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BRUGGE 2015

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## Nicolas Grenier: Vertically Integrated Socialism Church of the Grootseminarie

The Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015 brings the issues of the metropolis to the small, preserved medieval core of Bruges. Starting from the fictitious scenario that all five million of the city's annual visitors have decided to stay, the Canadian artist Nicolas Grenier applied himself to the question of housing. He devised a housing concept that integrates the social class pyramid into one single building. Vertically Integrated Socialism is an architectural model that recognises - as opposed to denies - the social and economic inequalities of the contemporary neoliberal metropolis.

### Vertically Integrated Socialism

A painter by training, Nicolas Grenier is fascinated by the way that architecture reflects social structures. *Vertically Integrated Socialism* is an experimental housing concept that integrates the social class pyramid into one single building. Grenier installed a nearly life-sized replica of one of the studios in the church of the Grootseminarie plus a scale model of the complete apartment building. A video explains the concept of the social integration model.

Population growth, migration, the growing gap between rich and poor, the lack of social mobility and geographical segregation represent major challenges for housing and urban planning in big cities. The way that we respond to these issues is partly determined by our perspective on the global economy. Are we satisfied with the status quo? A world in which widespread neoliberalism is the driver for the future? There are those of us who find the situation perfectly comfortable, and others who want to see revolution. Some try to make minor adjustments to the existing model, others find it fundamentally unjust and unsustainable, ready to implode, and look forward to watching something new evolve.

*Vertically Integrated Socialism* embodies all these scenarios in microcosm. It suggests a pragmatic system that incorporates the conflicting needs, interests and aspirations of different social classes. The apartment block offers 64 free housing units for the most under-privileged. The floor above comprises 16 apartments for the working classes. The upper middle class is accommodated in 4 luxury duplexes and, above that, an exclusive penthouse 5 storeys up is home to an extremely rich individual. The rent for each level is paid by the residents of the floor above. For the poorest in society, this inclusive, socialist microclimate offers housing and social integration. The rent of the other floors is subject to free market rules and generates continuous upward mobility.

The *Vertically Integrated Socialism* concept can be applied anywhere. It is an architectural template that is designed to concentrate and organise the economic, political and social inequalities of the modern metropolis. Residents themselves choose how they participate in this microcosm - and whether it results in order and stability or unrest and revolution.

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## Biography

Nicolas Grenier (°1982, Montreal, CA) divides his time between Montreal, where he studied painting and drawing, and Los Angeles, where he earned his master's degree in fine arts. His paintings and installations focus on social and political structures from a critical standpoint that does not exclude irony, cynicism and social engagement. Highly visual, Grenier's work demonstrates his fascination for the often paradoxical relationships between societal systems and the social and ethical principles that they serve. Besides paintings and drawings, his work spans architectural installations, art books and digital prints. He endeavours to translate philosophical issues into something tangible, with words physically integrated into his work. Borrowing from architecture and urban planning, he creates models and systems that are both functional and fundamentally absurd.

Grenier's work is meticulously planned and devised. Months of refining, perfecting, documenting and channeling inspiration go into the final product.

Grenier participated in the 2014 Montreal Biennial. His creative practice is supported by grants from CALQ (Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec). He is regularly invited to speak at art schools and to co-curate exhibitions in Canada and the United States.

[www.nicolasgrenier.com](http://www.nicolasgrenier.com)

## Visitor information

20.05 - 18.10.2015

Church of the Grootseminarie, Potterierei 72, 8000 Bruges

Tuesday - Sunday, 9.30 am - 6 pm

Closed on Mondays

## Further press information

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## Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015

**20 May – 18 October 2015**

What if the five million tourists who visit Bruges annually were to stay? What if a small, preserved, historic city should suddenly become a megapolis? This is the premise for the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015. Eighteen international artists create new works that form an art trail through the city centre. Three indoor exhibitions provide the opportunity to further explore and contextualise the topics. Bruges will be transformed into Egg Urb: the Triennial cracks the Bruges 'egg' in order to reinvent the city from the inside out.

Information and programme: [www.triennalebrugge.be](http://www.triennalebrugge.be)

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