

Flourishing with the Pointed Pen CSSA Workshop April 2022

Important information about using the Pointed Pen

How pointed nibs work – these nibs have a very different way of working to a broad-edge nib. They do not have a reservoir of ink and so require to be ‘dipped’ regularly as you write. They have a cut-out piece of metal on each side which allow the nib to bend or ‘flex’ when pressure is put on it and this moves the 2 points apart to make a thicker line. Releasing this pressure allows the points to spring together and make a fine, thin line.

Pressure can only be used during a DOWNSTROKE. So all thick penlines must be downstrokes.

Choosing a nib – nibs differ in their ‘flex’ and can be firm, medium or soft flex. Most people find that they start off with a firm or medium flex nib and then progress to a finer and softer flex nib.

Why use an Oblique pen holder – right handers often find the angle which they need to have the pen to the paper (55) is difficult to master using a straight pen holder BUT left handers frequently find the straight pen holder is their best choice.

The way you hold the pen will make a difference to how it performs for you.

Ink and paper to suit the nib – paper needs to be smooth surfaced and also well sized so that the ink does not bleed into it. Ink needs to have a certain amount of viscosity to allow it to cling to the nib and run smoothly through to the tip. Inks which are good for modern fountain pens are frequently too thin for a dip pen. You can ‘dip’ into ink but you should also learn to ‘brush’ the ink onto the nib. This will give you much more choice in what you can use to make your calligraphy.

Are these nibs good to express your personal style? – Yes, I think so. There is a certain amount of structure, especially with the formal Copperplate style, but you can also adapt this to a more relaxed style and even think of it as more like a personal handwriting technique.

Is it handwriting? - No, definitely it is not handwriting. Each pen stroke is considered and placed with care and attention, however with plenty of practice, it can become a relaxed and rhythmic calligraphic form.

Pressure and release - breathing and focus – getting in the ‘zone’

These are all interconnected. Use Pressure on the down stroke to develop a thick pen stroke and gently release as you transition from thick to thin; the lightest of touches on the upstroke gives beautiful hairlines and then gradual increase of pressure as you move into the downstroke again; focusing your mind on what you are doing takes you into the zone; breathing and movement then are interconnected. It can almost become a meditation.

