

KASHYA HILDEBRAND GALLERY

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Justine Cooper: *SAVED BY SCIENCE*

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Australian artist, Justine Cooper premieres her recent series of large format photographs and video. Over the course of a year she captured the behind the scenes storage areas of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Using a vintage wood 4x5 camera, Cooper shares rare glimpses into their massive housed collections and reveals a trail of scientific desire that reaches back into the 19th century and across the 4 corners of the Earth.

Sheer optical exuberance surfaces from a set of *Graphium sarpedon* butterflies. In the Victorian attic a group of donated ex-Barnum & Bailey, Ringling Brothers Circus seals, swathed in plastic wrap, await their departure to climate-controlled storage. The 21st century liquid nitrogen cooled frozen tissue collection holds a million specimens in a room the size of a studio apartment. Immense corridors of locked steel storage cabinets most powerfully express the veil of structure dropped over the complexity of nature.

Cooper deftly wended her way from basement to attic, peering into thousands of vats, drawers, corners and cupboards along the way to produce this vivid series of photographs. Her access was unprecedented as the first and only artist-in-residence at the Museum in its almost 150 year history.

The artist was born in Sydney. She lives and works in New York. Cooper's artwork investigates the intersections between culture, science and medicine. She is best known for incorporating medical imaging technologies such as MRI, DNA sequencing, Ultrasound and SEM into her projects.

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