

1932

Antonín Procházka (1882 – 1945)

Happiness, 1932

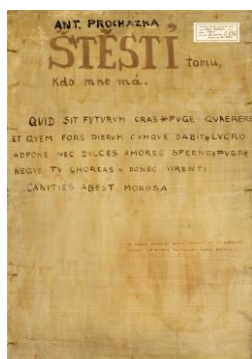
The work *Happiness* by Antonín Procházka, a prominent artist of the Osma group, is one of the few encaustics (an ancient and exacting painting technique employing beeswax mixed with paint and applied most often on a wooden panel) in our collections. This extraordinary technique makes the sculpted details (bracelet, ring, rose, hair, hem of the bedspread) stand out in the painting.

A graceful girl with deep, mesmerizing eyes and a shy smile has just pulled back the ornately decorated curtain. She holds wild roses she has received or wants to give to someone. She has appeared to delight us with her pure and simple beauty, to bring us joy, and perhaps to disappear again... This mysterious girl is a symbol of happiness, of its fleeting nature. Inspired by the art of ancient Greece, she represents happiness as a feeling and a state of mind.

The painting has become a bit of a symbol of our gallery – how could it not, since its reverse hides a promising message inscribed in ancient handwriting (allegedly in the hand of Brno collector, Karel Růžička, J.D., from whom the gallery purchased the work in 1968): *“Happiness to him who has me.”* That is why the gallery cherishes it, presents it on various printed materials, and exhibits it regularly within its permanent exhibition. The reverse of the panel also bears two texts about happiness. The longer one is in Latin and quotes the Roman poet Horace: *“Leave off asking what tomorrow will bring, and whatever days fortune will give, count them as profit; do not despise the pleasures of love nor the dance of your youth, when you are fresh and morose gray hairs are far away.”* (Horace, Odes and Epodes IX) The shorter one in Greek reads approximately as follows: *“Rose will long remain beautiful. The point is to find the rose...”*

Besides Jakub Schikaneder’s *Twilight*, the *Happiness* by Procházka is another magnet for our visitors, for which they repeatedly return. And we love coming back to it too – after all, no other gallery has the *Happiness* that brings it luck...

The Karlovy Vary gallery holds five paintings by Antonín Procházka, one of the most prominent figures of Czech interwar Modernism. They represent his early period influenced by Munch’s Expressionism and the Cubist stage of his work, but above all his Neo-Classicism.



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