1. Introduction

The exhibition *Věra Nováková & Pavel Brázda: Paintings, Words, Irises* presents the work of an exceptional artist couple. The Brázdas lived and worked under the former regime at the margins of both society and the artistic community, in very modest conditions. Their long-standing position as outsiders in the art world gradually shifted from the 1990s through the turn of the millennium, until they came to be widely recognized as among the most important figures in Czech art. The exhibition does not primarily follow the couple's biography, though it does not exclude it. Instead, it attempts to outline the key thematic areas shared by both artists – themes they both explored, yet each from a distinct perspective shaped mainly by their relationship to Christianity. Věra Nováková focused on the unique artifact, often highlighting subjects such as biblical figures or intimate portraits of loved ones. In contrast, Pavel Brázda leaned toward universal types and the democratization of art, enthusiastically multiplying, varying, and replicating his motifs. These contrasting approaches define the exhibition's thematic sections:

Heads, faces, figures
The relationship to script, words, and text
The theme of vegetation

A specific thread of the exhibition consists of illustrations. These include illustrations for prose, experimental poetry, and scientific illustrations on which the couple collaborated and in which these same themes also appear. Perhaps for the first time, the exhibition presents a collection of beautiful botanical drawings of irises to the public, with the iris motif closely connected to the theme of vegetation. At the same time, it is intertwined with Věra Nováková's family history and can be found not only in her early work but also in the early work of Pavel Brázda.

The relationship to words and text is represented in Věra Nováková's work by "letter paintings," in which she reflected on the shapes of letters and their potential meanings. For Pavel Brázda, the relationship to text took a different form. He named the subjects of his paintings (e.g., *Matthew the Honest*, *Dobromil and Dobromila*, *Hujdobro*, etc.) and provided his works with nonsensical titles and commentaries full of wordplay. Brázda, whose literary inclinations verged on graphomania, was an enthusiastic interpreter of his wife's paintings. Under the pseudonym Přemysl Arátor, he described his own paintings, often delving into the details and vicissitudes of their life as a couple.
In almost every stop in the audio guide, you will hear the texts of Pavel Brázda and his alter ego. These are complemented by two texts by Věra Nováková.