

Pavel Brázda in the British Isles

Next year, the Czech Republic will celebrate the centennial of its modern statehood. It will be an excellent opportunity to reflect on the good things we have given to Europe and the rest of the world, where we have excelled, and how we have enriched our nation and the world around us. We will unspool a century-long film encompassing a plethora of sad and funny stories, and we will seek inspiration for the present and the future. And next year, Pavel Brázda, like Queen Elizabeth II, will mark 92 years on Earth. The span of his life covers almost the entire modern history of our country. It has seen both of its extremes, the high points and the low points; it connects the past and the present; it bears witness. It contains what is most noble in humanity, from the past to the present and into the future. Anyone who has had the extraordinary opportunity to visit Pavel Brázda and Věra Nováková in their flat in Prague's Vinohrady neighbourhood will have been smitten with the remarkable atmosphere of First Republic refinement, exquisite taste and omnipresent, uplifting and almost palpable warmth rising not only from a cup of steaming tea, but also from some intangible depth. You are immediately drawn into exciting events in which elegant language and traditions are a framework for a deeper reflection on issues in contemporary society and modern times.

Pavel Brázda himself embodies the best of what we have produced in the Czech lands, what has come to fruition here, what has been of significance beyond the borders of our country. He is a worthy representative not only of Czech art and culture, but of the Czech spirit. His "hominism" – art about people and for people – is imbued with kindness, an ability to look at human beings with an understanding of their weaknesses, joys and passions. It's a method that condemns, mocks and finds irony in what is evil and low, but at the same time leads to forgiveness, cleansing, contemplation. His is a colourful and complex grasp and vision of the world, without an overambitious attempt to uncover all its secrets, suspicions, gaping uncertainties and contradictions. Pavel Brázda is knocking on the door of our lives. Perceptibly, but without insistence and with humility. Delivering news. He is at the same time the ancient tribune and the modern messenger. Herald of joy, strength, and redemption. Now at the start of his tenth decade of life, he is coming to Great Britain. A country where it is mainly young aspiring artists who are supported and warmly received. This has been the tendency, but maybe it's already a bit cliché.

In his heart and soul, Pavel Brázda is fundamentally a young artist. The demanding content in his work is often playful. He likes to surprise. He uses magic and enchantment. He shows us sparks of eroticism. He discusses with the verve of a student and tirelessly supports his arguments. He has the potential to be discovered and explored. Worthy of special mention is Brázda's absolute and lasting fidelity to principles, first and foremost his allegiance to freedom. In good times and bad, Pavel Brázda follows his own path. Regardless of the difficulties and temptations surrounding him, he stays true to his vision of life and art, his idea of happiness. He never gives up, never equivocates. In this sense, the silent and poetic Pavel Brázda remains radical and young. I could not have a clear conscience if in this essay introducing Pavel Brázda I did not devote at least one sentence to the artist Věra Nováková, the painter's life support.

Without her care, perspective, understanding, but also generosity and humour, Brázda's artistic and personal pilgrimage would undoubtedly have been more challenging. I hope that this exhibition brings them further fulfilment and satisfaction. I firmly believe that Brázda's work will captivate viewers in Britain and open the door for a continued dialogue, which is needed today more than ever before.

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