

NUMBER OF TULIP BULBS PRODUCED ANNUALLY IN THE NETHERLANDS: 3 BILLION
 NUMBER OF CUT TULIPS EXPORTED ANNUALLY: 2 BILLION
 NUMBER OF REGISTERED VARIETIES OF TULIPS: 3,000
 RANK OF TULIP AMONG FLOWERS IN WORLDWIDE POPULARITY: NO. 3
 NO. 1 AND NO. 2 MOST POPULAR FLOWERS, WORLDWIDE: ROSES, CHRYSANTHEMUMS



BLOOM AND BUST

Photographs by **JULIAN FAULHABER**

Centuries before the collapse of Sun Belt real estate, Dutch tulips were the original symbol of speculative excess and market correction. Brought to the Netherlands from Asia in the 16th century, the flower sparked an acquisitive fever that culminated, in 1637, with a single bulb of one variety selling for what was then an unheard-of 5,200 guilders — the price of a house. Suddenly the market disintegrated and Tulipomania passed, leaving the Netherlands to tighten its grip on the global market by providing dominant auction houses and, according to Fred Wever of the auction house FloraHolland, “the perfect soil and weather circumstances” for growing the flowers. Despite the recent financial crisis’ lingering effects, Dutch auction houses are still handling about \$300 million in tulip sales each year. Presumably U.S. suburban real estate also will bloom again someday. **TONY GERVINO**

From afar, a field, Page 58

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