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ACROSS BORDERS AND ART HISTORIES: TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

TOWARD A GEOGRAPHY OF ART EXHIBITIONS

In *Toward a Geography of Art*, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann notes that “many art historians have employed geographical ideas or formed arguments based on geographical assumptions of which they may have been unaware”.¹ Terms such as “French Impressionism” or “Italian Renaissance” locate works of art both in cultural epochs and on geographical maps.² The geography of art tends to focus on where a work of art was created and how it relates to a particular cultural circle, state, nation and nationalism (e.g. *Kunstgeographie*), as well as climatic conditions and the specificities of locally available materials.³ Called into question in postcolonial studies, political and hierarchical distinctions between “West” and “East”, or “North” and “South”, derive from the seemingly neutral names of the main geographical directions.⁴ But how is art geography useful in the study of exhibition histories? The titles of collective exhibitions, surveys of national art, often contain adjectives formed from the names of countries or nations, e.g., *Czech and Slovak Painting* or *Contempo-*

¹ T. DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, Chicago–London 2004, p. 8.

² Ibidem.

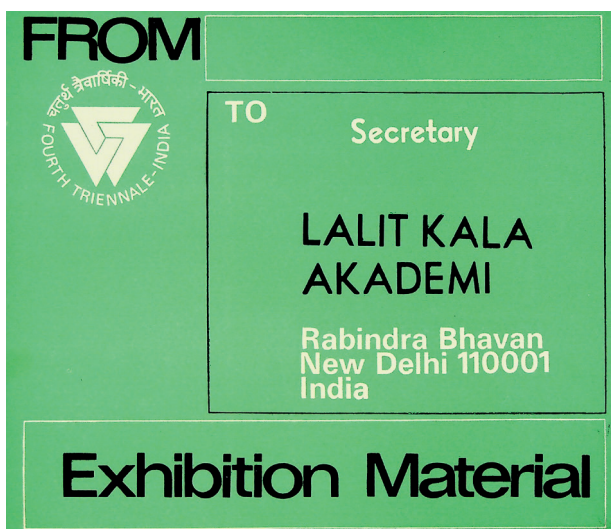
³ On contemporary revisions, see also *Borders in Art: Revisiting Kunstgeographie*, ed. K. Murawska-Muthesius, Warsaw 2000; J. Działek, *Geografia sztuki. Struktury przestrzenne zjawisk i procesów artystycznych*, Kraków 2021, pp. 24–26.

⁴ Within the context of art-historical iconology, which is founded upon Ernst Cassirer's concept of “symbolic forms”, the four cardinal directions are not regarded as “neutral”, but rather as an intrinsic element of “mythical” spatial orientation. For example, “the early Christians retained the eastward orientation of their church and altar, while the south became the symbol of the Holy Ghost and the north conversely of estrangement from God, faith, and the light”. E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Two: Mythical Thought*, trans. R. Manheim, New Haven–London 1955, p. 102.

*rary Cuban Painting*⁵. The geographical terms in these titles mark the routes of specific journeys. The viewer remains in one place, but is invited to a brief encounter with artworks that cross borders with the touring exhibitions.

The mobility of works is the subject of provenance research, which documents the history of the ownership of artworks from the time of their creation to their acquisition. Sometimes works from exhibitions are acquired for museum collections. In the study of exhibitions, which are temporary “constellations”⁶, attention shifts from the place of creation to the routes of circulation and the works’ reception in different places. The geography of art exhibitions thus involves mapping circulation (ill. 1), analysing the spatial and temporal conditions in which the art is presented, and identifying the cultural boundaries in the reception of travelling artworks.

International circulation has gained prominence in contemporary research on the globalisation of art and art history.⁷ As Caroline A. Jones argues, an art-



1. A sticker for transporting works to the 4th Triennale-India, New Delhi 1978

⁵ *Malarstwo czeskie i słowackie*, Warszawa 1972; *Współczesne malarstwo kubańskie*, Warszawa 1979.

⁶ On the term’s meaning in the framework of exhibition histories, see B. von Bismarck, *The Curatorial Condition*, London 2022, pp. 32–45.

⁷ *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, eds. T. DaCosta Kaufmann, C. Dossin, B. Joyeux-Prunel, London–New York 2017.

work becomes international “once it enters circulation”.⁸ She traces the origins of the globalisation of art to the tradition of world’s fairs, universal expositions and their streets of nations. These exhibitions offered a “journey” across continents, although their “world picture” was not free of cultural stereotypes and colonial ambitions. Unlike world exhibitions of the past, the Venice Biennale and its national pavilions focus on the visual arts, but they also stimulate international circulation. Another phenomenon is the global biennialisation of art, which began with the São Paulo Biennial in 1951.⁹ As an exhibition medium, biennials are now studied from the perspective of cultural geography, which is concerned with the relationship between culture and space.¹⁰ Major perennial art exhibitions are analysed in relation to the spatial, global structures of social and economic life, or as an aspect of tourism geographies. In the latter sense, contemporary art-historical “tourism”, such as visiting the Venice Biennale or *documenta*, is defined as “the Grand Tour of the Twenty-first Century”.¹¹

THE CIRCULATION OF EXHIBITIONS DURING THE COLD WAR: A WARSAW PERSPECTIVE

“The geography of the visual arts changed with the end of the Cold War”.¹² This caesura is closely linked to geopolitics, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the change of global spheres of influence, and the beginning of local processes of transformation, for instance, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The cases I am analysing are foreign exhibitions coming to Poland as part of cultural exchanges during the Cold War. This research is based on a chronology of exhibitions organised by the Central Bureau of Art

⁸ C.A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art: World’s Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience*, Chicago–London 2016, p. ix.

⁹ E. Filipovic, M. van Hal, S. Øvstebø, “Biennialogy”, in: *The Biennial Reader*, eds. E. Filipovic, M. van Hal, S. Øvstebø, Bergen–Ostfildern 2010, p. 13.

¹⁰ C. Green, A. Gardner, *Biennials, Triennials, and documenta: The Exhibitions That Created Contemporary Art*, Chichester 2016, pp. 13–14.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 257. The Grand Tour represents a significant cultural and social phenomenon of the eighteenth century. It is thought to have constituted a formative travel experience for a considerable number of young British aristocrats. However, some contemporary scholars have put forward the suggestion that the Grand Tour should be examined as part of a broader “network of international travel and exchange that involved the circulation of bodies and luxury goods”. See K.D. Kriz, “Introduction: The Grand Tour”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1997, 31(1), p. 87.

¹² *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Words*, eds. H. Belting, A. Budensieg, P. Weibel, Karlsruhe–Cambridge MA 2013, back cover.

Exhibitions (now Zachęta – National Gallery of Art) in Warsaw in the 1970s, a decade which, in the history of the Polish People's Republic, is identified with a new opening of foreign policy. This chronology – interpreted from a local perspective – allows us to outline the geographical imperatives of the top-down policy pursued by the central Polish institution (1949–89) responsible for organising and circulating exhibitions at home and abroad.

Between 1970 and 1979, contemporary art from twenty-one countries was presented in the building of the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions (CBAE), in group exhibitions and several solo shows. It is unsurprising that in this part of Europe many exhibitions (nineteen) presented art from European Eastern Bloc countries, even including eight from the Soviet Union (four in 1972, others in 1973, 1975, 1977, and 1979) and others from Czechoslovakia (1972, 1973, 1975, 1979), Hungary (1974, 1976, 1979), Romania (1972, 1977, 1979), and East Germany (1979). Nineteen exhibitions also came from European countries outside the Eastern Bloc: three from France (1973, 1974, 1979), the others from Austria (two solo shows in 1979), Finland (1973, 1977), Great Britain (1976, 1979), Switzerland (1973, 1977), West Germany (1971, 1979), Belgium (1971), Greece (1977), Italy (1977), Norway (1971), Spain (a solo show in 1979), and Sweden (1976).¹³

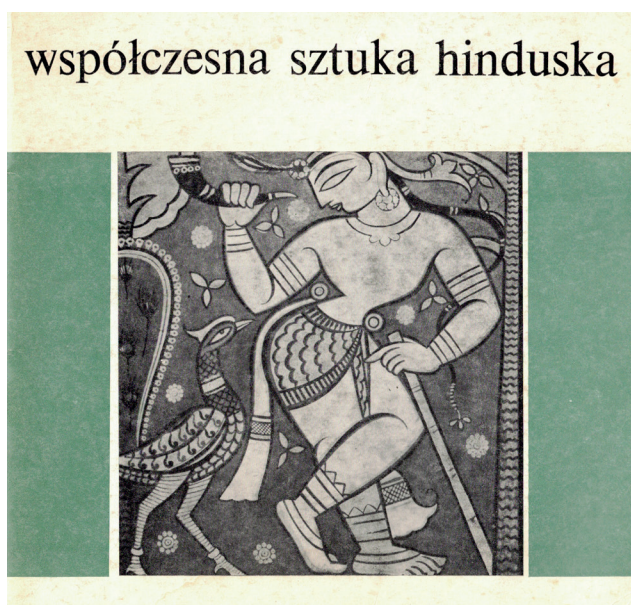
In the same period, exhibitions from other continents accounted for a small percentage of displays at the CBAE gallery. There were three exhibitions from Cuba (*Cuban Painting and Graphic Art*, 1976; *Contemporary Cuban Painting*, 1979; *René Portocarrero*, 1979), one from India (*Contemporary Indian Art from the Collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi*, 1978/1979), one from Japan (*Contemporary Japanese Printmaking*, 1973), and one from Mexico (*José Luis Cuevas*, 1976). What kind of foreign art was seen at the state-organised exhibitions in Warsaw depended on global geopolitics. Following the 1959 revolution, Cuba was the only Latin American country to become part of the communist bloc. 1979 saw celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, as evidenced by exhibitions travelling from Cuba to Poland. From the 1961 Belgrade Conference onward, India was an Asian leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.¹⁴ There were no exhibitions from China in the 1970s, although they had come frequently to the

¹³ *Zachęta 1860–2000*, ed. G. Świtek, Warszawa 2003, pp. 334–336.

¹⁴ There were no Yugoslav exhibitions at the CBAE during the 1970s, despite the fact that diplomatic relations between Poland and Yugoslavia were particularly active. Group exhibitions were held in 1955 (Yugoslav graphic arts), 1959 (applied arts), and in 1982 (the art of the 1970s). The official exhibition exchange between Poland and the Non-Aligned Movement countries, as exemplified in the CBAE chronology, had a scope and political rhythm that differed from that of Yugoslav cultural diplomacy. On Yugoslavia's cooperation

CBAE in the 1950s. This lacuna reflects the political tensions in the Eastern Bloc after 1960, i.e. the rift between the USSR and China.

The geography of art exhibitions also encompasses issues of border crossings in interpreting phenomena seemingly of political proximity but distant both geographically and culturally. Is it true that culture knows no boundaries? What was known about Cuban, Indian, Japanese or Mexican art in Poland in the 1970s? The art exchange with each of these countries requires a separate study.¹⁵ As a representative example of global art geography, I will outline the circumstances behind the organisation and reception of the *Contemporary Indian Art* exhibition that travelled from New Delhi, through the Middle East to Eastern Europe, and was shown in Warsaw from 22 December 1978 to 12 January 1979 (ill. 2). The place



2. Jamini Roy, *Krishna and Balarama*, c. 1930s (fragment). Cover of the catalogue *Contemporary Indian Art*, Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions, Warsaw, 1978/79. Photo: author's archive

with the NAM countries, see B. Videkanić, *Nonaligned Modernism: Socialist Postcolonial Aesthetics in Yugoslavia, 1945–1985*, Montreal–Kingston 2019, pp. 111–175.

¹⁵ On Cuban and Japanese exhibitions at the CBAE in the 1960s, see G. Świtek, "‘Like Fidel at a Rally in Havana’: Warsaw’s Exhibition of Cuban Painting with a Global Political Crisis in the Background (1962)", *Miejsce* 2019, 5, available online: <http://miejsce.asp.waw.pl/en/jak-fidel-na-wieczu-w-hawanie/> [accessed: June 15, 2024]; G. Świtek, "Global Exhibition Histories and Their Visual Time: Shikō Munakata in Warsaw", *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny / Notebook for Art, Theory and Related Zones* 2023, 35, pp. 87–114.

and time of this presentation, however, is not seen as a point in a linear chronology of art history, but as a nod within a “heterochronic” network of cultural connections.¹⁶

INDIA IN WARSAW

“How was building done in India, during the golden age of Greek art? How was painting done there when Gothic cathedrals were erected under our skies? We are so firmly rooted in the Mediterranean cultural tradition that our knowledge of art from outside of it is generally poor”.¹⁷ These questions were raised in a Polish review of the *Contemporary Indian Art* exhibition, published in January 1979. This of “blissful Eurocentrism”, sometimes “shaken” by the influence of art from other continents, was noted even back then.¹⁸ Such questions, posed in the spirit of decolonising studies, recur in the contemporary geography of art. This kind of geography directs our attention towards the encounters between different cultures, of “how art in various places is to be interrelated, through diffusion or contact”.¹⁹

Contemporary Indian Art brought together 100 works by eighty artists, created from the 1920s to the 1970s, including paintings by pioneers of Indian modern art, such as Jamini Roy (1887–1972), Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941), Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and his nephew Gaganendranath Tagore (1867–1938).²⁰ These artists, as well as others whose works were shown in Warsaw – such as sculptor Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury (1899–1975), and painters Bikash Bhattacharjee (1940–2006), and Ganesh Pyne (1937–2013) – are featured today in the Indian art history textbooks.²¹

In 1978, Gaganendranath Tagore’s *Poet Rabindranath on the Island of Birds* (c. 1925, ill. 3) arrived in Warsaw, but was not reproduced in the Polish catalogue. Tagore’s famous artwork crops up today, for example, in Partha Mitter’s analyses of the significance of the Bauhaus artists’ exhibition (e.g., Wassily Kandinsky, Johannes Itten, Lyonel Feininger) in Calcutta in crys-

¹⁶ My understanding of “heterochronicity” is indebted, among others, to Keith Moxey’s definitions. See K. Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History*, Durham, NC 2013.

¹⁷ (EGA), “Współczesna plastyka hinduska. Obecność wielokrotna”, *Trybuna Ludu* 1979, 25 January, p. 7.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, p. 8.

²⁰ *Współczesna sztuka hinduska*, Warszawa 1978.

²¹ P. Mitter, *Indian Art*, Oxford 2001, pp. 189–222.



3. Gaganendranath Tagore, *Poet Rabindranath on the Island of Birds*, c. 1925. *Contemporary Indian Art*, exhibition documentation, Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions, Warsaw, 1978/79

tallising Indian modernism.²² Emphasising that Tagore “was among the first Indian painters to adapt the revolutionary syntax of Cubism”, Mitter criticises simplistic interpretations of the Western influences on Indian art.²³ The

²² P. Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde 1922–1947*, London 2007, pp. 14–18.

²³ P. Mitter, “Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery”, *The Art Bulletin* 2008, 90(4), p. 535. See also P. Mitter, “Modernism and Its Dis-

contacts between Weimar and Calcutta in 1922, i.e. the encounters between the European cosmopolitan Bauhaus milieu and modern art movements in India have already been the subject of in-depth studies.²⁴ The 1978 exhibition of Indian art provides an opportunity to recall how art has flowed between New Delhi and Warsaw in other political and (art) historical circumstances.

As highlighted in the Polish press, this “exotic exhibition” was being presented for the first time in Europe.²⁵ It had previously been shown in Teheran and Damascus. After Warsaw, *Contemporary Indian Art* was to travel to Prague, Sofia, and Moscow.²⁶ Archival correspondence shows that the exhibition ended in Damascus on 20 November 1978 and arrived in Warsaw from Syria by car on 15 December. After its presentation at the CBAE, the exhibition left on 17 January 1979 for the Indian Embassy in Czechoslovakia, with a note that the consignment of twenty-seven crates was to be presented in Prague.²⁷ There, the exhibition was shown at the National Gallery.²⁸ Warsaw was thus but one stop on its journey, but an important one with regard to Indian foreign policy at the time.

Mieczysław Ptaśnik, director of the CBAE (1977–89), recalls that the initiative to show the exhibition in Warsaw came from the Indian side. In his diary, dated 13 October 1978, he notes that Savitri Kunadi, First Secretary of the Embassy of India in Poland, visited him to propose an exhibition of Indian art.²⁹ Ptaśnik declined, owing to lack of space, but shortly afterwards, the director of the Department of Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries of the Ministry of Culture and Art telephoned him to express the necessity

contents: Some Reflections on the Vexing Problem of a Center and Its Periphery”, in: *Was Socialist Realism Global? Modernism, Soc-Modernism, Socially Engaged Figuration*, eds. M. Lipska, P. Słodkowski, Warsaw 2023, p. 60.

²⁴ *Das Bauhaus in Kalkutta. Eine Begegnung kosmopolitischer Avantgarden*, eds. R. Bittner, K. Rhomberg, Ostfildern 2013.

²⁵ (om), “Piękno i egzotyka”, *Nasza Trybuna* 1978, 23–26 December, p. 2.

²⁶ (bd), “W Zachęcie współczesna sztuka hinduska”, *Dziennik Ludowy* 1979, 3 January, p. 6.

²⁷ Archive of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. File no. 3420. Organisation of exhibitions of the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions. *Contemporary Indian Art*, Warsaw, Zachęta, December 1978 – January 1979. Letter from Savitri Kunadi to the director of the Hartwig Polish shipping company (Warsaw, 26 October 1978). CBAE shipping letter (Warsaw, 17 January 1979).

²⁸ Z. Klimtová, “Lubor Hájek and Indian Modernist Art”, in: *Collecting Asian Art: Cultural Politics & Transregional Networks in Twentieth-Century Central Europe*, eds. M. Hánová, Y. Kadoi, S. Wille, Leuven 2024, p. 166.

²⁹ Archive of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. M. Ptaśnik, *Dzienniki* (typescript), 1978, p. 29.

of accepting the exhibition. At a cocktail party thrown by Kunadi, the CBAE director met the director of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in New Delhi. Entering the party, Ptaśnik already had “the concept of setting up two halls on the ground floor, as well as a lecture hall”. A day later, the NGMA director and Kunadi visited the CBAE: “We are looking at the halls. Everybody is satisfied”.³⁰

In Ptaśnik’s notes of 1978, we find no information about the exhibition’s content, only a collection of anecdotes. On 11 December 1978, Chintamani Vyas from the NGMA flew to Warsaw to install the works. During the Polish “winter of the century”, the visitor from New Delhi “fell ill from unpacking the exhibition in Indian outfit and sandals”.³¹ On the opening day of the exhibition, the embassy organised “an Indian party in the halls of Zachęta with incense and the atmosphere of the East”.³² The only publication about India that Ptaśnik mentions in his diary is the novel *Stone Tablets* by the Polish writer Wojciech Żukrowski.³³

Żukrowski worked as a cultural attaché at the Polish embassy in New Delhi between 1956 and 1959. His novel, published in 1966 (and censored for political reasons), is set in New Delhi, but in the Hungarian embassy. The main character is Istvan Terey, a young poet and embassy counsellor, and the action takes place around 1956, the year of the bloody suppression of an anti-communist uprising in Budapest. Żukrowski’s novel offers a panorama of Indian history and culture written from the perspective of the main character from socialist Hungary, but the events in Budapest are reported from a global perspective against, for example, the backdrop of the simultaneous Israeli-Arab war. Rabindranath Tagore is mentioned not only as a poet but also as a “watercolourist”, and a Hungarian diplomat calls India “a capitalist country”.³⁴

Despite being anecdotal, the CBAE director’s notes allow us to sketch the diplomatic context of the exhibition. The exhibition arrived as a ready-made travelling set, which meant it was possible to organise it in Warsaw within two months. As Kunadi reports, the exhibition was sponsored by the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, as part of the Indo-Polish Cultural Ex-

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 33.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem, p. 29.

³⁴ W. Żukrowski, *Kamienne tablice*, vol. 2 (4th ed.), Warszawa 1972, pp. 179 and 228. See also: idem, *Stone Tablets*, trans. S. Kraft, Philadelphia 2016; available online: <https://www.pauldrybooks.com/pages/wojciech-x17c-ukrowski> [accessed: September 9, 2024].

change Programme.³⁵ Also preserved in Zachęta's archives is documentation from the NGMA, 100 black-and-white photographs of the works described in English (the artists' names, the titles and dates of the works, the techniques, dimensions and inventory numbers).

THE POLISH-INDIAN ART EXCHANGE

Labelled "exotic" by the press, the exhibition came to Warsaw at a time when Poland was already well informed about independent India. Poland and India established diplomatic relations in 1954. In 1955, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, visited Poland. In 1967, Indira Gandhi came to Warsaw.³⁶ Polish PMs visited India in 1957, 1960 and 1973. In the 1960s, Indian ministers of food and agriculture, mining and fuels, education and culture travelled to Poland. In the 1970s, the Polish-Indian Mixed Commission for Economic and Scientific/Technological Cooperation met regularly in Warsaw and New Delhi. As emphasised in Polish publications of the 1970s, India was Poland's largest trading partner among the "developing countries".³⁷

The Polish-Indian Friendship Society became active in 1957.³⁸ Knowledge of India was popularised through, for example, translations of Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi or *A Survey of Indian History* by K. M. Panikkar, an Indian statesman and historian.³⁹ A Polish bibliography on India between 1947 and

³⁵ Archive of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. File no. 3420. Letter from Savitri Kunadi to the director of the Hartwig Polish shipping company (Warsaw, 26 October 1978).

³⁶ *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski. Informator. Tom III, Azja, Zakaukazie, Australia i Oceania 1918–2009*, eds. K. Szczepanik, A. Herman-Łukasik, B. Janicka, Warszawa 2010, pp. 89–95.

³⁷ D. Fikus, *Polska Indie. Gospodarka, stosunki ekonomiczne*, Warszawa 1976. Polish participation in the socialist modernisation of India, or the expeditions of Polish Himalayan explorers who invested in "India shops" in Poland after 1989, were recalled in the *Polish-Indian Shop* exhibition (Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2017). See *Polish-Indian Shop*, available online: <https://artmuseum.pl/en/wystawy/sklep-polsko-indyjski> [accessed: January 19, 2024].

³⁸ M. Tumulec, *Historia stosunków polsko-indyjskich XVI–XXI w.*, Warszawa 2013, p. 110.

³⁹ J. Nehru, *Odkrycie Indii*, trans. S. Majewski, K. Rapaczyński, Warszawa 1957; M.K. Gandhi, *Autobiografia: Dzieje moich poszukiwań prawdy*, trans. J. Brodzki, Warszawa 1958; K.M. Panikkar, *Dzieje Indii*, trans. K. Kęplisz, Warszawa 1964.

1984, compiled in 1985, contains almost 100 books and about 200 articles on the country's political system, economy, religion and culture.⁴⁰

In 1977, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Edward Gierek, went to India. Among other things, a programme of cultural cooperation in 1977–1978 was signed at that time.⁴¹ The exhibition at the CBAE coincided with the completion of the Polish Embassy in New Delhi (1975–78), a modernist edifice designed by Kraków architects Witold Cęckiewicz and Stanisław Deńko.⁴² Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art pressed the CBAE director to find space for an exhibition of Indian art.

The exhibition was not the first group show from India in post-war Poland. From October to November 1953, the *Exhibition of Indian Art* organised by the All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society was presented in Warsaw and then in Kraków (ill. 4). It came at the invitation of the Committee for Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries, and the organiser on the Polish side was the CBAE.⁴³ The exhibition, previously shown in the Soviet Union, brought together several hundred works of contemporary painting, prints, sculpture and applied arts, as well as colour photographs of old Indian art and architecture. The enormous interest in this show is evidenced not only by the dozens of notes and reviews published in the Polish press, but also by the fact that it was visited by 120,000 people.⁴⁴ It was nearly impossible to "squeeze up to see the paintings and sculptures".⁴⁵

The review quoted above was published in *Przegląd Artystyczny* [Art Review], a magazine for contemporary art. In 1953, still in the shadow of Stalinism, albeit after Stalin's death, the critic used terms familiar from Socialist Realist rhetoric: "Alongside works depicting the lives of the Indian people using their national forms, there were some ... formalist paintings ... clearly influenced by Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso, Bonnard or Raoul Dufy".⁴⁶ The review was accompanied by reproductions of works by

⁴⁰ *Stosunki polsko-indyjskie po II wojnie światowej*, eds. W. Góralski, S. Balbin, M. Żwirski, M. Safianowska, Warszawa 1985, pp. 51–69.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

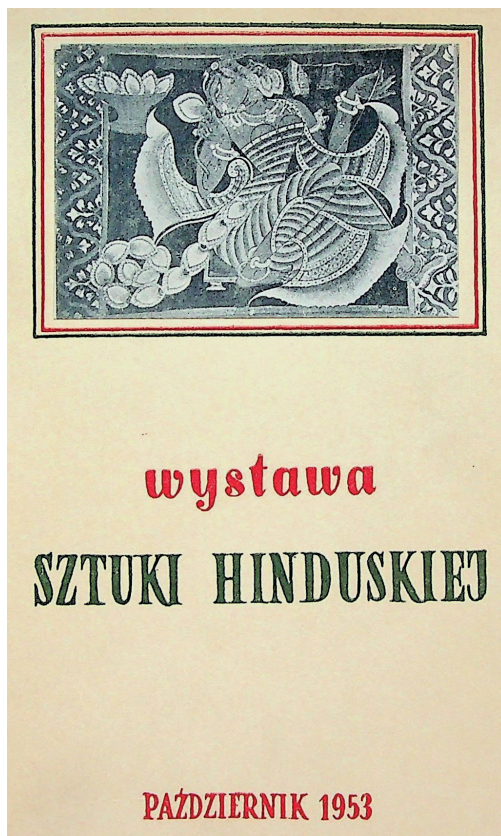
⁴² M. Wiśniewski, "Architekt jeszcze większego Krakowa", in: Witold Cęckiewicz, t. II, *Socrealizm, socmodernizm, postmodernizm. Eseje*, eds. M. Karpińska, D. Leśniak-Rychlak, M. Wiśniewski, Kraków 2015, pp. 60–67.

⁴³ *Wystawa sztuki hinduskiej*, Warszawa 1953.

⁴⁴ A. Marcinowska, *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1944–1960*, ed. A. Wierzbicka, vol. 7, 1953, Warszawa 2016, pp. 255–256.

⁴⁵ J. Zanoziński, "Wystawa sztuki hinduskiej", *Przegląd Artystyczny* 1953, 6, p. 28.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 39–40.



4. Cover of the catalogue *Exhibition of Indian Art*, Warsaw 1953 (with K. Sreenivasulu's work)

leading Indian artists: Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil (ill. 5), and Nandalal Bose (1882–1966), among others. We should emphasise that other articles in this magazine were devoted to “the struggle for Socialist Realism”. The success of the 1953 exhibition was referenced in the *Polish Art Exhibition in India* catalogue.⁴⁷ This survey of twentieth-century Polish art, including iconic works of Socialist Realism (ill. 6), organised by the Committee for Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries, under the joint auspices of Indian Ministry of Education and Polish Ministry of Culture and Art, travelled to New Delhi, Calcutta [now Kolkata], Madras [now Chennai] and Bombay [now Mumbai] in 1956.

⁴⁷ J.K. Wende, [introduction], in: *Polish Art Exhibition in India*, New Delhi 1956, unpaginated [7].

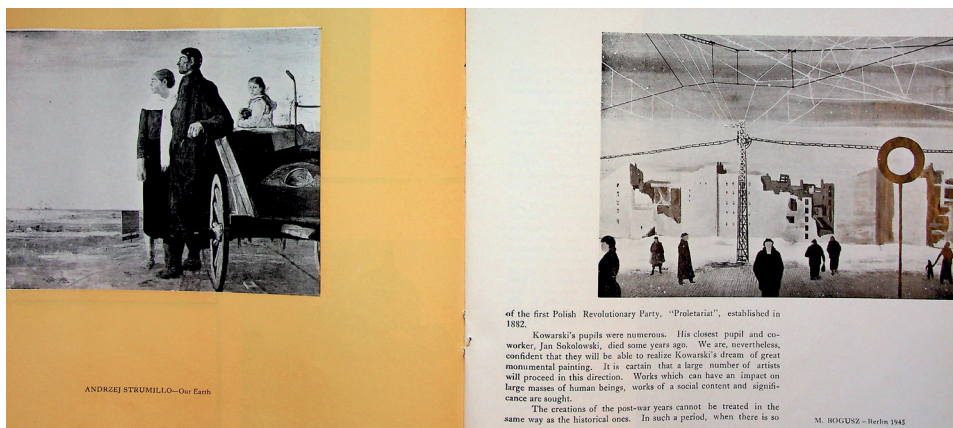


AMRITA SHER GIL. Dziewczęta mielące ziarna tamarysku. Olej



NANDA LAL BOSE. Radha bolejąca nad rozłąką ukochanym

5. Amrita Sher-Gil, *Haldi Grinders*, 1940; Nandalal Bose, *Radha's Viraha*, 1936. Photo in: J. Zanoziński, "Wystawa sztuki hinduskiej", *Przegląd Artystyczny* 1953, 6, p. 34



6. Andrzej Strumiłło, *Our Earth*, 1953–54; Marian Bogusz, *Berlin*, 1955. Photo in: *Polish Art Exhibition in India*, New Delhi 1956

In 1962, the *Contemporary Hindu Graphic Art* exhibition travelled around Poland.⁴⁸ Organised by the National Museum in Kraków, with the cooperation of the UNESCO National Committees of India and Poland, it presented the works of about fifty Indian printmakers. The Polish–Indian art exchange, however, included not only large group exhibitions, but also artists' travels. Polish artists, such as Tadeusz Kulisiewicz (1899–1988) and Andrzej Strumiłło (1927–2020) began travelling to India in the 1950s.⁴⁹ The works of the latter, made during his stay in India, were shown not only in Poland, but also in New Delhi, at the *Exhibition of Indian Drawings by Polish Artist Andrzej Strumiłło* at the Gallery of the All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society (1976).⁵⁰

Artworks were sent to the New Delhi Triennial, founded in 1968, leading to the establishment of permanent contacts between its organiser, Lalit Kala Akademi, and the CBAE organising the Polish section. In 1971, Ryszard Stanisławski, director of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, was a member of the

⁴⁸ A. Maślowska, *Kronika wystaw Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie 1862–2002*, vol. 1, 1862–1962, Warszawa 2002, p. 224. On other exhibitions as part of Polish–Indian exchanges, see W. Góralski, "Polsko-indyjska współpraca kulturalna", *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 1987, 4, pp. 414 and 420.

⁴⁹ Tadeusz Kulisiewicz. *Rysunki z Indii*, ed. Z. Juzwa, Warszawa 1959; *Indie w twórczości Andrzeja Strumiłły. Impresje. Inspiracje / India in the Art of Andrzej Strumiłło: Impressions, Inspirations*, Wigry [2005].

⁵⁰ Andrzej Strumiłło. *Wystawa prac*, Warszawa 1976, unpaginated [14].

International Jury at the 2nd Triennial.⁵¹ Polish artists also participated in the *First International Graphic Art Exhibition India 1974*.⁵² At the 3rd New Delhi Triennial (1975), the Polish section showed fifteen works (by Stanisław Fijałkowski, Jerzy Stajuda and Władysław Winiecki). Its commissioner was Polish art historian Andrzej Jakimowicz (1919–92).⁵³

In 1977, in a letter to the Polish ambassador, the chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi announced the opening of the next Triennial (February 1978), encouraging the authorities in Warsaw to show Polish art once again at the Triennial-India exhibitions, “the only comprehensive shows being held in South-East Asia”.⁵⁴ The commissioner of the 1978 Polish section was also Jakimowicz, who selected twenty-four works (by Roman Artymowski, Jerzy Nowosielski, Wojciech Krzywobłocki, Leszek Rózga and Jan Tarasin).⁵⁵ In March 1978, the Lalit Kala Akademi informed the Polish ambassador that it wanted to buy a work by Artymowski (*Twilight II*, 1975) shown in the Polish section for the NGMA collection in New Delhi.⁵⁶ In late December 1978, when an exhibition of contemporary Indian art from the NGMA opened in Warsaw, in a report on his stay in India, Jakimowicz wrote that Polish art should have been more widely represented, considering the fact that the New Delhi Triennial had already “acquired worldwide importance”.⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Second Triennale – India 1971*, New Delhi 1971, p. 8. See also: the Polish section (commissioner: Bohdan T. Urbanowicz; artists: Tadeusz Dominik, Zbigniew Gostomski, Jerzy Panek, Janusz Przybylski, Jerzy Rosołowicz), *ibidem*, pp. 90–91.

⁵² See: the Polish participants (Stanisław Fijałkowski, Zenon Januszewski, Marian Malina, Edmund Piotrowicz, Aleksander Turek), in: *First International Graphic Art Exhibition India 1974*, New Delhi 1974, p. 18.

⁵³ Archive of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. File no. 2966. Organisation of the exhibition of the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions. 3rd Triennial of Contemporary Art – New Delhi (India), February–March 1975. Andrzej Jakimowicz, report on the activities of the commissioner of the Polish section at the 3rd Triennial in New Delhi (5 April 1975), p. 2.

⁵⁴ Archive of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. File no. 3421. Organisation of the exhibition of the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions. 4th Triennial of Contemporary Art – New Delhi (India), March – September 1978. Letter from Ram Niwas Mirdha to Jan Czapla (21 January 1977).

⁵⁵ List of works for the 4th Triennial of Contemporary Art – New Delhi, pp. 1–3, *ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Letter from the Ministry of Culture and Art, Department of Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries, to the CBAE, Department of Realisation (17 March 1978), *ibidem*. See also: “Arthymowski [sic!] Roman” in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi’, available online: <https://sites.google.com/view/ngmaindia/collection/artists-collection/a-artists-list> [accessed: February 2, 2024].

⁵⁷ Archive of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. File no. 3421. Andrzej Jakimowicz, report on the 4th Triennial in New Delhi (28 December 1978), p. 1. As Thom-

THE BORDERS OF ART HISTORY

The purpose of travelling exhibitions crossing national borders is to break down cultural barriers. It would seem that after years of intensive contacts between India and Poland, the ground was well prepared for the reception of contemporary Indian art. And yet, in 1978, the question was still asked: "Indian art ... What do we know of it?"⁵⁸

One review refers to the Polish translation of French Indologist and art historian Jeannine Auboyer's book *Les arts de l'Inde et des pays indianisés* (1968). This publication covers the period "from the dawn of time" and "after the year 1000". Twentieth-century Indian art is commented in only a dozen sentences. Auboyer mentions the role of Ernest Binfield Havell (1861–1934) in the renewal of painting, the importance of the Bengal region in upholding Buddhist traditions, and the Tagore family, one of whom, Abanindranath (1871–1951), returned to the study of ancient Indian art. Auboyer's commentaries on modern painting end in 1914, when the Calcutta school was shown at the Grand Palais in Paris.⁵⁹ In 1964, Andrzej Jakimowicz published *Sztuka Indii. Szkice* [The Art of India: Sketches]. His commentary on recent art (in the final eleven pages) is limited to the Tagore family and their international art salon in Calcutta.⁶⁰

Works by the brothers Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, and their uncle Rabindranath, were shown in Warsaw in 1978 (ill. 7); reviewers most often mentioned the latter. Rabindranath Tagore's popularity in Poland began in 1913, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His short stories and poetry were most often translated into Polish from European languages; after World War II, for example, three editions of *The Home and the World* (1916) were published.⁶¹ Reviews of the 1978 exhibition emphasised Tagore's contribution to decolonisation processes:

as McEvilley rightly argues, the New Delhi Triennials "have remained far more global in reach than their Western equivalents". See T. McEvilley, "Arrivederci, Venice: The Third World Biennials (1993)", in: *The Biennial Reader*, pp. 408–409.

⁵⁸ [bm], "Hindusi w 'Zachęcie'", *Szandar Młodych* 1979, 14 January, p. 1.

⁵⁹ J. Auboyer, *Sztuka Indii*, trans. J. Krzywicki, Warszawa 1975, pp. 218–219. See the references to Auboyer's book in the review: *ibidem*, p. 1.

⁶⁰ A. Jakimowicz, *Sztuka Indii. Szkice*, Warszawa 1967 (2nd ed.), pp. 221–228.

⁶¹ E. Walter, "On Polish Translations of Rabindranath Tagore's Writings", in: *India in Warsaw: A Volume to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Post-War History of Indological Studies at Warsaw University (2003/2004) / Indie w Warszawie: Tom upamiętniający 50-lecie powojennej historii indologii na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim (2003/2004)*, eds. D. Stasik, A. Trynkowska, Warsaw 2006, pp. 100–111.

Is it more important to recall the fact that the great poet Tagore was a supporter of German Expressionism and French Surrealism in his painting, or should we rather remember the struggle of Indian intellectuals to restore appreciation to indigenous cultural traditions, in spite of the British colonisers, and the concomitant aspiration of India's intellectual elite to fully open up a backward and degraded colonial country to the ... trends of the modern world?⁶²

In sketches on Indian art published in Poland in the 1960s, Jakimowicz mentions Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher-Gil, emphasising the latter's links with Europe (a Hungarian mother, studies in Paris and the nature of her painting



7. Rabindranath Tagore, *Veiled Woman*, c. 1932; Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, *Wall*. Photo in: *Contemporary Indian Art*, Warsaw 1978

⁶² (EGA), *Współczesna plastyka hinduska...*, p. 7.

which “came close to ... the French master Paul Gauguin”).⁶³ Several passages from Jakimowicz’s book *Zachód a sztuka Wschodu* [The West and the Art of the East] gave Polish readers the opportunity to assimilate the term “Bengal school”, referring to “the early development of modern Indian art”.⁶⁴ The art of Abanindranath and Rabindranath Tagore, Roy and Sher-Gil crop up once more in Jakimowicz’s 1978 photo album, showing a panorama of Indian culture from the third millennium BC to Le Corbusier’s Chandigarh plan. In the introduction, the Polish art historian only mentions a few contemporary Indian sculptors: Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury, Sankho Chaudhuri (1916–2006) and Prodosh Dasgupta (1912–91).⁶⁵ Their works were presented at the CBAE in 1978.

Accepting that exhibitions are still “a marginalised medium within canonical art histories”,⁶⁶ let us try to bring out the potential of the *Contemporary Indian Art* exhibition in overcoming cultural boundaries. In 1978, this collection of recent art was intended to act as a museum “canon”, travelling across Asia and Europe. A catalogue with a several-page essay by Laxmi Prasad Sihare, a curator and author of publications on modern and contemporary Indian and European art,⁶⁷ was the primary source of information on Indian art from the 1920s to the 1970s in Poland at the time. In contemporaneous Polish publications, the history of Indian art generally ended in the 1910s.

In 2013 Partha Mitter asked: “How many in the West know Jamini Roy, arguably the most original painter to emerge from colonial India?”⁶⁸ Roy was (or could have been) known due to the exhibitions of Indian art travelling behind the Iron Curtain from the 1950s onwards. In 1978, a version of *Krishna and Balarama* (c. 1930) was shown at an exhibition in Warsaw, and reproduced on its catalogue cover, a poster and in several reviews (ill. 8). Other works by Roy

⁶³ Jakimowicz, *Sztuka Indii. Szkice...*, p. 226. Sher-Gil’s work is now analysed by Polish scholars. For example, see: D. Kamińska, “Wizerunek kobiety indyjskiej w malarstwie Amrity Sher-Gil”, in: *Studia o sztuce bliskiego i środkowego Wschodu*, ed. J. Malinowski, Warszawa 2009, pp. 127–139. This article, however, does not mention the 1978 exhibition that featured the painting *Camels* (reproduced in the catalogue and reviews).

⁶⁴ A. Jakimowicz, *Zachód a sztuka Wschodu*, Warszawa 1967, p. 130.

⁶⁵ A. Jakimowicz, A. Rytzel, *Indie. Panorama sztuki*, Warszawa 1978, p. 37.

⁶⁶ A. Gardner, “Exhibition-Making as Horizontal Art History?” in: *Horizontal Art History and Beyond: Revising Peripheral Critical Practices*, eds. A. Jakubowska, M. Radomska, New York–London 2023, p. 86.

⁶⁷ L.P. Sihare, *Oriental Influences on Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian, 1909–1917*, PhD. diss., New York University, New York 1967; idem, *Selected Expressionist Paintings from the Collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art*, New Delhi 1975.

⁶⁸ “‘A Virtual Cosmopolis’: Partha Mitter in Conversation with Keith Moxey”, *The Art Bulletin* 2013, 95(3), p. 385.



Jamini Roy, „Krishna i Balarama” — tempera.

WSPÓŁCZESNA PLASTYKA HINDUSKA

Obecność wielokrotna

Jak budowano w Indiach, w okresie złotego wieku sztuki greckiej? Jak tam malowano, kiedy pod naszym niebem wznoszono katedry gotyckie? Tkwiły tak głęboko w śródziemnomorskiej tradycji kulturowej, że nasza znajomość sztuki spora tego kraja jest na ugiół niewielka. Fakt wpływu drzeworytu japońskiego na grafikę europejską pod koniec ubiegłego stulecia, a na początku naszego wieku — sztuki murzynskiej na kubizm, niewiele zmienił w świadomości powszechnej. Dopiero napór amerykańskiego pop-artu, tak skwapliwie przyjętego przez artystów starego kontynentu, leciutko wstrząsnął błogim europocentryzmem.

WSPÓŁCZESNA sztuka hinduska jest w Polsce praktycznie nieznana. Tym większe zainteresowanie wzbudza rzeźba w warszawskiej „Zachęcie”. Sięga się na nią sto dzieł: obrazów, 11 rysunków, 14 afiszy i 20 rzeźb — powstałych w 1920 roku. Wszystkie pochodzą z zbiorów Galerii Narodowej Sztuki Współczesnej w Nowym Delhi. Wybór przygotował kustosze tej placówki, malarz i krytyk Chintamani Vyasa.

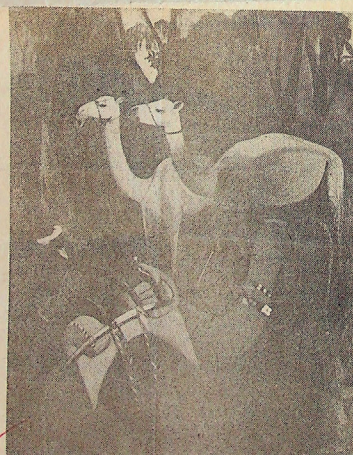
Wyznaczył naszą wędrówkę po ówczesnej sztuce Indii i od czujemy się trochę pewniej: szóstka kierunków i tendencji w światowej sztuce ostatnich kilkudziesięciu lat jest tu reprezentowana. Pejzaż „Głęboka cista ziemia” J. Sabavala chyba nie dobrze mógł być powstać w Europie. „Akt” N. S. Bendre rysowany jest w najczystszej linii naszych najlepszych okazy. Rycina „Kolejny” Narandry porządkować można po konstruktywizmowi, a obrazy S. Gaitonde, Bansi Patimoo i Arjun Natha — malarstwa malarstwa. Lecz — stop! Co do nam znanego przenoszenie naszych reguł na kraj trzydziści-letniej kultury, na ojarzynie budownictwa i spadkobiercę arcydzieł rzeźby sakralnej kilku religii nie-relekcjonistów.

Wystawie piękny rysunek Rabindranatha Tagore

„Dwie twarze”: dwa oblicza o zagadkowym wyrazie wylaniają się z nieokreślonej, tajemniczej przestrzeni. Czy ważniejsze jest przypomnienie faktu, że wielki poeta Tagore był w swojej działalności malarzem i rzeźbiarzem, czy raczej przypomnienie, że w Niemczech ekspresjonizm i surrealizm francuskiego, czy raczej pamiętać trzeba walkę intelektualistów indyjskich o rewolucyjną rodzimych tradycji kulturowych — na przekór brytyjskim kolonizatorom i o równoczesnym dążeniu umysłowej elity Indii do pełnego otwarcia zaciętego i zdegradowanego do kolonii kra-

zakończonego, ekspresyjnego zarazem surrealistycznego rysunku „Chaos”, urodził się w 1941, czyli w 6 lat po śmierci Wielkiego Starca, Tagore’a. Bhatnagary i chyba również A. R. Chandran, Jyoti Bhatt oraz Doraiswamy podejmują — każda na swój sposób — dziedziczy Tagore’a.

Lecz we współczesnej sztuce hinduskiej jest także obecność dziedzictwa kulturowego mniejszości. Dekoracyjna stylizacja tematu obyczajowego lub mitologicznego pozwala dopatrzeć w „płótnie Amrity Sher-Gil” „Wielbłądy” kontynuacji malarskiej miniatury, a w obrazie Jaminiho Roy „Krishna i Balarama” — tradycji folklorystycznej. Erytyzm historycznej rzeźby skrajnie znalazł współczesnych interpretatorów — rzeźbiarzy i grafików jak np. Laxmi Goud i R. Santosh. Choć nie znamy języka z którego pochodzą „Symbol” K. C. S. Panikera i wartości estetyczne i formalne obrazu przykrywa wzrok i wzb-



Amrita Sher-Gil „Wielbłądy” — olej. Fot. A. PIETRZAK-BARTOS

8. Jamini Roy, *Krishna and Balarama*, c. 1930s; Amrita Sher-Gil, *Camels*. 1941. Photo in: (EGA), „Współczesna plastyka hinduska. Obecność wielokrotna”, *Trybuna Ludu* 1979, 25 January, p. 7

were shown at the Indian exhibition of 1953, featured in the press, and in one of Jakimowicz's books. The originals were seen at exhibitions, usually lasting a few weeks, but reproductions circulated as part of "virtual cosmopolitanism", as Mitter defines global dissemination through print culture.⁶⁹

But did this dissemination result in intercultural understanding? In *Krishna and Balarama*, Polish critics found a "folklore tradition",⁷⁰ probably paraphrasing Sihare's remarks in the catalogue about Roy's inspiration from Bengali folk art. They even thought that "at first glance" the painting evoked "Polish highland motifs (!)",⁷¹ which was in keeping with the favouritism in Polish art history, since the turn of the twentieth century, regarding folk art from a part of the Carpathian region. However, no analysis of the iconography of the divine brothers Krishna and Balarama and its significance in Indian mythology was undertaken then in the Polish press.⁷²

In 1978, the scarcity of knowledge about the origins of modern Indian art was justified, for example, by "the presence of different cultures", which caused "not all its meanings [to be] accessible to us".⁷³ As was fairly admitted, "we do not know the language from which the *Words and Symbols* by K.C.S. Paniker comes", but nevertheless, it was thought this 1965 painting was encouraging us to "read into its hidden content" (ill. 9).⁷⁴ Paniker (1911–77), a painter from the Madras region, is considered one of the most important figures of neo-Tantrism in Indian art.⁷⁵ The esoteric system of Tantra also influenced Polish art in the 1960s and 1970s, including the Silesian underground neo-avant-garde circles. A notable example is the work of Urszula Broll (1930–2020).⁷⁶ Nevertheless, in 1978, Polish critics made no reference to neo-Tantrism, an occultist revival that received impetus from Ajit Mookerjee's *Tantra Art: Its Philosophy and Physics* (New Delhi, 1966) and inspired Indian abstractionist and surrealist tendencies. Paniker's celebrated *Words and Symbols* series exemplifies the interplay between abstraction and figuration. It incorporates tantric diagrams, astrological charts, and calligraphic

⁶⁹ Ibidem, p. 384.

⁷⁰ (EGA), *Współczesna plastyka hinduska...*, p. 7.

⁷¹ (bm), *Hindusi w 'Zachęcie'...*, p. 2.

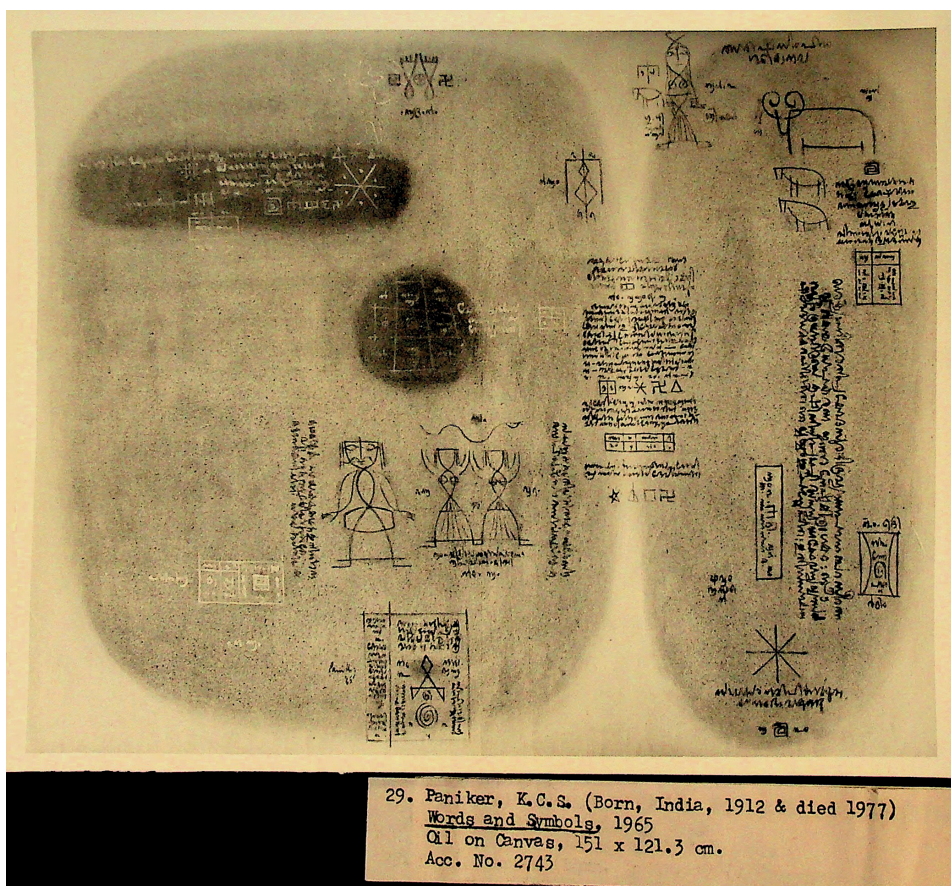
⁷² The myth of Krishna and Balarama was introduced to Polish readers, for example, in M. Jakimowicz-Shah, A. Jakimowicz, *Mitologia indyjska*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 212–224.

⁷³ (EGA), *Współczesna plastyka hinduska...*, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵ Mitter, *Indian Art*, p. 211.

⁷⁶ J. Balisz-Schmelz, "The Reverse of Reality: On Alternative Modernism of Urszula Broll", in: *Urszula Broll: Atman znaczy oddech / Urszula Broll: Atman Means Breath*, eds. K. Kucharska, J. Hobgarska, Warszawa 2019, p. 78.



9. K.C.S. Paniker, *Words and Symbols*, 1965. *Contemporary Indian Art*, exhibition documentation, Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions, Warsaw, 1978/79

forms, which are “based on Malayalam script from the southern Indian region of Kerala”.⁷⁷ Indeed, this reference to a regional tradition was not easy for Polish viewers to understand. Yet even in contemporary interpretations of modern Indian art, Paniker’s paintings are described as not intended “for reading”, but rather “to evoke a lost culture”.⁷⁸

Roy’s *Krishna and Balarama* and Paniker’s *Words and Symbols* are only two works that were presented in Warsaw and mentioned in the Polish press.

⁷⁷ R.M. Brown, “P.T. Reddy, Neo-Tantrism, and Modern Art in India”, *Art Journal* 2005, 64 (4), p. 35.

⁷⁸ Ibidem. See also: R. Siva Kumar, “Modern Indian Art: A Brief Overview”, *Art Journal* 1999, 58(3), p. 19.

The review echoes the pejorative notion of these works being “derivative” of the first Western avant-gardes. At the same time, the author offers an apologia for realist painting, known since Socialist Realism, while disparaging socially uncommitted “abstract art”. The reviewer was also concerned that contemporary Indian art was distancing itself from its millennia-old tradition, losing its “national character”. These words might be read in a specific Polish context. The exhibition of Indian art opened on 22 December, and the same gallery showed the *Folk Culture – National Culture* exhibition in November and December 1978, to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of Poland’s regaining independence.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

In exhibition histories, the concept of art geography applies to the circulation and reception of art presentations. *Contemporary Indian Art from the Collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi* was an opportunity to bring together art histories of postcolonial India, global avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes, the official art scene and art-historical narratives in post-war Poland. But was this opportunity exploited to the full?

There are differences between descriptive “art criticism” and academic art history.⁸² Mentioning names or repeating passages from the catalogue’s introduction, reviews in the censored Polish press did very little to explain the movements in the Indian art of the time. It also seems that the 1978 Indian art exhibition failed to replicate the success of the one in 1953. This may have been because it was presented in Warsaw for about three weeks during the aforementioned “winter of the century” in Poland. A state of emergency was declared in many regions; transport was paralysed for several days. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to imagine crowds lining up for any exhibition. Andrzej Strumiłło ironically sums up his visit to the CBAE (in mid-January 1979) and the gallery’s international programme. He saw an exhibition of “neorealism” from West Germany, “the commodity fantasies of an Austri-

⁸¹ The same author wrote about *Contemporary Indian Art* and *Folk Culture – National Culture* exhibitions shown at the CBAE. See: G. Hołub, “Złoto na pozłotko”, *Nowa Wieś* 1979, 7 January, pp. 6–7.

⁸² As James Elkins notes, “In smaller and developing countries, newspaper art criticism normally serves as art history, so that reviews and exhibition brochures compose the written self-description of the country’s art”. J. Elkins, “Art History as a Global Discipline”, in: *Is Art History Global?*, ed. Elkins, New York–Oxon 2007, p. 5.

an" [an exhibition of Wolfgang Hutter's prints], "Czechoslovak textiles" and "stylised" Indian pieces.⁸³

I have chosen the *Contemporary Indian Art from the Collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi* exhibition both for its unique place in the CBAE geography of exhibitions and for the global, art-historical timing of its presentation. In 1978, Edward Said's *Orientalism* provided a foundation for postcolonial discourse. Also in 1978, Geeta Kapur published *Contemporary Indian Artists*, including essays on Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011), Francis Newton Souza (1924–2002) Akbar Padamsee (1928–2020) and Jagdish Swaminathan (1928–94).⁸⁴ The latter studied at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts in the late 1950s. Their works came to Warsaw in 1978, but no broader context (e.g. of political specificity of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group⁸⁵) was outlined in Poland at the time. Crossing the borders of art history depends not solely upon diplomatic contacts, but also upon preparing the ground for understanding and interpreting geographically and culturally distant phenomena.

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⁸³ A. Strumiłło, *Factum est. Dzienniki z lat 1978–2006*, Łomża 2008, p. 30.

⁸⁴ G. Kapur, *Contemporary Indian Artists*, New Delhi 1978. On the importance of Kapur's book, see, e.g., J. Reynolds, "On a Wider Canvas", *India International Centre Quarterly* 2006–2007, 33(3/4), p. 269.

⁸⁵ On this group, see, e.g., G. Kapur, "Modern Painting since 1935", in: *The Arts of India*, ed. B. Gray, Oxford 1981, pp. 204–205; P. Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań 2018, pp. 13–14.

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ACROSS BORDERS AND ART HISTORIES: TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

Summary

The concept of art geography is undergoing a process of revision in light of recent research on exhibition histories. The analysis of major perennial art exhibitions is conducted in relation to the spatial, global structures of social and economic life, or as an aspect of tourism geographies. The geography of art exhibitions entails mapping circulation, analysing the spatial and temporal conditions under which art is presented, and the identifying cultural boundaries in the reception of travelling artworks. This article examines the circulation of international exhibitions that were presented at the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions (CBAE) in Warsaw as part of cultural diplomacy in

the 1970s. During this decade, the CBAE gallery hosted exhibitions of contemporary art from twenty-one countries. What kind of foreign art was seen at the state-organised exhibitions in Warsaw depended on global geopolitics. The primary case study is the exhibition *Contemporary Indian Art from the Collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi*, which was toured from New Delhi through the Middle East to Eastern Europe (including Warsaw and Prague) in 1978–79. The exhibition brought together 100 works by 80 artists, created between the 1920s and 1970s. It included paintings by pioneers of modern and contemporary Indian art, such as Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil, Rabindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, and K.C.S. Paniker. The diplomatic circumstances of organising the exhibition in Warsaw are set in the broader context of the Polish-Indian art exchange since the 1950s. This encompasses Poland's participation in the New Delhi Triennial (established in 1968) and the completion of the modernist building of the Polish Embassy in New Delhi (1978). Furthermore, the article examines the impact of travelling national exhibitions on fostering intercultural understanding. The *Contemporary Indian Art* exhibition provided a valuable opportunity to transcend the conventional boundaries of Indian and Polish art histories. While in the 1960s and 1970s Polish academic discourse typically concluded the history of Indian art in the 1910s, the exhibition's catalogue served as the primary source of information on twentieth-century Indian art. Consequently, the reception of *Contemporary Indian Art* in Warsaw is contextualised within the broader discourse of global art history and postcolonial studies.

Keywords:

geography of art, exhibition histories, modern Indian Art, cultural diplomacy, global art history, Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions