



## PARADISE FOUND

**Jennifer Bennett**

WHAT you see on display at the Australian Museum is not even a 10th of what it holds in its basement.

For every roaring dinosaur skeleton or lump of crystal, there are dozens more specimens in the depths.

Artist Silke Raetze has spent the past few months in close company with some of the museum's hidden treasures and the results are about to go on display as part of the "Rituals of Seduction: Birds of Paradise" exhibition.

Raetze, 35, has for years sketched the displays at the museum, but eventually decided she wanted to take a closer look at what it held.

A request for more access

over a three-month period saw her invited behind the scenes, spending a day a week in the basement with the specimens as part of the museum's first artist's residency.

"They asked me what area I was interested in, and at that point I'd done a lot of dragonfly and butterfly wings, and I wanted to keep looking at wings," she said.

"They said, 'Well, we have this show coming up called Birds of Paradise, would that do?', and of all the birds they're the most spectacular, so I said yes.

**Birds of Paradise runs from April 9 to August 7**