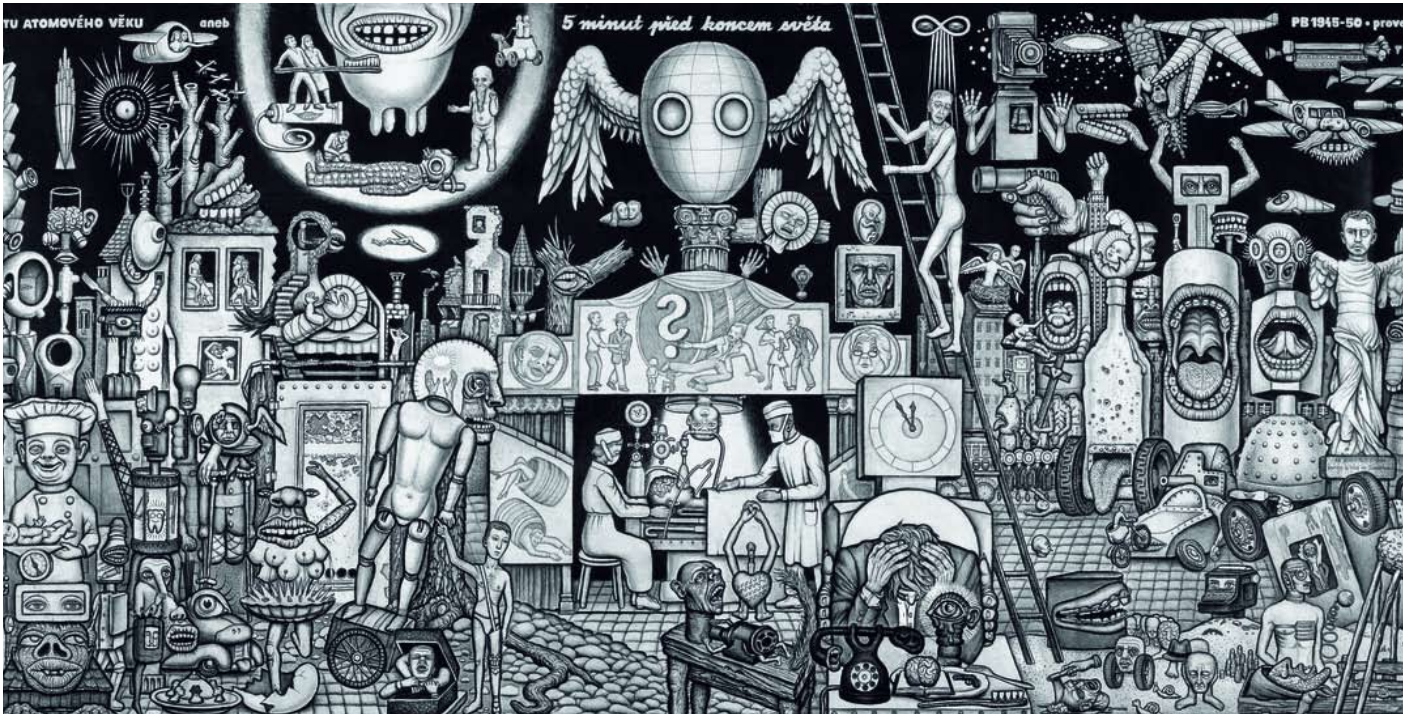
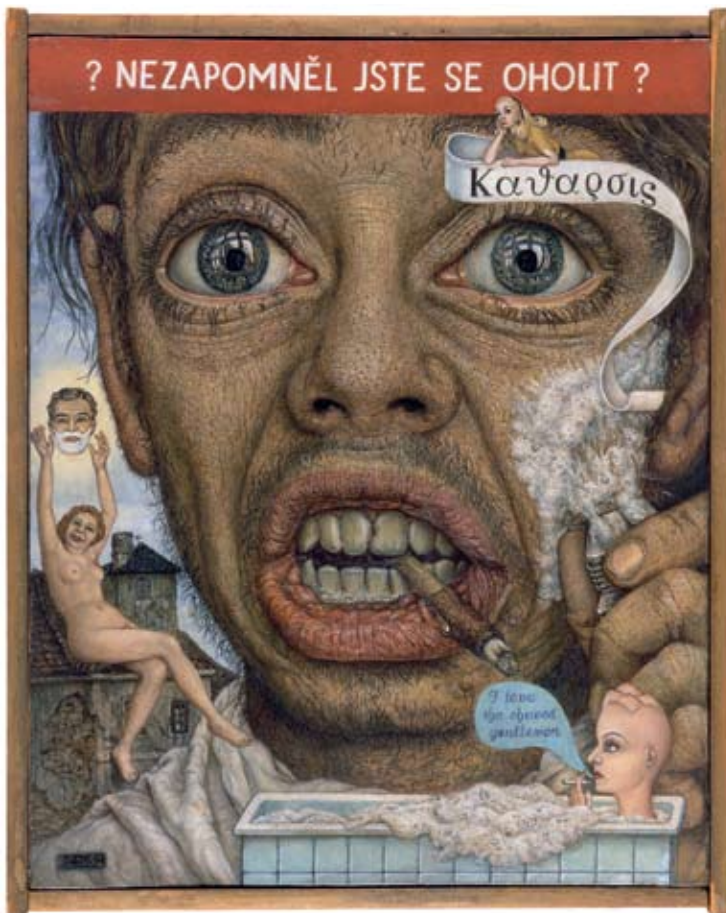


PAVEL BRÁZDA





Five Minutes Before the End of the World
(1945-1966) chalk and ink drawing on paper 63 x 136 cm



Did You Forget to Shave?
(1950) oil on board 37 x 30 cm

The Monster Is Waiting, the Monster Has Time
(1950) oil on board 78 x 44 cm



"THE MONSTER IS
WAITING, THE MON-
STER HAS TIME"
1956-58

"RACERS" 1956-58

Oil on canvas

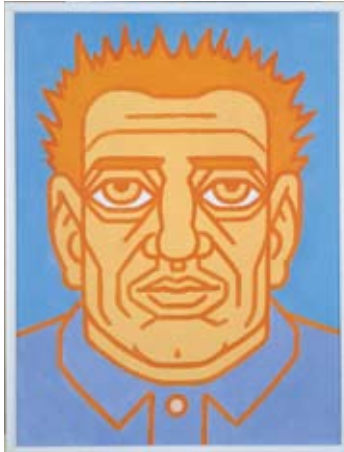




Grey Figure
(1957) watercolor on paper 38 x 20 cm

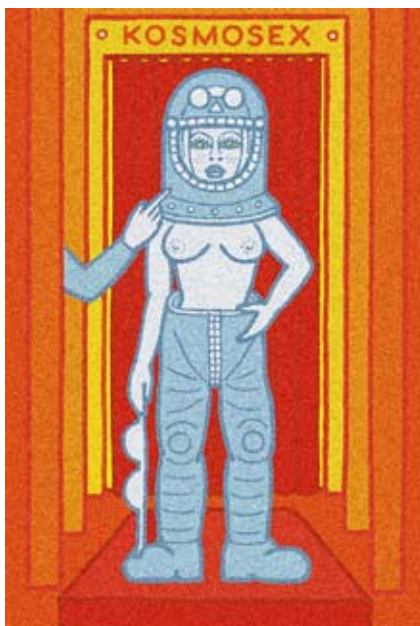
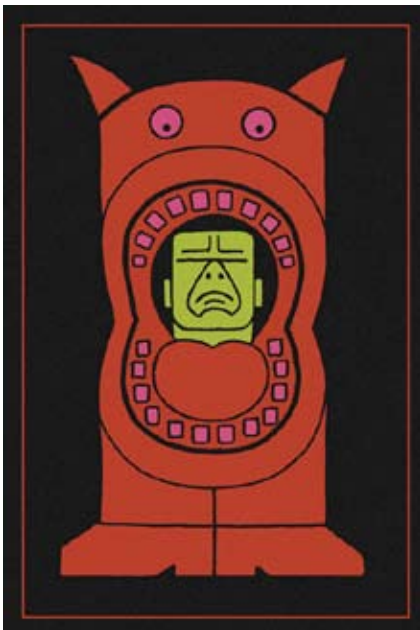
"Silver Astronaut"
(1957) watercolor on board 45 x 18 cm





Acrylic on canvas

"HEADS" 1956-58

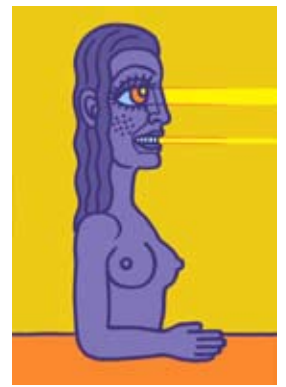
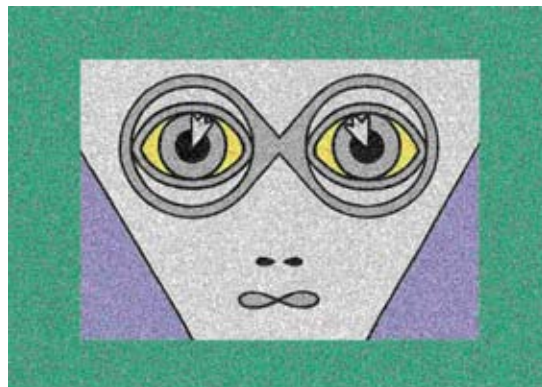
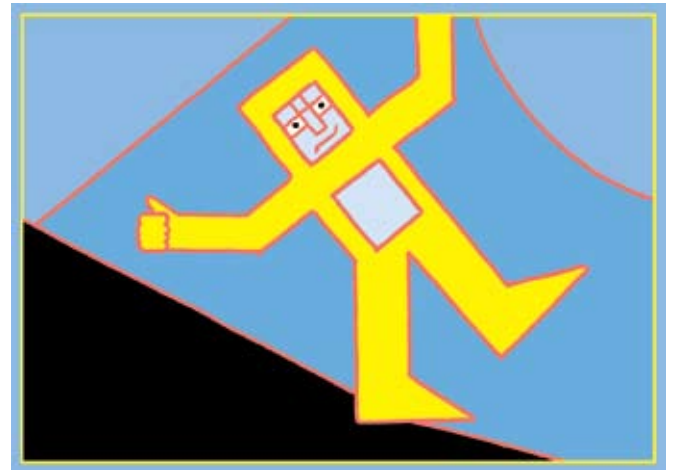
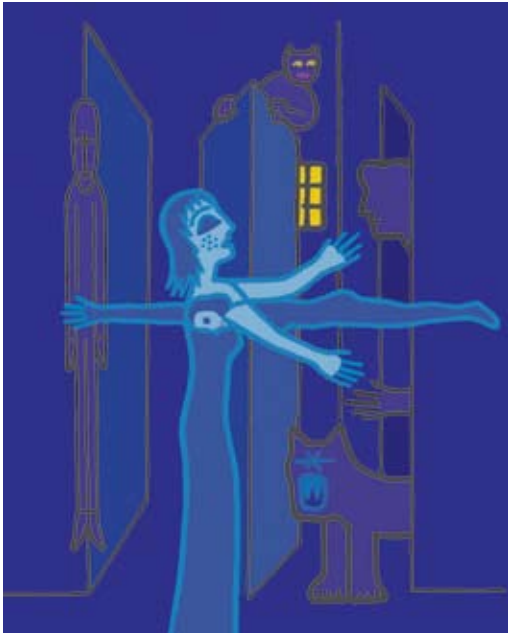


Computer painting / Digital print on paper or canvas

"HUMAN COMEDY" 2000- PRESENT

"HUMAN COMEDY" 2005- PRESENT

Computer painting / Digital print on paper or canvas

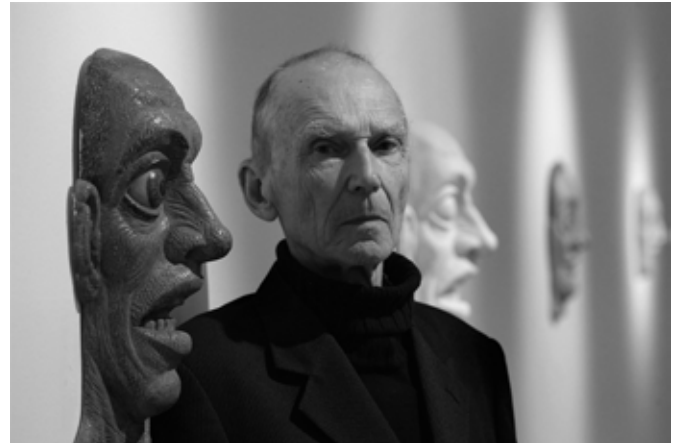


Pavel Brázda (born 1926) is one of the most remarkable solitaires in Czech postwar art. As early as 1943 he founded his own movement, called “Hominism”, which he defined as art about people and for people. In 1949 he was expelled along with the painter Věra Nováková from the Prague Academy of Fine Arts for political reasons, and subsequently he had to apprentice as a house painter. From 1950 to 1952, now as a married couple, Brázda and Nováková attended the Higher School of Applied Arts, and both were then allowed to earn a living in the applied arts to a limited degree. For 10 years starting in 1977 Brázda was a stoker in a coke boiler room, and since 1987 he has been a pensioner.

His nonconformist work was hidden from public view for 40 years, and only after the Velvet Revolution was it “discovered” when he and his wife jointly had their first major exhibition in 1992. In recent years he has been adding to his extensive body of visual art a group of literary texts marked by irony and self-irony. Paradoxically, long-term exclusion from the public sphere allowed him to take a lifelong nonconformist stance and to create with a sense of freedom and inner independence. His work from the 1940s and '50s is characterized by the startlingly bold departure through which he distanced himself from the artistic mainstream of the time and even anticipated some of the essential features of Postmodernism by several decades. His views were in part close to Surrealism, but at the same time he was looking into the distant past with veneration for such Old Masters as Lucas Cranach. His drawing method is based on the example and teachings of the classics of Late Gothic and Early Renaissance art, including Albrecht Dürer and Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

From his earliest creative work Brázda has dealt primarily with critically analysing the image of the world while maintaining his characteristic humorous outlook. The socially oriented “Hoministic” paintings and drawings from the 1950s can be described as a visionary statement about the human psyche against the backdrop of the time. Brázda enjoys working with the device of microscopic “up-close seeing”, as in the paintings *The Monster Is Waiting*, *the Monster Has Time* and *Did You Forget to Shave?* (1950), which are bizarrely introspective with numerous symbolic meanings and levels. The absurdity of the very origin of our world is one of the unifying themes threading in an uncustomary consistency through his entire body of work. In his output one also can note an affinity with literary texts by Samuel Beckett, Dostoevsky and Orwell. A philosophical overlay is also evident from the titles of his paintings.

One of the most important works of this period is a tragicomic painting of the apocalypse titled *Five Minutes Before the End of the World* (1945–1966). In it we are standing before a bewitching reflection of the full breadth of human intellectual existence “from the terrible to idealism”, in the words of the artist. “Brázda’s sharp vision acts here as an imaginary magnifying glass, which he focuses both on his own intimate life and also



on the brutally absurd realities of the civilization in which he lives.”* In 1954 he painted the visionary cycle “Astronauts” – figures, half human, half robot, wearing spacesuits. It was just at that time that his style began to change: He moved from a faithful naturalism to symbolism, often with elements of graphical ornament. It was in this spirit that he created, for example, his cycle of cheerful and brightly coloured “Racers”. But there is also the sting of irony here: Racers symbolize vitality and energy and at the same time the futility of a “fast” consumerist way of life. In these graphically stylized works he also found a point of departure for his current work, a large “novel in pictures” called “The Human Comedy”. It is in a clearly readable, understandable, simplified, grotesquely symbolic style, partly mediated with digital technology, in which everything that is unnecessary – including colour – is eliminated and reduced to symbol and intimation. There remains only a strong basic line, contour or contrasting colour on a monochromatic or at most two-colour background.

“Brázda does not go against current trends in visual art, nor against the trends of any period, except those that are too fashionable or academic. He prefers to remain on the outside. If he concurs with them in some way he welcomes it, if he diverges with them it doesn’t bother him at all. Since the beginning he has remained and will continue to remain sufficiently free and independent. There is not much, but also not little, in contemporary art (mainly figurative, but also abstract) that he values as lively and useful, whether it is somewhat close to him personally or remote. About the crucial present and future of painting, compared with other modes of art that would replace it and sometimes even try to unseat it, he remains confident (...). Brázda is above all a sympathetic observer of his own life and the lives of others. Generally, the human situations and stories in his paintings transcend time in content and form.”**

Miroslav Ambroz

* Richard Drury: *Z lidské komedie* (From the Human Comedy), 2009

** Přemysl Orátor: *O malíři Pavlu Brázdovi* (On the Painter Pavel Brázda)