



In 1926: Living on the Edge of Time

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht

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Travel back to the year 1926 and into the rush of experiences that made people feel they were living on the edge of time. Touch a world where speed seemed the very essence of life. It is a year for which we have no expectations. It was not 1066 or 1588 or 1945, yet it was the year A. A. Milne published *Winnie-the-Pooh* and Alfred Hitchcock released his first successful film, *The Lodger*. A set of modern masters was at work--Jorge Luis Borges, Babe Ruth, Leni Riefenstahl, Ernest Hemingway, Josephine Baker, Greta Garbo, Franz Kafka, Gertrude Stein, Martin Heidegger--while factory workers, secretaries, engineers, architects, and Argentine cattle-ranchers were performing their daily tasks.

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht opens up the space-time continuum by exploring the realities of the day such as bars, boxing, movie palaces, elevators, automobiles, airplanes, hair gel, bullfighting, film stardom, dance crazes, and the surprise reappearance of King Tut after a three-thousand-year absence. From the vantage points of Berlin, Buenos Aires, and New York, Gumbrecht ranges widely through the worlds of Spain, Italy, France, and Latin America. The reader is allowed multiple itineraries, following various routes from one topic to another and ultimately becoming immersed in the activities, entertainments, and thought patterns of the citizens of 1926.

We learn what it is to be an "ugly American" in Paris by experiencing the first mass influx of American tourists into Europe. We visit assembly lines which turned men into machines. We relive a celebrated boxing match and see how Jack Dempsey was beaten yet walked away with the hearts of the fans. We hear the voice of Adolf Hitler condemning tight pants on young men. Gumbrecht conveys these fragments of history as a living network of new sensibilities, evoking in us the excitement of another era.

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