Title: From Nowhere: Utopian and Dystopian Visions of Our Past, Present, and Future

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Abstract (summary):
Since the earliest known works of literature three-thousand years ago, the vision for a better society, an ideal society, has driven and inspired cultures to improve their social conditions. These visions were written around themes of voyage and discovery, the classical age, and medieval Christianity, that culminated in Thomas More's Utopia in 1516. Since More's vision of the imaginary society on the island of Utopia, writers have envisioned practical societies that transform our economic, political, technological, and cultural infrastructures taking us to uncharted lands, distant planets, and unimaginable futures that challenge and alter our society's foundations. These utopian, and sometimes dystopian, visions show us what our society could be like and how we could achieve it, for better or for worse. This exhibition will showcase a selection of these utopian and dystopian visions ranging from Plato's Republic and Augustine's City of God to Francis Bacon's New Atlantis and Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe to H. G. Wells's War of the Worlds and Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale.

Description:
Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, January 28, to May 31, 2013.

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Utopia. Our Golden Age lies right before us. Utopian fiction depicts a future in which humanity has reached a state of balance and peace, and where all life is valued and maintained. There is no more suffering and injustice, no more ignorance and violence. We have reached our full potential. Dystopia. Our Golden Age is long buried in our ashes. Dystopian fiction depicts a future in which humanity has fallen into decline and ruin, and where life and nature are recklessly exploited and destroyed. The overarching message of dystopian stories is one of warning and mistrust in humanity. The vision of a future come true between the pages? The possibilities to explore the consequences of our ways without actually being affected by...