

Welcome to **CRAFTIVISM: How the Arts give voice to Causes and**

**Craftivism:**  
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to Causes and  
Communities



## Communities

Our thanks to Natalie Spyvolt for the topic, Emily Hilliard who suggested the panelists, Beth Nardella and the technical crew today. Josh Vana, ARTivism Virginia co-director will coordinate our images.

Panelists are Dr. Dolores Johnson from Huntington, WV; Shaun Slifer from Pittsburgh; and Kay Ferguson from Charlottesville, Virginia . I am Susan Feller, living in Augusta, West Virginia

**Craftivism:** was coined in the 21st Century. It combines

**Craft** ... using one's hands and simple tools to create useful objects usually done at home, **alone** and **Activism** .... policy or action of vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change this relies on **many together**.

Today we will present examples where artists working in their studios and at home contribute to change in the societal issues of the time.

How a craft brings makers together in a community adding their independent work to become a louder voice.

And how an organization can be formed around an issue encouraging arts and activists from the start.

It is important to find a project within an organization for people willing to create messages using domestic crafts. Many are unable to publicly resist but eager to contribute. They become part of the broader grass roots network necessary for an issue to take hold. Remember The simple knitted rectangle sewn up the sides into a pink hat just five years ago. They were contributed by thousands who watched from home during the Women's Marches.

Carving, Drawing, Stitching, Pulling Loops EMPOWERS the maker .... one line or stitch becomes two, over time thousands and a visual message for



researchers decades later.

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I represent those makers. My practice is solitary combining the slow traditional handicrafts of rug hooking, embroidery and applique' to depict human impact on nature, and document my observations on social issues specifically equal rights. The tools I use are simple, needle, threads, hook and strips of wool fabric. I am drawn to rug hooking and sewing because of the comforting feel of fabric and seeing each loop or stitch adding to my message. Repetition becomes meditative, even cathartic.

I approach a design with an idea, an image I took, phrases, the subject or the view as I travel West Virginia.



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The 2020 Journal covers whole year and took 2 months to complete. The process was and is therapeutic. Spending time with issues and thinking through color, techniques and materials begins to separate me from the emotions. I know my work will be seen by others today and decades later



inspiring awareness and conversations.



Mountains of Energy, plastic straws as pipelines

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How human impact affects the natural beauty of Appalachia is a thread throughout my work. There are series about the pipelines cutting straight through forests and fields trying to cross waterways. The protests every step of the way are holding the companies back hopefully blocking this extraction of a limited resource being exported again out of state.

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Mountaintop Removal Jewel    layer of coal revealed

Mountaintop removal has blasted the peaks of over 500 mountains in West Virginia alone to extract what is left of the coal in our state. The process destroys habitats, poisons and reroutes waters, pollutes the air and produces sludge ponds filled with heavy metals all while people live, work

and go to school in the valleys. Please consider where the energy is coming from in your daily life.



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The Iconic tryptch spans a century of women's rights leading to 2016 issue of voting rights for all. The neutral coloring representing 1920 and the ratification of the 19th Amendment adds to the history. By 1973 and the ERA passing from Congress for the states to ratify (still not 50 years later) I used my own Girl Scout badges and a rainbow of colors to portray my youthful outlook on the future. The VOTE palette proudly signals the USA.



Names of women I voted for are embroidered around the red, white and



Pussycats Pillow Talk

blue crocheted doily.

**next slide** I began a series titled '*Pussycat Pillow Talk*' with hooked images on the front and embroidered messages on the reverse. Themes have been #metoo movement, persistence, gender equality, climate change, Love, and whatever other social issue can be summed up in a few words. The collection is growing.

By taking hooked rugs off the floor to present them as art they have been accepted in exhibitions and become ambassadors for rug hooking speaking about society today. Developing a strong social media presence brings awareness, uniting others. I can join in the worldwide protests from the solitude of my studio in rural West Virginia.



# TAMARACK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS



Domenica Zara Queen, plastic bags hooked

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I serve on the board of **Tamarack Foundation for the Arts** whose mission is to empower artists with business skills. We believe their art and economic contributions will help grow their local community. The organization and several artists are presenting during the conference. Make sure to spend some time talking with them.

[Domenica Zara Queen](#) believes plastic is the 21st Century's heritage fabric embracing the waste product in her traditional handicraft collection of rugs, mats, plates and vessels.



**Robby Moore, 'Black History Month'**  
Makers Market Saturday

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[Robby Moore](#) lives in Beckley, WV and is “inspired by the abstraction of shape, ephemera, tradition and mores; especially those steeped in Appalachia. He tries to express, through his figures, the sadness and confidence that comes from deep thoughtfulness.”

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[Suzan Ann Morgan](#) is from Buckhannon, WV. She says “my artworks are the result of the examination of my own, often tentative, beliefs. During their creation I am afforded the time to reflect upon my beliefs, note their



**Suzan Morgan, 'Tunnel Vision'**  
Makers Market Friday

contradictions, and make manifest their essence. In the end, each piece presents one facet of my truth extending a hand to the viewer hoping to find common ground and a starting place for future conversations.”

We are makers working in our studios but responding to life as we observe it, fitting the definition of CRAFTIVISM.

delivered by [Susan L Feller](#).

\*further research *Crafting Dissent*, Handicraft as protest from the American Revolution to the Pussyhats, edited by Hinda Mandell, publisher Rowman & Littlefield

Three additional panelists were Dolores Johnson, Huntington;

Shaun Slifer, JustSeeds

Kay Ferguson, ARTivism Virginia

They will send presentations separately.