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The Philadelphia Inquirer

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By Victoria Donohoe
For The Inquirer

Life, light

Amid the massive 21st-century drift we're seeing toward the mechanization of life and the dehumanization of man, what could be more welcome than Brian H. Peterson's soothing photographs exploring nature, rhythm, and light in "Human Nature," now at Pennsylvania State University's Great Valley campus in Malvern. Peterson is chief curator at the James A. Michener Art Museum and author of the recent book *The Smile at the Heart of Things*, excerpts from which accompany images in this highly personal exhibition.

Gesture freed of descriptive detail often signifies landscape, with its delicate textural variations of plant life, its creeks where darkness thrusts into light in shadowy yet luminous scenes. Insightful portraits also are notable, especially those of the Lower Gwynedd artist's wife, Helen.

The show continually touches a vein of experience in its 40-plus photos, the most recent documenting explorations of aging, illness, and transcendence. Ultimately, the appealing thing about the work is its optimism, and the very commendable relevance of Peterson's artistry to quiet contemplation.

The Gallery at Penn State Great Valley, 30 E. Swedesford Rd., Malvern. To Oct. 1.
Mon-Fri 9-6. Free. 610-648-3219

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