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September 13, 2018

Prismatic preview: *SuperNova* and Rah-Eleh's identity issues

The Iranian-Canadian artist uses her humourous one-woman show to explore race, gender and politics.

By Brandon Young



SUBMITTED

SuperNova

To September 17

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1723 Hollis Street

Iranian-Canadian artist Rah-Eleh is bringing her talents to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia to debut her video installation *SuperNova*. As one of many artists visiting Halifax for the Prismatic Arts Festival, her work offers a look at diverse and marginalized identities, with a bit of humour.

Presented as a game-show parody that mimics the tropes of popular reality TV shows like *American Idol*, *SuperNova* "re-contextualizes historical markers of identity and presents them in the future to be deconstructed, re-evaluated and reconfigured." Using characters, like her constantly present personality Oreo, Rah-Eleh examines racial purity, exoticism and self-identification in an increasingly intersectional world.

And Rah-Eleh knows all about identity issues: Having grown up in Gatineau, Quebec, the artist experienced racism and xenophobia that she says still plagues the region.

"Growing up in a small Francophone community as an anglophone, queer, Iranian, woman of colour, I had internalized white supremacy at many points in my life," she says. "A lot of people from diverse backgrounds can really respond to that imposition of white supremacy that they've internalized themselves."

As part of her MFA thesis project, *SuperNova* will see the Western University graduate play multiple characters including talent judges, a television host, audience members and contestants Fatimeh, Coco and Oreo. "It's a big and ambitious project," she says.

With more exposure planned for 2019, including a showing at La Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario, as well as a series of university lectures, Rah-Eleh is intent on spreading her ideas and art.

"I hope people take time to reflect and think about their relationship with the radicalized female body and gender, and to think about the ideas that I myself am speculating about," says Rah-Eleh. "I hope they can enter into this space with me."

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Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

1723 Hollis Street Downtown
902-424-5280
www.artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/
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