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Gelatin silver print, 20 × 16 inches

Courtesy Julie Saul Gallery, New York



The photographs Sally Gall created in Brazil and Hawaii bring together gardens and bodies of water—two subjects she has investigated on an ongoing basis. In *Rio Botanical Garden #3* the artist captures in remarkable detail the many textures found in nature. Gall creates exceptionally rich tonal contrasts through a dense patterning of shadow and light. From the partial shade of the foreground, an arching limb and stone **balustrade** create an arc, highlighting the space beyond where a pool of light descends, drawing the eye into the background. As depicted by Gall, the garden is a beautiful dream, bathed in an ethereal glow and suspended in time; even the fountain stream—underscoring her ongoing interest in water—appears frozen in mid-air. Man-made structures wear their coverings of vines, moss, and foliage comfortably, suggesting harmony rather than **entropy**. Yet paradise is presented at arm's length. In *Rio #3* and in *Rio Botanical Garden #1*, the viewer is prevented from entering the composition; in the former, by the balustrade closing off the foreground; in the latter, by the surface of the murky lake. The artificiality of this paradise is implied only by the distant edge of the shore, too highly groomed to be natural. In this photograph, Gall exploits the reflective quality of water to create a masterful image in which the garden and the brilliant light illuminating it meld together.