

Artists Making News: Kat Dolan



Kat Dolan, filmmaker

Local Filmmaker Wins National Festival

Local filmmaker Kat Dolan has won the national Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival with her short film, *Nobody But Myself*. The annual festival, presented by the New York City-based, mental health advocacy nonprofit Community Access, aims to facilitate dialogue and center the lived experiences of young people. Dolan's film was selected from more than 700 submissions.

Nobody But Myself was shot in Boone and stars Dolan in a spoken-word performance of her poem of the same name. "I wrote the poem one afternoon at home on my bus and once I had all the words, the shots for the film became clear," she says. "Soon after, I found a local cinematographer and we went to work."

For Dolan, setting the film in Boone was a personal choice as much as a creative one.

"I shot my film in Boone because this is where I feel most comfortable and have the strongest sense of community," she says. "In the seven years I have lived here, I have been lucky enough to find and become a part of a community that heavily supports the arts and my passion for mental health."

Dolan hopes the film will offer a "positive perspective for mental health, particularly depression," she says. "What if depression was sexy? What if we tapped into our emotions before they forced us to tap out? That is what I want for my viewers. I want them to imagine their mental health as the most valuable thing about them."

Nobody But Myself has been accepted into seven film festivals, including the RiverRun International Film Festival in Winston-Salem,

Fastnet Film Festival in Ireland and the Zebra International Poetry Film Festival in Berlin. “It is an incredible source of encouragement for me as an artist and a filmmaker,” says Dolan. “I made this film without ever expecting it to be played on ‘the big screen,’ especially because performance poetry is not typically filmed in this way. I wanted to create something different with more emotionally charged visuals and the response to taking this risk has been nothing but positive.”

Festival coordinator Nola Hamowy was struck by the quality of cinematography, poetry and performance in the film. “The goal of Changing Minds is to spark important and productive conversations about mental health, stigma, policy and everything in between,” says Hamowy. “*Nobody But Myself* does exactly that.”

Dolan says film festivals like Changing Minds contribute to suicide prevention and the expansion of mental health resources by increasing awareness and starting dialogue. “The NYC Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Film Festival is spearheading the action necessary for making depression, anxiety, suicide and the like commonplace topics within communities and schools,” she says. “We need more of this.”

Dolan is also the founder of a mental health nonprofit, Out of Your Mind, which offers an alternative to traditional group therapy and affordable, accessible spaces for people to explore different artistic outlets. To learn more, visit OutofYourMind.us or follow on Instagram [@outofyourmind](https://www.instagram.com/outofyourmind). To learn more about the film and festival, visit CommunityAccess.org/changingminds.