

## **Kim Adams Bruegel-Bosch Bus**

Repeatedly in his work, Canadian artist Kim Adams has explored the patterns of a mobile society, creating works of art that are eccentric hybrids of the readymade. Blending humour, satire and seriousness, he builds “worlds” as a means of social critique. Adams’ installations have existed comfortably in the space that divides life and art and the carnival aspect of Adams’ work comes alive when experienced first-hand.

**Bruegel-Bosch Bus** is a magnificent work consisting of a 1960 Volkswagon automobile that has been transformed and appears to pull a post-industrial universe displaying a cornucopia of fantastic and seductive worlds that play with our senses. This futuristic diorama is a post-apocalyptic civilization on wheels – a model of the next whole world picture in which reality and unreality, logic and fantasy, banality and sublimation of existence form an inexplicable unity. This ‘bus’, a Kubrick-esque megalopolis made of icons symptomatic in present day life, drawing upon urban fantasies, phantasmagoric, post-apocalyptic landscapes, a plethora of different times and cultures with buildings from epochs aligned side by side, where space becomes an imaginary territory, where instead of causal organization, pastiche prevails. A work in progress that defies a linear perception of time, the **Bruegel-Bosch Bus** is a culture-scape that displays a mixed layering of time in which

centuries collide - a dialectical vehicle leading into the future.

### **It's the end of the world as we know it...**

Ever wondered what the *Bruegel-Bosch Bus* is really about? Like many artists through the centuries, Kim Adams is asking us to think about, and correct our dangerous ways. If this is one big city of the future, where do you think it's headed? (For a hint, take a look at who's driving the bus).

For hundreds of years, artists and writers have been warning us about the end of the world, and of the dangers of our destructive behaviour. During the Renaissance, a period of Western art history that took place from about the 1400's to the 1600's in Europe, many artists were sure that the end of the world was just around the corner. They created paintings that showed the doom that was coming, warning people of what would happen if people did not change their ways.

Bruegel and Bosch were two artists whose work used the theme of people behaving badly. Two of their most famous paintings show us the consequences.

## Hieronymus Bosch

The ***Garden of Earthly Delights*** (from about 1504), shown here, is a huge painting in three parts (called a triptych). The first part on the left shows Adam and Eve in the garden of eden; in the middle is a wild and shocking landscape on Earth full of people and creatures doing anything they want, and on the right is a frightening picture of hell.

Many people who have studied this painting think that it shows us goodness in the left panel, wild behaviour in the centre and what will happen as a result of the bad behaviour on the right.

Look carefully at the ***Bruegel-Bosch Bus*** (especially the front of the Bus), and see how this artwork was inspired by the painting. You will notice all kinds of monsters and movie characters piled all over.

Would you like to visit this place? Before you answer, take a close look at all of the everyday people in the city – see how tiny they are compared to the monsters. Would you really like to be there?

## Pieter Bruegel the Elder

In the Old Testament of the Bible, we learn about a group of people, led by King Nimrod, who tried to build a tower that reached all the way to heaven. This is the ***Tower of Babel***, a popular subject for artists, shown here in one of the most famous paintings, painted in 1563. In the story, they were punished by God for this bold action – suddenly everyone spoke a different language that the others could not understand. Building stopped and the people went their separate ways across the Earth. *Have you heard the word ‘babble’ to describe people who talk a lot?*

Bruegel was inspired by Bosch in many of his paintings. He created huge scenes crammed with tiny people doing all sorts of things. Can you see how Kim Adams may have been inspired by this painting as well? Take a close look at the back of the ***Bus***.

Kim Adams has built a city that reaches to the sky with its skyscrapers and tall factory buildings. In a city full of factories, buildings, train tracks and people, what happens to all of the mess? At first you might think you see a volcano, but look carefully at the top – you can see dump trucks up there, unloading all of their junk. You can also see all of the broken cars that have tumbled down the side.

**Kim Adams**

Kim Adams is an artist who lives in Toronto. He has been making art using toys, model sets and readymade objects for many years. His art is often funny, sarcastic and ironic, often pointing out problems with our society in a way that makes us think and laugh at the same time. From time to time he comes back to the AGH to add things to the ***Bruegel-Bosch Bus*** – it is a city that keeps growing!

With the ***Bruegel-Bosch Bus***, what first seems like an exciting and fun world - full of our favourite movie characters and toys, with a roller coaster, hot air balloons and tall buildings - may not be such a great place to live after all. Like many artists of the past, he may be trying to warn us, asking us to change our ways before it is too late.

There are many different ways to understand a work of art, and this is one interpretation of the ***Bruegel-Bosch Bus***. How else might you explain it?

The **Tower of Babel** is a structure featured in chapter 11 of the Book of Genesis, an enormous tower intended as the crowning achievement of the city of Babylon. According to the biblical account, Babel was a city that united humanity, all speaking a single language and migrating from the east; it was the home city of the great king Nimrod, and the first city to be built after the Great Flood. The people decided their city should have a tower so immense that it would have "its top in the heavens." However, the Tower of Babel was not built for the worship and praise of God, but was dedicated to false man-made religion, with a motive

of making a 'name' for the builders - Genesis 11:4. God seeing what the people were doing, confused their languages and scattered the people throughout the earth.

The story is found in Genesis 11:1-9 ([KJV](#)) as follows:

1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children builded. 6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

**Other Interesting Notes:**

Pieter Brueghel's influential portrayal is based on the Colosseum in Rome, while later conical depictions of the tower (as depicted in Doré's illustration) resemble much later Muslim towers observed by 19th century explorers in the area, notably the Minaret of Samarra. M. C. Escher depicts a more stylized geometrical structure in his woodcut representing the story.

According to one modern legend, "sack" was the last word uttered before the confusion of languages

There are stories similar to the biblical "Tower of Babel" story around the world – South America, Africa, in Irish folklore, in Islam, the Qur'an, Kabbalah etc.