

Asia Society Korea Center

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**Asia Society Korea Center's
5th Anniversary Dinner**



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The Korea Center celebrated its fifth anniversary with the help of luminaries from South Korea and the U.S. in the Crystal Ballroom of the Lotte Hotel Seoul on Thursday, November 7th. The Center honored its many supporters, members, and friends. U.S. Ambassador to Korea, **H.E. Sung Y. Kim**, offered congratulatory remarks, noting the deep impact that the Korea Center has had in the arts and culture, business, policy, and education. The dinner also featured an Awards Ceremony that lit up the stage with influential Koreans: **Hyun-Jin Ryu**, the Los Angeles Dodger pitcher, and **Dae-Hwa Koh**, President of Aura Media and producer of legendary *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) dramas, received the Cultural Achievement Award; **Hong-Kee Kim**, Managing Partner of Samil Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and **SeungWha Gweon**, CEO of EY, each received the Business Leadership Award on behalf of their respective companies. **H.E. John Prasetyo**, the Ambassador of Indonesia to South Korea, received the Ambassador Award for his support of the Asia Society Korea Center. Among Asia Society luminaries in attendance were **Josette Sheeran**, President and CEO, **Ronnie Chan**, Board Co-Chair, **Dr. Hong-Koo Lee**, Honorary Chairman of the Korea Center, and **Dong-Bin Shin**, Chairman of the Korea Center. In all, there were more than 200 guests present at the dinner.

Special Lecture

Josette Sheeran, President & CEO of the Global Asia Society, Addresses Students at Sookmyung Women's University



(From left to right) Professor of Sookmyung Women's University, Si Yeun Moon, Executive Director of the Asia Society Korea Center, Yvonne Kim, President of Sookmyung Women's University, Sunhye Hwang, President & CEO of Global Asia Society, Josette Sheeran, Professor of Sookmyung Women's University Yun Keum Chang, and Professor of Sookmyung Women's University, Hyun Cheol Kang, pose together on November 8, 2013. (Tae Shik Ahn/ Sookmyung Women's University)

November 8, 2013 - The Samsung Convention Center of Sookmyung Women's University was standing room-only as **Josette Sheeran**, President & CEO of Global Asia Society, began her lecture titled "What it means to be a leader: Advice to the next generation of Korean women leaders." **Sunhye Hwang**, President of Sookmyung Women's University; **Hyun-Jin Cho**, board member of the Asia Society Korea Center; and **Yvonne Kim**, Executive Director of the Asia Society Korea Center, were also in attendance.

Sheeran spoke about the 10 rules of leadership that guided her life including the power of women to create change, being a bridge-builder, and walking through open doors. She encouraged the young women in attendance to overcome their fears and challenge their own perceived limits. "I was painfully shy when I was young," Sheeran revealed, sharing how she was too afraid to even ask questions when she was interning at the White House. "Even if I think I'm nothing, if my mind is focused on making a difference, I'm not afraid to ask questions during a meeting. I made a commitment that day to always ask a question."

In describing her life principles of achieving "the change you want to see," Sheeran invoked the stories of individuals she greatly admired, including Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani girl who was shot in the head by the Taliban for wanting an education and who became a worldwide advocate for girls' education. "Don't wait to be a boss to be a leader," Sheeran said. "If you see the people changing the world, it's people at every level."

Sheeran also spoke of her hero, Nelson Mandela, to explain her principle of being "a bridge-builder of optimism." "The number one deficit is the deficit of understanding," she said. "Very few people, who are quick to listen, are, quick to forgive." Sheeran continued, "After he was released from prison after 27 years, [Nelson Mandela] had every reason to hate, but he made a different decision." She spoke of how Mandela's choice to stand with his captors and forgive them was not a sign of weakness, but a sign of greatness. The concept of reverse innovation, which means innovations that are adopted first in the developing world, was another key aspect of Sheeran's message to the students. "We're seeing reverse innovation now," Sheeran said, specifically referring to the explosive global popularity of all kinds of Korean entertainment in recent years. "Korean entertainment is changing the way people view entertainment." She also encouraged the students to overcome their fear of failure and enter into the innovation economy.

In response to a student's question about advantages that women leaders have, Sheeran asserted that the world would benefit greatly from women leaders due to their different leadership styles and priorities. "One of the great strengths of women is compassion," Sheeran said. Although it may be seen as a sign of being less powerful, she said that this characteristic was something that she was proud of. "I don't think women should change," Sheeran said, explaining how women are more focused on building, not destroying. "It's not a power game, or an ego game, it's about people's ability to live. Women understand that."

"I've had many moments of despair," Sheeran said towards the end of her address. "The things that stay with me are the times when I lived up to my own character, my commitment to kindness, integrity and a bridge builder of optimism."

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Monthly Luncheon Series

Romania-Korea Relations: A Case Study in Foreign Policy Change



H.E. Calin Fabian, Ambassador of Romania to the Republic of Korea

November 19, 2013 - In Part 6 of Asia Society Korea Center's Ambassador Series, **H.E. Calin Fabian**, Ambassador of Romania to the Republic of Korea, gave a lecture called Romania - Korea relations - a case study in Foreign Policy Change.

Ambassador Fabian, who is the Ambassador of Romania to the Republic of Korea, explained the political process that Romania went through when the government changed from a highly centralized communist regime to a democracy with a market economy. This was demonstrated through Romania's shift in relationship with Korea, specifically in regards to the transition between being a close fraternal friend with North Korea in 1971, to becoming a strategic power with South Korea in 2008. Through a close examination of the case study regarding Romania's transition from a communist government to a democratic government, Ambassador Fabian gave an extraordinary insight into the difficulties a country faces when changing its fundamental political ideology. This case study has valuable information that could be used when considering North and South Korea's possible reunification and political and economic ramifications that could become evident.

Using the Conceptual Change Model of Kurt Lewis, Ambassador Fabian answered fundamental questions about why Romania decided to change from a communist system with a highly centralized government, to a democratic system. Those questions included why and how the shift happened, specifically examining the balance between the cost and benefits of a government change.

In 1971, Romania's president, Nicolae Ceausescu, visited North Korea and was inspired by Kim Il-Sung's cult of personality, as well as North Korea's Juche philosophy of total selfreliance. Coming back to Romania, he issued widespread reform of the communist system modeled on North Korea's government through his July Thesis. This thesis contained 17 proposals that would help to create a more centralized state. These policies were practiced by the regime of Ceausescu until there was a shift of government in December of 1989. During this time period, Romania was in the Frozen Stage of Lewis's model. According to Lewis' model, the events of December 1989 were the trigger that initiated the Melting Stage. This stage allowed Romania to begin the transition from the communist regime of Ceausescu, to a democratic government. "No exotic facts triggered the stage. Lower orders cannot react independently of the upper order, and when resources become exhausted, collapse or revolution follows," said Ambassador Fabian. Finally, after this stage occurred, Romania went through a transition and stabilization stage, the final stage of Lewis' model.

According to Ambassador Fabian, "In the early 1990's, Romanian society was enthusiastic in embracing democracy, but as the process began, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile new changes with the old regime." The new government faced a number of issues which included social, political, and economic challenges. Through the work of civil society, NGO's, and an emerging middle class, Romania was able to slowly transition their government and society from a highly controlled and centralized state. Thus they gained many freedoms foreign to Romanians, such as freedom of speech, movement, and transparency of the system. It has taken the Romanian government over 20 years to fully change their system and become a powerful player in Europe as well as the rest of the world.

The enduring legacy of this change is the realization, as Ambassador Fabian put it that, "This was a complex process with steps forward and back. After two decades of homework, Romania has been able to learn how to manage conflicting relations between two different systems in terms of values, mentalities, basic concepts of functioning institutional structures, and economic mechanisms."

The Dark Side of Seoul



Joe McPherson, Founder of ZenKimchi

September 24, 2013 - **Joe McPherson**, popular food writer and founder of ZenKimchi, gave a talk called "The Dark Side of Seoul" as part of Asia Society Korea Center's Monthly Luncheon Series. Mr. McPherson, an avid fan of ghost stories, decided to create a two and a half hour ghost tour called "The Dark Side of Seoul" after discovering a dearth of such activities in Seoul. "I was a big fan of ghost tours in London, Savannah, and New York," Mr. McPherson said. "But there were no ghost tours in Seoul and thought it would be fun to put something together."

He knew that a city with as long a history as Seoul likely had plenty of dark tales, but he ran into an unexpected challenge in digging them up. "We found that people are very secretive about ghost stories in Korea," Mr. McPherson said.

Mr. McPherson shared stories about Jedong, the Restaurant Blood Ghost, the Yanghwajin Foreigners Cemetery, the Gwangtonggyo Bridge, as well as more modern ghost stories. The talk was followed by an engaging discussion with the audience on topics such as the nature of Korean culture's superstitions and ghost stories from different countries around the world.

Monthly Luncheon Series

The Luxury Craze: Understanding the Korean Consumer's Inner Motives



(From left to right) Mr. Giuseppe Cavallo, Country Manager of TOD'S Korea, Ms. Sophie Park, Merchandising Team Leader of Lotte Duty Free Shopping, and Mr. Henry Shinn, Presenter of the news program Primetime on tbs eFM.

October 15, 2013 - The Asia Society Korea Center and the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Korea jointly presented a panel discussion called the "The Luxury Craze: Understanding the Korean Consumer's Inner Motives." The panelists included **Mr. Giuseppe Cavallo**, Country Manager of TOD'S Korea, **Mr. Henry Shinn**, Presenter of the news program Primetime on tbs eFM, and **Ms. Sophie Park**, Merchandising Team Leader of Lotte Duty Free Shopping.

Mr. Cavallo described Korea as a "dream market" and explained that luxury goods were a status symbol for Koreans. "My first impression of this market was really unbelievable," he said. "People coming out from the store were really excited after buying the bags and shoes. Italians are born with those kinds of things, so we don't dream anymore."

Mr. Cavallo explained some of the changes occurring in the Korean luxury market. "This is an important market for Italian companies. For example, my company, which has many brands, the first of which is TOD'S is we are very famous for showing how to be luxurious not at the weekend or at night time, but during the day," he said. "When you drive, or, when you go somewhere, that's the status that this market needs to be at." "Because luxury is not only for one time only, luxury is a status," Mr. Cavallo added.

Ms. Park, a buyer for global luxury fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton and Dior, offered insight into the mindset of Korean consumers. "Korean luxury consumers do not merely rely on the brand logo or name, but they're very sophisticated in terms of the trend," she said.

Ms. Park identified the top trends in the Korean luxury market, including uniqueness, men's goods, and "real high-end" goods. "Louis Vuitton has shown decent success for several decades in Korea. However, the numbers are slowing down," she said. "Chanel and other brands are showing explosive growth. Korean consumers are looking more and more for 'real highend' luxury goods. The definition of luxury has evolved at an advanced pace where only a few select brands have kept up."

Mr. Shinn shared his journalistic perspective on the economic and social impact of Koreans' obsession with luxury goods. After South Korea's rapid modernization and economic growth following the Korean War, members of the upper class sought a way to distinguish themselves from the lower classes by buying expensive Western goods. He explained how over the decades, this desire for luxury goods has contributed to issues such as bullying in schools and the pressure to exchange tens of thousands of dollars in luxury gifts between families when a couple gets married.

In response to a question about luxury good theft in Korea, Mr. Shinn pointed out that counterfeit goods are an even bigger problem. "The government is really trying to crack down on the trade of counterfeit goods," he said. "That seems to be a more pressing problem here. Not just for producers but for people who may smuggle in goods from China."

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