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**CULTURAL COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA
AND THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE 1960s AND 1970s:
A CASE STUDY OF THE INTERNATIONAL
BIENNIAL OF GRAPHIC ARTS***

This paper examines the cultural artistic links between India and the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing in particular on the links connecting Indian artists to the institution of the Ljubljana-based International Biennial of Graphic Arts (IBGA), as well as on the systemic arrangements for the exchange of other cultural events between the two countries. Studying the case of participation by the Indian graphic artist Krishna Reddy in the IBGA—who almost certainly entered the Biennial via the Western art world, paving the way for many of his compatriots—and concentrating on other institutional routes established with India (e.g. Lalit Kala Academy), we investigate how Yugoslav cultural agreements and programmes but also the self-initiative of artists influenced the processes of artistic exchange between India and the SFRY, and how, in the case of the IBGA, this was reflected at the level of procedures adopted for inviting Indian artists and exhibiting their works.

The paper is based on the analysis of the archival material deposited in the Archives of Yugoslavia, the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and the archives of the International Centre of Graphic

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Arts in Ljubljana, as well as on the study of the literature to the present date. The most extensive portion of the studied material is held in the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, and for the purpose of the research a substantial proportion of its fonds "AJ 319 Savezni savet za obrazovanje i kulturu 1967–1971" [Federal Council for Education and Culture] and "AJ 559 Savezna komisija za kultur veze sa inostranstvom 1953–1971" [Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries] were analysed. It is important to note that during the NATO bombing of Belgrade (1999), four fonds were destroyed and one partially damaged, including the fond "Solidarity with Non-Aligned and Developing Countries", which would be relevant for the present research.

The thesis of the research is that the cultural policy of the SFRY in the sphere of fine and visual arts—which could be conceived as completely individual, founded on anti-imperialism and decolonisation, non-interference and peaceful co-existence, in addition to Yugoslav self-management—is in practice not identifiable in the activities of fine and visual arts organisations or, at least, its impact is not considerable, even in the case of the IBGA, which was valued primarily for bringing together art from all over the world. "The International Biennial of Graphic Arts, with its Western-centrism and unreflected understanding of quality in art and art's autonomy, seems to have moved more visibly away from the search for new cultural policies based on the socialist principles of equality, freedom, self-management and solidarity".¹ Although concepts often occupy a significant part in manifestos included in speeches, commentaries, invitations and letters, practices reveal different trends, reflecting the great influence of Western modern art and its search for individual freedom and autonomy, disengagement from politics and the establishment of so-called objective criteria of quality. Already at the level of selection procedures, these criteria were established as the authority of predetermined conditions necessary for the artist's success. The success, in turn, depends on the perspective and the intensity of establishing the authority of the adopted perspective, which tends towards "truth" or "factuality".² The aim is to establish a totality (Western modernism), which can only emerge by placing a specific particularity in the position of an absolute, and this is inevitably linked to the elimination of other particularities.³ The canon of Western modernist art was formed as a result of certain intrinsic characteristics of the modernist period, which

1 Tepina, Umetniška stičišča – utopije – neuvrščenost, p. 89.

2 Feyerabend, *Znanost kot umetnost*, p. 68.

3 Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*.

remained unnoticed during this era, as Francois Lyotard points out. These characteristics were nationality, power and hegemony. The problem of hegemony—without realising, Europe conceives and presents its culture as a universal fact—is also the problem of the IBGA.⁴ At this point, we are entering an area where, at the cultural level and in the period of the bipolar world, the struggle for the dominance of ideas was fought once again. In this field, the SFRY did not actually succeed in establishing its own criteria but followed the predominant hegemonic (Western) trends—which created the conditions for following a single and increasingly global influence—rather than tending towards the dispersion and diversity of multiple perspectives and equal opportunities for interaction that constituted the conceptual foundations of non-alignment.

Period prior to the agreements on cultural cooperation (1955–1960)

In 1957, before the signing of the Cultural Convention with India, the SFRY Embassy in New Delhi described the cultural relations between the two countries as follows:

India remains a peaceful non-bloc country. The aim is to achieve a balance between the two blocs, which is sometimes loosened in favour of the West and sometimes in favour of the East. According to the Embassy, these are tactical moves to identify internal and external needs in order to strengthen India's position. Tactical leniency towards the West does not yield the best results for India. Consolidation and improvement of political and other ties are occurring at a faster pace, despite the re-ignition of the Cold War. Many leaders are coming to India (Chou En-lai, Georgy Zhukov, etc.). Nehru's visit to the US was another important event, as India interpreted it as a major bridge for smoothing relations between the US and non-bloc countries as well as with the East. India entered, albeit to a limited extent, into the politics of the big nations. Its role was specific because it kept its doors more open than any other big country. India sought to avoid strong integration with the East, while the Western bloc policy was a major barrier to better contacts due to its colonial attitudes and racial discrimination. Consequently, India's relations with the West were at a proportionally low level, while the country was striving to meet the conditions to obtain aid and loans as soon as possible.

In the 1950s, Yugoslav-Indian relations were mainly determined by the attitude reflected in Indian politics; India aimed to become an equal

4 Ženko, *Totaliteta in umetnost*; Lyotard, Jameson and Welsch.

partner of the big countries, and therefore also tried to keep non-bloc and friendly countries at a certain distance: advising rather than consulting them, expecting support for its actions rather than displaying willingness for joint actions as equal partners. However, it should be pointed that among the non-bloc countries India maintained the best relations with Yugoslavia. According to the Embassy, this is mainly due to the importance of Yugoslavia in global politics, which other smaller non-bloc countries lack, the respect for principle in our foreign policy and, as an important factor, Nehru's⁵ personal respect for Comrade President.

Later on, the Federal Executive Council (SIV) and the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in their information notices, reports and evaluations of cultural cooperation repeatedly emphasised that relations between the two countries had been good since the beginning of the cooperation and were rapidly strengthening and that, at the same time, cultural contacts constituted an important field and an incentive for the development of political and economic relations. In its report on cooperation between Yugoslavia and India between 1953 and 1966, the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries states:

These are two nations that emerged after the Second World War and fought for their freedom and independence—therefore contacts were established very soon and have been genuine and fruitful from the very beginning. Usual activities: diplomatic missions in New Delhi and Belgrade were established immediately after the war. At the cultural level, there was an exchange of information, publications from the sphere of cultural life—cultural propaganda. Before the meetings of the representatives of Yugoslavia and India, meetings of “goodwill missions” took place, which, in addition to their political character, also had the function of cultural missions; on these occasions, representatives of cultural and educational life had, for the first time, the opportunity to directly encounter the cultural achievements of our nations and become acquainted with the level of their cultural development. These relations are not accidental and are the result of the impressions that the members of our “goodwill mission” brought back from India. The Chair of Indology in Zagreb was established in 1962/63. This was followed by the organisation of Indological educational research, as well as by a

5 AJ 837_KPR-I-5b/39 (1–12), Kabinet predsednika republike. India: Iz izvještaja jugoslovske Ambasade u New Delhi-u o spoljnoj politici Indije i jugoslovske-indijskim odnosima, 11 October 1957.

symposium and an exhibition held in 1965 on Yugoslav-Indian cultural contacts through the centuries, which provided interesting insights for the wider cultural public on our cultural achievements related to the great culture of India—Sanskrit, the presence of the spiritual culture of India.⁶

Due to the distance between the two countries and historical circumstances, cooperation and integration at the level of cultural relations had to be developed anew, and in 1968 the Yugoslav diplomatic-consular missions provided the following assessment:

Translation of works had an instrumental role, and over the last ten to fifteen years there has been noticeable progress, as previously interactions were non-existent due to different contexts and distance. Conversely, political relations are at a high level and there is a long-term orientation towards the expansion of economic connections. In this way, culture and art, if they become better acquainted with each other, can also mutually enrich each other and become an object of interest and creative inspiration for cultural operators and artists in Yugoslavia and India, which are objective reasons for expanding cultural relations with India in the future. Cultural cooperation lags behind political relations and increasingly stronger economic cooperation—this is what emerges from all the reports prepared up to three or four years ago. This area received less attention and, consequently, fewer resources were allocated to it. Even when the Cultural Convention was signed with India in March 1960, this did not change.⁷

Krishna Reddy at the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (1957–1963)

The Indian printmaker Krishna Reddy (1925–2018) exhibited at the IBGA even before the beginning of a greater influx of Indian artists and prior to the conclusion of agreements by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. The thesis is that Reddy reached the IBGA through another route, the Western world art route, and that the same is true for as the vast majority of Indian artists who followed him.

Reddy, born into a family of farmers, fought injustice all his life, participating in protests, including Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India movement.⁸

6 AJ559_57_126 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom. Opšti material. Veze sa Azijom. Veze sa Indijom 1953–1966: Information notices on cooperation with India in the fields of education and culture. Petar Mihailovski.

7 AJ 319_49_65 Kulturno-prosvetne veze sa inostranstvom: Ocene i predlozi naših diplomatsko-konzularnih predstavništva, May 1968.

In fleeing the colonial police for his involvement in this revolutionary movement, Reddy came to Santiniketan, West Bengal, where he spent his formative years at Visva-Bharati University's Kala Bhavana (Institute of Fine Arts) founded by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. While at Santiniketan, Reddy trained to be a sculptor and watercolorist, and came to be influenced by key figures such as Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinker Bajj and Benode Behari Mukherjee—artists now characterized as forming the school of contextual modernism in India.⁹

He graduated in 1946 and was head of the art section at Kalakshetra Foundation until 1949, while also teaching art at the Montessori Teacher Training Institute in Madras, where he took up painting for the first time.¹⁰

Relevant for our research is his move to London in 1949 to study sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Arts under the supervision of Henry Moore, who himself exhibited several times at the IBGA, and Lucian Freud. In 1950, Reddy moved to Paris on a scholarship, where he met Constantin Brâncuși, who introduced him to the artistic life of the city. Here, Reddy studied sculpture under Ossip Zadkine at the Academie Grande Chaumiere and etching under Stanley William Hayter at Atelier 17. Hayter, who regularly received personal invitations to participate at this Ljubljana-based event, was also a frequent guest of the IBGA.¹¹

In 1957, Reddy left for the Accademia Di Belle Arti Di Brer in Milan in order to study under Marino Marini. During this period, in 1957, 1961 and 1963, he exhibited his prints at the IBGA, but the archival material revealing how his works were admitted to the Biennial is scarce.

In 1957, artists were either invited in person or submitted their works themselves, which were then selected by a jury.¹² That year, Reddy, whose biography in the catalogue lists his studies in India and under Moore, Zadkine and Hayter was, was the only Indian artist to exhibit at the Biennial.¹³ On this occasion, he exhibited a colour aquatint *Fish*. In 1959 he did not participate, while in 1961 he exhibited three colour etchings, i.e. *Water Lilies*, *Pastoral and River*, the first two dated 1960 and the third dated 1961. The biography

in the catalogue mentions "numerous exhibitions in Paris, European cities and America" and the prize he won at the International Exhibition held in Philadelphia.¹⁴ The archival material of the International Centre of Graphic Arts for 1961 is non-existent, but other sources¹⁵ indicate that in October 1961 Reddy not only exhibited at the Biennial but also at the gallery Mala galerija in Ljubljana, selling two prints, which also emerges from his correspondence, dated in 1963, with the head of the IBGA Zoran Kržišnik.¹⁶ The Indian Ambassador was unable to attend the opening of the exhibition,¹⁷ although, in the same year, the Serbian art historian and critic Lazar Trifunović stressed the importance attached to participation in the Biennial by artists from all parts of the world.¹⁸

In 1963 Reddy received a personal invitation to exhibit at the IBGA, to which he responded with a letter and prints.¹⁹ Three other Indian artists, i.e. Krishna Kanwal, Bishamber Khanna and Kaiko Moti, exhibited their works alongside Reddy. Reddy's presentation is described by Alexander Bassin in the journal *Sinteza*, where he describes his prints as follows: "the lace-like sequence of graphic lines in Reddy's work already represents a departure from the acquired practices, and, on the whole, an attempt to merge Oriental and European art".²⁰ The catalogue of the 1963 Biennial of Graphic Arts already mentions Reddy being co-director of Atelier 17 in Paris and lists numerous exhibitions in Europe, America and India that displayed his artworks, highlighting once again the prize he won in Philadelphia.²¹ Reddy exhibited two prints from 1963, *Water Forms and Sunset*. In this period, he was already renowned for his mastery of intaglio printing and had been co-director at Hayter's Atelier 17 at least since 1962. Hayter founded this thriving workshop in Paris in 1927, moved it to New York in the period from 1939 to 1940 and re-established it in Paris in 1950. Originally located on the Rue Moulin Vert, the workshop's name was derived from its later location at 17 Rue Campagne Premiere, Paris, where Hayter settled at the beginning of the 1930s. Atelier 17 is known for numerous celebrated

8 Krishna Reddy 1925–2018.

9 Sumesh Sharma. Krishna Reddy and Atelier 17: A "New Form" Takes Shape.

10 Krishna Reddy 1925–2018.

11 SI MGLC 1963/F2, archive relative to the 5th Biennial of 18 May 1962: List of exhibitors, 18 May 1962.

12 SI MGLC, 1957/F1, 2. IBGA 1957: Minutes of the 1st ordinary meeting of the Committee for the 2nd International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, 2 March 1957.

13 Krishna Reddy 1925–2018.

14 Ibid.

15 Hayter, Krishna.

16 SI MGLC 1963/F2, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts: Competition: Applications and invitations. Krishna Reddy's letter, 8 February 1963.

17 SI MGLC 1963/F1, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts 1963: Invitations.

18 SI MGLC 1963/F1, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts: Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Organisational Committee for the 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, 21 December 1962.

19 SI MGLC 1963/F2, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts: Applications for participation: Krishna Reddy's response to the invitation and SI MGLC 1963/F2, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts: Minutes: Personal invitations.

20 Bassin, Peta mednarodna grafična razstava, p. 59.

21 Krishna Reddy 1925–2018

artists who worked there and were encouraged by Hayter's insistence that printmaking was not simply a method of reproduction but rather a form of artistic creation. The artists of the atelier often worked directly on the plate and were in a constant search for new experiences and techniques. Paris-based Atelier 17 was considered a meeting place, which provided a space for artistic experimentation for a number of artists, including Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Juan Cardenas, Constantin Brâncuși and Zarina Hashmi:²²

Notable among the innovations of Atelier 17 is the method of simultaneous color printmaking, an etching technique involving several colors on the same plate. It offers artists increased possibilities for experimentation and innovation. Collaboration between experienced and novice artists created a spirit of creative research. Each day an assistant or collaborator/assistant helps and advises the artists. However, each works according to his own rhythm and creates his own personal works of art.²³

Technique and style distinguish Reddy as an important printmaker. His prints are abstract, consisting of subtle grid-like designs on plates with intricate textures, even reliefs. The myriad of complex colours introduced into his prints reveal a contemplative approach to the infinite mysteries of nature. His work at Atelier 17 played a key role in developing a new printing process to produce multi-coloured prints using a single printing matrix and exploiting the viscosity and tackiness of the inks; this method was subsequently named "viscosity printing".

During the Paris demonstrations in May 1968, Reddy also created a print entitled *Demonstrators*, which is considered one of his most famous works.²⁴ "His unique vision was the startling combination of his pastoral nature studies from Santiniketan, with the darker cosmic view of French surrealism. His plate-making was sculptural, carved with styluses and tools into the copper."²⁵

In 1976, Reddy moved permanently to the United States. "A real guru and teacher, Krishna mentored generations in France and the US and always kept his links with India. He did many print workshops here with art students and taught many Indian artists in the

22 Atelier 17.

23 Ibid.

24 Krishna Reddy 1925–2018.

25 Kalra. A real guru, he always kept his links with India. The art fraternity remembers eminent sculptor and printmaker Krishna Reddy, who died in New York at the age of 93.

influential art studio Atelier 17, including Zarina Hashmi. A gentle soul with sharp political beliefs, his roots combined Tagore and Gandhi with a good dose of the French left," says photographer and curator Ram Rahman. He adds:

He also mentored me when I had just moved to New York and he got me to teach design at NYU. Always very generous with his time, guidance and even loans to young students, his loft was always filled with people of every continent and he made it a point to interact with black artists in the US. Bob Blackburn was one such artist he was extremely close to.²⁶

First agreements on cultural cooperation (1960–1965)

Institutional links between the IBGA and the countries from which the exhibitors came were also formed in other ways. The path leading to the expansion of contacts and cooperation was established with the *Agreement on Cultural Cooperation* signed in March 1960, which produced concrete results—from this point on, cultural relations actually began developing. What can be referred to as the second period lasted until the signing of the *Programme of Educational and Cultural Cooperation* in July 1965, which contributed to raising the level of cultural cooperation. The Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries described as major achievements of this period the visits of important personalities from Indian cultural life, i.e. Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain (Secretary at the Indian Ministry of Education), Devi Presad (artist, activist and publicist) and Humayun Kabir (Indian Minister for Education), as well as the anniversary celebration dedicated to the humanist, writer and artist Rabindranath Tagore, which was organised in several cultural centres throughout the SFRY in 1961. In the academic year 1962/63, the Chair of Indology was founded at the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb. Five scholarships were offered for studying in India and five for studying in Yugoslavia. According to the Commission reports, the artistic field saw major achievements in the fine arts, music, performing arts and literature. An exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav painting was hosted in India in 1962,²⁷ followed by a solo exhibition by Peter Lubarda in 1963.²⁸ Indian artist Bishamber Khanna, who, as stated above, also participated at the 5th edition of the IBGA in 1963, refers to Lubarda's exhibition in his correspondence. In a letter dated 27 March 1963 to Zoran Kržišnik, director

26 Ibid.

27 Sodobno jugoslovansko slikarstvo, p. 91.

of the Museum of Modern Art (Moderna galerija) and head of the IBGA in Ljubljana, he apologised for the delay and communicated that Lubarda's exhibition was being held in Delhi at the time of his writing, describing it as an important contribution for Indian artists and art critics.²⁹ In 1962, India organised an exhibition held in the SFRY featuring works of two painters who were recipients of scholarships granted by the Government of Yugoslavia, where they had also undertaken their specialisation. In April 1964, an exhibition of twenty-five exhibits by the Indian sculptor Amar Nath Sehgal was presented in Belgrade.³⁰

The implementation of the Cooperation Programme, which was signed on 7 July 1965, took place mainly in 1966, as the programme did not enter into force until the second half of the year. This complicated the dynamics of its implementation, as the cooperation between the two states was disproportionate and unbalanced. Another problem arose at the end of the programme, as it was not extended and therefore expired on 31 March 1967; however, for the rest of 1967, the activities that experienced delays remained ongoing in the attempt to complete all their phases. A new cultural cooperation programme was signed only at the beginning of 1968, which did not interrupt the exchanges, but delayed and extended the time for the completion of activities, allowing the full realisation of the previous programme.³¹ This period of intense cooperation represents realistic terrain where the process of adaptation of both countries to the needs and interests of their own cultures took place, manifesting not only as a desire but also considering the material possibilities. The Commission expressed strong concern in relation to the geographical factor affecting cultural cooperation, since the considerable distance between the two countries required additional adjustments. It also noted that the distance reduced the possibility for a more intense and frequent cooperation, which became evident after 1964. Moreover, it recognised the differences between the two specific national cultures as an addi-

tional obstacle but expressed the belief that over a longer period of time and with continued cooperation, these differences would eventually diminish, which was a mutual desire. In its opinion, significant results had been achieved in all sectors (cooperation in the fields of education, fine arts, music and stage art, literature and film).³²

In 1965, New Delhi hosted an international painting exhibition with twenty-one participating countries. The exhibiting artists from the SFRY included, among others, Andrej Jemec, Ljubo Lah, Ibrahim Ljubović, Slavko Šohaj, Nikola Reiser, Aleksandar Tomašević, Đorđe Pravilović and Trajče Jančevski.³³ The event was part of art exhibitions exchanges—in return, India arranged an exhibition of miniature painting in Belgrade and Zagreb, which was held for the first three weeks of November 1965, while in December 1965,³⁴ the fifth international art exhibition was organised in New Delhi by the All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society. Yugoslavia participated in the international exhibition with four artworks, and the catalogue also includes an overview of contemporary Yugoslav art. Subsequently, the exhibition travelled to Calcutta, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Bombay, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad and Amritsar.³⁵

First biennial agreement on cultural cooperation (1965–1967)

On 7 July 1965, the first biennial programme on cultural and educational cooperation with India was adopted. Cultural activities began to be conducted in a completely systematic way. In January 1967, a delegation consisting of Dušan Vejnović (chairman of the Commission), Petar Mihailovski, Dušan Štrbac and the Secretary of the Embassy of the SFRY in New Delhi, joined by the President and Vice-President of the Republic of India, the Indian Minister of Education and the Secretaries for Culture, came to New Delhi. One of their activities was a visit of the Lalit Kala Academy.³⁶ The programme was usually renewed every two years, but as mentioned before, there were delays in its implementation; consequently, the new programme for the period 1968–1969 was signed only in January

28 AJ 559_57_126 Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. General material. Relations with Asia. Relations with India 1953–1966: Information notices on cooperation with India in the fields of education and culture. Petar Mihailovski (senior councillor on the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries).

29 SI MGLC 1963/F2, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts 1963: Correspondence from individual exhibitors.

30 AJ 559_100_221 Izložbe stranih umetnika u Jugoslaviji 1962–1964. Letter from the Embassy of the SFRY to the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries on Nath Segal's arrival, 20 December 1963.

31 AJ 559_57_126 Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. General material. Relations with Asia. Relations with India 1953–1966: Information notice on cultural cooperation between India and Yugoslavia, 15 October 1966.

32 AJ 559_57_126 Petar Mihailovski.

33 Kronika, p. 109.

34 AJ 559_100_222 Exhibitions of foreign artists in Yugoslavia (1965–1966), Correspondence between the Embassy of the SFRY and the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 19 April 1965.

35 AJ 559_100_222 Exhibitions of foreign artists in Yugoslavia (1965–1966), Correspondence between the Embassy of the SFRY and the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 24 August 1965.

1968 (its signing coincided with the visit of President Tito's delegation to India between 22 and 24 January 1968).

In the meantime, the structure of the Federal Executive Council (SIV) in the SFRY changed; the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was formed as a special socio-political body at the federal level, which merely coordinated the international cultural and educational activities of the SFRY in cooperation with the newly established republican Commissions for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, as well as with self-governing institutions and organisations, which were active in the field of culture and also cooperated with foreign institutions according to their own interests. In 1967, republican Commissions were formed in Montenegro, Macedonia and Slovenia. In the same year, biennial programmes were reaching their end and new ones were being drafted for the period 1968–1969. Preparations and discussions on programmes signed in the SFRY with fifteen countries were in progress, which is one of the reasons why the signing of the 1967 agreement with India was delayed until 1968, as it was connected to funding arrangements. Given the importance attached to the continuity of cooperation, this caused widespread discontent.³⁷ The possibility for cooperation was no longer the domain of the Federal Commission but was extended to local competent authorities and included coordination of all the activities of publishing houses, writers, fine arts, music and dramatic arts academies as well as of individual visual and other artists in relations with foreign countries. The main visual arts manifestations, which had been successfully approved at that time by the Federal Commission, were a solo exhibition by the painter Peter Lubarda and a representative exhibition dedicated to the Yugoslav graphic arts (which was planned to be opened in June 1967, displaying 100 prints³⁸). Prints also proved to be the most sensible choice, as they did not require a lot of resources for transport and the technical equipment was provided by India, but they had nevertheless the potential to leave a big impact.

Particularly important is also the participation at the Triennial of Art in Delhi, which exhibited works by Riko Debenjak, Boško

36 AJ 559_57_127 Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. General material. Relations with Asia. Relations with India 1967–1971: Report on the visit of the Yugoslav delegation to India in order to sign the Programme of Educational and Cultural Cooperation for the period 1968–1969.

37 AJ 319_49_65 Cultural and educational relations with foreign countries: report of the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries for the year 1967, Belgrade, May 1968, pp. 3–4.

38 Merhar, *Mednarodno kulturno sodelovanje Jugoslavije z državami članicami gibanja neuvrščeni*, p. 64.

Karanović, Albert Kinert, Zlatko Prica, Marjan Detoni, Aleksander Lukovič, Božidar Jakac, Mario Mascarelli, Mihajlo Petrov, Mersad Berber and Miroslav Šutej among others. Triennial-India was conceived by Dr Mulk Raj Anand, the then President of the Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi, and it was in 1968 that the Triennial opened its doors for the first time.

In its documents, the Federal Commission draws attention to the lack of knowledge of Indian culture in the SFRY and suggests placing greater emphasis on the importance of learning the language and translating as well as on learning about Indian classical music, which had captured the interest of the West, exploring the ancient sculptures, which were unrivalled in terms of their richness and preservation, studying the best works of literature, etc. Moreover, the Commission also attaches great importance to the scholarships awarded by the Federal Institute for International Cultural, Educational and Technological Cooperation.³⁹ It noted that in 1968 relations between the two countries were sound and that the SFRY was striving to open up to all the countries across the globe but also to integrate into the international scene, as was evident from a number of conventions and programmes signed worldwide. In 1968, the SFRY cooperated in the field of culture with 100 countries, concluded cultural conventions with 46 countries and signed cultural biennial programmes with 21.⁴⁰

The financing of cultural cooperation was shaped according to a structure that changed considerably over the 1960s (in 1966 the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries still included the Republican Commissions for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries). After 1966, the Federal Executive Council (SIV) continued to finance and organise presentations of Yugoslav artists at international art manifestations. Throughout this time, there was a tendency towards decentralisation, but the SIV could not be completely excluded from financing cooperation with developing countries; in order to maximise the devolution of competencies to the Republics and the direct promoters of cooperation, the Commission proposed to diminish the role of the Federation and to concentrate its powers on only two categories: developing countries and the "joint actions".⁴¹ While most of the artistic cooperation with the above-mentioned countries remained founded by the Federation, the responsibility of the Republics was limited to rare instances. It was also proposed that the Federation retain a

39 AJ 319_49_65 Cultural and educational relations with foreign countries: Evaluations and proposals of our diplomatic and consular missions, May 1968.

40 AJ 319_49_65 Cultural and educational relations with foreign countries: Analysis of cultural relations: considerations 1968.

role in providing financial and material support for artistic exchanges with developing countries and that the Republics gradually become involved in the financing of cooperation (for the first two to three years it was envisaged that the Republics would cover half of the total costs). The SIV furthermore proposed that joint actions—those related to major artistic manifestations and the organisation of major representative art exhibitions, through which the cultures of nations and ethnic groups of the SFRY affirmed themselves in the world—continue to be supported materially and financially by the Federation, while the Republics would have the responsibility to organise the exhibitions on a proportional basis, according to the activities of individual territories.⁴² In addition to expanding the biennial programmes, the Federal Commission also aimed to increase the number of direct connections and initiatives of individual institutions, which were either foreseen but not yet implemented or insufficiently realised. It assumed that the financing problems in India were even greater:

The budget of the Ministry of Culture and Education has been considerably reduced, and given the economic situation, it is improbable that significant funding will be allocated for cultural cooperation. The question which arises in these circumstances is whether our companies should be more actively involved in financing cultural activities and contribute to elevating the prestige of Indian companies active in this field. The main problems are financial resources and the great geographical distance, which implies that in cases where the costs are limited, everything has to be done to ensure cultural exchanges between institutions and cultural operators.⁴³

It can be deduced that the financial aspect was one of the key obstacles to the development of cultural cooperation, and despite there being high interest in deepening cultural contacts with developing countries, it long lagged behind political and economic interests and relations. From 1960, when the SFRY signed the first convention, until the signing of the Cooperation Programme, the Commission's evaluations of the cultural exchanges with India pointed out that they were carried out in a haphazard manner, with no organised work from either side, causing cultural cooperation to lag behind political relations and economic links. Attention was drawn to the fact that

41 AJ 319_50_66 Cultural and educational relations with foreign countries: Questions regarding financing cultural cooperation, SIV, 17 July 1970, p. 4.

42 Ibid., pp. 14–17.

43 AJ 319_49_65 Cultural and educational relations with foreign countries: Evaluations and proposals of our diplomatic and consular missions, May 1968.

in a situation of strict centralisation of foreign currency, as was the case in India, it was not possible to count on unplanned exchanges, which affected the fruitfulness of cooperation:

In the difficult foreign currency situation that India is facing, the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture planned for cultural exchanges with foreign countries is the first to be impacted by cuts as it occurred a couple of months ago when India's budget was drastically reduced. It is therefore important that the Programme is adapted to our needs and capacities as realistically and appropriately as possible.⁴⁴

Self-governance

The development of self-management in the field of Yugoslavia's cultural relations with foreign countries did not keep pace with other social processes in terms of its intensity. The old forms of performing work and decision-making on cultural cooperation, which were tied to a single decision-making centre, were preserved. The goal, however, was to decentralise the Federation's competences regarding its international cultural activities, but the attempts did not yield much success. The Commission expressed the need to focus on substantive rather than organisational processes, especially on the realisation of the constitutional rights of the Republics and the pursuit of their interests. It argued that cultural relations could not be consolidated without self-governing bodies. Its members wanted to promote the self-governing processes relevant to cultural links, which were supposedly more suitable for the functioning of a self-governing system, presuming that the elements in common would crystallise. They recognised the need to develop an awareness of the interconnectedness of the world among the working population, labour organisations and their associations with the purpose that these actors would concentrate their efforts on building the broadest possible cultural connections. The development of self-management in the field of culture and education should have enabled working people to assess and identify their interest in cultural exchange and facilitate the development of responsibility awareness among all the parties involved. The Federal Council hoped that with the self-managed development of culture in general, cultural contacts with foreign countries would become a matter managed by working people and individual communes, pursuing their interests and opening up processes in which individuals would freely and directly realise their interest in exchanging

44 AJ 559_5_12 Opšti poverljivi materiali 1965–1966. Comments by the Embassy of the SFRY in New Delhi to the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries on the proposals of the Yugoslav-India Cultural Cooperation Programme.

creativity and learning about the creativity of others. At the same, the Federation was expected to be vigilant and direct resources towards the overlooked interests of society.⁴⁵ The Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries emphasised that in cultural exchanges with foreign countries it had to be considered that these were not merely exchanges but also produced effects, which, through the involvement of countries, occurred in the East as well as in the West. In 1968, it suggested that cultural cooperation should be integrated into the whole system of cultural development in Yugoslavia in a more organic way to be a genuine reflection of the country's progress. The Commission's members underlined their awareness that closing could not prevent the effects, and that they had to concentrate on what would benefit Yugoslavia, i.e. a clearer formulation of a differentiated conception of the policy on its cultural relations with foreign countries, which included the great powers, neighbouring countries and regions (the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Europe) as well as developing countries.⁴⁶ In the contacts with Eastern European countries they wanted greater visibility of Yugoslavia's contemporary successes in the area of cultural production. They stressed that a more critical attitude should be adopted towards art originating from these countries. As regards developing countries, the Commission argued that future cooperation and Yugoslav interest should be clearly defined and conceived for the long term. Most of these countries seemed interested, and the Commission recognised the great importance of Yugoslavia in cultural cooperation with them. Furthermore, it reckoned that it was important to also find ways to cooperate through international organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD, and to understand culture and education in the context of development. For the future, the Commission thus saw the need for a stronger cultural and educational policy and a policy on cultural cooperation with foreign countries. It also pointed out that with the participation of all interested factors, it would be necessary to consider the potential ways of conducting foreign policies in line with the internal policies of these countries.⁴⁷

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45 AJ 319_ 49_ 65 Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries 1967–1971: Considerations of the Federal Council for Education and Culture: analysis of Yugoslavia's cultural relations with foreign countries, 14 November 1968, p. 5.

46 Ibid., p. 7.

47 Ibid., p. 9.

Cultural Cooperation Programme and the IBGA

The IBGA was rarely discussed by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, but Zoran Kržišnik and the creators of the Biennial ensured from the very beginning that informal connections with this important body were maintained. In 1955, the Organising Committee decided to form a permanent secretariat of the International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, to which Zoran Kržišnik personally invited Ivo Frol (Secretary of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries from 1953 to 1958, Assistant Chairman of the Commission for Education and Culture of the SIV from 1958 to 1961), as the Committee considered this essential for the international and therefore also absolutely Yugoslav character of the Biennial.⁴⁸ Already at the Committee meeting held in June 1955, at the time of the catalogue's publication, the IBGA decided to invite as patrons Rodoljub Čolaković, Marko Ristić (Chairman of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), Juš Kozak, Boris Kraiger, Marijan Dermastia, Dolf Vogel-nik, Boris Kocjančič and the ambassadors of all the participating countries.⁴⁹ Contacts with the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and others actors therefore also occurred through "unofficial" channels.

In 1957, the IBGA asked for sponsorship, proposing a request for the funds from the President of the country either through the Marshal's Office, Moša Pijade or Rodoljub Čolaković.⁵⁰ During these years Ivo Frol was still on the Secretariat Committee. At a meeting of the Secretariat for the Organisation of International Exhibitions on 26 November 1958, the Secretariat proposed an expansion and the inclusion of Bogdan Osolnik, secretary of the Committee on Information in Belgrade, and Dušan Popović, secretary of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and member of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, as its members,⁵¹ which was realised in January 1959 at the request of the People's Organisational Committee in Ljubljana. Another interesting fact about the

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48 SI MGLC 1955, 1st International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F1, Correspondence between Kržišnik and Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (Frol), Letter, 28 October 1955.

49 SI MGLC 1955, 1st International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F1, Minutes of the meetings for the organisation of the 1st IBGA, Minutes of the meeting of the Committee for the 1st International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, 8 June 1955.

50 SI MGLC 1957 2nd International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F1, Minutes of sessions and meetings, Minutes of the 1st ordinary session of the Working Committee for the 2nd International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, 2 March 1957, p. 6.

51 SI MGLC, 1959, 3rd International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F1, Minutes of meetings, Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat for the Organisation of International Exhibitions of Graphic Arts, 26 November 1958, p. 2.

third edition of the IBGA (1959) is that President Tito took over the patronage of the event, to the great satisfaction of the Secretariat.⁵² In the same year, Tito also visited the IBGA, and the patronage continued in the following years, e.g. it is mentioned in the 1975 information notice on the 11th edition of the IBGA.

After the third edition of the IBGA (1961), the organisational structure of the Biennial no longer involved a direct representative of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. An example emerges from the correspondence relative to the preparations for the fifth edition of the IBGA between the Commission and Zoran Kržišnik asking it for participation in the prize fund (with a contribution amounting to 300,000 of the former dinars).⁵³

Besides the programmes with Egypt and Tunisia, the programme on cultural cooperation between the SFRY and India was one of the most extensive programmes signed with developing countries. It developed a very wide range of cooperation at the level of education—including university cooperation and the exchange of scholarships for specialisation and post-graduate studies—and comprised the exchange of art exhibitions, exchange of theatre and music companies, and exchange of cultural operators, writers, artists and music professionals, as well as cooperation in the field of sport.

The cooperation continued in the 1970s. The discussions on the programme for the 1973–1974 period were chaired by Krsto Bulajić, director general of the Federal Institute for International Educational, Cultural and Technical Cooperation, who also welcomed the visiting Indian delegation, led by State Secretary Mohan Mukherjee deputising for the Minister of Culture. In the field of fine arts, the plans provided for exchanging art exhibitions, inviting Indian artists to visit the art colonies in Strumica and Prilep and, for the first time, inviting artists from the SFRY to participate in the art colonies organised by the Lalit Kala Academy.⁵⁴ The programme, signed in Belgrade in January 1975, stipulated that the two countries would exchange one art exhibition each, accompanied by one expert, whose visit could last up to three weeks. Moreover, it was specified for the first time that Yugoslavia would invite India to par-

52 SI MGLC, 1959, 3rd International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F1, Minutes of meetings, Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat for the Organisation of International Exhibitions of Graphic Arts, 11 April 1959.

53 SI MGLC 1963, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F2, Personal invitations and List of invited embassies and consulates general. Request for contribution to the prize fund.

54 AJ 465_619 Kulturna suradnja sa Indijom 1976–1977: Information notice on the Yugoslav plan for the programme of cooperation in the field of education and culture between the SFR Yugoslavia and the Republic of India for the period 1975–1976, p. 4.

ticipate in the 9th edition of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts in 1975. At India's request, Yugoslavia participated with one artist in each of the colonies for sculptors and painters organised by the Lalit Kala Academy. This was the youngest of the three similar national organisations, founded in New Delhi in August 1954. It was inaugurated by the Minister for Education Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The Lalit Kala Academy was the materialisation of the dream of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, who aspired for the cultural and national identity of India. The Academy focused on activities in the field of visual arts. In his opening speech, Kalam Azad emphasised: "The Academy must preserve the glorious traditions of the past, enriching them with the work of our modern artists. It also must strive to improve the standards and public taste."⁵⁵

Indian representatives at the IBGA and the Lalit Kala Academy

The Committee meeting minutes from 24 January 1955 on the first IBGA report that in relation to the Indian artists, the best course of action would be to write to the Indian Ministry of Education. However, apart from the official communication channels, the correspondence was also personal, as is evident from Reddy's and Bishamber's letters. From the available sources emerges that Krishna Reddy exhibited at the second Biennial in 1957 and at its fourth edition in 1961 as the only Indian representative, but at the fifth Biennial in 1963, he was joined by three other representatives, one of whom was Bishamber, who was in personal contact with both the Embassy and Zoran Kržišnik. The group of Indian artists exhibiting in 1965 consisted of Kaptain Perez, Kanwal Krishna, who participated again, and Moti Kaiko. In 1967, India participated with just one representative, Bhavsar Natyar, while in 1969 the exhibiting Indian artists were three (Bhalt Jyoti, Hore Somnath and Krishna Devayani, all of whom participated in the first Triennial in New Delhi, where Bhalt and Hore won three national awards each, and Krishna was awarded the grand prize). Chopra Jagmohan and Dutt Lakshmi exhibited their works at the 9th edition of the Biennial in 1971, while 10th anniversary edition of the Biennial was attended by as many as seven exhibiting artists from India: Agrawal Jai Krishna, Banerjee Dipak (who, like Krishna Reddy, studied with Hayter), Ghosh Tapan (studied with Hayter and trained in Atelier 17), Pasricha Anjula, Selvam Panner (studied with Hayter), Shaw Lalu Prosad, Sud Anupam (like Krishna Reddy, studied at Slade School of Fine Arts). Ghosh,

55 Lalit Kala Akademi.

Shaw, Selvam and Pasricha were invited, while Agrawal and Sud attended the event on the basis of a competition.⁵⁶ What becomes apparent is the importance of the Indian artists' route through their studies in France, which was opened by Reddy and followed by a number of exhibitors. In 1975, Agrawal Jai Krishna, Banerjee Dipak and Sud Anupam exhibited again, along with Reddy Dubbaka Laxminarsimha and Devraj Dakoji, both winners of Indian national awards, who studied in Hyderabad and Baroda.⁵⁷

The question of the role of the Lalit Kala Academy in relation to the IBGA remains unanswered. The Academy appears on the list of intermediaries for the fifth IBGA, which was organised in 1963, and on the list for the following two biennials.⁵⁸ At that time, as emerges from the IBGA archives, Krishna Reddy was personally invited to attend the exhibition, along with the Indian Ambassador in Belgrade, Jagan Nath Khosla (Ambassador between 1961 and 1964).⁵⁹ Khosla is also mentioned in one of the Commission's dispatches, in which Bhabesh Chandra Sanyal, director of the Western Division of the Ministry of Education in India, blames him for the fact that none of the ministers of the Indian government met with Krsto Cervenkovski when he was on a visit to India.⁶⁰

According to archival material of the International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC), on 7 December 1970, the IBGA organising committee sent a request to the Lalit Kala Academy asking for provision of artists from India, as also emerges from Kržišnik's reminder of 19 January in which he seeks information from Lalit Kala Academy regarding the participation in the 9th IBGA.⁶¹ But it was only then, in 1971, that the Indian selector—the Lalit Kala Academy—was thanked in the catalogue by the IBGA Secretariat for the first time; it appears as if it was only then that this Indian academy officially became the selector of Indian artists, although, as already mentioned, it was included in the IBGA's lists of intermediaries as early as in 1963. The acknowledgement appears again in the catalogue of the 11th IBGA (1975), in which thanks are expressed to the selector for India, i.e. the secretary of the Lalit Kala Academy, as

56 SI MGLC 1973/F2, 10th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, box F1, Jury: Embassy interventions, invitations, confirmations, Competition list.

57 Kržišnik, 12. *mednarodni bienale grafike*.

58 SI MGLC, 1963, box F2, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, New Year's card 1964 and addresses, List of New Year's cards recipients 1963/64 for exhibitors at the 5th International Graphic Art Exhibition and its mediators.

59 SI MGLC, 1963, box F1, 5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, Personal invitations and List of invited embassies and consulates general.

60 AJ 559_67_149, Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries General material, Dispatches 1960–1963, ŠTK dispatch n. 841, 7 June 1963.

61 SI MGLC, 1971, box F1, 10th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, Invitations to participate, Letter from Kržišnik to B.C. Sanyal of the Lalit Kala Academy, 19 January 1971.

well as to Sankho Chaudhuri, a sculptor who, among others, exhibited at Forma Viva in Kostanjevica na Krki, Slovenia, and that year acted as an intermediary by recommending three Indian artists for the IBGA.⁶²

Findings

It emerges that the IBGA's cooperation with Indian artists and their entourage is varied and occurs through institutional and non-institutional channels to an almost comparable extent. The cultural contacts between India and the SFRY were much more genuine than with some other non-aligned countries, as the political and economic connections were considerably more stable and balanced than was the case with most other members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Several artists who exhibited at the IBGA established personal contacts with its organisers, especially with Zoran Kržišnik; this also resulted in closer contacts and more in-depth presentations through additional exhibitions, such as Krishna Reddy's exhibition hosted in October 1961 at the Mala galerija, Ljubljana, or the colony in Kostanjevica na Krki, which Sankho Chaudhuri, a sculptor and selector of Indian artists for the IBGA, attended during his visit to the SFRY. Similarly, federal cultural cooperation with India in the field of the fine arts was also very varied, ranging from scholarships for specialisation in printmaking in Yugoslavia to exchanges of exhibitions and longer visits, as in the case of Peter Lubarda, who exhibited in New Delhi, where he stayed for several months (1963; see, for example, the exhibition "Prometheans of the New Century", Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade 2021, curated by Ana Panić and Jovana Nedeljković). Participations in the Triennial in New Delhi were also important, as well as participations in other international exhibitions across India, at which Yugoslavia was present with the represented artists.

Most of the contacts at the level of the SFRY, especially after 1961, were, however, conducted according to the Convention and Programme; what was lacking was countries' own engagement and the search for links from the core, as Yugoslavia and India were in reality miles apart, geographically, politically and historically as well as culturally. The authorities were aware of the geographical and cultural distance and were taking steps towards mutual education and building mutual acquaintance. In this way, the authorities strived to establish a cultural policy which would be complementary to stronger political and economic relations. With this in mind, we

62 SI MGLC, 1977, box F1, 12th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts, Invitations list, 11 November 1976.

can see that the cultural exchanges and collaborations that originated from the channels of political bodies and cultural institutions often served the prestige of abundance and generated manifest openness, and, at least at the level of the IBGA, also created more genuine ties and co-influences. The establishment of new artistic landscapes did not occur to a large extent, as the venue itself was established as a carrier of prestige, at least for a while. "The display of artworks, however, is neither an innocent process nor one in which some sort of neutral evaluative criteria are applied by those who are in charge of these events. Rather, it is always dependent on the larger politics that those who occupy key positions in these institutions, the government, the funders, the curators or the artistic directors, wish to express them."⁶³ At the level of the IBGA, these policies were represented by self-governing bodies, which followed the already existing and established criteria, reflected at the time in the cultural policies of the West.

63 Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials. Spectacles of Critique*, pp. 27–28.

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