

A Thousand Lovers' Eyes by Lorraine Loots

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A Thousand Lovers' Eyes by Lorraine Loots: a contemporary take on 18th-century Europe's most sentimental jewellery.

CAPE TOWN, South Africa: Internationally acclaimed miniaturist Lorraine Loots has spent the past three years researching, planning and orchestrating her latest project, *A Thousand Lovers' Eyes*, which is to be a collection of 1000 miniature watercolour eye paintings set in solid gold pendants. On Valentine's Day, 14th February 14, 2020, *A Thousand Lovers' Eyes* will be launched online at lorraineloots.com. Loots was inspired to begin this series when she was gifted an empty heirloom locket from her mother on her 30th birthday. Wanting to place a miniature painting in the locket, she found the right subject matter a year later, when her son was born. She decided to paint one of his bright blue eyes and place it in the pendant, and this sparked the idea to create a contemporary ode to the historical tradition of Lover's Eye paintings.

In 18th-century Britain and Europe, the beloved would be presented with a delicate, jewel-like painting of their beau's eyes, and often these pearl-encrusted, gold-bound eyes rested on clavicles or were placed close to the wearer's heart. This custom of gifting precious miniature eyes to someone dear is given a contemporary makeover in *A Thousand Lover's Eyes*. As art historians believe that only a 1000 of these intimate eye paintings exist, Loots has pledged to paint a correlating number of miniature eyes over the next decade in order to accentuate the precious nature of these pendants. Clients can commission Loots to paint the eyes of lovers, friends or family members.

Loots has exhibited her miniature paintings internationally to great acclaim, and has published three books detailing her work, but this will be the artist's first foray into jewellery. She collaborated with Carla Maxine Germann - a Sydney-based Capetonian jewellery designer - to make these bespoke pendants. Etched into each gold pendant are tiny lines that reference the *ouroboros*, the serpent eating its own tail, which is one of the oldest mystical symbols in the world. The simple circular shape of the *Lover's Eyes* is imbued with meaning, as for centuries across a myriad of various beliefs and traditions, circles have been used to depict the zodiac, the sun, cycles of life and death, as well as infinite love.

For *A Thousand Lover's Eyes*, clients have the option of nine carat white, yellow, and rose gold and three different lengths of chain. Engraved at the back of the pendant in Loots' handwriting will be a specified date of your choosing, the number of the piece (1/1000), and Loots' signature. Pendants are 12 mm in diameter, complemented by a 1.16 mm fine Italian-made Trace Chain with a lobster clasp. The tiny teardrop-shaped bail on top of the pendant symbolises both tears of joy and mourning.

Each painting is sealed with archival varnish, set in a solid gold pendant, and then encased in Sapphire domed glass. All works will be made to order and will never be recreated or released as print editions. Each piece is an original watercolour painting on acid-free archival Canson Montval 310 gsm paper. Visit lorraineloots.com to book a painting time slot, and supply the reference pictures for each eye. The estimated delivery date is roughly 8-12 weeks from date of order.

The starting cost per unit will be \$1800 (USD).

Bio

Loots started her career as a miniaturist in 2013 with her first series, *365 Paintings for Ants* in which she painted one miniature watercolour a day for a year. Before the opening of this exhibition, every painting had already been sold. Her next series *365 Postcards for Ants* was themed around Cape Town, and by the end of 2014, she had painted 730 miniatures in total, each of which was sent to new homes around the world. In 2015, Loots shifted her focus, and began painting only during the week. *100 Paintings for Ants* had four themes which correspond with certain days of the week: Microcosm Mondays (space-inspired), Tiny Tuesdays (vintage books), Fursdays (animals) and Free Fridays (for wide-ranging subject matter).

In July 2015, Loots had her third solo show in New York, and this international debut was wildly successful. Soon after she gave birth to her son, she exhibited in Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Chicago, Singapore, Sydney, and London, garnering impressive media interest along the way. Lorraine's work has been featured on *CNN*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Mail*, *Colossal*, *Buzzfeed* and *Gizmodo* among many others.

Lorraine Loots lives in Cape Town with her husband, her son and their dog.

- by Leora Joy Jones