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Peter Bruun exhibits 1000 love letters

By [YOOSOO YEO](#) | February 28, 2019  

Peter Bruun is a Denmark-born artist and current Baltimore resident. After losing his 24-year-old daughter Elisif Janis to a heroin overdose in February 2014, he turned his devastation into art with the overwhelming support of those around him. His loss became the start of the development of a new exhibition, though he was working on his previous exhibition *Autumn Leaves* at the time of her passing.

In 2016, Bruun started to collect love letters from various sources including friends, family, strangers, historical figures and even his own past. He then created unique drawings inspired by each letter until he completed one thousand pieces in total. Each piece of art is made up of the love letter itself (or an excerpt of it) and Bruun's personal artistic interpretation of what the love letter conveys.

All of Bruun's artwork is connected through the common theme of a combination of the detailed lines and broad strokes of his artwork and the handwritten part of the letter, but they also manage to each stand alone and are distinctive in their own way. The thousand drawings each have their own voices, but all of them convey one powerful message: love.

The exhibit is organized around eight themes that deal with different dimensions of love: *Forever Family*, *Honeysuckle Words*, *Cupid's Arrow*, *Such Sweet Sorrow*, *Wild Horses*, *Drive All Night*, *Love Thy Self* and *Ten Thousand Things*. The exhibition itself takes place on two sites — Maryland Art Place and Area 405 — and features free public events at each site for each theme. Each event features singers, artists and writers whose work, stories and performances reaffirm the ideas surrounding each theme.

With two events left, *Love Thy Self* is the next and penultimate exhibit that will take place on Thursday, March 7 at the Maryland Art Place from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

In this particular exhibit, audiences will get the chance to hear directly from the people whose letters inspired Peter's drawings. With the tag, "Love Thy Self: Where the healing power of love begins," all of the letters are of hope and are inspired by the idea of finding love from within and from one's self.

One specific piece that I thought was particularly poignant was *264*, in which the note seems to take the form of a poem Bruun wrote to his daughter while she was in the midst of struggling with her addiction.

The note evokes a sentiment that all parents should feel toward their child — one of unconditional love, regardless of the circumstances. After writing a list of actions that could potentially diminish the strength of love, Bruun then ends each stanza of the note with either "I love you" or "I still love you," showing the power of love and its persistence through hard times.

While I was reading the note, I was touched by Bruun's unwavering love toward his daughter. The drawing connected to the note contains simplistic strokes that hold a firm shape, conveying the constant paternal love and support he gave his daughter.

Another particularly touching piece was *158*, a drawing under the *Love Thy Self* theme. For this piece, Bruun's drawing was inspired by a woman named Gloria who wrote a letter to "little Gloria."

The first part of the letter is placed on top of the page and reads, “I am glad that you are with me. Because of you, I have so much energy to laugh, play, dance, and learn.” The second half, placed on the bottom, reads, “I promise to continue to laugh, play, create, and love life each day.” In the middle are indistinct blue and green lines that form intertwined human figures — perhaps symbolic of Gloria’s connection to her younger self.

As Bruun explains on his exhibition website, “The choice of green and blue are intended to convey that sense of duality... a sense of two figures together, perhaps sitting together and/or playing.” He wanted to bring out “a kind of fresh, spring-like quality: innocent.”

I know it is often easy for people to forget to take a moment for themselves and focus solely on their thoughts. In the midst of chaos that sometimes prevents me from stopping and truly enjoying what is around me, the drawing gave me a sense of reassurance and spoke to me. It told me to find treasures during every moment of my life, no matter how hard, and to live just like the younger, innocent me who loved myself unconditionally.

For anyone who has loved before or is loving now, which really is everyone, this exhibition is a must-see.

The exhibit will be on view until March 17 at both the Maryland Art Place and Area 405.

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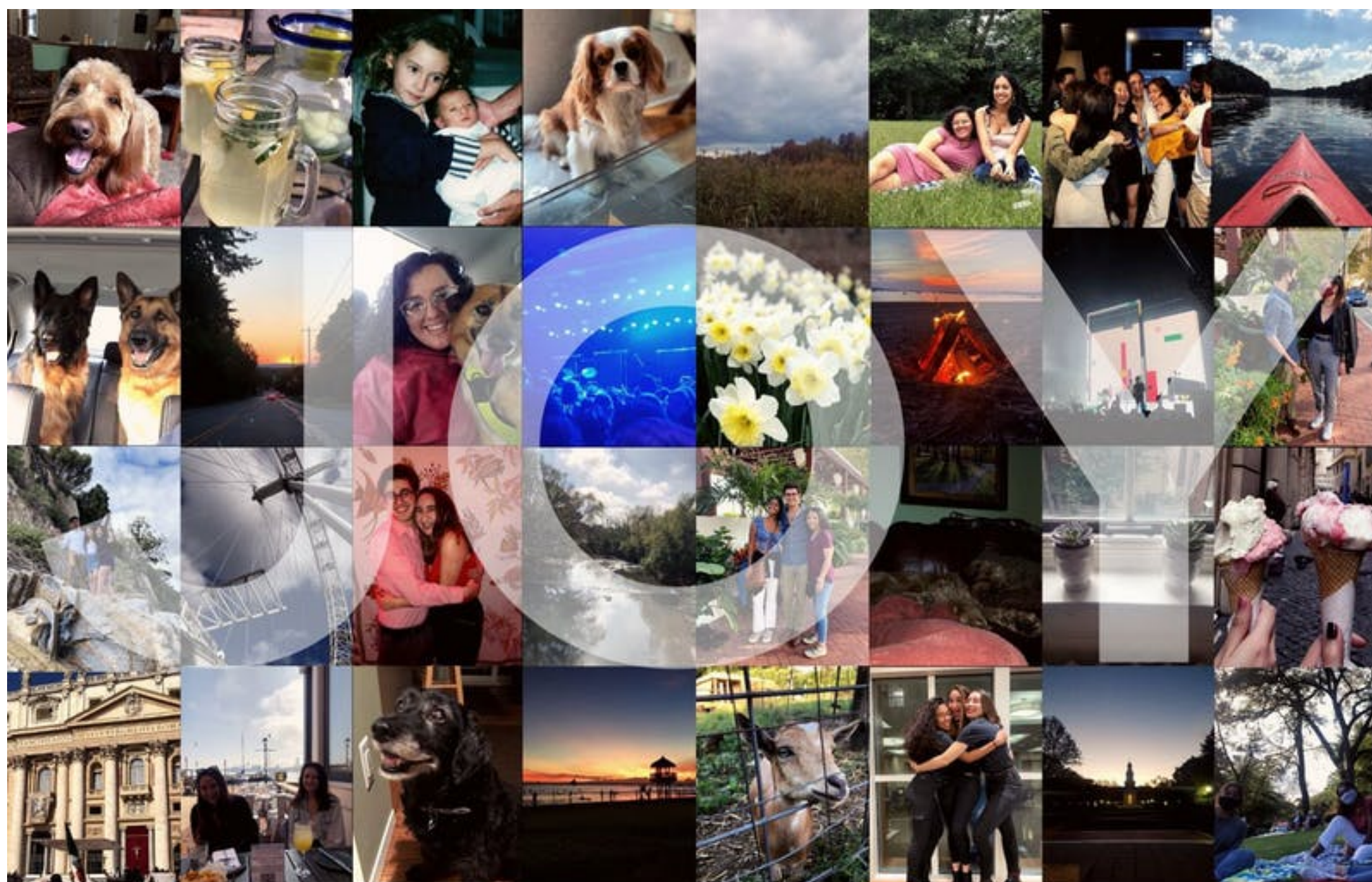
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