

JOAN HALL  
**SEA OF HEARTBREAK**

NEWPORT  
ART  
MUSEUM

JOAN HALL  
**SEA OF HEARTBREAK**

**May 19-July 29, 2018**

NEWPORT ART MUSEUM  
76 Bellevue Avenue  
Ilgenfritz Gallery  
Newport, RI 02840  
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Curator: Francine Weiss

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All works courtesy of Joan Hall.  
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Joan Hall, *Algae Bloom*.  
Mixed media/handmade paper  
140"x372"x24".

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*SEA OF HEARTBREAK*

FRANCINE WEISS, PhD, SENIOR CURATOR, NEWPORT ART MUSEUM

Joan Hall's paper-based sculptural installations are complex syntheses of materials and ideas. Joan Hall's love affair with handmade paper began in 1977. Since then, her work has evolved; moving away from printmaking on rectangular sheets of handmade paper, Hall began using free-form shaped papers to create sculptural works into which she incorporates various materials. In essence she has fulfilled her own stated desire to push paper "beyond what paper can do" leading some viewers to ask "Is that really paper?" Combining plastic, metal, glass, and Mylar with paper, Hall's sculptures join rich textures and vibrant colors to create tantalizing constructions that are highly evocative and reminiscent of various natural and manmade forms—undulating currents, algae blooms, coral reefs, and fishing nets.

Hall's mixed-media installations are visually striking and seductive, with an express purpose in mind. "My works use beauty as a means to draw a viewer in and impact him/her in a subversive and emotional way," states Hall. "The works initiate a conversation." Specifically, Hall is interested in highlighting the human footprint on nature, with a particular focus on plastic pollution in the ocean and its consequences. Water is of course essential for our survival. The human body is about seventy-five percent water. Two-thirds of the global economy is derived from activities that involve clean water resources in some way, yet as Hall explains, ten percent of the world's plastic winds up in the ocean. Water pollution ultimately impacts everything and everyone. Non-biodegradable plastic waste "floats indefinitely, circulating the world," Hall reminds us. It also breaks into tiny particles ingested by fish and birds. For "Sea of Heartbreak," Hall's stunning, large-scale works address increases in algae bloom and invasive algae, and refer to the coral reefs that are dying worldwide. Both are the result of increased ocean temperatures caused in part by plastic pollution. According to the artist, the sea surface temperature where she lives on Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, has increased 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit since the 1960s, and new research has revealed that plastic microfibers are in eighty-three percent of water samples worldwide.



With water pollution as a core concern in her artwork, it is only natural that Hall would work in a medium that involves water. Dispersing a range of fibers in water, Hall forms her sculptures using abaca and cotton pulp. She makes large sheets of paper up to 8 x 10 feet using kozo and gampi fibers that are hand beaten. Hall works with overbeaten abaca as a liquid drawing medium. She also employs high-shrinkage flax pulp to coat wires and forms that she fashions from plastic. For some of her sculptural works, Hall creates shapes with overbeaten abaca that is colored with dry pigments and metal fibers that rust in the paper. "The rusted pulps change colors as they dry," describes Hall. "Oftentimes I am not quite sure what they will look like until they dry, much like printmaking where one really does not know what the end result is until it is pulled off the printing plate." The resulting, richly colored layers of paper in her sculptures are meant to evoke the experience of looking down into ocean water.

Hall is drawn to this tension between control and surrender. She has learned to wholeheartedly embrace the unpredictability of her medium and materials. As a title "Sea of Heartbreak" is taken from Don Gibson's country hit from 1961, in which the singer laments a lost love. For Hall, it references the ups and downs in an artist's life and creative process. More broadly, Hall uses the title to point out the harm of plastic pollution to the world's oceans, marine life, and ultimately humankind with all the resulting "heartbreak." And finally, it refers to love and loss as two sides of the same coin—because in order to be heartbroken, one must love something or someone enough to risk being broken. It is a bittersweet realization. When viewing Joan Hall's exquisite installations, one learns that in the many layers of paper, glass, and metal, we will find a vast ocean of meaning, symbolism, and emotion.





WORKS IN PROGRESS--JAMESTOWN STUDIO.

*ART + ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY*

JUDITH TOLNICK CHAMPA, INDEPENDENT CURATOR + WRITER



The “Art + Environmental Advocacy” panel discussion presented on July 6th at the Newport Art Museum was the most enlightening advocacy session I have ever attended. That it was launched and cadenced by the monographic art exhibition that surrounded the panelists in the premier Ilgenfritz Gallery of the Museum -- the creatively buoyant, instructive and admonitory installation by Joan Hall entitled “Sea of Heartbreak” -- was the immediate and tangible reason. This brave art was both the source and reference for a serious-minded discussion of ocean advocacy.

Hall’s suggestively animated artistry was viewed along wide gallery walls and on a shallow circular, centralized platform of glass vessels and solids. These held variegated sands harvested from over 70 beaches nationally and worldwide, the latter, a collaboration with Benny Giguere of Gather Glass Studio called “The Greening of Our Beaches.” Handmade papermaking, blown glass vessels, including glass cast with marine debris, remarkable colorism, the glass and sand, were Hall’s extraordinary means processed to highlight the unravelling of marine life ecosystems, without at all surrendering art to message. How enormously rare this artmaking is, where emotion and intellect combine into a unique modality. With emotional resonance stemming from the visual, Hall’s art stimulates us to understand the highly charged truths about the ailing sea, yet without political assault, without casting us adrift.

For Hall, a longtime sailor, the observant experience of voyaging on the sea is integrated personally and vigorously into an aesthetic for which environmental research and activism are co-expressions. The never diminishing role of pollution from increasingly minute presence of plastics in ocean waters, and their scaliness as they adhere dangerously to keels, the visible algae bloom and coral reefs beset by excessive ocean temperatures—all were part of the experience that propelled Hall’s making and the evidence in the Newport discussion.

Probing questions by RI Public Radio environmental reporter Avory Brookins encouraged the elaboration of expertise from the artist, from the Congressional level via longtime environmental champion and regulatory policy maker Rhode Island Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, as well as from the local Save the Bay voice of Executive Director Jonathan Stone, a committed environmental educator who has steered Narragansett Bay protections and habitat restorations through legislative victories. Each expert earnestly addressed the successes and persistent challenges in their environmental advocacy and stewardship.

The panel discussion, by being set within the generative and complementary ambience of Joan Hall's exhibition, was crystallized exceptionally. Here, the Senator's relentless work against the machinations of the fossil fuel industry and climate change deniers, and Stone's work as a public educator, could be understood in context, and in depth. What a programmatic model the evening was. Newport provided the Ocean State an outstanding example of art's intensity and uniquely potent role in environmental advocacy.



*ARTIST STATEMENT*

My work reflects my passion for the ocean environment in expansive works and installations. Process and material exploration are a major part of my studio practice. Information on climate change and scientific data are points of departure for my creative works. My art addresses the crisis of today: one of changing climates and changing chemistry in the world.

The exhibition, *Sea of Heartbreak*, addresses the increase in algae bloom, invasive algae, and dying coral reefs worldwide due to the increase in ocean temperatures, contributed in part by plastic pollution. Half of the plastic produced in the world has occurred in the last 15 years and plastic waste has been found in the ocean from the Arctic to the Antarctic and from the surface to the sea floor. My intent is to initiate a conversation and awareness about the deterioration of our greatest resource: water.













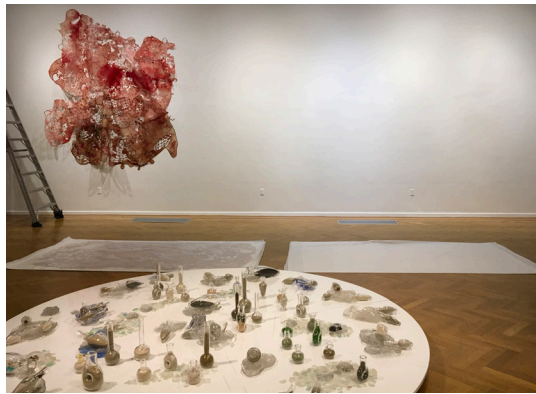
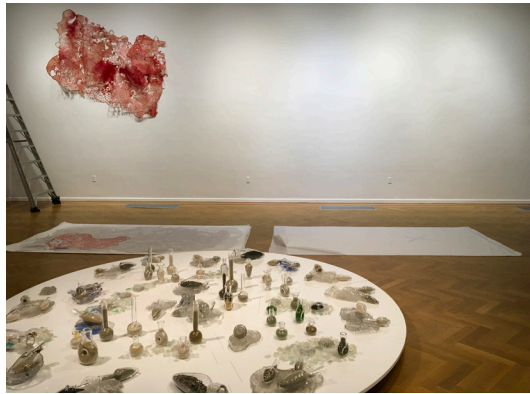
*SEA OF HEARTBREAK*





*ALGAE BLOOM*. 2017. Mixed media, handmade paper. 140"x372"x24". 40 sections.















*GOING, GOING, GONE*. 2018. Mixed media, handmade paper. 144"x415"x22".







*DEGRADED OCEAN'S TOPOGRAPHY.* 2018.  
Mixed media, handmade paper, glass beads.  
128"x50"



*INSTALLING DEGRADED OCEAN'S TOPOGRAPHY*









*THE NEW NORMAL: IN WITH THE TIDE*. 2018. Mixed media, handmade paper. 70"x100"x15".





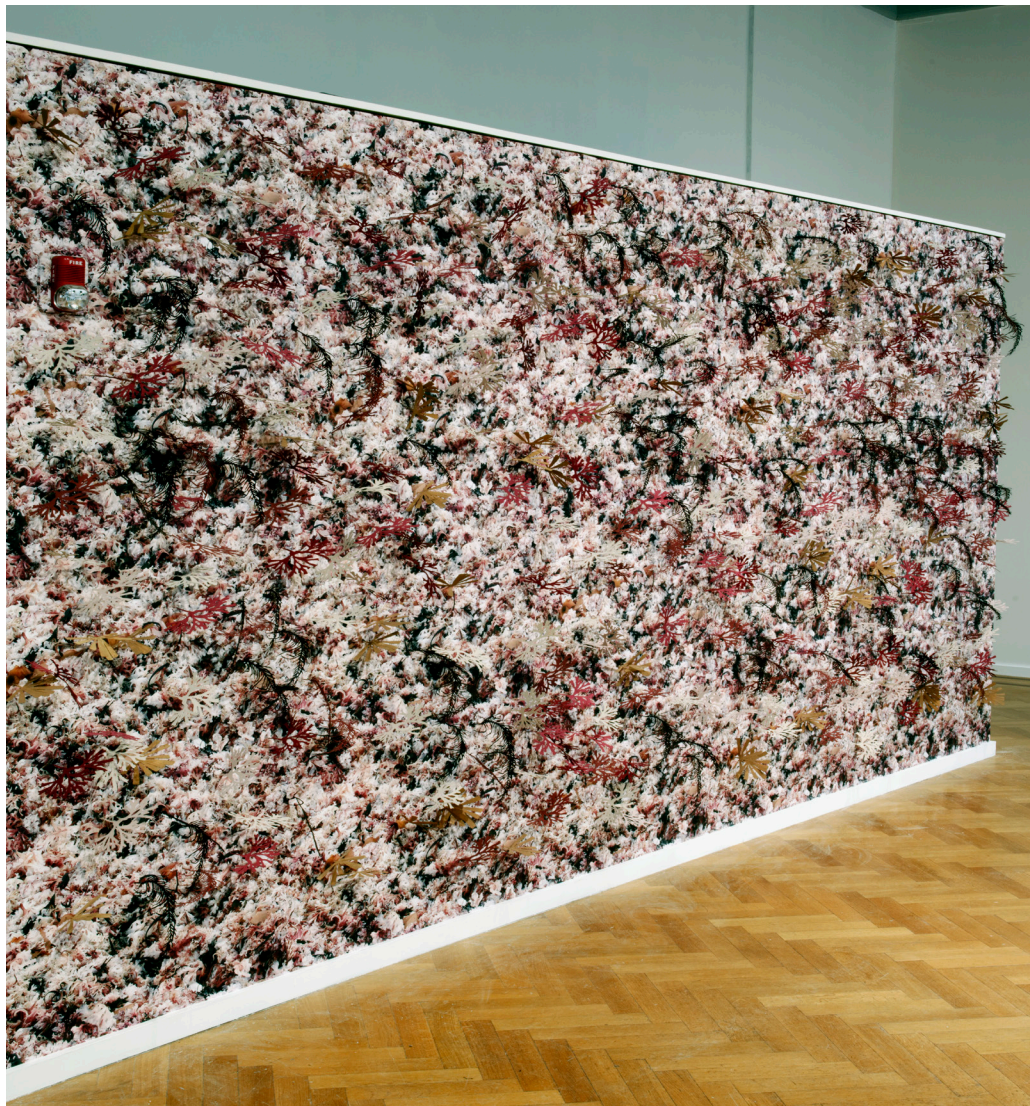


*THE OLYMPIC BLOB, CHINA*. 2008. Mixed media, handmade paper. 80"x98x12".









*THE INVASION OF HULL COVE*. 2018. Photograph on vinyl, steel, acrylic. 96"x203"x6"





For *The Greening of Our Beaches*, Joan Hall has collected and displayed sands from around the world. This work of art was inspired by an article that Hall read about Miami Beach running out of sand, and experts proposing to replace the lost sand with ground glass.\* The circular platform in the work evokes the continuous relationship of cause and effect and also builds on the artist's personal iconography of compass shapes, which can be found in the other works in this gallery.

The Greening of Our Beaches explores the complicated cause-effect chain of events causing the loss of sand. Plastic pollution has contributed to the rising ocean temperatures. The rise in ocean temperatures has caused coral to disappear, which the fish feed on to create sand. Thus, beaches are losing an essential aspect of their composition and identity: sand.

*\*Lizette Alvarez, "Where Sand is Gold, the Reserves Are Running Dry." The New York Times (August 25, 2013) A14.*







*THE GREENING OF OUR BEACHES*. 2018. In collaboration with Ben Giguere, Gather Glass, Providence, RI.  
Glass, sand, handmade paper. 120"x120"x14".







1. South Beach, Florida, 2013
2. Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, 201
3. Key West, Florida, 2013
4. Miami Beach, South Point, Florida, 2017
5. Waikiki Beach, Hawaii, 2012
6. Green Glass Beach
7. Sea Glass
8. Sea Glass
9. Green Glass Beach
10. Key Biscayne, Florida, 2017
11. Daebudo Beach, Korea, 2016
12. Green Beach, Bermuda, 2018
13. Katsura Beach, Japan, 2017
14. Hull Cove, Jamestown, RI, 2014
15. Key Biscayne, Florida, 2012
16. Narragansett Town Beach, RI, 2018
17. Stella Beach, Puerto Rico, 2016
18. St. John, British Virgin Islands, 2012
19. Anagada Island, British Virgin Islands, 2012
20. Grape Bay, Bermuda, 2016
21. Nature's Valley Beach, South Africa, 2012
22. Nova Scotia, 2017
23. 2nd Beach, Newport, RI, 2014
24. Iceland, 2016
25. St. James, Jamaica, 2016
26. Leblon Beach, Brazil, 2013
27. Grand Cayman, 2014
28. Lighthouse Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015
29. Turtle Beach, Brazil, 2013
30. Lighthouse Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015
31. Virgin Gorda, Bitter End, British Virgin Islands, 2012
32. Lighthouse Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015
33. Palm Island, Florida, 2016
34. Cotton Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015
35. Palm Island, Florida, 2016
36. Cotton Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015
37. Cotton Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015

38. Hull Cove, Jamestown, RI, 2014
39. Princess Margaret Beach, Bequia, 2016
40. Stegna Beach, Rodas, Greece, 2014
41. St. Lucia, British Virgin Islands, 2016
42. Dominican Republic, 2015
43. Palm Island, Florida, 2016
44. Port Arkansas, Texas, 2012
45. Constance Beach, Louisiana, 2012
46. Grenadines, 2016
47. Katsura Beach, Japan, 2017
48. Grande Isle, Louisiana, 2011
49. Bahia Honda, Florida, 2012
50. Lighthouse Beach, Eleuthera, Bahamas, 2015
51. Grande Anise, Grenada, 2016
52. Sanibel Island, Florida, 2016
53. Key Biscayne, Florida, 2017
54. Iceland, 2016
55. Bermuda, 1960s
56. Sea glass
57. Peconic Bay Beach, Southampton NY, 2017
58. North Shore, Hawaii, 2012
59. Naples, Florida, 2013
60. Bahia Honda, Florida, 2013
61. Lambert Cove, Martha's Vineyard, MA, 2017
62. Station 27, Sullivan's Island, SC, 2015
63. Figure 8 Island, North Carolina, 2012
64. Taboga Island, Panama, 2016
65. Galveston, Texas, 2012
66. Key West, Florida, 2013
67. Dutch Harbor, Jamestown, RI, 2013
68. Pauanui Beach, New Zealand, 2016
69. Sanibel Island, Florida, 2016
70. Captiva Island, Florida, 2014
71. Sea glass
72. Laguna Beach, California, 2013
73. Cannon Beach, Oregon, 2018
74. Glass Beach, Bermuda, 2018













*EXHIBITION INSTALLATION*































*BIOGRAPHY*



Born in Mansfield, Ohio  
Lives in Jamestown, Rhode Island

Joan Hall works in mixed media and large-scale sculptural installations with an emphasis on the materials of paper glass and metal. Hall Received her BFA at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Ohio and her MFA at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She studied papermaking with Garner Tullis at the Institute of Experimental Papermaking and Printmaking in San Francisco. She is known for her innovative approaches to material and process. Hall's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (NY), Leopold-Hoesch Museum Germany), Newport Art Museum, (RI), St. Louis Art Museum (MO), Museum of Nebraska Art (Kearney, NE), Silkeborg Art Center (Denmark), The Blue Star Contemporary Art Center (San Antonio, TX), George Mason University (Fairfax, VA), Joslyn Art Museum (Omaha, NE), Hillwood Art Museum, (Brookville, NY), Walton Art Center, (Fayetteville, AR), Budapest Museum of Fine Arts (Hungary), Nordjyllands Museum of Art(Aalborg, Denmark), Suwa Municipal Museum (Japan), Municipal Museum ( Nanjing, China), Musée d' Art (Lyon, France), and the Rijswijk Museum and Apeldoorn Museums ( The Netherlands).

She has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards that include two MAAA-NEA individual artist grants and an exhibition grant for her show in Silkeborg from the Danish National Arts Council.

Selected books include: 500 Paper Objects, New Directions in Paper, Papermaking for Printmakers, The Art and Craft of Papermaking, Critical Mass, Papermaking for Printers, Artforms, and the Art of Papermaking.

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Thanks to my studio assistants, who helped make this show possible.

Anna Benjamin  
Camila Escobar  
Ruhan Feng  
Liz Guilmet  
Anna McNeary  
Nina Ruelle  
Nicole Selmer



In memory of Michael Brown and Pam King, who wanted to make this planet a better place.