

BRENT T. WESTON
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Lying comfortably on a strange bed, I was chilling to faint sounds of an Atlanta Braves game broadcast from around the corner. My favorite announcer, Skip Carrey, was calling the balls and strikes between Coca-Cola commercials. A doctor arrived in my room wearing a church suit and tie; my mom also entered. The doctor started probing questions. Just where to begin answering, I had no idea. All I could think of was recently painting a colorful series of established restaurants, diners, and bars in Atlanta. The old guard working tables and multitudes of regular patrons were all on stage. Then, it all suddenly happened...

I asked the doctor about the Braves game. His puzzled eyes looked to the right without really looking at anything. A deep breath from Mom, and I could instantly tell something was wrong. They did not hear a baseball game. His diagnosis was Bipolar combined with Schizoaffective Disorder. He told me to rest, and then left for a few minutes. The Braves game went quiet, so I picked up *The Problem of Pain* by Clyde Staples Lewis. The doctor returned and told me to put down the book. Later, left in silence, I walked the long hallway double-checking for a TV or radio. I wanted the final score to the baseball game. I arrived at a faraway TV room where everyone was watching *Star Trek the Next Generation*. Since then, 1994, I have not been readmitted to a mental hospital.

Previously, as a young adult, "bipolar" was not in my lexicon, and "schizophrenia" was one I feared due to the stigma surrounding it. Words like *mental asylum*, *nervous breakdown*, *straightjacket*, *electroconvulsive therapy*, *lobotomy*, and *suicide* were all frightening and sad. In the United States media today, the words "mental illness" are being used to describe politics, political leaders, political polarity, and the manner in which information is presented in the media itself. Currently, I paint from the wreckage and vestiges of postmodern bipolarity and schizophrenia. I paint with a political voice.

My paintings expose fragmented, split, uncertain, opposite, and contradictory painting styles and schools of thought, yet, political concerns bring my "styles" and "divisions" together under one umbrella. Paintings of animals with architecture in their bellies, paintings of a brief incarceration, studies of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, and paintings of mandalas, simply may not have much in common, yet, current "schizo" and "poles" can still be real and expressed, as well as, combined and contained within my painting. Truth, hope, love, and bound "ceaseless connections" can offer new freedom in the understanding of painting, while making a political statement.