歲生日取得了飛行執照，他飛越了洛杉磯盆地，從空中拍攝 8 釐米影片，那股騰空凌越世間萬物、旅程自眼下無盡延伸的感受，帶領他的人生向捕捉精采壯觀的豐美地景前行。

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“Cities are mankind’s greatest collective achievements — where our hopes, dreams, and ambitions live or die. They show both the image and reality of the American Dream. One can read a lot about our culture from the visuals. Only from the air can you experience this unseen and unexpected beauty.”

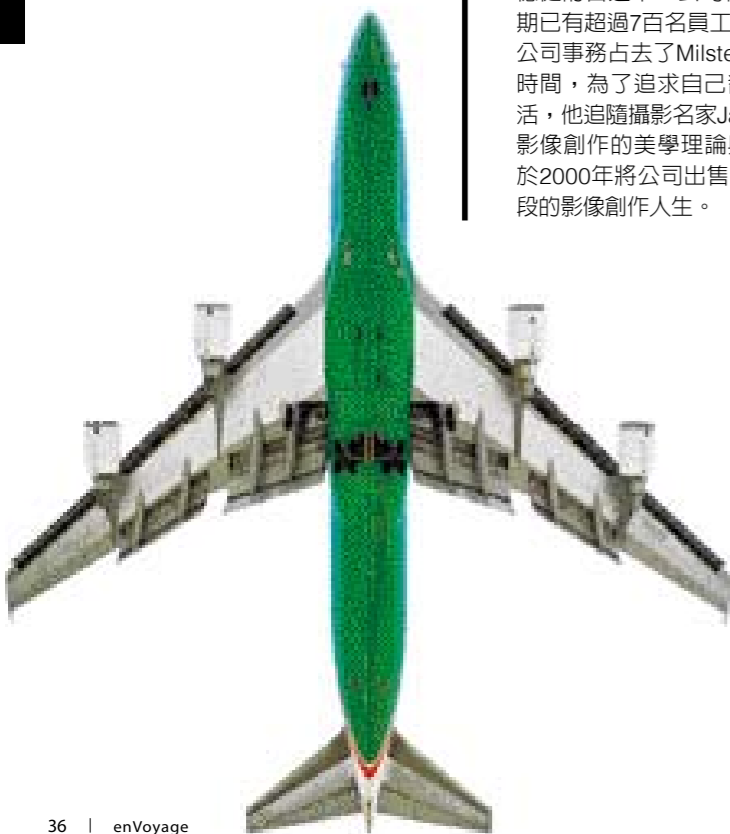
When shooting, Milstein looks for perpendicular lines and symmetrical patterns, requiring the helicopter pilot to maneuver extensively to find an ideal shoot location. Constantly changing lighting conditions add an extra layer of complexity to aerial photography.

As to post-production, Milstein said, “I don’t normally use Photoshop to alter content. I do use it to rotate, crop, and adjust for perspective as needed to create the flat symmetrical artistic palette that I like.”

隨後他離開洛杉磯，前往加州大學柏克萊分校攻讀建築學位。就學期間，一位教授鼓勵他拿起相機創作，而在多年以後，攝影成了這名建築人理性思維下的創意媒介。

完成建築學業後，Milstein於1980年代中期設計了一套建築卡片，這套卡片的暢銷讓他創立了Paper House Productions公司，在穩健的營運下，公司在1990年代晚期已有超過7百名員工的規模。主理公司事務占去了Milstein絕大多數的時間，為了追求自己嚮往的創意生活，他追隨攝影名家Jay Maisel學習影像創作的美學理論與技巧，而後於2000年將公司出售，展開全新階段的影像創作人生。

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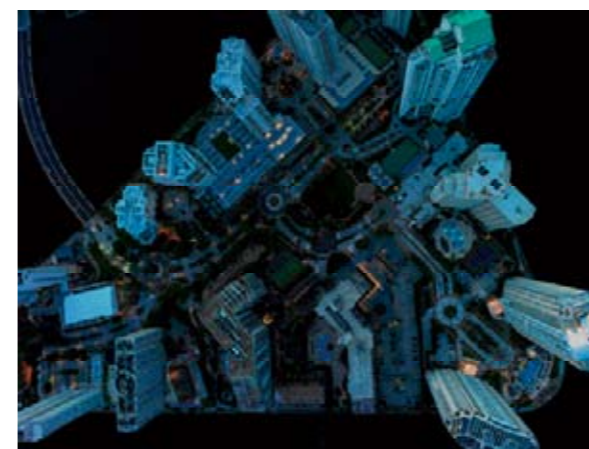
「飛行的奇蹟，絕對是人類歷史上最偉大的發明。」出於對「航空學」的興趣，Milstein掌握班機降落洛杉磯國際機場的最佳時機，仰拍各家航空公司客機的形體，美國Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum曾舉辦為期一年的客機攝影展，展出34件Milstein所拍攝的作品。幾年後，當Milstein在藝術展覽上看到幾件以紐約高樓夜景為主題的作品時，激發了他自高空俯拍的創作慾望。

走遍世界、看盡雄偉建築的Milstein，靈光一閃尋思：「身居繁忙都會的人們，如何想像自我生活的城市全貌？」於是決定換個視角，以超越常人的上帝視角來欣賞城市的豐富地貌，並以人生中兩個重要的城市洛杉磯與紐約為題，將鏡頭對準紐約和洛杉磯的市容，搭乘直升機從1千至2千英尺的高度，拍攝俯瞰自由女神像、紐約帝國大廈、長島貨運碼頭、機場停機坪、火車站、遊樂場與城市各個不同角落的景觀照片，展示城市由建築與人類生活軌跡所累積的幾何地景，不僅讓人們得以一窺「看不見的城市」，也傳遞了人類活動對於環境造成巨大影響的深度思考。

當曙光乍現時，Milstein搭乘直升機自空中捕捉紐約與洛杉磯的地景，至今累積了無數商業區住宅與摩天大樓、貨櫃碼頭、機場與高速公路運輸網的影像作品，從藍領階級的住宅區到依隨都市開發而生的重劃區，建築景觀的差異都可視為時代的切片，而機場的照片中可見地面如同大型繪畫般的精準標示，是為了確保班機起降的安全無虞。「城市的建設是人類最偉大的集體成就，寄寓了您我的希望、夢想與野心，展示了美國夢的形象與現實。您可以從這些圖中讀取許多文化層面的訊息。唯有自空中俯瞰，您才得以感受這些看不見、無法預期之美。」

為了呈現「垂直正下」的最佳構圖，Milstein總是要求直升機駕駛「急轉彎」，而為了尋找正確的拍攝定點以完美地按下快門，直升機也需要不斷地在空中來回飛行，最佳的光線狀態更是稍縱即逝。至於影像畫面最終的視覺呈現，Milstein表示：「我不會透過後製改變影像的元素，我使用Photoshop軟體來旋轉、裁切畫面、校正透視，創造出看來平直而對稱的圖像效果。」

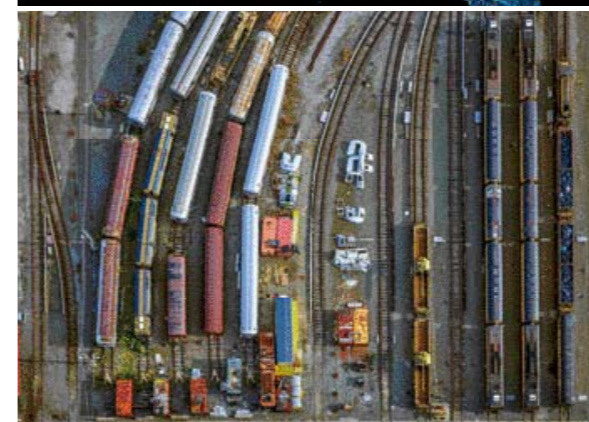
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