

WHAT'S ON

Art exhibit explores what it means to be recovered

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So, when are you going to get back to normal?

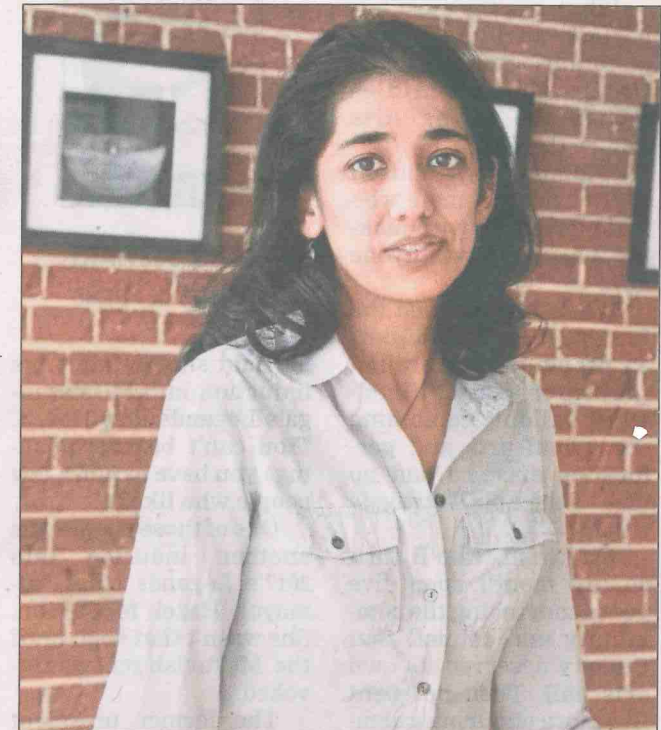
It's a question Mississauga's Kanika Gupta heard countless times from well-meaning family and friends after she suffered a serious concussion in 2013 that developed into post-concussive syndrome. A self-described extrovert and busy social entrepreneur who had been named one of Canada's 100 most powerful women in 2012 by the Women's Executive Network, Gupta's life was upended by the concussion.

Friends often asked her when she would be recovered. She didn't really know how to respond.

And, as the debilitating symptoms from the condition lingered, she started to have her own questions. Like, how come she hadn't yet recovered and how long was it going to take?

Extremely sensitive to noise and unable to watch television, read or use the computer as it aggravated her symptoms, Gupta turned to art. Her mother, Neerja, is a painter so she had grown up around it but pursuing the craft wasn't something Gupta had any previous interest in.

With her active life gone and finding herself



Bryon Johnson/Metroland

Mississauga artist Kanika Gupta, who suffered from a concussion several years ago, with her artwork at Lakeshore Arts, prior to the opening of a show featuring her work, titled, ReThink Recovery.

bored beyond belief, she started painting as a hobby because it was basically the only entertainment she could tolerate due to her concussion. Through it, she began to explore what she was experiencing as well as her own ideas about what it means to be recovered.

"I realized that, subconsciously, I was creating art that mirrored what I was dealing with," she said.

Gupta is staging her

first solo art exhibit at Toronto's Lakeshore Arts gallery. Called ReThink Recovery, the multifaceted exhibit that features a variety of media opened with an official reception Thursday, Nov. 9 and continues until Dec. 2.

It chronicles her stages of recovery while also challenging perceived norms around the notion of being recovered.

Part of what she discovered through the process

was that she had put her life on pause as she waited to get better.

She says it's believed that the way for someone to recover is to get back to how they used to be before an accident or traumatic event. But, what if that isn't possible?

There was no reverting to exactly how she was prior to the concussion. Her injury and experiences afterwards had changed her.

"What I had gone through influenced how I now saw the world," she said.

And, as her artist statement for the exhibit reads "I learned that recovery is an ongoing process, not a static end goal. Recovery is something to be lived through and experienced individually."

The gallery itself is part of the installation as it's been made to be accessible to those with post-

concussive syndrome. They've removed lights to make it easier on the eyes while also bringing benches to sit on for a rest as those with the syndrome can tire easily. There's also a candy jar filled with earplugs to muffle noise and large print to make the text easier to read.

For more on the exhibit including gallery hours and location, visit lakeshorearts.ca/november-rethink-recovery.