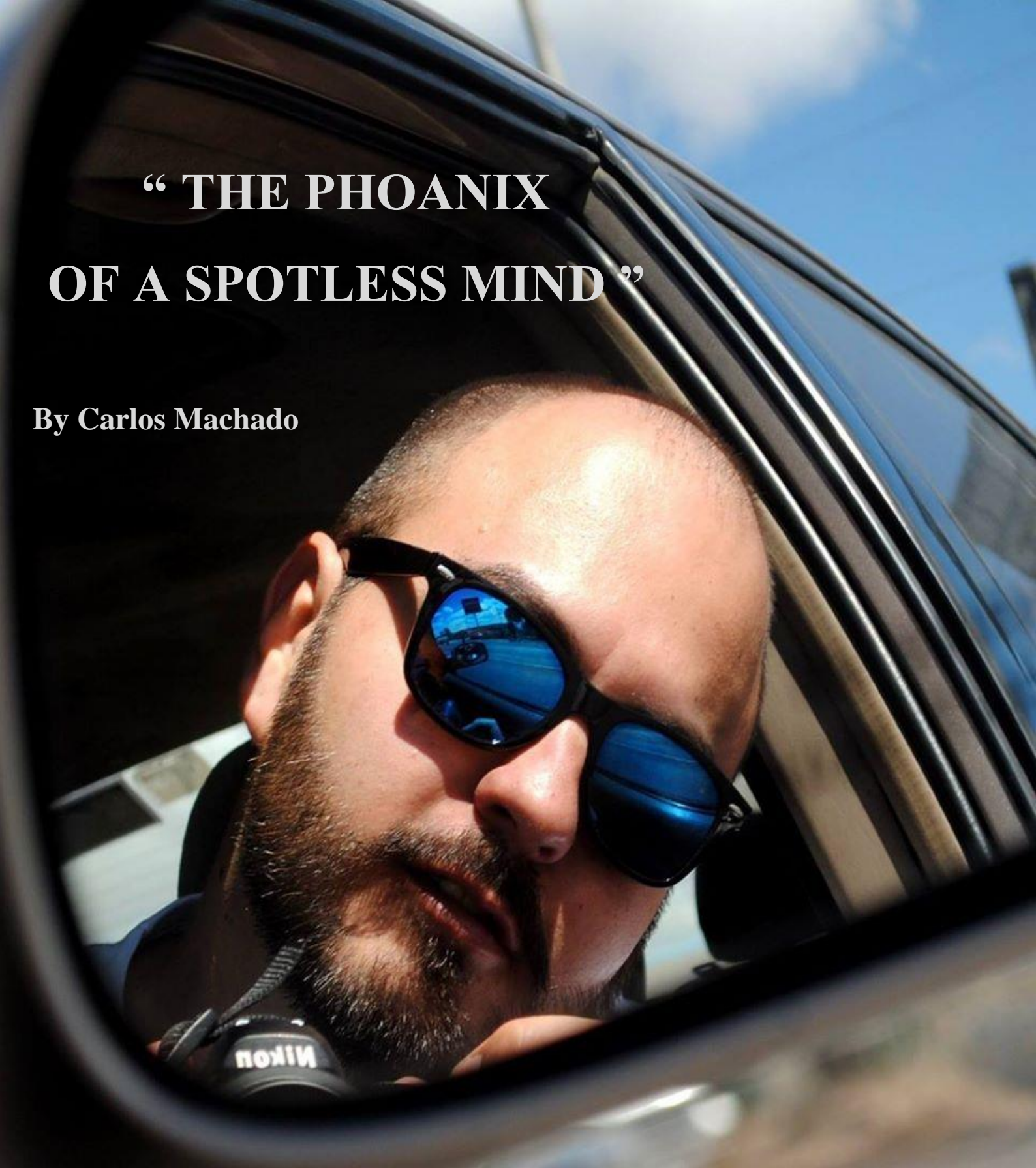


“ THE PHOANIX OF A SPOTLESS MIND ”

By Carlos Machado

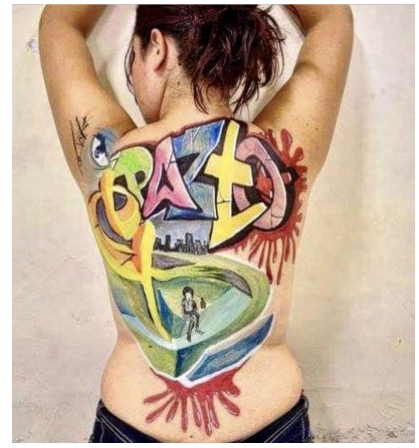




An artist's renaissance

“I came to this world to create.”

Pastoe



Jorge Eduardo Machado is a Mexican artist, who now just goes by 'Pastoe', his artistic identity. Pastoe's childhood was tough. He was belittled, despised and demonized. All his thoughts and memories just vanished like a fragile snowflake in the heat. He doesn't recall anything before he turned 12 years of age. It is like Pastoe was just put in the world as a fully formed person. His stuttering didn't let him to express himself in a normal way. He was bullied and reviled by his classmates; mimicking his stuttering, mocking his memory lapses. They were implacable, they had no mercy.

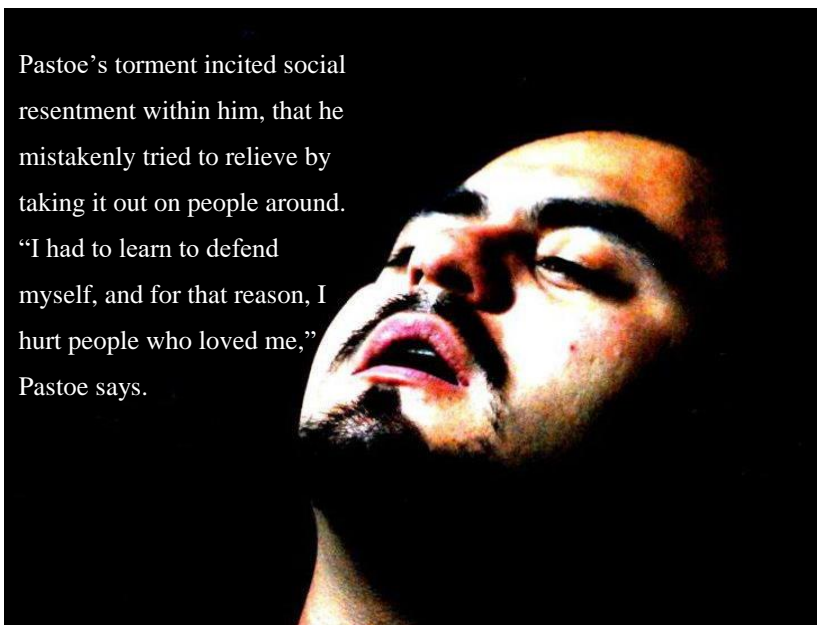
He used to have many friends who ended up leaving him to his fate. His parents looked desperately for a remedy to stop his inner agony but they knew what he had even before confirmed. He was bipolar, as well as his mother.

People with mental illness, their relatives, friends and health professionals push a heavy stone uphill: the social stigma around mental health. One of the hardest things about bipolarity is learning to live with its effects, characterized by depressive and manic episodes. Depression can include excessive mood reduction,

insomnia and lack of passion about doing any activity. Mania, is a period with high and sometimes irritable moods, causing exaggerated self-esteem, decrease in the need for sleep and inappropriate behaviour.

Diagnosed bipolar patients tend to struggle to connect with society, mainly due to people's lack of mental health knowledge, as well as the conspicuous peaks of the polarized moods that rule their behaviour. They need to have a personal support to handle the ups and downs this condition brings to their lives. Pastoe found it in his parents and brother.

Pastoe's torment incited social resentment within him, that he mistakenly tried to relieve by taking it out on people around. "I had to learn to defend myself, and for that reason, I hurt people who loved me," Pastoe says.

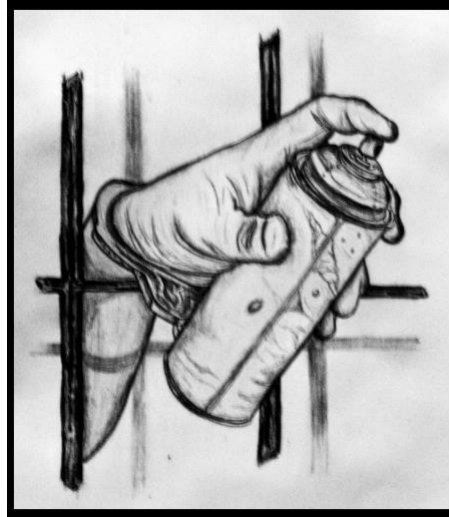


**"My family pushed me
on the right track,"
Pastoe says.**

They were committed to love him and their love marked him deeply. A protective and humble father, a disciplined and

empathetic mother, who knew what bipolar was like, and a sometimes reserved but still naively optimistic little brother who loves him and held him upright in his fight.

Following diagnosis, he was medicated with antidepressants and antipsychotics. He lists the drugs he is currently on: “quetiapine, magnesium valproate and lamotrigine.” Pastoe has been stable for two years now but he cannot forget the four times he was held in psychiatric hospitals for several days. One was *San Juan de Dios Hospital* in Guadalajara Mexico at age 24 for a depressive episode. Two times at *Fray Bernardino Hospital* in Mexico City; the first at age of 25 for a manic episode and the second



at 26 for depression. And finally, once at *Zoquipan Hospital* in Guadalajara Mexico at age 27 for a suicide attempt.

Pastoe was afflicted by the myriad deleterious effects of bipolarism. He forgot simple things, like taking his medication on time, which led to relapses.



His learning process at school was getting worse. He was unable to work. Social relationships fell apart. But then, a silver lining appeared, art came into his life.

“The best thing I've gotten out of my condition are my crazy creative ideas.”

Pastoe says.

He moved to *Nahuales*, a house/art gallery in Downtown Guadalajara, inhabited by artists



Here, he was finally comfortable. Everyone living there shared their thoughts and appreciation of life and he was finally heard and understood by people apart from his family. A sense of relief he had when realized it was ok to be and to think differently. It was bliss.

It is known that, through art, people affected by a mental disorder can not only express themselves in an easier way, but are better able to recognize their emotions, which is essential for the socializing process. Pastoe received art therapy while counselling when he was

psychiatrically secluded. Painting workshops helped him to wake up his inner artist.

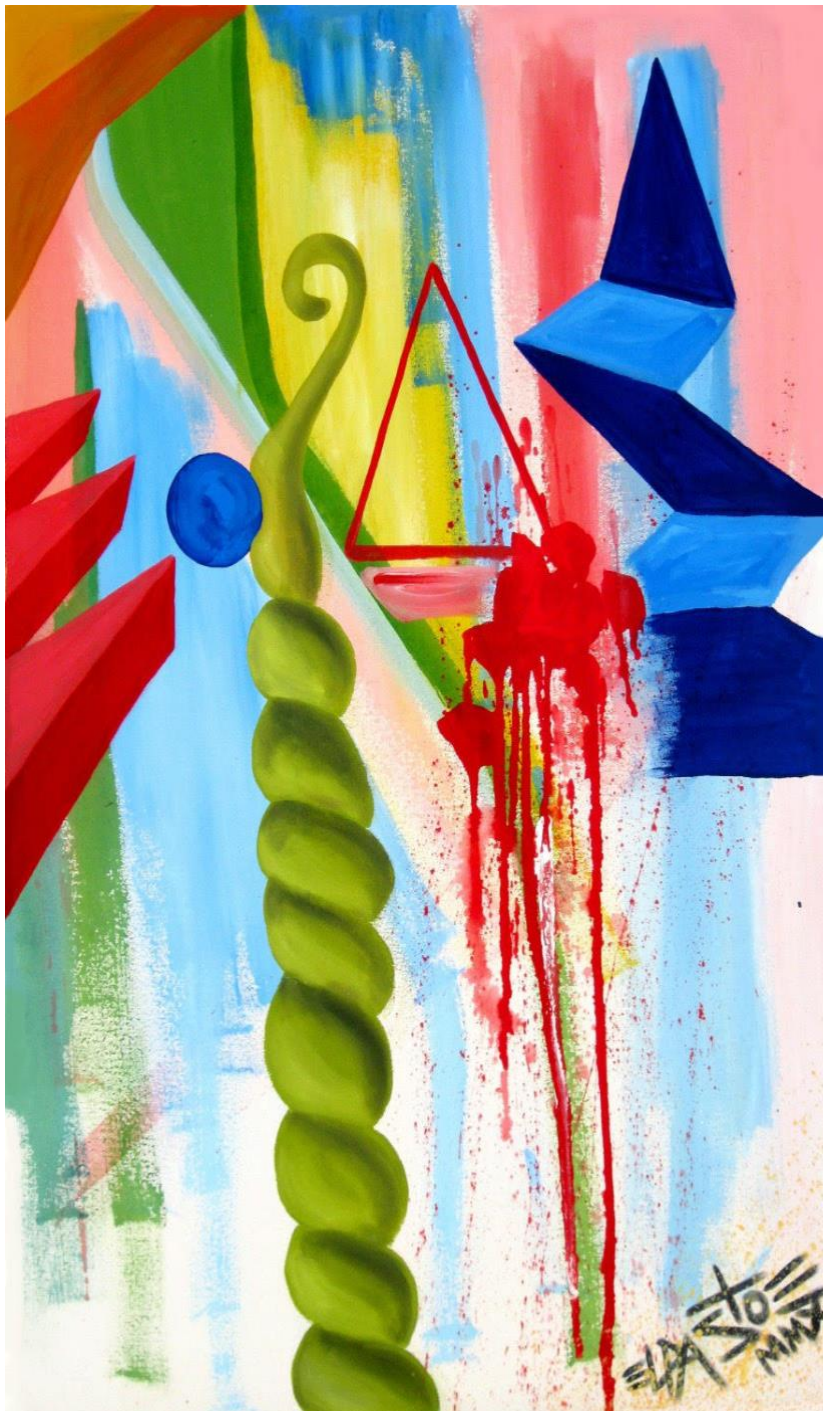
Pastoe's first encounter with art was through his grandmothers, both of them painters. Such a big inspiration that soon was brought to school. He drew and sketched everything he could.

“My notebooks were like authentic art catalogs,”

Pastoe says.

He did bodypainting and underground graffiti since his teenage years as an act of rebellion inspired by a dystopian vision of a decadent society, a motive inspired by *Banksy Collective*, his idols.

The Collective is a group of British graffiti artists, widely recognized for their crude criticism of society. Pastoe was an emerging artist, longing to be heard and to contribute in the social renaissance. Stripes and doodles, colour and paint, were now the way to connect to people. Graffiti was his path to develop himself as an urban artist.





Pastoe faced hard times in the subculture world of graffiti artists. Being chased by the gangs of a low-income neighborhood to mark territory, having to brawl to get the respect of the slum, being ruled by skid row, and a very concerned family made him decide to leave the streets and to start studying which led him to the School of Arts. Now he knows his real calling.

**“I came to this world to create,”
Pastoe says.**

Pastoe’s portfolio speaks for itself. Since his career began, he has attended more than 50 collective art exhibitions. He has painted hundreds of human bodies and a Volkswagen Beetle.

His greatest professional achievement came as a pair, two world records, the biggest graffiti in the world on a wall of fabric in 2010 and 2011, named *Graffiti por la Paz* or ‘Graffiti for peace’. 2 kilometers of messages of peace. He collaborated with 800 local artists who, together, created the massive masterpiece. “We made these records a social movement for peace, a demand for a halt to the violence in Mexico.” Pastoe says.



Pastoe first came to Canada in 2007 to study English in Kingston Ont., where, he says, experienced nothing but kindness and acceptance. After returning to Mexico for a few years, he moved to the Lower Mainland in British Columbia in 2019 with his brother.

“What I love about this country is the respect most of Canadians have towards different kind of people.” Says Pastoe, who visits friends and family in Guadalajara Mexico.



One of Pastoe's biggest challenges and his main goal now is to educate people about mental disorders and how to help them integrate in society through art. Bipolarity is still taboo. "People reject us, fear us, avoid us, denigrate us. They make fun of us," Pastoe says, urging everyone to open their minds and to read about mental health. We can save a life by divulging the message, by listening, by empathizing, he says. And for bipolar people, he adds

"Do not waste your talents and always do what you love."

He'd like to break a new world record soon and keep doing graffiti, "When graffiti comes into your life, it lasts forever," Pastoe says.

In Canada he can see opportunities to go beyond, to help others, to change the society in a constructive manner. Canada inspired him to broaden his horizons, to embrace the multiculturalism that makes Canadian society as rich and vibrant as his Graffiti. It shows, says Pastoe, "What an immigrant can contribute to this great nation."

