

# Art

## Reviews

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### Philippe Gronon

★★★★★

**Yossi Milo Gallery**, through July 11  
(see Chelsea)

In his U.S. solo debut, French photographer Philippe Gronon presents a cool front. His photos of wall safes, library card catalogs and elevator doors, enlarged to actual size, cover the gallery like so many depthless facades. Treated with a matter-of-fact approach and an extreme fidelity to detail, each item is transformed into a shiny surface that, however seductive to the eye, resists deeper penetration.

This approach underscores the thread linking seemingly disparate subjects: They're all spaces to which access is denied. While this may seem more true of safes stuffed with jewels, for example, than for card catalogs, Gronon's images suggest that they are all ultimately open only to the initiated.

The nature of the places in which



he's taken the photos drives his point home: The catalog belongs to the Vatican Library in Rome, and is organized under an unfathomable system of headings that includes "Cardinali," "Poesie Anonime" and "Alas..." The elevators are in the Lyceum Kennedy, an international school in midtown, and in the gallery's own building in Chelsea. This unlikely constellation suggests that material, religious and cultural riches are all highly guarded domains. It also serves to illuminate Gronon's true inquiry, namely regarding the status of the photographic image as an archive for hidden knowledge. —*Nuit Banai*

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## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### PHILIPPE GRONON

The French photographer's American debut consists of eight pieces: pictures of two elevator doors, a card catalogue, and five vintage wall safes. Reproduced to scale and presented unframed, the images have a suave trompe-l'oeil quality—the safes look like they were installed in the gallery—underscored by Gronon's attention to design and a fetish for patina. Although the card catalogue is from the Vatican Library, it's less intriguing than the scratched and battered service-elevator door from one of Chelsea's biggest art warrens, the conveyance of so many inflated egos and dashed hopes. Through July 11. (Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)