

**Asia Society Korea Center**

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**Korean Wave Initiative**

**Hallyu: Riding the Korean Culture Wave for a Globalized World**



LOS ANGELES, November 16 - 17 — As a leading organization seeking to generate new ideas across a variety of fields, Asia Society Korea Center launched the Korean Wave Initiative in Asia and the United States to build upon Korea’s numerous cultural assets. Once known as the “Hermit Kingdom,” South Korea has spread its contemporary culture across a wide and diverse geography and demographic of enthusiasts.

*Hallyu*, or the Korean Wave, has swept Korean popular music, comic books, films, and television drama series into diverse societies around the world. *Hallyu* is now Korea’s global brand, and the cultural boom emanating from the Korean peninsula is rich, diverse, and complex. The purpose of our events was to convene both academics and practitioners in the pop culture and entertainment industries to explore the impact of this global trend, as well as how Korea should plan ahead in creating and promoting its next global brand.

**2011 Holiday Cocktail Reception**



SEOUL, December 7 — Asia Society Korea Center celebrated the holiday season by hosting a cocktail reception on Wednesday, December 7, at the Lotte Hotel Seoul’s Pierre’s Bar. Since the inauguration of the Korea Center in April 2008, the Center has conducted 90 high-profile programs and events in policy, business, journalism, education, and art and culture.

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## News & Events

### Luncheon with Director Im Kwon-taek



SEOUL, October 18 — Im Kwon-taek is one of Korea's most renowned film directors, one whose films have won many domestic and international awards, among them an honorary Golden Bear award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2005 and the Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival (for *Chihwaseon*, 2002).

Im has produced and directed over 100 films since 1962, and helped bring international renown to Korean cinema. His rise to critical and commercial prominence overlapped with the film movement known variously as the "New Korean Cinema" or "Korean New Wave." Im is recognized as one of the founding figures of that movement, which won worldwide critical recognition and acclaim for the Korean film industry. In 2007, the French government named Im a Knight of the French Legion of Honor.

It was a true honor for Asia Society Korea Center to host Im and hear his experiences and views about Korean cinema.

### Leslie Koch Joins Networking Night



SEOUL, September 7 — Leslie Koch, President of the Trust for Governors Island in New York City, joined Asia Society Korea Center's Networking Night at the Pierre's Bar. Koch shared a lively conversation with the Korea Center members about the planning and redevelopment of the 150 acres Governors Island with an innovative park and public space design. This was Koch's first visit to Seoul and she was in town to participate in the C20 conference. For C20, each G20 member nation sent a representative from the realms of fashion, cuisine, art and culture.

### Stuart Solomon: Growing Up in Korea



SEOUL, September 20 — In "Growing Up in Korea: Challenges and Rewards," a presentation at Asia Society Korea Center's monthly luncheon, MetLife Korea Chairman Stuart Solomon shared his experiences working in both Korea and New York.

After an overview of MetLife as a global company, Solomon described MetLife's arrival in Korea in 1989, as a joint venture with the Kolon Group, which lasted until 1998. Differing visions and practices in

the two companies made the partnership a challenge, and in 1998, during the Asian financial crisis, MetLife acquired complete ownership of MetLife Korea.

During this time of testing and restructuring of the company, many of its self-employed insurance salespeople were let go, and the remainder were retrained to move away from "relationship selling" towards a professional needs-based selling model. With regards to needs-based selling, Solomon explained that MetLife salespeople are trained to find out what customers need based on their individual financial goals rather than just selling them what they want. The past decade was a critical period for MetLife Korea because of increasing competition in the insurance market with the launch of new products, and new distribution channels such as Bankassurance and telemarketing. CEO of MetLife Korea for much of this period, Solomon looked back with pride on his company's achievements and on the positive changes in the Korean market since 1995.

Solomon also spoke admiringly of the MetLife Korea Foundation, of which he is also chairman. Founded in 2005, the foundation funds organizations with programs for disabled children and community centers for children in Seoul. More recently, the foundation began supporting research programs related to retirement issues in Korea.

During the question-and-answer session, Solomon clarified that despite downsizing of MetLife's sales force during the Asian financial crisis, the company has now grown to over 6,000 professional career agents, both men and women.

Overall, Solomon showed that people who are truly dedicated to Korea as not just a place to make money, but as a second (or third) home, can be very successful here. He himself first came to the Republic of Korea in 1971 with the U.S. Peace Corps, and worked with health care professionals around the country to monitor the treatment of diseases like tuberculosis.

As Solomon stated at the beginning of his talk, Korea is where he, as well as MetLife Korea, "grew up" in many ways.

# Korean Wave Initiative

## Hallyu: Riding the Korean Culture Wave for a Globalized World

### SESSION I Conversation with Im Kwon-taek; History of Korean Cinema

Wednesday, November 16, 10:00 am-12:00 pm, USC, Town and Gown



LOS ANGELES, NOVEMBER 16 — Korean film director Im Kwon-taek, also known as the ‘mastermind of modern Korean cinema’, visited the University of Southern California (USC) to give a lecture on his film career and on the contemporary issue of Korean film development. As a part of Asia Society Korea Center’s Korean Wave Initiative, the event was hosted at USC’s Town and Gown Hall with nearly 200 guests and students in attendance. The lecture was moderated by Dr. David Kang, Professor of the International Relations and Business and the Director of the Korean Studies Institute at USC. Dr. Youngmin Choe, Assistant Professor of the Korean Film & Visual Culture, participated as the interviewer.

Im said that he was strongly influenced by Hollywood’s star directors such as John Ford and Billy Wilder when he produced his first 50 films, which helped him achieve his fame as “a successful commercial director”. However, Im expressed his regret by saying “I hope my first 50 movies were either robbed or burned” as they focused only “on the fictional world” rather than “the portrayal of the Korean culture.” Hence, he began to change his style by focusing more on creating films that reflected “the stories of Korea’s past, culture and sentiment”.

Im explained, “it was hard at first to lose the fast pace, rhythm of the Hollywood-style habit” but he continued to produce films on the Korean culture and the people, such as *Seopyunje* and *Chunhyang*, both of which were highly acclaimed by various international film communities.

In light of the rising K-Pop cultures and films, he expressed that there is a bright future for Korean culture to influence the entire world and for the further development of the Korean film industry. He shared his experience of his first visit to USC in 1996, where he was unable to continue with his tour due to a vast difference in understanding of the Korean culture and cinema. But nowadays, Korean films have been recognized by many international audiences as a result of the hard work by the young and dedicated directors who have helped “the Korean films to stand in the spotlight in the film industry world.” He also hopes to continue to make films that deliver the lives of Korean people and capture more of “stories of Korea’s past, culture and sentiment”, just as he promised he would in 1960.

### SESSION II The Evolving Image of Korean-Americans in the U.S. Entertainment Market

Thursday, November 17, 1:00-3:00 pm, USC, Davidson Conference Center, Club Room



LOS ANGELES, November 17 — Asia Society Korea Center and the Korean Studies Institute at the University of Southern California jointly hosted a panel discussion at the USC Davidson Conference Center, featuring four influential Korean Americans in the U.S. entertainment industry.

Panelists included Albert Kim, an award-winning journalist, and writer and co-producer for the hit action series *Nikita*; C.S. Lee, a veteran actor from hit TV series *Dexter* and *The Sopranos*; James Kyson Lee, a Korean-born American actor best known for his role in NBC television series *Heroes*; and Christine Yoo, an award-winning writer and director of *The Wedding Palace*. The panel was moderated by Dr. David Kang, Director of the Korean Studies Institute at the University of Southern California.

The discussion focused on numerous topics associated with their backgrounds and experiences by sharing their views on how the image of Korean-Americans have been evolving in the US entertainment market and the challenges they faced throughout various facets of their experiences in Hollywood.



## Korean Wave Initiative Hansik Dinner in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, November 17 — Influential entertainment leaders and other notables gathered at the Korean Consul General's residence to celebrate and promote Asia Society Korea Center's Korean Wave Initiative by introducing key elements of the culture through a hosted traditional dinner, Hanbok fashion show and awards ceremony.

The dinner took place as the finale to the Korean Wave Initiative events in the residence of Hon. Yeon-Sung Shin, the Korean Consul General in Los Angeles. Approximately 140 guests, including several members of the Asia Society family, attended the dinner, which was designed and centered on the eight-course menu - including *sinseollo*, *jabchaj*, *bibimbap*, and pumpkin porridge - catered by Bruce Byung-Woo Lee, the Lotte Hotel Seoul's Master Chef and his team, who traveled from Korea to cater the event. Guests were openly fascinated by food that was "very different" from what they're used to having in LA. In addition, Asia Society Korea Center prepared and brought 140 silver vessels from Korea to serve *sinseollo* especially for the dinner. The fascinating dish and its texture caught many guests' attention and further stimulated their interests in Korean food. Each course was introduced by Asia Society family members and friends, including Asia Society Southern California Chairman Thomas McLain; David Kang, Director of the Korean Studies Institute at the University of Southern California; Bruce Pickering of Asia Society Northern California Center; Asia 21 member Jinah Kim; and more. In addition, Asia 21 Fellow Seagull Song introduced the LAsia 21 Young Leaders Initiative and Asia Society Vice President for Education Tony Jackson explained the new Global Cities Network Initiative to the guests. During the dinner, the Korea Center acknowledged two exceptional Korean-American women with special awards. Sujin Nam, a composer and a pianist, received the Cultural Ambassador Award, and Michelle Park Steel, vice chair of Board of Equalization, received the Women Leader Award.

As ASSC Chairman Tom McLain remarked, "the Korea Center have laid the foundation for excellent collaboration between our two centers for the future and have helped the ASSC develop much needed, important inroads into the local Korean community which are important for us to pursue and develop." The Korean Wave Initiative successfully exposed the best of Korean culture, both traditional and pop, and truly established the stepping stone for further developing Korean culture around the world.



Thomas McLain, Asia Society Southern California Center Chairman



Randall Cox  
President of RogueLife



Sujin Nam, recipient of the Cultural Ambassador Award



Matthew Arkfeld, an USC cheerleader, introducing Hanbok Fashion Show



the Lotte Hotel Seoul's Master Chef and his team traveled from Korea to cater the event



Jinah Kim, Asia 21 member and NBC Correspondent



Hanbok Fashion Show by Suk Hyun



Michelle Park Steel, Vice Chair of the Board of Equalization, receives the Women Leader Award



Bruce Pickering and Wendy Soone-Broder  
Asia Society Northern California Center



Hon. Yeon-Sung Shin, the Korean Consul General in LA, makes welcoming remarks

# Asia Society Korea Center

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Asia Society Korea Center is a non-profit and non-partisan organization.

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#### \*\*Tax Exemption Notice\*\*

On December 27, 2007, Asia Society Korea Center was designated as a public donation body by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Finance and Economy. This means that donations to Asia Society Korea Center are subject to tax exemptions. The donor will therefore be able to receive full tax benefits, which gives prospective donors one more good reason to donate! The contributions will be used to develop innovative programs and world class events for Asia Society Korea Center's members. Help make a difference!

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