

**www.brusselstimes.com**

Date: 19-06-2024

Periodicity: Continuous

Journalist: News Agency Belga

Circulation: 0

Audience: 1000

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/brussels/1099241/do-not-call-it-the-chinese-pavilion-anymore-but-the-silk-road-palace>

## 'Do not call it the Chinese Pavilion anymore, but the Silk Road Palace'



Credit: Belga

**"Ditch Chinese Pavilion for Silk Road Palace," proposes Diane Hennebert, one of the officials leading a nonprofit aimed at restoring and operating the Belgian monument, originally commissioned by King Leopold II and unveiled in 1913 in Laeken.**

The building, located by the Japanese Tower, was closed in 2013 due to stability and security issues. The facades, particularly the one perpendicular to Van Praet Avenue which is not incorporated into the structure, have shifted, attributed to the weight of wooden elements that make up the terraces.



Issue of water infiltration into the building has been another issue faced, now resolved, however, the unused edifice continues to undergo slow deterioration.

Before the elections, Federal Government allowed the establishment of an association for renovation which combined the Buildings Authority, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the private sector contributing through philanthropy. The estimated renovation costs are around €6 million.

The Chinese Pavilion will, henceforth, focus on the theme of the Silk Road, routes that played a significant role in East-West exchanges since ancient times. The monument's influences are not solely Chinese but also have Japanese and Cambodian inspirations.



Chinese Pavilion of Brussels on 28 April 1970. Credit: Belga

The redefined Pavilion aims to host cultural and tourist activities during the day, strengthening diplomatic relations and fostering ties between Belgian and Asian businesses.

The Pavilion's annex is lined up to become a hub for exclusive events (conferences, meetings, dinners, cocktails), dedicated to enhancing Belgian-Chinese and Asian relations.

"It's not too late, but time is of the essence," said Diane Hennebert, who is known for heading the Wallonia-Brussels Centre in Paris, as well as overseeing both the Atomium and the Villa Empain during their restorations.

During an onsite visit, attended by Secretary of State for the Buildings Authority Mathieu Michel, Hennebert expressed her "dream" of complete restoration by the end of 2027, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and China.