

Dan Patterson @ Westmont College

I lost myself just now

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

USING METAL CRAFT AND A CLEVER USE OF TECHNOLOGY, artist Dan Patterson has transformed scientific ideas into beautiful works of art. Six of his sculptures exploring the many twists and turns of Tourette's syndrome are currently on display at Westmont College through May 8th, 2010. Two additional pieces will be added to the sculpture garden in January.

"All of the pieces I've done this year are on Tourette's," said Patterson, who was diagnosed with Tourette's at the age of 23, "but I didn't want people to feel like I was unloading on them or that it was all about personal pain. There's enough of that out there. I hope the pieces educate people, but also invite them to laugh about it like I do."

A highly creative individual, Patterson learned to manage his active mind from an early age through art and music. "I have an overactive, zany creativity. It's one of the positive side effects of having Tourette's. But there are others, too, like being obsessive-compulsive. My mother

got us onto an early path to channel our creativity," he said.

Patterson grew up in Irvine, California but moved around frequently from the time he was in junior high. "I loved working with my hands as a kid. Instead of buying us toys, my mom bought us the materials to make our own. It gave me a real sense of ownership over the things I made."

With a natural bent for 3D art and sculpture, Patterson went on to earn a BFA in Studio Art with an emphasis in sculpture from Hope College in Western Michigan.

Finding his way back to California in 2001, Patterson is now the owner of Santa Barbara Forge and Iron, an ornamental metal and blacksmithing company. "I love being in business. I need that anchor to keep me from being in a dream-state too much," he said. "The high standards I hold for myself in the craft-side of working with

metal translates easily into my creative work."

Patterson is currently working toward an MFA from the Transart Institute, an international low-residency art program. He spends one month in Berlin during the summer and one week in New York during the winter working closely with fellow students and professors. He spends

the rest of his time bringing his ideas to life. "I really love seeing something I've created come together," he said. "I try to have a theoretical groundwork for each piece that's interesting enough to keep viewers interested for longer."

In addition to several large-scale, free-standing steel pieces which visually address the neural processes behind the seemingly-erratic behavior of Tourette's, Patterson has

created a sensory light installation using LED lights and motion-sensors. "Nothing happens unless someone walks through it," he said. "The viewer becomes an exacerbating factor for that instant, setting off tick-like flashes from the lights. It shows people how they're engaged in and even necessary for the piece. It's the same with Tourette's."

In addition to Patterson's sculptures, the Reynolds Gallery is also hosting an



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Tourette's #4 (I lost myself just now) by Dan Patterson

exhibition of *Gee's Bend Quilters: Selections from Paulson Press* on display through December 18th. The exhibition celebrates the uniquely quilted work of four African American women from rural Gee's Bend, Alabama.

Westmont College is located at 955 La Paz Rd. For more information, call 565-6162 or visit www.reynoldsgallery.org.