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Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World

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The idea of utopia, the perfect place, has tantalized humanity for thousands of years, from the myth of the Garden of Eden to the high-tech folly of Biosphere 2. Now the Bibliotheque Nationale de France and The New York Public Library are jointly sponsoring a major exhibition that explores the utopian imagination and the myriad attempts to achieve utopia, showcasing a spectacular collection of art and literature.
Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World is the catalogue for the American exhibition, which will be on view in New York from October 14, 2000 through January 2001. Featuring essays by curator Roland Schaer and by Alain Touraine, Lyman Tower Sargent, and other leading European and American scholars of utopia, this elegantly designed volume will explore the long tradition of thought and art envisioning the "perfect place," extending from classical antiquity to the present. Lavishly illustrated with more than 200 pictures, most of them in color, *Utopia* presents such fascinating images as Theodore de Bry's 16th-century idealized drawings of the native inhabitants of the New World, Renaissance renderings of ideal architecture, posters from the Soviet Union and the 1939 World's Fair in New York, and photographs of experimental communities. Included as well are such resonant documents as a copy of the Declaration of Independence in Thomas Jefferson's hand, stunning illuminated manuscripts, and rare items relating to the French Revolution and to the social utopias of the Romantic Age from the collections of the Bibliothe'que Nationale.
Both beautiful and intellectually provocative, *Utopia* is the perfect vehicle to explore an idea that has arisen, in many forms and many places, throughout human history.

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