



This Artist Battles Depression (And Metro Delays) With Roller Coaster Doodles

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By DCist contributor Blake Richardson

Mid-drawing, Brody Rose fixated on an image in the Washington Post Express, trapped in the trance of creating. He did not want to leave the Metro. “I’m probably the only person on the train who doesn’t have a problem when there’s a delay,” he says.

An associate creative director at HDZG, Rose started drawing in 2010 to fight the nervous knots in his stomach that came when he began the high-pressure creative job. He was diagnosed with depression in 2000, and he wanted to do something productive on his 30-minute commute from Dupont to Rockville.

“When you’re in a depression, everything is sort of glossed over,” he said. “There’s no spark that kind of ignites the creativity.”

So Rose embraced a new puzzle: Fitting a roller coaster into an image from the Washington Post Express. Sometimes, he placed pictured people in the cars. Other times, he carved the landscape with the coaster’s loops and curves. He only deciphered his drawing’s meaning upon completion.

Drawing was fun, relaxing, and best of all, low pressure. If he made a mistake, there was always another copy of Express nearby. “It was a life changer, truly,” Rose said. He grew to love his mornings on the Metro.

“My commute to work used to be something that I was intimidated by because it was taking me to this place where I was required to perform at a high level,” Rose said. “And I certainly was, had times where I was scared to go to work. And the simplicity of sketching these roller coasters really sparked my confidence for the day.”

It was natural for Rose to create roller coasters. He has been captivated by them since he was seven years old. His grandmother Helen Strangberg, whom he called Tutu, took him to his first amusement park, Six Flags Great America, where he didn’t ride a coaster.

“I was just as happy watching them,” Rose said. “Kind of this organic structure/sculpture or piece of art that you can ride. I remember watching the car on the train slither through this path, and being able to watch it over and over.”

When he came home, he started drawing them, then graduated to sculpting them out of popsicle sticks. He joined the American Coaster Enthusiasts in middle school and took trips to see rollercoasters with Tutu and his parents.

When he was in college, Rose built a rollercoaster from a block of wood, dubbed it the “Cardinal” and gifted it to Tutu. He thought about becoming an engineer to spend a career building roller coasters, but he decided on Art and Design instead to tap into his creativity.

Three months after graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Rose “couldn’t get up from the chair,” his mom, Sue Rose said. When Rose learned he had depression, his parents knew very little about it. But they resolved to



learn by getting involved with the local NAMI chapter in Kenosha County, Wisconsin. Now, Jack Rose is the chapter's co-president.

"At least to know that you weren't alone, that it happens to a lot, a lot of people, that's how it helped us get through it all," Sue Rose said.

That's why Brody Rose has resolved to be open about his depression. And because when he tells friends and co-workers about what he's been through, he's frequently met with a personal response: Me too.

"Everybody feels like they're alone," Jack Rose said. "And you don't have to be alone."

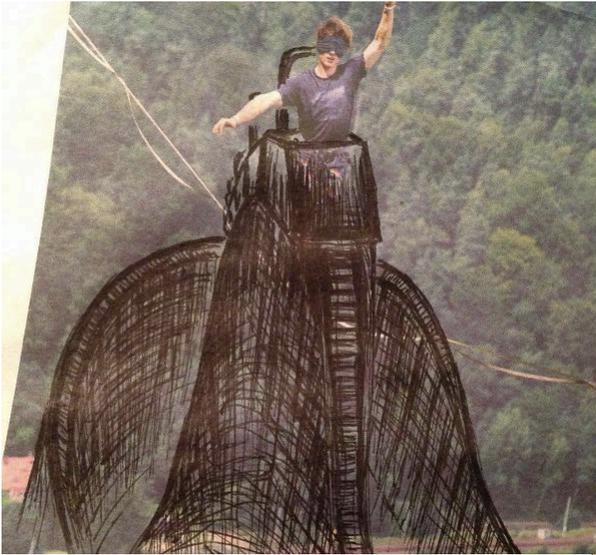
Brody Rose still has all his coaster drawings — now numbering almost 500. The company he works for expanded to Dupont, so Rose doesn't have a long commute anymore, but he still draws whenever he has downtime.

Friends have told Rose he should publish a book, or put them on display in a gallery or museum. Rose said regardless of what he does with his drawings, he will use them a platform to speak out about his depression and end the stigma against mental illness.

"It's way more common than people are led to believe," Rose said. "And the more we can kind of talk about it and bring it out in the open, it becomes less intimidating... That's really the only thing that's saved me is talking about it."

Find Rose's drawings as @the_coaster_doodler on Instagram and @CoasterDoodler on Twitter.

Contact the [author](#) of this article or email tips@dcist.com with further questions, comments or tips.

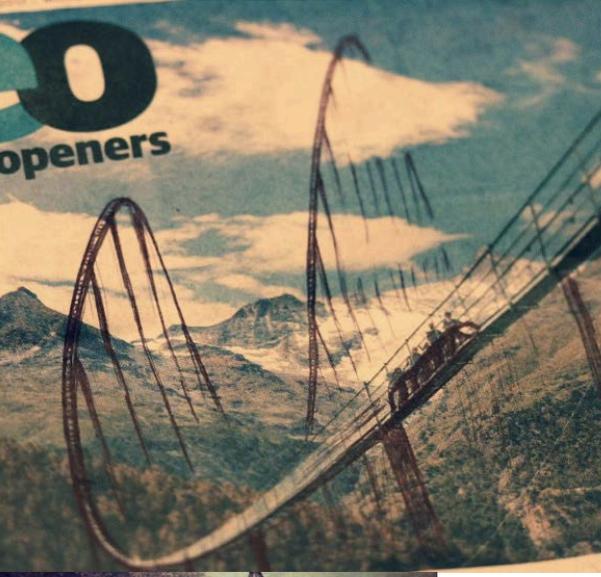


es at Ben's Chili Bowl



Artist Aniekian Udofia, left, works on his new mural Friday at Ben's Chili Bowl, in an alley off U Street NW.

of Maple Heights, Ohio, as
 took photographs Friday of
 a's work.
 "It's you in the gut, man,"
 said Udofia, who is a friend
 of Ben's.



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