

Distorted images



My MS symptoms can't be seen by others, so I visualize them through my art.

by May Ling Kopecky



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I experienced my first clear multiple sclerosis symptoms when I was 13 years old. I was diagnosed in 2010, at the age of 15. Due to the “invisible” nature of MS, I was often met with skepticism when I talked about my illness. Many people told me I “looked fine” or that I was too young to be sick. These reactions inspired me to create artwork about my experiences with MS.

I have been painting and drawing since I was a toddler, and I've always been attracted to

highly detailed and intricate work. Since so many of my MS symptoms can't be observed by others, I visualize them through my artwork.

I take photographs of my surroundings and then later paint or draw how I felt. I distort the image to reflect my discomfort: edges are blurred, objects are doubled, sections are faded and spaces are layered and limited. I share these experiences to evoke empathy and a sense of understanding from the person viewing the piece.



Kopecky illustrates the invisible nature of her MS symptoms.

I earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of Minnesota and am currently pursuing a master's of fine arts at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. I have been an art instructor for both adults and children, and I am passionate about advocating for accessibility in academia. Art can act as a form of communication for both spreading MS awareness and educating the public. Through this work, I hope to prompt others to consider just how much can go unseen when looking at another person as well as encourage people with invisible illnesses to advocate for themselves.

May Ling Kopecky lives in Plymouth, Minnesota. When she's not making art, she spends her time playing piano, going on walks with her dog and knitting.

See more of May Ling Kopecky's artwork at maylingkopecky.com and on Instagram at [@mayling.k](https://www.instagram.com/mayling.k).