

Photography

Nether-Netherland

Until four years ago, the landscape photographer **Sally Gall**, a self-described claustrophobe, didn't much care for caves. But she didn't like getting soaked to the bone either, which is why Gall reluctantly followed her husband into a cave when a rainstorm broke out during their hike in the jungles of central Mexico. It was, as it turned out, love at first sight. "While I was inside, I was looking out, and I realized how beautiful it was," Gall recalls. "I took a picture, and when I got back, that was the one that held a lot of possibility." Over the next three years, Gall took her camera deep underneath Belize, Thailand, California, France, and Italy, shooting superlong exposures to make up for lack of light (Gall never uses artificial illumination), which necessitated standing for hours, and "getting really hot, really cold, and really wet." She laughs about it now, but Gall contracted malaria in western Belize: "Being a landscape photographer, I've always rubbed shoulders with nature in a physical way, but everything is more exaggerated in caves." She's since finished her cave series; now the rest of us claustrophobes can see her poetic, hard-won images in comfort at Julie Saul Gallery and in a new book, *Subterranea* (Umbrage Editions; \$45). "Caves are compelling because they're something you don't know," Gall says. "I felt like an explorer—as if I were in places that no one had ever seen—and that is the feeling I was trying to convey." (Through February 22; see "Photography.")



HELLOO UP THERE! Sally Gall's *Pause* (2001), shot in a *cenote* (a limestone sinkhole) in Valladolid, Yucatán.