

Alfred University alumna's art installation aims to increase awareness of sexual violence

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ALFRED, NY Alfred University alumna Traci Molloy has created a campus-wide art installation that seeks to advocate for victims of sexual harassment and assault and engage discussion on the issue of sexual violence.

Molloy, who earned a BFA degree from Alfred in 1992, created 22 vinyl banners that will be displayed on lampposts across campus beginning Monday, April 16. Each banner depicts a “fractured” (not identifiable) headshot portrait of a current student or alumnus, accompanied by hand-written testimonials by participants describing their experiences of sexual assault or harassment.

The installation, entitled “Against My Will”, is the result of a yearlong collaboration between Molloy, various University offices, and students involved with peer education around issues of sexual violence. Molloy will lead an accompanying panel discussion on Wednesday, April 18.

A resident of Brooklyn, NY, Molloy travels the country as an artist and activist, often helping communities address issues of violence, addiction, trauma, and loss. She has partnered with children who lost a parent in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001; adolescents displaced from their home countries due to genocide or war; sexual assault survivors; and underserved youth in rural and urban communities.

Next week's installation will mark the second time Molloy has visited her alma mater for a project aimed at putting a spotlight on the problem of sexual violence. She was on campus for a residency last fall, collaborating with 13 Alfred University students to create "I Am, I Will, I'm Afraid (Alfred)," a 16-by-10 foot art piece that was displayed on the exterior of Harder Hall. She returned in January to discuss that installation.

During her residency last fall, Molloy spoke with current students and recognized the similar struggles that still exist between her peers and this current generation regarding sexual harassment and assault. Those discussions inspired her to create an art collaboration ("Against My Will") that would bridge together the generations of survivors, educate current students, and transform the center of the college campus.

For the banners, Molloy hand-painted portraits of each participant using head-shot photographs for reference. Each portrait has aspects of the facial features omitted. This allows for anonymity and lets the viewer imagine the victim as themselves, a friend, or family member.

The accompanying presentation will be held on Wednesday, April 18, at 7:30 p.m. in Holmes Auditorium, Harder Hall. It will include a panel discussion on the collaborative experience that created the installation and provide some participants the opportunity to further share their stories. The event will begin at 7:30 at Holmes Auditorium in Harder Hall. The event will also include a musical performance and spoken word presentation. Due to the sensitive nature of this content, the program will caution viewers that these shared words may evoke strong emotional reactions. The Office of Counseling Services is available to Alfred University students and can be accessed by calling 607-871-2300 or visiting the Wellness Center.

Questions about this program can be directed to Dan Napolitano, Chief Diversity Office of Alfred University, at napolitano@alfred.edu.