



The Art of Being Feminist and Fabulous

Antwaun Sargent — Sep 18 2015





Rashaad Newsome's Bedroom Eyes

To be fabulous means different things to different people, and curator Jasmine Wahi (<http://www.jasminewahi.com/>)'s new group show, شگفت آور (<http://shiringalleryny.com>)—the Arabic word for fabulous—explores how artists have interpreted the term in their work, as a way to question

the intersection of traditional feminist identities and contemporary representations of women in popular culture.

“I think of myself as a 'fabulous' curvy, brown, outspoken, and empowered woman, says Wahi, who is also the cofounder of The Gateway Project (<http://gatewayprojectspaces.com/>) art space. “When I first started this series I was really thinking of the term fabulous and how I could simultaneously express a positive ownership of that term not only for myself, but for all women and girls.”

شگفت آور is Wahi’s follow up show to *Zabardust*, which is the Urdu word for fabulous. “I had an experience in which a man referred to me as 'fabulous' in a catcall,” explains Wahi to The Creators Project. “It made me think of not only how that term had been grossly subverted, but also of the intentions and implications of that word based on context, and I decided to explore how that term—and its various formal and colloquial definitions—have been sometimes elevated and sometimes perverted to describe the self or the other.”



Shoshanna Weinberger's Dragon Fruit Cactus Playing Double Dutch

The diversity of artists—Dana Caputo, [Farnaz Rabiejah \(http://rabiejah.com/Site.aspx?lan=en\)](http://rabiejah.com/Site.aspx?lan=en), [Jaishri Abichandani \(http://jaishriabichandani.net/home.html\)](http://jaishriabichandani.net/home.html), Kate Hush, [Lisa Ficarelli-Halpern \(http://www.lisaficarelli-halpern.com/\)](http://www.lisaficarelli-halpern.com/), Lunar New York, Rashaad Newsome, Shoshanna Weinberger, [Tatyana Fazlalizadeh \(http://www.tlynnfaz.com/\)](http://www.tlynnfaz.com/), and Ventiko— suggests that being fabulous can take on many different forms in contemporary art.

“Although female empowerment was the conceptual onus for this show, I have tried to expand what the term has come to mean on a wider scale,” explains Wahi. “Rashaad Newsome and Dana Caputo are two of the artists in the show who span the gambit of defining the essence of 'fabulous.' Dana Caputo has two works, *Untitled (Raging Bull Dyke)* (2015) and *Man-Child* (2015)— both neon, and both speak to her identity as a queer female artist having ownership of herself, her sexuality, and taking no bullshit from anyone.”



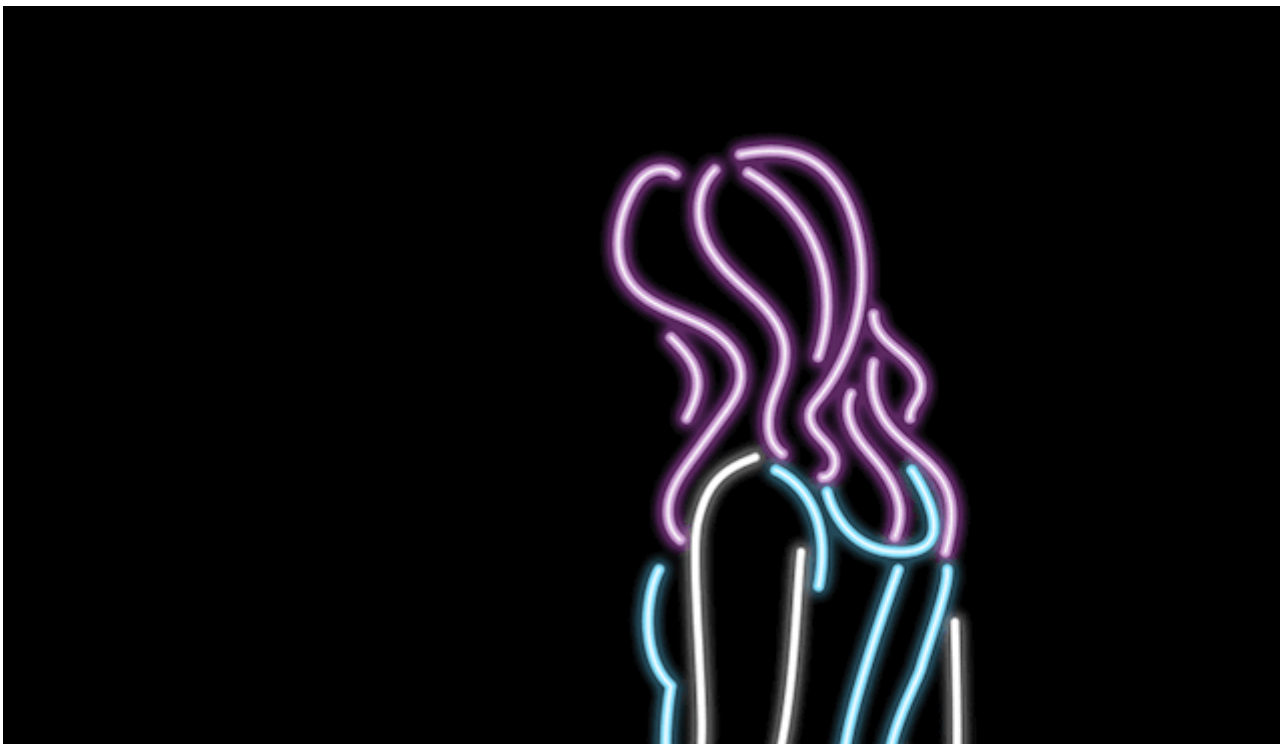
Dana Caputo's Man-Child

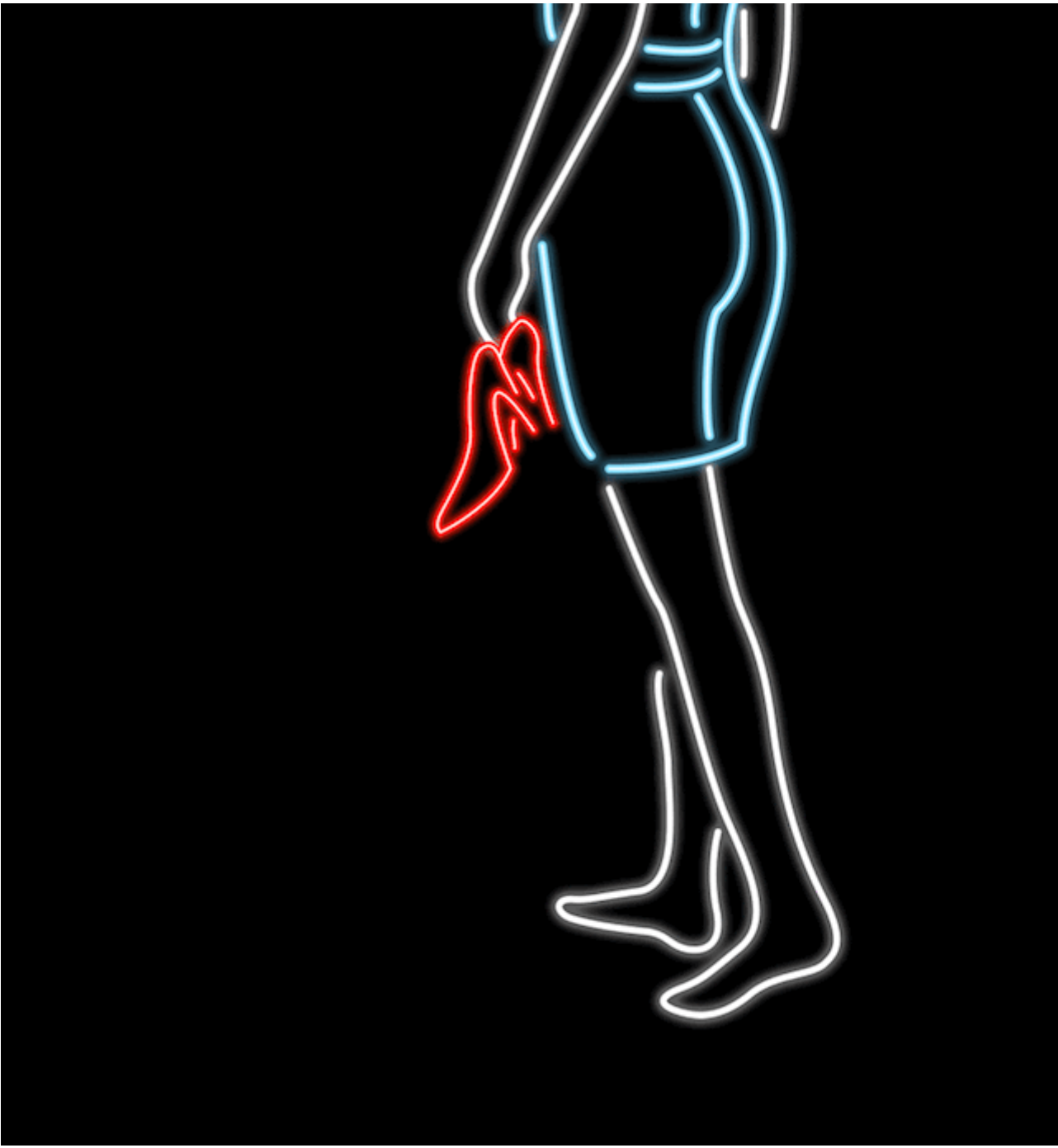
She adds: “Rashaad Newsome's work visually speaks more linearly to the colloquial understanding of ‘fabulous’—*Bedroom Eyes* (2015) has the glitz, glam, sensual beauty that is so often associated with fabulous. But Newsome's work is so much more than superficial or cosmetic beauty. This work speaks to a much larger culture of heraldry, history, and pride. His work speaks to a culture that has often been ignored or exoticized by the mainstream, but in reality it is a culture that has taken ownership of its identity in the face of misunderstanding, discrimination, and outright hate. His work, particularly this work, alludes to the ‘fabulousness’ of the culture.”



Ventiko's Me and Dex

Wahi says despite the fact that this show is part of an ongoing series, *شگفت آور*, explores new ideas that also consider the negative connotations that can also be associated with the term. “This is the first time I’ve actively tried to acknowledge some of the negative aspects of a term that I saw as holistically empowering,” she says. “It’s a little hard to admit because I do want people, especially women, to leave the show feeling proud and invigorated about being women.”





شگفت آور opens today and runs through October 13th at Shirin Gallery. For more information, [click here \(http://shiringalleryny.com\)](http://shiringalleryny.com).

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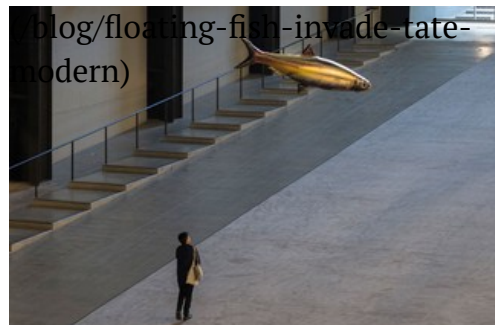
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