

In the galleries

By Mark Jenkins November 30



A photograph from Ebtisam Abdulaziz's "Women's Circle," on view at the District of Columbia Arts Center. (Ebtisam Abdulaziz/District of Columbia Arts Center)

Ebtisam Abdulaziz

The subject of Ebtisam Abdulaziz's "Blue Freedom" is not exactly freedom. The performance piece, one of several documented at the District of Columbia Arts Center, places the D.C.-based Emirati artist inside a clear plastic sphere. She paints the interior surface with blue pigment, partly blocking herself from view. She's defining a refuge but also a prison.

The performances are shown on video, in photos or both. In one video, Abdulaziz pens the word "Muslim" repeatedly on a transparent surface between her and the camera. The word and its implications are for the viewer to ponder, but the artist maintains some control by writing from her own point of view, so the text is backward to the observer.

In “Women’s Circle,” a suite of photos, a black-clad Abdulaziz contorts herself inside a white ring that represents the bonds of culture and gender. Like the clear sphere, it’s a constraint the artist has devised for herself, but it symbolizes ones over which she has little influence.

Blue Freedom: Ebtisam Abdulaziz On view through Dec. 10 at District of Columbia Arts Center, 2438 18th St. NW. 202-462-7833. dcartscenter.org.