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# The Social Life of Ink: Culture Wonder And Our Relationship With The Written Word

*Ted Bishop*

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"Part travel narrative, part hidden history, part cultural exploration, *The Social Life of Ink* is a fascinating book, with writing as tactile and fluid as ink rolling across rice paper."  
—Will Ferguson, Scotiabank Giller Prize-winning author of *419*

## The Social Life of



Culture, Wonder, and Our  
Relationship with the Written Word

**Ted Bishop**

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**Ted Bishop : The Social Life of Ink: Culture Wonder And Our Relationship With The Written Word** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Social Life of Ink: Culture Wonder And Our Relationship With The Written Word:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Donald T Foster good buy will use again4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Bishop's book history includes INKBy Leslie Howsam Fabulous book, deep

knowledge with a light touch, on a subject that's been weirdly overlooked by scholars, journalists and other researchers. But Ted Bishop's travels and archival curiosity (not to mention his motorcycle) carry the reader to places where the people live who really know their ink. Historians of the book will learn a lot, and so will curious readers everywhere. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. We all enjoyed this work as Bishop's journey investigating origins of the ...By Clifford Therou "The Social Life of Ink" by Ted Bishop was the December choice of my long standing mens book club. We all enjoyed this work as Bishop's journey investigating origins of the making and use of various ink and writing instruments took on a road trip nature throughout the world, as he introduced characters of past and present who held obsession and often reverence for the written word. It is a fascinating and enriching journey.

A rich and imaginative discovery of how ink has shaped culture and why it is here to stay Ink is so much a part of daily life that we take it for granted, yet its invention was as significant as the wheel. Ink not only recorded culture, it bought political power, divided peoples, and led to murderous rivalries. Ancient letters on a page were revered as divine light, and precious ink recipes were held secret for centuries. And, when it first hit markets not so long ago, the excitement over the disposable ballpoint pen equalled that for a new smartphone with similar complaints to the manufacturers. Curious about its impact on culture, literature, and the course of history, Ted Bishop sets out to explore the story of ink. From Budapest to Buenos Aires, he traces the lives of the innovators who created the ballpoint pen revolutionary technology that still requires exact engineering today. Bishop visits a ranch in Utah to meet a master ink-maker who relishes igniting linseed oil to make traditional printers ink. In China, he learns that ink can be an exquisite object, the subject of poetry, and a means of strengthening (or straining) family bonds. And in the Middle East, he sees the worlds oldest Quran, stained with the blood of the caliph who was assassinated while reading it. An inquisitive and personal tour around the world, *The Social Life of Ink* asks us to look more closely at something we see so often that we dont see it at all.

"The history of ink and pens and the entire culture of writing by hand is a fantastic and (you knew this was coming) indelible subject for a book. But in the hands of Ted Bishop, one of Canadas best and most entertaining writers, the subject becomes a thing of rare beauty and, best of all, a story you wont be able to put down. A brilliant accomplishment." - Ian Brown, author of *The Boy in the Moon* Ink as the medium is also the message and in *The Social Life of Ink*, the hugely talented Ted Bishop offers a spellbinding, sophisticated, surprising and deeply satisfying exploration of inkmaking ink, writing in cursive, calligraphy or print, Islams elevation of ink to the spiritual realm, and finally, wistful reflections on the renaissance of ink. *The Social Life of Ink* has brought me the peace of understanding some of my own eccentricities; for example, why I can only write outlines with inky pens or runny gel. Its also sent me racing to buy a bottle of real ink for my fountain pen, neglected though much loved, and now an object of reverence. - Elizabeth Abbott, author of *Sugar* and *A History of Marriage* In this latest quixotic, erudite, and entertaining adventure, Ted Bishop ambles from Budapest to Buenos Aires, and from Samarkand to Istanbul and New York City, scattering allusions to Virginia Woolf, Henry Miller, and Orhan Pamuk as he wanders. Bishop transforms the conventional travel memoir into an unpredictable narrative of quirky intelligence and good humour. More, please. - Ken McGoogan, award-winning and internationally published author Who would have imagined that an exploration of ink could lead a man to Samarkand, Buenos Aires, Utah and Tibet? In all these places, and many others, Ted Bishop reveals how the act of writing represents not just a flow of ideas but the condensed expression of a culture. His constantly surprising look at the craft, art and spirit of ink is both quirky and humane, both inventive and wise. - Mark Abley, author of *Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages* and *The Prodigal Tongue: Dispatches from the Future of English* Part travel narrative, part hidden history, part cultural exploration, *The Social Life of Ink* is a fascinating book, with writing as tactile and fluid as ink rolling across rice paper. - Will Ferguson, Scotiabank Giller Prizewinning author of *419* About the Author Ted Bishop is a professor of English literature and film studies at the University of Alberta. His first book, *Riding with Rilke*, was a Canadian bestseller and was shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction.