

## **MadArt features local artist with MSA**

*During the month of September, MadArt will be displaying Rey Umali's art.*

**Saint Louis**—The MadArt Gallery will be displaying a local artist with Multiple System Atrophy during the month of September. Rey Umali is a Saint Louis artist who returned to painting after being diagnosed with Multiple System Atrophy (MSA) in September 2015.

His work will be on display and for sale at MadArt Gallery during the month of September, and all proceeds will be donated to Defeat MSA, an organization dedicated to raise awareness and find treatments for this disease. The event is free entry, and there will be a cash bar.

The opening reception will be on Friday, September 1, 2017 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

In addition to proceeds going to Defeat MSA, the MSA Shoe will also be making an appearance at the opening. The MSA Shoe is a tool for spreading MSA awareness, increasing support for MSA patients and their caregivers and fighting MSA by raising vital research dollars.

Before being diagnosed with MSA, Umali left the marketing world to get his Masters in Fine Arts at Fontbonne University. At the start of his second semester, he started getting chronic headaches and dizziness. By the end of the semester, the disease had progressed and affected his driving. He started attending rehab hoping to recover. When local doctors couldn't find a cause for his symptoms, he went to the Mayo Clinic for diagnosis.

After being diagnosed with MSA at the Mayo Clinic, Umali rededicated his life to painting. His motto, "If there is a will, there's a way" has kept him determined to continue painting throughout his life.

"We're really happy that this can bring some awareness to this disease," says Madeline Umali, Umali's daughter. "I'm so proud of my dad. He's showing everyone that just because you have a setback in your life doesn't mean you have to give up the things you love."

MSA is a rare neurological disorder that impairs the body's involuntary functions, including blood pressure, heart rate, bladder function and digestion. Formerly known as Shy-Drager Syndrome, MSA is similar to Parkinson's disease. It's a degenerative disease that usually develops during adulthood. This rare disease is classified by two types: Parkinsonian and Cerebellar. Umali has Cerebellar MSA, meaning the predominant signs and symptoms are lack of muscle coordination. These symptoms include the impairment of movement and coordination; slurred, slow or low-volume speech; visual disturbances, such as blurred or double vision; and difficulty swallowing or chewing. Umali also suffers from some of the general symptoms of MSA, like postural hypotension, urinary and bowel dysfunction, sweating abnormalities, sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction, cardiovascular problems and psychiatric problems.

There is currently no known cause or cure for MSA.

Umali was born in the Philippines in 1960. After his family moved to the United States, he grew up in Saint Louis. He attended Truman State University studying graphic design and marketing. Umali worked in this field for over thirty years. He has received numerous awards including The American Graphic Design Award, The Arrow Award, Quill Awards and The Printing Industries of American Award. In recent years, Umali and his family moved into a handicap accessible home, which is home to his painting studio. He's painted over 100 pieces of art.

For more information, check out [paintingwithmsa.com](http://paintingwithmsa.com) and [defeatmsa.org](http://defeatmsa.org)

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