

Ackerman Pens Newsletter

November 2009

Published monthly

Free



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Year End 25% Off Sale

Two announcements in this newsletter – first, our annual sale, and second, developments with our Nib Pump Pens.

Sale first. We just started our end-of-year sale for 2009 – 25% off all pens, 20% off all nib units. This means you can buy a Pump Pen with your favorite nib for US\$22.50. You can add additional nib units for \$8.00. Which means you can get one Pump Pen and four nib units for under US\$50.00. Anyone who bought a pen in the past month can get a credit for the difference on a future purchase. This makes the sale effective for the last two and a half months of 2009.

We reduced the price of the Brush Pump Pen to \$20.00. And we're throwing in an extra brush. We shopped around a long time for the brush – comes from a well-known Japanese pen company. The pump works especially well with this pen – great for inking in large areas.



Nib second. We have continued to experiment with our Nib Units and find that one Nib Unit fits half of the most popular dip nibs. That's the Nib Unit currently shipped for the Hunt 101, Leonardt Principal and Manga G nibs. We find it can accommodate the Gillott 1068A, the Leonardt Hiro and Hiro Krems, in fact most Hiro nibs, the Professor 543, all Brause nibs except the Cito Fein, Tape nibs – the list goes on. We are creating a page on our web site to list and track these additions. We also confirmed that the Gillott 303 Nib Unit accommodates the Hunt 99 Drawing nib. More news as it unfolds . . .

Genesis of the Pump Pen

In last month's newsletter I described our Speedball Pump Pen and compared it to a pen Speedball sold half a century ago, which let you pump more ink to the nib in drops. I claimed our Speedball Pump Pen (shown on the left) was better because you can pump as much ink or paint as you want directly to the nib giving you a seamless flow, whereas you can only expel drops of ink using the original Speedball pen, and you have to make sure each drop lands on the nib.



(By the way, you'll see pictures of our Pump Pens with variously colored sections, like the orange section in the Speedball Pump Pen on the right. We like to experiment with colors, and we occasionally ship odd colors, but if you prefer matching black sections with your Pump Pens, just tell us.)

While the Speedball pen is a "pump pen" of sorts, but this was not the genesis for our Pump Pen. The pen that got me thinking about a pump was the Kamei Brush Pen – an excellent brush pen from Japan. The body is beautifully designed, and the brush is superb, but it uses a fiber feed to transport the ink from the reservoir to the brush. This prevents the ink from flowing quickly, which can be

good or bad depending on what you like to do. This was bad for me because I like a rich, strong flow. The pen provides an especially penetrating ink that wicks through the feed more quickly. That would work if the ink remained as densely black as it does when it leaves the brush, but, the ink soon dries to a grey shade which I don't like.

I tried the usual trick of filling the empty ink cartridge with darker ink – needless to say, the flow was even slower. The fiber feed was designed for the penetrating ink only. I almost convinced myself that dry brush was a desirable technique, but I found I kept squeezing the front of the pen unconsciously trying to increase the flow. The pen eventually plugged up, so I took it apart, removed the fiber feed, and voilà – ink spilled all over the page. That's when I started thinking – there's got to be a better way - and the result is our Pump Pen.

Somewhat humorous note –We litigated a patent issue, and the judge wanted to get a better idea of how our Pump Pen worked. He said as a child he used to write with a fountain pen in school, and to increase the flow he'd unscrew the barrel and squeeze the sac by hand. "That's it!" I said – "that's our idea in a nutshell, only you don't have to unscrew the barrel or move your hand."

On Ink Flow and Viscosity . . .

What do we mean when we say “you can use any ink or paint in the Pump Pen”. We mean you can use any liquid that flows, but we presume you are interested in the traditional artistic media that is difficult to use in standard fountain pens, such as India ink and acrylic paint. These liquids will plug up most fountain pens and make them useless. On a technical level, we stand behind our claim - you can pump any liquid that flows, even thick enamel and lacquer. On a practical level, you will find you spend more time pumping thick liquids than you like, and more time cleaning the pen than you enjoy.

I designed the Pump Pen for Speedball Super Black, which is one of my favorite inks, also one of the thickest India inks on the market. Turns out thick artistic media is not our real problem. The liquid that gives us most trouble is thin inks and paints,



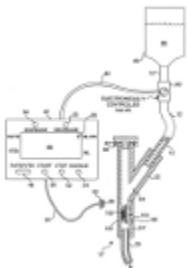
especially fountain pen ink. This ink was developed for the modern fountain pen, to pass through narrow channels and complicated networks baffles that control the flow of the ink for steady hand writing. This is the ink that made most artists give up using pens for their tools.

In the past several years, ink manufacturers have developed new types of thin inks that are remarkable lightfast, waterproof and permanent. Many of these inks use aniline dyes, which provide strong dense colors that last for 100 years. This technology was originally developed for ink jet printers, then migrated over to the fountain pen market.

As a solution, we are now providing ink feeds with a range of flow rates. We ship the standard feed with each Nib Pump Pen, but if you find the flow to fast or slow, tell us and we will send you the appropriate feed.

Variable Ink Feed Control

The Holy Grail of pens for artists would provide a variable ink feed control. Several designs were developed during the



golden years of fountain pens, in the first part of the last century. All of them worked for awhile, then broke or plugged up. It's difficult to place something in the flow of ink or paint that will work without maintenance. Ink and paint dry - that's their nature, and that's what you want them to do.

We continue to tinker with several designs, and hope to introduce our version in 2010. With luck, the unit will be modular and fit into all Gen 4 and Gen 5 Pump Pens.

Next issue

- ✓ Updated feed/nib matches
- ✓ Using Pump Pen Nib Units

Coming to the web site

- ✓ Videos of pens in use
- ✓ Survey results for popular nibs, inks and paints

. . . and Ink Feeds

Most modern fountain pens are finely tuned to a specific type of ink, usually thin fountain pen ink, often a proprietary type of ink supplied by the pen company in their own ink cartridges matched to the pen. The Kamei Brush pen is one such pen. Designing pens this way expands the market for individual pen manufacturers, which now move from the single sale (pen) to replacement sales (ink cartridges). Every business likes to get into replacement sales.

You can use any ink or paint in the Pump Pen, but you have to buy your own ink or paint. And you can use any of the more popular dip nibs, but you have to supply the nib. What we provide is the proper mechanism for feeding your ink or paint



to your nib. Which brings us to the ink feed - the interface of nib to pen. We are constantly trying to improve the quality and expand the range of our ink feeds so you can use different nibs, inks and paints in the Pump Pen. Currently, we provide six different feeds for what we have identified as the most popular dip nibs, and the range is getting wider as noted at the beginning of this newsletter.

Your Favorite Nibs?

If you've read this far, you might recognize our focus in this issue - genesis of the pump pen is to control the flow > design a pen that lets you use any ink or paint > build feeds that let you use a range of popular dip nibs. So what are your favorite nibs for drawing? We can use more information from the field. I have my favorites, but other people have theirs, and they are different from mine. Please send you nib recommendations to nibs@ackermanpens.com.



We'll close with a favorite drawing by Richard Bell done with the Pump Pen for Hunt 101 nibs - a map of an area in the UK done in pen, ink and watercolor.

Nib facts - The Gillott 404 is the same as the Gillott 303 only firmer. Abraham Lincoln wrote his personal correspondence using a Gillott 404.