

Press release

Virus – Crisis – Utopia

until 27 June 2021

The idea of Utopia thrives particularly well in times of crises. An exhibition at the National Museum Zurich explores this phenomenon – past and present.

Future visions for a better world usually emerge during a crisis. And in this day and age, it's no different. Early in the 16th century English statesman Thomas More set out his vision of the future, featuring an ideal society where neither capital punishment nor major social disparities exist. His book *Utopia* was written in an age full of conflicts, pestilence and social tensions, and influenced European society for hundreds of years afterwards. There are scores of other examples from history of utopias and visions of the future that emerged during times of crises.

The coronavirus pandemic is the most profound seismic shift since World War II. So it's no surprise that all kinds of interpretations and blueprints for the future are being thrown about. The exhibition 'Virus – Crisis – Utopia' spins together some of these future threads: Will there be a return to regional strengths? Is the line between humans and the environment shifting in favour of nature? Will vaccine research end the pandemic anytime soon?

A look back shows how vast the breadth of utopian thinking has always been: while some Utopias turned out to be prophetic visions with a high level of realistic possibility, others were purely fantasies. This is also the case with today's post-coronavirus utopias. The spectrum ranges from the meaningful and ingenious, to the totally warped. But which is which?

If you have any questions, please contact:

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