

Making Reed Pens And Feather Quill Pens: Medieval Technical Manuals

Are you a fan of calligraphy or simply intrigued by tools of the past? In this article, we will delve into the fascinating world of reed pens and feather quill pens, exploring the techniques and instructions found in medieval technical manuals.

The Historical Significance

Writing instruments have played a vital role in human history. From ancient cave dwellers etching their experiences on cave walls to the advanced digital age we live in today, the evolution of writing tools has been remarkable.

Dating back to Medieval times, technical manuals were created as guides for various crafts and skills. These manuals provided step-by-step instructions for a range of tasks, including the creation of reed pens and feather quill pens.



MAKING REED PENS AND FEATHER QUILL PENS



Bruno Bossi - Ivana Occelli - Andrea Bozzano

Making Reed Pens and Feather Quill Pens (Medieval Technical Manuals Book 5)

by Theodor Mommsen (Kindle Edition)

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The Reed Pen: A Versatile Tool

Reed pens were widely used in medieval times, particularly in the Islamic world. Made from stalks of certain types of plants with hollow stems, such as the common reed or bamboo, reed pens offered an inexpensive and readily available writing instrument.

Featuring a pointed nib, reed pens were ideal for writing on parchment and papyrus. They allowed the writer to control the width of the lines by varying the pressure exerted on the nib. This flexibility made reed pens suitable for detailed calligraphy as well as everyday writing.

To create a reed pen, one would start by selecting a mature, straight reed stalk. The thinner end of the reed would be trimmed to expose the hollow inner pith, acting as the ink reservoir. Then, the nib would be shaped by cutting the reed diagonally, creating a pointed tip.

The reed pen, although simple in design, required skill and practice to master. It was capable of producing elegant and flowing script, making it a favorite tool among scribes and artists of the time.

The Feather Quill Pen: A Symbol of Elegance

Feather quill pens gained popularity during the Middle Ages, especially in Europe. Made from the strongest wing feathers of large birds, such as geese, swans, and crows, feather quills were known for their durability and precision.

The process of creating a feather quill pen began with selecting a feather that had the desired strength and flexibility. The feathers would be carefully prepared by removing the barbs, cutting the quill at an angle, and then shaping the nib through careful cutting and sanding.

Feather quill pens had a distinct advantage over reed pens as they provided a smooth and consistent flow of ink. With the growing popularity of parchment and paper in Europe, feather quill pens became the go-to instrument for writing letters, manuscripts, and other important documents.

Medieval Technical Manuals: A Wealth of Knowledge

Medieval technical manuals provided detailed instructions on various topics, including the creation of writing instruments. These manuals outlined the materials needed, the step-by-step processes, and even tips and tricks for achieving optimal results.

For enthusiasts of calligraphy and historical crafts, these technical manuals are a treasure trove of knowledge and guidance. Through these manuals, one can learn how to create reed pens and feather quill pens just as the skilled craftsmen of the past did.

The art of writing as we know it today owes much to the medieval craftsmen who meticulously created reed pens and feather quill pens. Through the guidance provided in technical manuals, we can gain insights into their techniques and recreate these traditional writing tools.

So, if you are eager to dabble in calligraphy or simply appreciate the beauty of historical craftsmanship, try your hand at making reed pens and feather quill pens. Embrace the medieval spirit and embark on a journey to connect with the rich heritage of writing instruments.

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The reed pen is an ancient writing instrument; in ancient Greek it was called “kalamus” which became “calamus” in Latin.

Originally the tip was frayed or pulped. Later, like the quill pen, it was cut to a point and sharpened with a knife. Some specimens of ancient reed pens are preserved in the British Museum.

The feather quill pen made from the wing feather of geese, swans and other birds, was already used in early medieval times.

As soon as vellum came into general use, the feather quill pen was the main pen of the Middle Ages, for its flexibility compared with reed pen less elastic and more perishable.

The feather quill pen was used in modern times down to the nineteenth century and it was afterwards substituted by the metal nib.



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