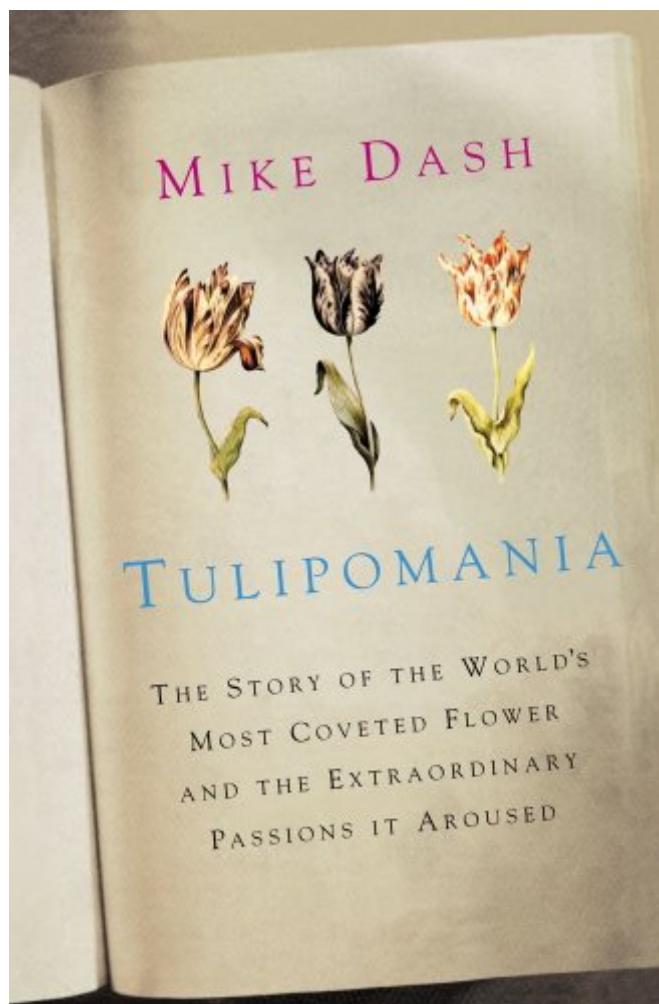


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Tulipomania: The Story Of The World's Most Coveted Flower And The Extraordinary Passions It Aroused



Synopsis

'A fascinating exploration of human greed and self-delusion and also a tribute to our ageless search for beauty' DEBORAH MOGGACH.In 1630s' Holland thousands of people, from the wealthiest merchants to the lowest street traders, were caught up in a frenzy of buying and selling. The object of the speculation was not oil or gold, but the tulip, a delicate and exotic bloom that had just arrived from the east. Over three years, rare tulip bulbs changed hands for sums that would have bought a house in Amsterdam: a single bulb could sell for more than £300,000 at today's prices. Fortunes were made overnight, but then lost when, within a year, the market collapsed. Mike Dash recreates this bizarre episode in European history, separating myth from reality. He traces the hysterical boom and devastating bust, bringing to life a colourful cast of characters, and beautifully evoking Holland's Golden Age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was a pleasure to read. It is beautifully written, well-researched and it grabs your attention right away and holds it until the very end. I think Mr. Dash realized that even though the book is relatively short, most people would have been bored if the book had only stayed with a narrow focus on tulip varieties and the economic dynamics of the brief period during which the mania flourished.

The author made a wise choice by going off into little interesting peripheral areas, such as the origins of the tulip in central Asia, the cultivation of the flower by the Ottoman Turks, and some aspects of social life in 17th century Holland. Did you know that when the flower was popular in Turkey some of the Ottoman soldiers went around with tulips embroidered on their underwear? Due to the Islamic prohibition concerning the artistic depiction of people and real life objects the embroidery of the flower had to be kept "undercover", so they placed it on the underwear! I don't want to give the impression that the book is a bunch of fluff. Mr. Dash never veers too far from the tulip mania and some of the best chapters in the book concern the botanical, economic and social reasons for the stratospheric heights tulip prices reached. Due to the way tulips reproduce it took a long time for new varieties (which were the most coveted) to be produced in quantity. Trading methods that we use today, such as buying on margin and trading in futures, also helped to fuel the craze, as did the tendency of the people involved to do their trading in taverns while consuming vast quantities of beer! Oh, by the way, I do want to explain the title of this review: In 1562 a shipment of cloth which had been sent from Istanbul arrived in Antwerp.

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