**Opening Slide:**

My thanks to the college of arts and letters at Northern Arizona University for hosting this conference. And, to David Van Ness for his work on organizing this conference. ***This is What It Is***. This phrase suggests resignation. People use it in circumstances where things can not be changed. ***This is what it is*** – the title of my presentation refers to ….accepting the situation of being an artist during a pandemic – and, using the situation as an avenue for change and progress.

**Slide #2: As a quick introduction -**

During the pandemic it has been a challenge to stay focused on art-making, to energize one’s studio practice during a lockdown. Let me begin by succinctly explaining the type of art I create. The personalization of social issues in a serial format is the structure for my art-making. Recently explored topics include societal impositions upon body image, mass media perspectives about women and violence, and socio-cultural burdens endured by women. Social issues are viewed through a multifarious lens of mass media, social media and art history.

**Slide #3**:

My fiber works are created by hand-sewing my hair into various surfaces. I consider myself a self-taught fiber artist. I apply drawing techniques to the act of sewing. I have been sewing with hair since 2000. The decision to utilize hair as a vehicle for making art is informed by socio-cultural symbolism, feminism, and religious symbolism. Collecting and sorting my hair is a ritualistic act. The dichotomy of using hair captivated my interest: hair can be a sexy and engaging tactile to people or it can be repulsive – like a hair in your soup or a hair on your hotel pillow. (Cry, Die or Just Make Pies is the hair drawing on the right-hand side of the screen) As a painter, I focus particularly on the medium of watercolor. Voluptuous layers of watercolor stain surfaces to create figurative forms. Washes of color depict the imperfections of flesh: flesh is not merely about accuracy for color and form, but it is about having an eye for the bump -- and the lump-- and the chunk of blemished flesh. (Two Women Walk into a Bar is on the left)

**Slide #4:**

My drawing installations are composed of scratchy, nervous lines trailing across a wall. These large, on-site installations are drawn with conte; sometimes the drawings incorporate vinyl appliques, liquid graphite and specialty fabric. These drawing installation are done on site at universities, commercial galleries and other art venues – the process of creating them allows me the opportunity to engage with students, faculty, art gallery patrons and individual communities. (Shown Normative Discontent at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Co – 12’ x 24’.)

**Slide #5:**

Moving effortlessly through varying tempos and characters, I create performances made up of frank and touching vignettes. I punctuate the performances with tailored costumes for each performance. (The poem Happy from a performance at Free Form Gallery in Santa Fe, NM)

**Slide #6:**

What now? Artists are by nature creatures of solitude, yet they blossom under circumstances of interaction with their community: exhibition receptions, live performances, artists’ talks, conferences, and exhibition installations. Spoken word performers come alive in front of an attentive and responsive audience. They write, rehearse, create costumes and props for those intoxicating minutes in the limelight. How do I stimulate ideas in a silo? Finding the Remedy….

**Slide #7:**

I started taking an acting class in Spring of 2020 at San Juan College in Farmington, New Mexico. I took the class to improve my spoken word performances. When the pandemic caused a shut down across the nation, my college course became an on-line Acting I class. As students, we had to learn how to record ourselves and submit our assignments via video. I am not a particularly tech savy person. When I taught at El Centro College in Dallas, I was known for saying my computer hated me and plotted behind my back. If a technology problem could occur, it would occur to me. My HP laptop has a video editor. I recorded my acting I monologues on my i-phone and used the video editor to complete my assignments. Here is my last assignment for the class. We had to play all the characters in a scene. My scene is from the movie “Fargo”. By the end of the semester I had become comfortable with the video editor.

**Slide #8 and #9:**

After my college course, Acting I, was over – I started thinking about how I could take my newly acquired video skills and apply them to my artwork. I often received questions about “how are the hair works created”: how do you get the hair?, what kind of needles do you use?, how do you sew these works?, is it just your hair or the hair of others? It seem natural to give visuals to these questions via process videos. Because many of my exhibitions had been canceled or postponed in 2020, I had the time to slow down my studio process and document the process of sewing hair. This is how it started…1st video: This video shows my process in sewing my brunette hair into a watercolor canvas. 2nd video: I started sewing with my gray hair in 2018. This video shows my process of sorting gray hair for one day’s studio session. 3rd video: The 3rd video shows the process of sewing an artwork titled “Marching Across Your Lawn, The Grass is on Fire”. This is my gray hair on black twill fabric. 32” x 37”.

**Slide 10:** Here is the finished artwork. It is currently on display at Amos Eno Gallery, Brooklyn, NY. The exhibition opens tomorrow with a reception and continues until May 16th.

**Slide 11: Putting it All Together**

As I became more confident utilizing the video editor, I started to ponder putting everything together: my artwork, poetry and spoken word performance. I decided to work on a video for my poem “These United States”. The opening sequence has images of my wall drawings from Fort Lewis College. There are three stanzas and each one is staged similar to my acting class monologues. The minimal setup lets the viewer focus on the words of the poem. I am exhibiting this video at Amos Eno Gallery.

**Slide 12:**

The current artworks are centered upon the act of marching: it is the simplest use of the physical body as a political force. Researching the history of women-led marches, I consider the role of the individual within a demonstration. Vast numbers of clamorous bodies in motion translate to a robust show of strength and determination; however, eventually, the individual goes home to their daily existence. When the protest is over, the pussy hats put away, signs disposed of and costumes packed up – is political activism embraced as an ongoing individual practice? Figurative artworks, with minimized or nonexistent facial features, convey the individual subsumed by the larger group. Compositionally, these feminine bodies reflect the varying tempos and pauses of a demonstration thus illustrating the visual structure of marching. My nude figures exude vulnerability yet defiance; furthermore, they allude to art historical images of partially nude women representing political ideology. In the words of Beyonce, ‘okay, ladies, now let’s get in formation.’

**Slide 13:**

Please stay in touch! On my website, you can subscribe to my monthly newsletter. Thanks you! I am happy to answer any questions….