

D. GOTH HEARTS OF STONE

IT'S FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING AND Diana Goth is in her garage, painting. Hour after hour she works, completing one piece, then another. Suddenly she realizes that it's morning—she's been painting all night. For Goth, the experience of painting through the night is not new. But the reason she does it now is new, and a welcome change from what originally compelled her to paint all night.

On a cul-de-sac in a quiet neighborhood, people often get to know each other well. So it was with Goth and her neighbor, Laurie. They had become close friends over the years, and shared many of the same interests and experiences raising their children.

When Goth and her family moved to Orange County, the two women remained close. They met on a monthly basis with two other friends, and the four of them would celebrate Christmas with a special gathering. It was while Goth was living in Orange County that Laurie was diagnosed with cancer. Faced with her illness, the four women became even closer, cherishing their monthly gatherings. By Christmas of 1996 they had much to celebrate: Laurie's cancer was in remission.



That year Laurie brought a gift to each of the special women who had given so much of themselves to the friendship. To Goth, she gave a watercolor set. She knew Goth had studied art all her life and loved

one thought she would celebrate. She presented Laurie with a colorful collection of forty-five hearts, each signifying a year in her friend's life, each different from the rest, all laid out like a mosaic on canvases. Their gathering that year had been a celebration in many ways, but it was short-lived.

Laurie's death was a painful loss to Goth, and painting became therapeutic for her. She often began to paint after her children went to bed, and many times worked until early morning. Seeing the lights on in her garage became so familiar to her neighbors that they began to stop by at all hours to chat or to see if she needed anything, or just to make sure everything was all right. The friendships that developed during those long hours sustained Goth through the difficult times and, combined with her painting, helped her through her grief.

One day, while collecting beach rocks, Goth found a rock that looked like a heart cracked in two. She took it home and began to paint it. Rather than seeing the flaws in the rock as an obstacle, she incorporated the intricacies of the cracks into her

paint, but that she had not painted for quite a while. Moved by her friend's gift, Goth's first painting was in honor of Laurie's forty-fifth birthday, a milestone that no

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design. That first rock was the beginning of what would become *Hearts of Stone*, a uniquely individual expression of the different experiences of one's life, all centered around the heart. As she experimented with different stones and then with tiles, she realized that the asymmetrical sections created by the cracks in the surface gave them a one-of-a-kind look and character. "The pieces have to have flaws," she explains as she looks at the colorful tiles spread before her. "It's a celebration of our own imperfections."

Goth's lifelong interest in art has given her a creative outlet as well as a reason and the means to reach out to others. She became involved with a local home-school program, teaching art history to small children. She designed a "Meet the Masters" course, in which they studied the works of great painters. After becoming familiar with the techniques, colors, and style of each artist, the students would use what they had learned to create their own works of art. Goth says that as a teacher she was tempted to give too much guidance: "You want them to go in a direction, you want to show them how to do it, but they might want to show it differently, like many famous artists did."

As an artist, Goth appreciates the stimulation many people feel when

exploring their artistic side. "Art is very much part of your soul," she says. "You're putting yourself out there and saying, 'Like me!'"

When Goth began painting on stones and tiles, she had no idea if anyone else would appreciate the thought and effort she put into each piece. Nonetheless, she needed a way to express her feelings and to focus her energy on recovering from her loss. Perhaps that is what touches people when they see her work for the first time. Perhaps the love, joy, and even sorrow that go into her paintings are the same elements that draw people to her work. Whatever the case, "I seem to have touched a chord in people," she says gently.

The painting of Laurie's 45 *Hearts of Stone* now hangs in the artist's home, a beautiful reminder of a special friendship that inspired a new artistic direction. Goth is currently working on a line of wallpaper with matching borders incorporating the *Hearts of Stone* designs, which captures all the flaws and beauty of her favorite subject.



HEARTS OF STONE™

Stone

In every heart there is some pain sometimes so much so that one feels the need to turn part and sadly sometimes all their heart to stone or else out of respect and sorrow it would surely cease to beat

but even if it were possible to turn one's heart to stone in that stone would be painted the wondrous and beautiful colors of the love that still resides hidden in the cracks and crevices of their life

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