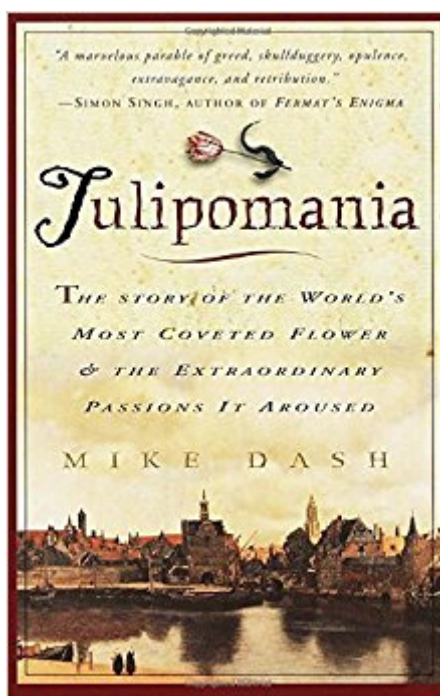


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Tulipomania : The Story Of The World's Most Coveted Flower & The Extraordinary Passions It Aroused



Synopsis

In the 1630s, visitors to the prosperous trading cities of the Netherlands couldn't help but notice that thousands of normally sober, hardworking Dutch citizens from every walk of life were caught up in an extraordinary frenzy of buying and selling. The object of this unprecedented speculation was the tulip, a delicate and exotic Eastern import that had bewitched horticulturists, noblemen, and tavern owners alike. For almost a year rare bulbs changed hands for incredible and ever-increasing sums, until single flowers were being sold for more than the cost of a house. Historians would come to call it tulipomania. It was the first futures market in history, and like so many of the ones that would follow, it crashed spectacularly, plunging speculators and investors into economic ruin and despair. This is the history of the tulip, from its origins on the barren, windswept steppes of central Asia to its place of honor in the lush imperial gardens of Constantinople, to its starring moment as the most coveted--and beautiful--commodity in Europe. Historian Mike Dash vividly narrates the story of this amazing flower and the colorful cast of characters--Turkish sultans, Yugoslav soldiers, French botanists, and Dutch tavern keepers--who were centuries apart historically and worlds apart culturally, but who all had one thing in common: tulipomania.

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Customer Reviews

For history buffs or gardeners who enjoy more than just digging in the dirt, Tulipomania presents a fascinating look at the tulip frenzy that took place in Holland in the mid-1600s. Beginning as gifts given among the wealthy and educated folk of Europe and Asia, the tulip rapidly became a source of incredible financial gain--similar to today's Internet start-up companies or Beanie Baby

collections. Stories of craftsmen discontinuing their trade and focusing on raising tulips for public auction, where they sold for prices comparable to that of a manor house, are astonishing. Poets, moralists, businessmen--it seems everyone was involved at some level. Lack of regulation and poor quality control were just a couple of the details that led to the abrupt crash in February 1637. Tulipomania was the original market bust--people were ruined, debts went unpaid. It was a disaster similar to the stock-market crash of 1929. A brief resurrection of the mania occurred 65 years later in Istanbul, and while it was not the financial obsession Holland experienced, it led to the creation of standards in flower shape and increased the development of new types. You don't need to be obsessed to enjoy this book--an interest in tulips, history, and the futures market ensures that this will be a remarkable read. --Jill Lightner --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The centerpiece of this story is a stunning two months, December 1636 and January 1637, when fortunes were made and lost in the Netherlands--in tulip bulb futures trading. Stripped to its basics, this would be a dry case study in an economics textbook. But Dash adds depth to the tale by including relevant bits of botany, sociology and history, as well as glimpses of the personalities involved in the creation of the tulip market, such as the orphans who made a fortune selling their late father's tulip bulbs and the man who owned a dozen extremely rare bulbs and wouldn't part with them at any price. Occasionally, he provides too much detail--his descriptions of how many guilders changed hands in particular transactions become repetitive, as do his physical descriptions of specific tulip varieties. Dash is fascinated by the contrast between the aesthetic sense of the Ottoman sultans (reflected in their love of tulip-laden gardens) and the ferocity of their rule (evidenced by fratricide, garroting and torture), but his musings on this interesting paradox are too unfocused to be enlightening. Overall, however, Dash (*The Limit; Borderlands*) effectively brings together a diverse mix of disciplines to illuminate the cultural, financial and psychological elements of an economic bubble--a subject that should be of great interest today. Readers interested in the technical aspects of economic speculation and those attuned to human folly will find this a worthwhile read. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

On river cruise in Holland I decided to become more informed before I saw the tulip fields, Mike Dash has told a good story about the history of these flowers from their beginnings deep in Asia to their migration to Turkey before entering Antwerp where a man at a warehouse on the docks picked up a stray bulb, went home with it and thinking it an onion ate it for dinner. The story of the tulip

craze is one of honest lovers of this flower new to Europe and ordinary people who saw an opportunity to make some money and got caught up in the excitement of the possibility of becoming rich beyond their wildest dreams. Economics can be influenced by greed but operates within boundaries of supply and demand. This book was fun to read. Dash uses records of the times to build a story grounded in the world of the 17th century but relevant to all times.

Very interesting -- learned so much about one of my favorite flowers. Easy, comfortable read. History and some botany all in one book. I knew about the hybrid varieties but never realized where the tulip originated. Glad I read this book.

Anybody that would trade a house for flowers would be rightfully considered strange, but this is what happened in the Netherlands. With stock market and mortgage speculations and government bailouts in our recent history, it is frightening to think that this has been going on for centuries. We can sit and laugh at people who lost all of their money because of flowers, but it provides an important lesson about investment and how bubbles will burst. A must read for historians or economists.

This book turned out to be interesting after the tedious beginning. At first it was too much information about the origins of the tulip. Then when it got into what was basically commodity trading done in the taverns it really got interesting! I recommend it especially for those who are fascinated with the futures markets of today. Surprising how much things stay that same!

I enjoy reading historical accounts of odd events and the tulip mania that swept the Netherlands in the 1630s qualifies. However, I found this book quite dry and rather a bore with a lot of repetition of facts. I did manage to get through it, but not with a lot of enthusiasm

You'll know a lot more about tulip mania when you finish this book than you did when you started it. And you'll learn that information in a well written and painless manner. The problem is that the details of tulip, breeding and trading are not overly exciting or fascinating.

Came new as bought and packaged nicely.

Awesome take on how the world can become consumed with hysteria. It's so cyclical - wonderful read.

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