RPA kidney recipient donates painting

Donor kidney recipient Miguel Lopez this week made a donation of his own, giving a painting by Sydney artists, Gillie and Marc, to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

It’s not the first time he has been though the hospital doors. Mr Lopez first had an essential kidney transplant in 1975 at RPA, only two years after the hospital performed its first living donor transplant.

“When I came to Australia I was one of the first people to receive a live kidney transplant and in those days it was very much a pioneering thing,” Mr Lopez said.

“I feel like I’m now part of the bricks, part of the hallway, part of the memories of the hospital. I’ve seen people that have succeeded and grown in their careers over the years. It’s almost like a family, knowing so many of these doctors who have been around all through my time like Dr Tiller and Dr Roy who was my doctor in 1975,” he said.

While meeting his hero John Travolta at age 11 inspired his life-long love of dance, Mr Lopez has relied on three kidney transplants throughout his life to allow him to pursue his passion.

Mr Lopez’s first two kidney transplants came from his mother (1975) and sister (1985), with the third most recent kidney coming from a deceased donor (2011).

“Because of my mum and sister I was able to live a pretty normal life for a long time and I am really thankful for the change and the opportunity to have full life,” he said.

“I hope this painting can help people think about donation and how important it is for someone to receive that gift of life,” Mr Lopez said.

“My point of view is that education is in front of everything, for people to talk about it, be aware and to do something about it.”

The work by Sydney artists Gillie and Marc Schattner is part of a 2005 series called “Life Can’t Wait” that was developed over a two year period. The series features works and portraits telling the stories of 12 people who were in urgent need of donated organs including kidneys, livers, hearts and corneas.

“Every month, we’d meet with a hopeful candidate at their home. We took a cameraman with us, and spend the day with them: interviewing them on film, drawing them, really trying to find out everything we could,” Gillie Schattner said.

“We’d then paint their second chance at life – what they would do after their transplant,” she said.
The General Manager of RPA, Deborah Willcox, thanked Mr Lopez for his generous donation helping to raise awareness about organ donation.

“Miguel has a long and continuing association with RPA and is much loved by all of the staff. Receiving this art work is a very generous gift and reminds all of us of the generosity of spirit of those who have donated their kidneys to improve the lives of others.”

The painting will be installed in the Medical Foundation Transplantation Unit Ward 9 east.