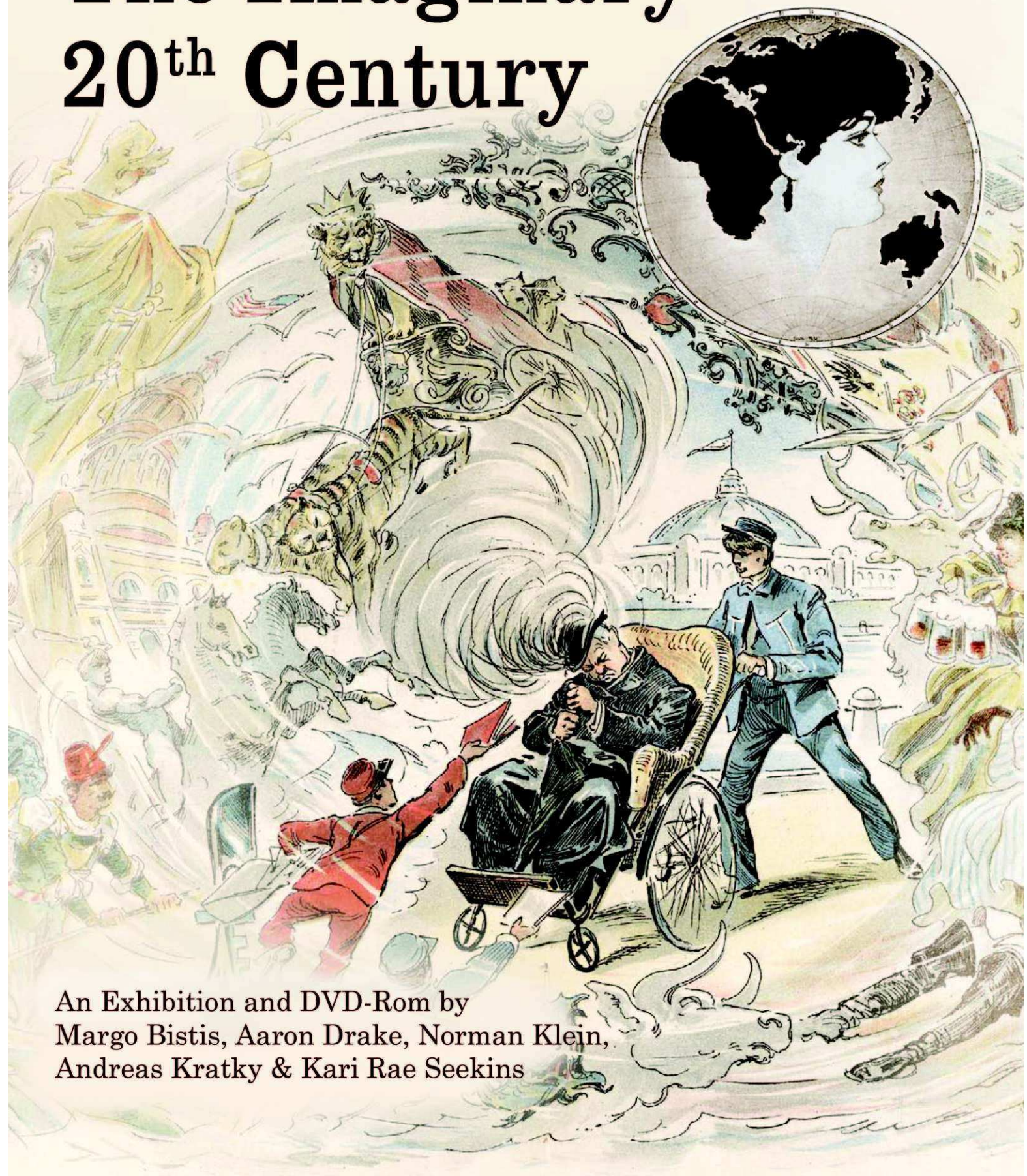
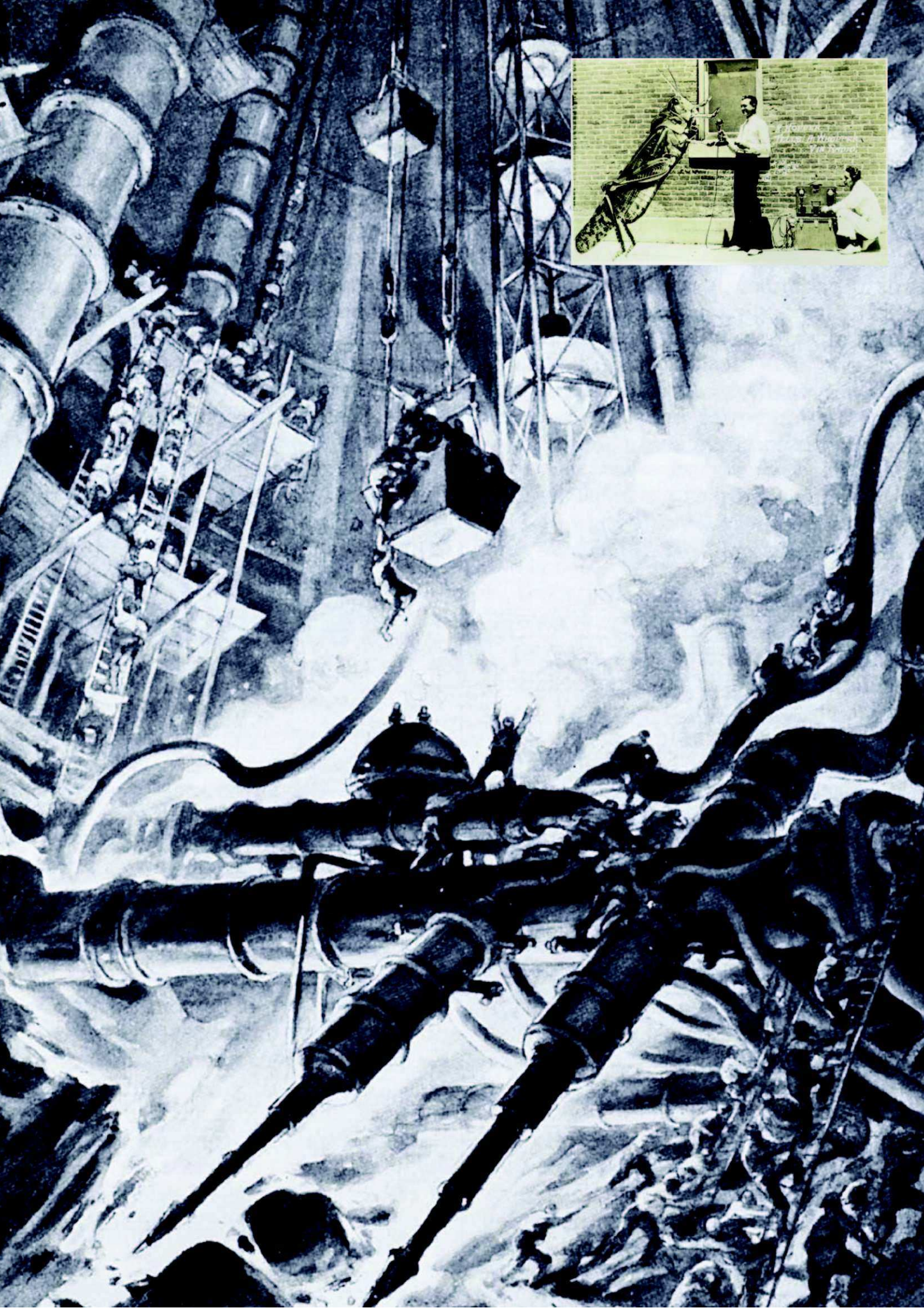


# The Imaginary 20<sup>th</sup> Century



An Exhibition and DVD-Rom by  
Margo Bistis, Aaron Drake, Norman Klein,  
Andreas Kratky & Kari Rae Seekins







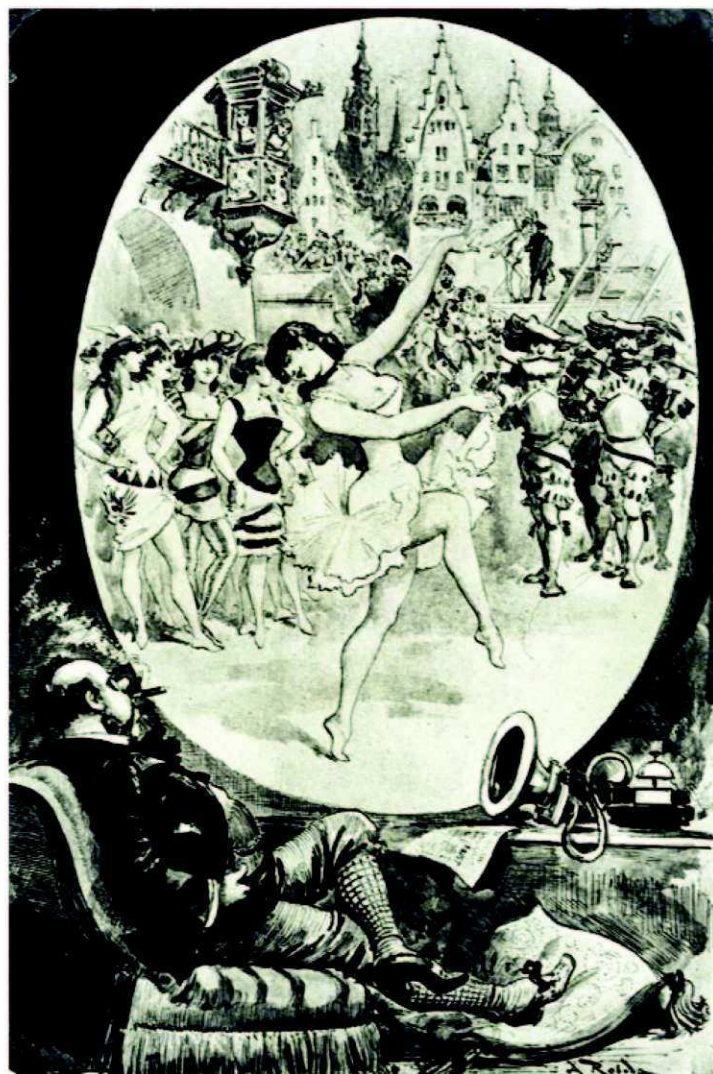
# The Imaginary 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In Europe and America, between 1895 and 1926, there was not simply one 'imaginary twentieth century.' There were many that repeated and overlapped in seemingly endless nuance. The sum effect of these futuristic visions is dazzling. Mentally, it is like traveling through phantoms of an imaginary future fed by a single engine. In this exhibition, that engine is a historical science-fiction novel that operates as a gigantic interactive database. As a novel, *The Imaginary 20<sup>th</sup> Century* is both authored and imaginary – a journey into comic and perverse phantoms, very factual and at the same time, very fictional. And like most novels, it contains a double story: the story of the century that opened at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, and the story of a woman (Carrie), who in 1901, selects four men to seduce her, each with his own version of the new century.

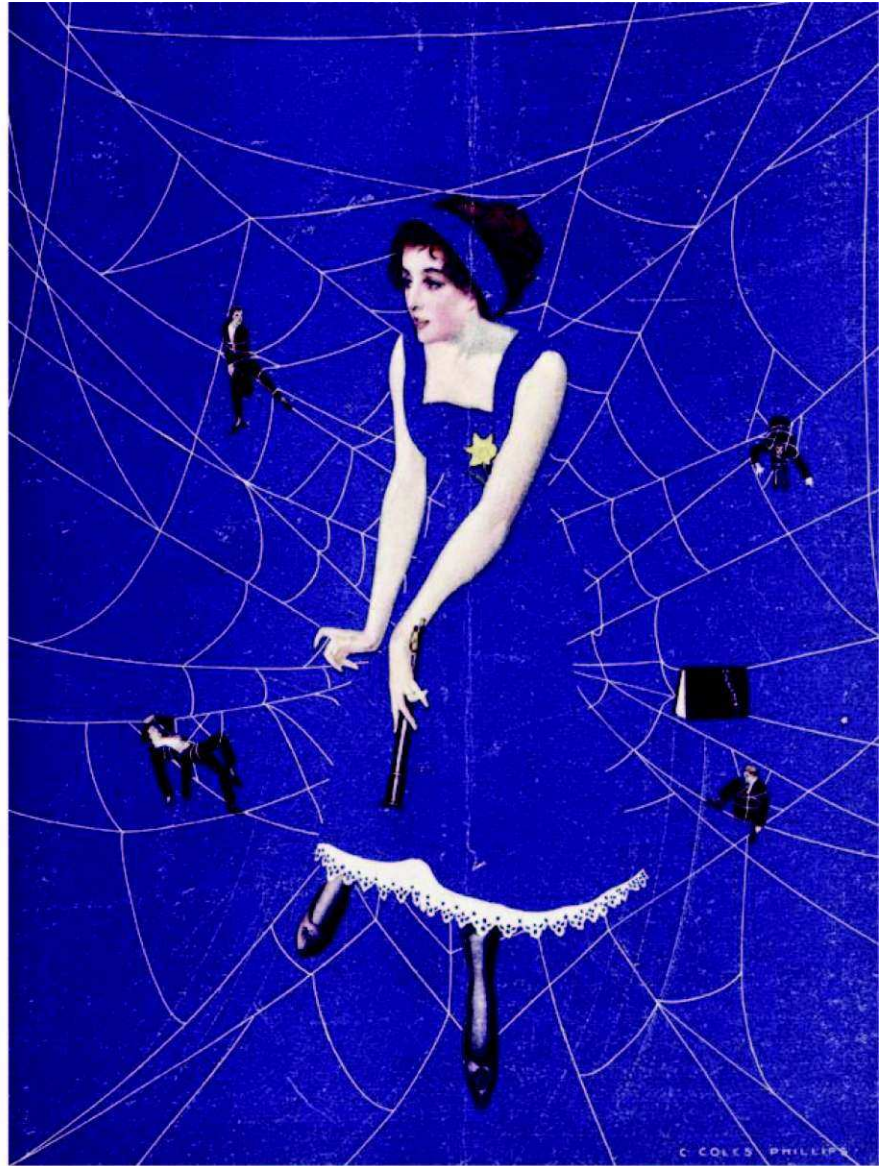
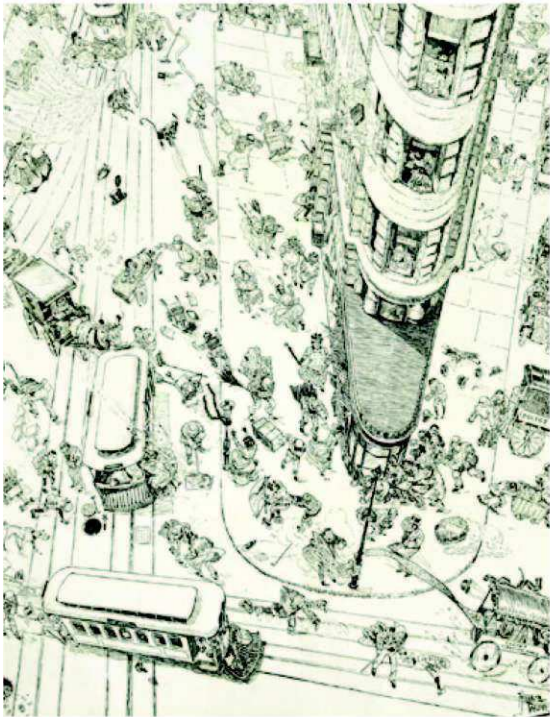
The database of *The Imaginary 20<sup>th</sup> Century* is the product of intensive research into the visual and literary culture of the period from 1890 to 1926. Over two thousand assets have been harvested from period illustration, cartoons, photographs, film, ephemera, industrial design, architectural drawing, urban planning schemes, science fiction, fantasy and utopian novels, philosophical texts, and more.



*The Imaginary 20<sup>th</sup> Century* is a new cultural form that follows up on the award-winning interactive novel *Bleeding Through: Layers of Los Angeles, 1920-1986* (2003), co-directed by Norman Klein, Andreas Kratky, and Rosemary Comella. A co-production of California Institute of the Arts and ZKM | Center for Art and Media at Karlsruhe, it will be released in October 2007 as an interactive piece on DVD-Rom, together with a printed novella and historical essays included in the boxed-set edition. It will be premiered at CalArt's Redcat Theater in Disney Hall, Los Angeles, then tour as the centerpiece of an exhibition, with ZKM as the first venue.









# The Interactive Novel

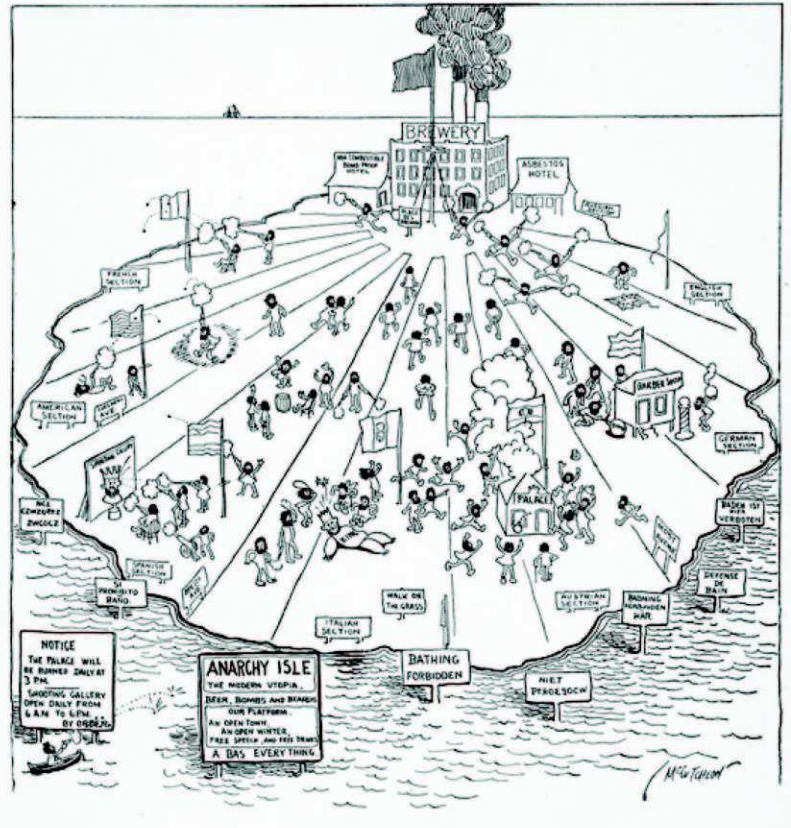
Carrie's story is a modernist picaresque: a whimsical, episodic tale of adventures and misadventures across the globe. We first meet Carrie in Chicago in 1893, as a girl of sixteen. Her father, a swindler, gradually auctions her off to the wealthy son of a powerful old family. The marriage that follows proves a sensational disaster, enough scandal for months on the front page – and a lucrative divorce.

Afterward, forearmed but not yet forewarned, Carrie has a taste of Europe. She joins the bizarre International Science and Crafts movement in Greece. She winds up a patient, and a source of worship at Zukerkandl, a progressive Viennese sanatorium for the treatment of nervous diseases. There, she gathers the second of her four suitors; and finds the other two on the way to New York. Finally, she and her four men meet in Los Angeles, to build a utopian colony. They are mistaken for a group of mystical agronomists. Like many utopias of the time, the Isis experiment in Los Angeles dissolves within a year.

Then in 1908, Carrie shoots a man while embroiled in anarchist politics. Luckily, the crime never goes to trial. But in the press, her legend grows. Her legend – not her reality attracts playwrights, artists and journalists, who turn Carrie into a walking fiction.

In 1913, she escapes to another bad marriage, to a rancher and orange grower in the San Fernando Valley, near Hollywood. She notices the film industry emerging. She has a gruesome meeting with Edgar Rice Burroughs. She even becomes something of a feminist aeronaut. Finally, she decides to stay grounded, and take a break from men and their toys.

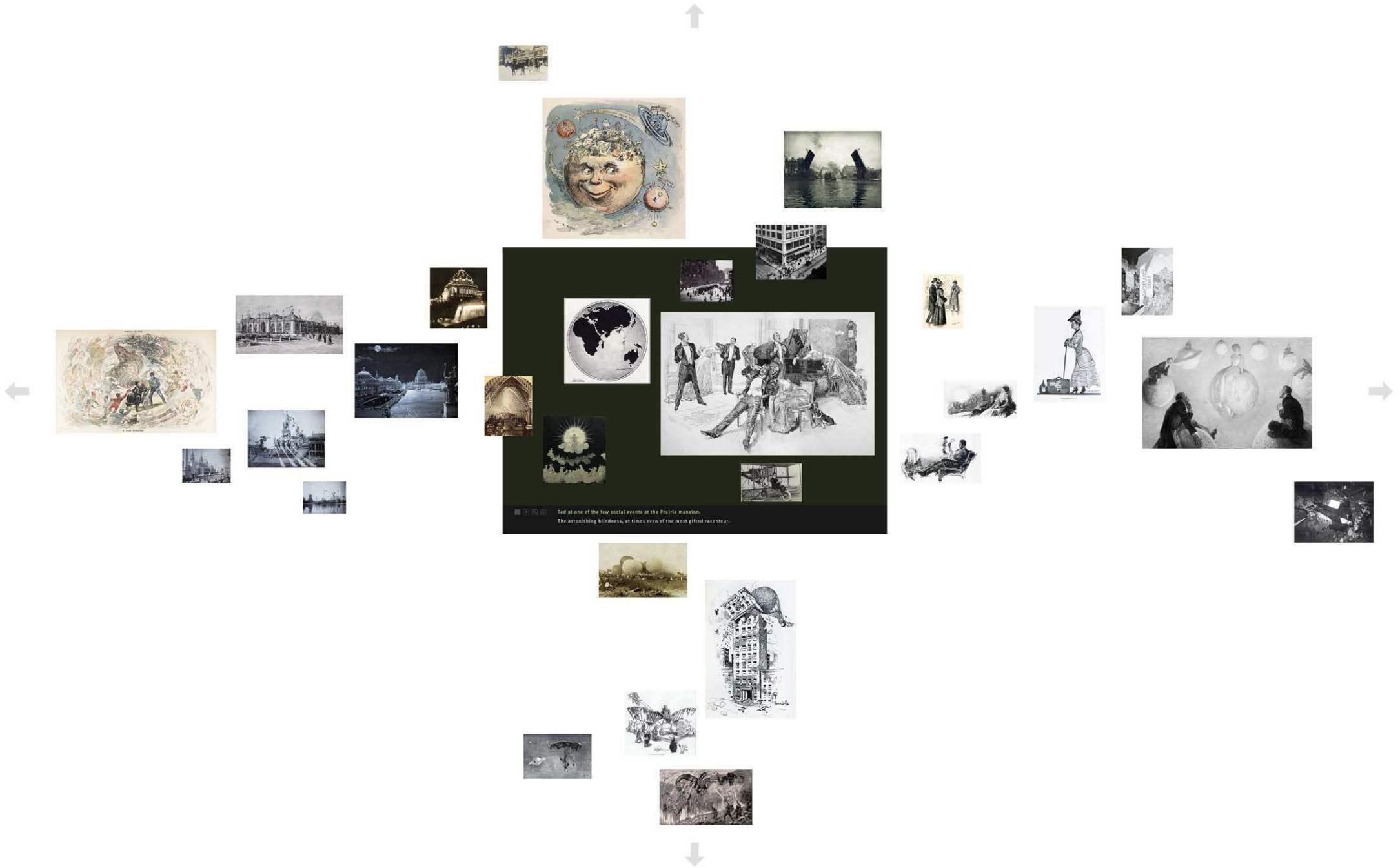
While Carrie recedes, we enter the worlds of her four suitors: a French-Algerian colonist; a Swiss businessman; an American anarchist from New York; a medical doctor of nervous diseases from Boston. It is here that the other story of the novel – that of the twentieth century as it was imagined before it actually happened – unfolds in its fullest dimensions, as four incomplete versions



of the modern, with comical and gruesome predictions about future empires, races, cities, technologies, wars, sexual relations, and the body of the future. With Carrie, we watch each suitor as he struggles to make up his mind, comes up with dozens of schemes – and designs – toward his final product; constantly finding intrusions, bad contractors, faulty equipment, failed marriages, financial disasters and confidence men. The four worlds of the imaginary twentieth century wobble on their axes.

Carrie's legend inspired Marcel Duchamp's modernist masterpiece *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23). But Carrie's actual story takes a different turn. She is indeed 'the bride stripped bare,' but she learns how much better it is for a woman of her temperament to remain a bachelor. She is not made for marriage, for any number of reasons. Every few years, she falls into a nervous collapse. There are always men ready to catch her depressive sweetness can be very disarming, very erotic. But to the depressive, it is mostly exhausting in the end, a scented journey to nowhere. Carrie discovers her own way to cultivate her garden, or rather her fifty orange trees, near the San Gabriel foothills, under the shadow of the Mount Lowe Observatory.





## BIOS

MARGO BISTIS is a European cultural historian, independent curator and adjunct professor of humanities at Art Center College of Design. Her publications included essays on Henri Bergson, modernism and caricature. In 2003, she assisted in the curating of *Comic Art: The Paris Salon in Caricature* at the Getty Research Institute.

AARON DRAKE is a composer, curator and performer living in Los Angeles. His education quickly runs as such: Bachelor of Music from San Francisco State University (Josh Levine, Ronald Caltabiano and Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez), music exchange to the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Trossingen Germany (Norbert Fröhlich and Mark Randall-Osborn at the Schloss Solitude), Master of Arts from the California Institute of the Arts (Mark Trayle, Michael Pisaro and David Rosenboom).

Aside from his compositional work, Drake's experience includes an interest in interdisciplinary projects. His projects have included improvisational composition for theater, collaborative art pieces with visual artists and scoring film. Apart from performing regularly, Aaron's works have been presented at many notable festivals, galleries and museums including the Orange County Museum of Art, the Andrew Kreps Gallery (NYC), the ZKM, the Darmstadt Summer Courses, ProvFlux, REDCAT, International Computer Music Conference, the Bent Festival, the International Society of Improvised Music, FLOOD's SoundWalk, Radio Hessen (H3) and the Sea and Space Explorations.

NORMAN KLEIN is a cultural critic, urban and media historian, novelist and professor of critical studies at California Institute of the Arts. His books include *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*; *Seven Minutes: The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon*; *The Vatican to Vegas: The History of Special Effects*; *Freud in Coney Island and Other Tales*; and the database novel *Bleeding Through: Layers of Los Angeles, 1920-86*. In 2008-2010, Klein has contracted to complete three projects: the second edition of *The History of Forgetting*; a novel about LA/NY in the fifties (more broadly 1909-1960); and a study on the history of the present (media, cities and power, 1973-2009).

ANDREAS KRATKY is an interface designer, independent media artist and adjunct professor of interactive media at the University of Southern California. His works include award-winning projects like the interactive costume projection *The Jew of Malta*, the database novel *Bleeding Through: Layers of Los Angeles, 1920-86* and the interactive installations *Soft Cinema- Navigating the Database* and *Title TK*.

KARI RAE SEEKINS is a sound designer and composer currently living in the Los Angeles area. She obtained her MFA in Sound Design and Integrated Media from CalArts in 2008 and her BFA in Design for the Theatre and Electroacoustic Composition from Concordia University in Montreal, in 2005. Her strengths and primary interests in sound design lie in the creation of original sounds and in complete soundscapes which combine sound FX, ambiences and music as one entity.

In the past year, Kari's sound designs and compositions have shown in various museums and festivals throughout the world including ZKM Center for Art and media, REDCAT, the International film festivals of Vienna, Rome, and New Zealand, The KROK international Animation Festival and the upcoming AFI film festival in Los Angeles.