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Korea | Belgian director to head Asian Arts Theatre





Frie Leysen, a renowned artistic director in the international theatre scene, was named to lead the Asian Arts Theatre, a major venue for Asian arts currently under construction in Gwangju, Korea, as reported in The Korea Herald.

Vice Culture Minister Kim Yong-hwan presented a letter of appointment to Leysen at his office in Seoul. Leysen is the first foreign director to head a major art venue in Korea, the ministry said. The 61-year-old director will lead the AAT for three years.

"I think it is a great, unique project for the region, Korea and Asia as a whole. Gwangju will become a regional hub where Asian artists and arts can be put into a center of attention," Frie Leysen told The Korea Herald.

"My goal is to have people in Gwangju and also from all over Asia create high quality art works and to have them staged in Latin America, Europe and elsewhere in the world," she added.

Despite concerns about the selection of a foreign director to head an art center aimed at promoting Asian culture, officials said her dedication to promoting Asian arts will open up better opportunities in the future.

"She has life-long experience in developing and co-producing Asian art

works and has played a central role in introducing regional art into the world,” an official at the Culture Ministry said.

The Belgian director said she won’t pick a specific genre. Rather, she will look at interesting artists and personalities who can visualize unique Asian culture.

“Asia has a very different and unique culture. But I’m surprised to see how Asian art projects look alike in the eyes of Westerners,” she said.

Leysen has built a reputation throughout the European performing arts scene as an artistic director and also as a festival organizer since the late 1970s. She was the founder and artistic director of De Singel, a contemporary arts center in Antwerp, Belgium, and also led the Kunsten Festival des Arts in Brussels, which now has become a leading international festival. She was the artistic director of Meeting Points, an international contemporary festival designed to encourage young Arabic theater works.

The Asian Arts Theater is part of Gwangju's [Hub City of Asian Culture Project](#). The project, aimed at forging cultural ties and establishing a forum for exchanges with various countries in Asia, is the single largest cultural project in Korea, the ministry said. The construction of the center is expected to be completed in 2014.

By Cho Chung-un [[read the full article in *The Korea Herald*](#)]

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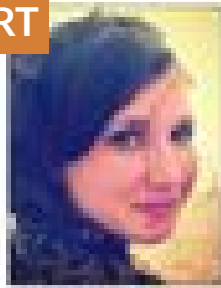
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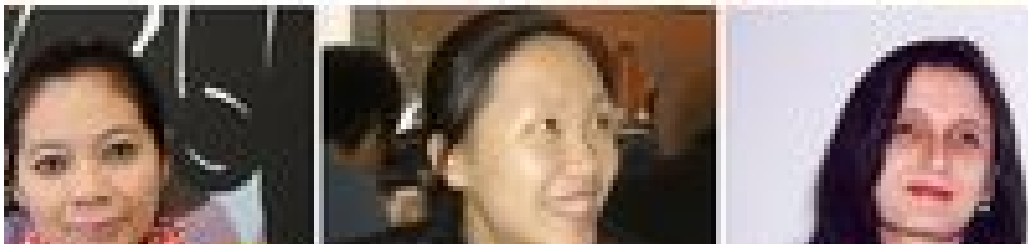
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