

Triumphant return to hometown for artist Sandeep Johal

Sandeep Johal: To Be Something More
August 23, 2025, to February 1, 2026

August 20, 2025 – Kelowna, BC: *To Be Something More* marks the latest chapter in Kelowna-born artist **Sandeep Johal**'s ongoing exploration of women's resilience. This body of work celebrates the strength, endurance, and indomitable spirit that rises in the face of adversity. It opens this weekend at the Kelowna Art Gallery.

For the artist it is a triumphant return to her hometown of Kelowna for her first major solo exhibition in the city. "I grew up in Kelowna not thinking a career in the arts was possible," says **Sandeep Johal**. "I always dreamt of pursuing this avenue, but artists' careers simply weren't mirrored back to me. It wasn't until I turned 30 that I went to art school and my career as an artist didn't take flight until I was 41, as a new mom. I'm thrilled and very proud to be presenting this new body of work at the Kelowna Art Gallery."

To Be Something More offers audiences a reimagining of the folktale of **Sohni Mahiwal**, an enduring romance from Punjab that remains firmly embedded in the region's cultural fabric. According to the folktale, Sohni falls in love with a traveller named Mahiwal but is married to someone else against her will. Sohni pursues this forbidden love and the tale ends in betrayal and tragedy for her (with an underlying tone of justification). In revisiting this story, **Sandeep Johal** visually creates an alternate storyline for Sohni, one where she triumphs over the people and forces that work to confine her, and ultimately, she is rewritten as the hero of her own story.

"Through painting, collage, textiles, and a large mural, Sandeep Johal uses her signature Indo-folk feminine aesthetic to confront the harsh realities of the female experience," says **Christine May**, Curator at the Gallery. "She accomplishes this while infusing her work with vibrant colour, delight, and a triumphant or hopeful tone."

Visitors will encounter the raw energy of Johal's works that combine her bold and graphic aesthetic with the tactile charm of textiles within the gallery space. *To Be Something More* offers audiences both beauty and thoughtful consideration to experience during their exploration.

Sandeep Johal is a Vancouver-based artist with a Fine Arts diploma from Langara College and a B Ed. from UBC. She has many notable commissions including projects with the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Mural Festival, Cadillac Fairview, and Downtown Vancouver BIA. Johal has been an artist-in-residence at Burrard Arts Foundation and Indian Summer Festival, and received the 2019 Darpan Magazine Artistic Visionary Award.

An **Opening Reception** with the artist will be held on **Friday, August 22, 2025**, from 6 to 8 pm at the Kelowna Art Gallery. It is free and open to attend.

To Be Something More runs from August 23 to February 1, 2026. It is presented with support from British Columbia Arts Council and Scenic Road Cider Co.

The Kelowna Art Gallery is located at 1315 Water Street in the heart of Kelowna's Culture District. For more information visit kelownaartgallery.com or call 250-762-2226.

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About the Kelowna Art Gallery

The Kelowna Art Gallery engages, inspires, and enriches the community it serves through the exhibition, collection, and interpretation of visual art. Work by Canadian artists, both historical and contemporary, are presented in five distinct exhibition spaces. The Kelowna Art Gallery is invested in the idea that art helps to bring people together; and that life is simply better with art in it. Programs for people of all ages and backgrounds help to instill confidence in ones' creativity and to foster meaningful dialogue on matters important to Canadians.

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