

Shimmering saris and video make up a colorful outdoor installation.

Review by Mark Jenkins

June 14, 2024 at 6:00 a.m. EDT

In one of the videos made for “Swimming,” artist Monica Jahan Bose joins Bangladeshi women, wearing blue saris, who dance in their village and in the waters of the nearby Bay of Bengal. The installation at Marie Reed Plaza, which Bose calls a “public art immersion,” doesn’t offer flowing water. But the piece is outdoors and near the indoor pool attached to the school in the Adams Morgan neighborhood. And the blue saris the women wore are now sewed into banners that flap overhead, evoking ripples and waves.



An installation view of Monica Jahan Bose's show “Swimming” at Marie Reed Plaza. (Monica Jahan Bose)

Bose lives in the neighborhood and has ancestral ties to Bangladesh, which she visits regularly. Her community-building project enlists people both there and in D.C. to help decorate the saris, and to share their songs and verse. Some of the poems, read in video snippets, are included in “Swimming.”

The installation can be kept open 24 hours a day because most of it is virtual. While the saris are real, the six short films are arranged in “soundwalks” that are just QR codes on columns. Visitors must use a smartphone or portable computer to access the video content. Alone on the school plaza, they are invited to become part of a global community linked by elemental forces and universal feelings.

Swimming: A Public Art Immersion by Monica Jahan Bose Through June 20 at Marie Reed Plaza, 2201 18th St. NW. storytellingwithsaris.com. 202-509-6282.