

A RARE DISPLAY OF BEAUTY, LOVE, AND MYSTERY AS WINTERTHUR PRESENTS *THE LOOK OF LOVE: EYE MINIATURES FROM THE SKIER COLLECTION*

Loan Exhibition Open to the Public September 21, 2013–January 5, 2014

Winterthur, DE—Discover a fragile art form that whispers the stories of romances lost and found at *The Look of Love: Eye Miniatures from the Skier Collection*. On loan from the Birmingham Museum of Art, this unique exhibition of hand-painted portraits of individual eyes ensconced in exquisite jewelry settings opens to Winterthur visitors on Saturday, September 21, 2013, at 10:00 am.

Sometimes called lover's-eye jewelry, the history of these delicate watercolors intricately dabbed on tiny pieces of ivory dates back to the late 18th century. According to lore, the trend began with a forbidden love affair between the young Prince of Wales and Maria Fitzherbert in 1784. Pursuing a woman whom he was forbidden to marry, both by law and by his father, the Prince secretly proposed marriage with a piece of jewelry containing a small portrait of his own eye and won her heart. This romantic gesture captured the fancy of the aristocracy of the time, who embraced the trend for decades.

Today it is believed only 1,000 pieces still exist, and Dr. David and Mrs. Nan Skier's carefully curated collection is considered to be the largest in the world. The intimate portraits are set into elaborately jeweled brooches, rings, locket, pendants, small boxes, toothpick cases, and other tiny tokens of affection. The fad produced some unique and beautiful jewelry pieces, which are considered to be some of the rarer types of antique jewelry.

The stories of the lovers who exchanged them are virtually impossible to trace today. Even in their own time, the eye portraits might only be recognized by persons intimately familiar with one another. Winterthur guests are invited to imagine their own stories of lifelong love, forbidden love, or clandestine love as they study the delicately beautiful renderings.

"How poignant it is that each eye represents an actual person and an actual story of a long-ago love or bereavement, now lost to the passage of time," says Mrs. Skier.

Winterthur has developed a small accompanying exhibit, *Winterthur Looks at Love*, that brings the art of eye miniatures into the 20th century and looks at some modern-day examples of this extraordinary artwork.

The Look of Love: Eye Miniatures from the Skier Collection is open to the public in Winterthur's East Gallery from Saturday, September 21, 2013, to Sunday, January 5, 2014. A special *Look of Love* Member Preview Day will be held on Friday, September 20.

All exhibitions are included with admission and are free to Winterthur Members.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic garden, and research library for the study of American art and material culture—offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year. General admission includes a tour of some of the most notable spaces in the 175-room house, as well as access to the Winterthur Garden and Galleries, special exhibitions, a narrated tram tour (weather permitting), the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens, and the Enchanted Woods children's garden. \$18 adults; \$16 for students and seniors; \$5 for ages 2–11. Tickets are valid for two consecutive days.

Museum hours

10 am–5 pm, Tuesday–Sunday

Winterthur, located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1, is closed Mondays (except during Yuletide), Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883, 302.888.4600, or TTY 302.888.4907, or visit winterthur.org.

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On Tuesday, October 22, Winterthur will host a companion lecture to *Look of Love*, "Lust and Love: The Eye Miniature with Elle Shushan," from 4:30 to 5:30 pm in the Roturnda. *Members free. Included with admission. Special admission rate of \$13 applies after 3:30 pm.*

The Look of Love: Eye Miniatures from the Skier Collection has been organized by the Birmingham Museum of Art. The installation at Winterthur is sponsored by Dr. Richard C. Weiss and Dr. Sandra R. Harmon-Weiss, with additional assistance from Pam and Jim Alexander, Laurel Riegel, and Coleman and Susan Townsend.

For more information, call 800.448.3883 or visit winterthur.org/lookoflove.

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Gold oval pendant surrounded by seed pearls, England, ca. 1830. Dimensions: $1\frac{7}{8}$ (with hanger) \times $1\frac{3}{8}$ \times $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. David Skier. Photo courtesy of Winterthur.