

The Look of Love: Eye Miniatures from the Skier Collection

MAY 17 – AUGUST 24, 2014

Cargill Gallery | Free exhibition



Gold oval pendant surrounded by seed pearls, ca. 1830, Brown right eye with clouds.
Purchased from Edith Weber, New York.

MINNEAPOLIS, MAY 6, 2014

This summer, a unique exhibition featuring hand-painted miniature portraits of individual eyes is on view at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA). These unusual and exquisitely crafted objects, including jewelry and accessories, date from the late 18th- through early 19th century England. A trend that began with Britain's Prince of Wales (later George IV) and his mistress Maria Fitzherbert, clandestine lovers exchanged these customized tokens depicting one another's eyes, recognizable only to intimates. "The Look of Love" presents a rare opportunity to see 98 exceptional examples of these deeply personal artworks, all from the Skier collection-- considered to be the largest collection of its kind.

Finely crafted in miniature and set in exquisite forms, both decorative and functional, each tiny eye portrait harbors enchanting stories of secret

romance and love lost. Lavishly adorned with jewels, the portraits are set into brooches, rings, lockets, pendants, small boxes, and toothpick cases.

Fewer than a 1,000 "lover's eyes" are thought to exist today. The largest single collection belongs to the Skiers of Birmingham, Alabama. David Skier, an eye surgeon, and his wife, Nan, have been collecting eye miniatures since 1993.



Rose gold oval ring surrounded by a blue enamel border containing ten small and two large diamonds enclosed in a border of natural split pearls, ca. 1790, Brown left eye. Purchased from Edith Weber, New York

The exhibition is accompanied by a full color, hardbound catalogue of the same name, edited by Dr. Graham C. Boettcher, The William Cary Hulsey Curator of American Art, and published by D Giles Ltd., London. An essay by Elle Shushan sets the historical scene and examines the role of lover's eyes in the broader context of Georgian and early Victorian portrait miniatures. Boettcher looks at the language and symbolism of these tokens and their jeweled settings. Available in the museum's Store for \$35.

"The Look of Love: Miniatures from the Skier Collection" is organized by the Birmingham Museum of Art.

Collectors Nan and David Skier will be attending "The Look of Love" on May 15 and are available for interviews.

Press Contacts

Anne-Marie Wagener, (612) 870-3280; awagener@artsmia.org

Tammy Pleshek, (612) 870-3171; tpleshek@artsmia.org

Emma Bauer, (612) 870-6364; ebauer@artsmia.org

About The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Home to over 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—the MIA links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration. The 2013 fiscal year marked the highest attendance in the almost 100 year history of the MIA with 679,357 visitors.

General admission to the MIA is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum hours: Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit artsmia.org.