



Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future

By Joseph J. Corn, Brian Horrigan

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Enormous skyscrapers will house residents and workers who happily go "for weeks" without setting foot on the ground. Streamlined, "hurricane-proof" houses will pivot on their foundations like weather vanes. The family car will turn into an airplane so easily that "a woman can do it in five minutes." Our wars will be fought by robots. And our living room furniture?waterproof, of course?will clean up with a squirt from the garden hose.

In *Yesterday's Tomorrows* Joseph J. Corn and Brian Horrigan explore the future as Americans earlier in the last century expected it to happen. Filled with vivid color images and lively text, the book is eloquent testimony to the confidence?and, at times, the naive faith?Americans have had in science and technology. The future that emerges here, the authors conclude, is one in which technology changes, but society and politics usually do not.

The authors draw on a wide variety of sources?popular-science magazines, science fiction, world fair exhibits, films, advertisements, and plans for things only dreamed of. From Jules Verne to the Jetsons, from a 500-passenger flying wing to an anti-aircraft flying buzz-saw, the vision of the future as seen through the eyes of the past demonstrates the play of the American imagination on the canvas of the future.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Whether it involves gleaming mega-cities, scudding unflawed skies or the inane advertising smile of a man who just loves his personal flying machine, watching Americans look forward is to look back. It is to look at ourselves in our most brilliant and boneheaded moments. Which is great fun. Here, moreover, the fun is enhanced by a cheerful... text and?the real glory?a wonderful abundance of visual material drawn from a Smithsonian traveling exhibit."

(Boston Globe)

"Many books might be commended as entertaining, instructive, or even fascinating. *Yesterday's Tomorrows* deserves each of these adjectives... The reader is taken through a gallery populated with forgotten industrial prototypes, architectural models, toy ray guns, flying cavalrymen on 'helihorses,' science fiction props from Hollywood and, of course, all sorts of projects and renderings concerning transportation."

(Road and Track)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Joseph J. Corn is senior lecturer in the department of history at Stanford University. He is the author of *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950*. **Brian Horrigan** is a curator with the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. *Originally published in 1984 to accompany an exhibition by the same name organized and circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.*

Users Review

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