

**EISENHOWER FELLOWSHIPS – 2009 Multi Nation Program**  
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**Jan Goossens**  
**Artistic Director**  
**Royal Flemish Theater (KVS)**  
**Brussels, BELGIUM**

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During his decade-long tenure as Artistic Director of Belgium's Royal Flemish Theater (KVS), Jan Goossens has expanded the theater's programming scope to reflect the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of Brussels and initiated ongoing artistic cultural exchange projects with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, and the West Bank. Prior to KVS, Mr. Goossens was Assistant Director and Dramaturg for Peter Sellars, Artistic Assistant for Wim Vandekeybus, and spent several years with the Salzburg Opera Festival. On his fellowship, Mr. Goossens met with artists, artistic directors at cultural institutions, cultural policy-makers, and political and intellectual visionaries. The themes he explored throughout his fellowship were the importance of cultural and intellectual leadership and its long-term impact on communities, as well as what the position of artists, intellectuals, and cultural and academic institutions in our cities and society should be.

Mr. Goossens was enormously impressed by the level of visionary and compassionate leadership that he encountered throughout the country, stating that "in every city, I met people who took their professional, cultural or other activities, and also their responsibilities as citizens and human beings, very seriously and who were committed to them with enormous talent, competence, care, and dedication. However, despite considerable contributions made to their communities, these cultural leaders remain challenged to insert themselves onto the agendas of power-brokers and those working outside of the arts." He also found that cultural institutions in the U.S. are compelled to devote considerable efforts to fundraising, noting that "The U.S. system makes it very hard for artists and institutions to focus on what should be their core business - confronting society with their essential voices in a world sometimes dominated too strongly by politicians and CEO's."

Outstanding encounters during his fellowship included time spent in Los Angeles with artists Peter Sellars and Bill Viola, musician Esa-Pekka Salonen, and John Malpede, director of LAPD (Los Angeles Poverty Department), a performance group comprised primarily of homeless people living on Skid Row. Mr. Goossens was inspired by the daring leadership demonstrated by journalist Mark Danner whose article in the *NY Review of Books* exposing the extent of torture conducted by the U.S. had just been published. Other highlights included conversations with historian Howard Zinn, MIT professor Noam Chomsky, anthropologist Jean Comaroff (Africanist, University of Chicago) and philosopher Peter Nabokov (Native American expert, UCLA). In New Orleans, Mr. Goossens met with Ron Chisom, director of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, who teaches widely about the lingering and insidious impact of racism in the U.S., and *Times Picayune* journalist Lolis Eric Elie who made the film *Fauborg Treme: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans*.

Mr. Goossens wrote "I have been impressed, moved and inspired by the many cultural, intellectual, social and media leaders I met who are genuinely and deeply committed to building an open, equal and democratic society. The U.S. certainly has a huge and inspiring potential of leaders, showing their country and its population the way towards an even better future, that is not exclusively defined by political and business leaders and corporate logics." Reflecting on his fellowship experience, Jan stated that "although Eisenhower Fellowships is not an arts-based program, I am extremely happy and grateful that I could be a participant and I have benefited in general from meetings with people and Fellows who are active in other fields. It has broadened my perspective on many issues and made me question many of my own views."