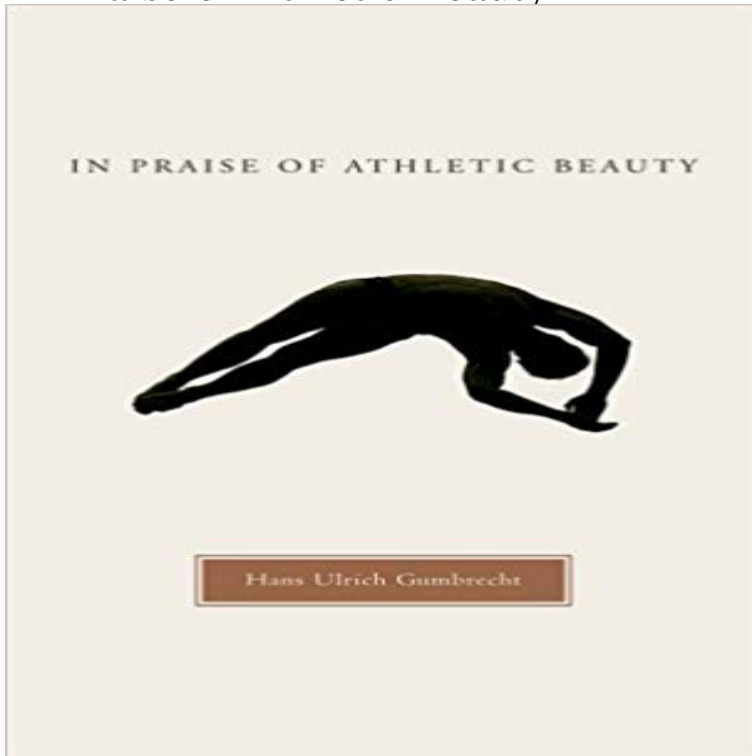


## In Praise of Athletic Beauty



By the hundreds of millions we show up, stand in line, turn on, and tune in to watch, mesmerized, as athletes perform. And yet this experience, so widely craved and intensely felt, we commonly dismiss as only a game. A book that looks beyond the usual explanations of why sports fascinates, *In Praise of Athletic Beauty* also strives for a language that can frame--even enhance --the pleasure we take in watching athletic events. The vicarious thrill, anxiety release, competitive spirit: in place of these traditional answers to the mystery of sports allure, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht proposes a more powerful and provocative alternative. The fascination with watching sports, he argues, is probably the most popular and potent contemporary form of aesthetic experience--in the classic, very literal sense of this concept. In exploring this idea, Gumbrecht develops a lucid reflection on the pleasures of sports spectatorship and the nature of athletic beauty. Where we might readily pronounce certain athletic moves and plays beautiful, this book gives us the means to explore, understand, and enjoy even more acutely the aesthetic experience that our words-in-passing barely suggest. With a new perspective on the appreciation of--and, indeed, a new tone of praising--sports, Gumbrecht also offers a new way of narrating the history of athletics and a fresh vocabulary for analyzing various sports. Exploring athletic beauty, this book makes us understand the widespread passion sport inspires as an untamed form of aesthetic fascination.

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