



TENANT TROUBLES. South Korean singer PSY performs during his “All Night Stand” concert in Seoul, South Korea. PSY is currently fighting a legal battle with artist tenants who are reluctant to leave a building he owns in Seoul. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)

Singer PSY feuding with artist tenants of his Seoul building

By Kim Tong-Hyung
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korean singer PSY is currently fighting a legal battle with artist tenants who are reluctant to leave a building he owns in Seoul. The property dispute has struck a nerve in a country notorious for super-high rents that critics say are killing vibrancy in cities by spurring gentrification and evictions.

Choi Jee Ahn of Takeout Drawing said about 10 lawsuits have been exchanged between a gallery the artists belong to and their YouTube star landlord.

PSY bought the six-floor building in February 2012 and wants to evict the artists on the grounds of a 2011 court ruling that ordered them to move out by the end of 2013. The artists, whose gallery has occupied two floors of the building since 2010, question whether the ruling is still effective when it was based on earlier plans by the building’s previous owner to reconstruct it. The company didn’t go through with the plans before selling the property to PSY for about \$6.8 million.

The artists said PSY’s continued attempts to evict them betray an agreement they reached with the singer in May through the mediation of his entertainment agency, which stated that they remain at their current space until the end of November.

PSY, who first told the artists he planned to convert the entire building into a coffee shop, has changed from his initial plans to preserve the building and is now talking about reconstruction plans, Choi said. However, this doesn’t restore the effectiveness of the 2011 ruling because South Korean laws have changed since then to strengthen the protection of tenants, she said.

PSY’s lawyer did not respond to calls to his office for comment. The lawyer previously told South Korean media that PSY was just trying to rightfully exercise his property rights and that the artists were trying to exploit the singer’s celebrity status.

The artists have staged rallies to protect their space since March, when dozens of enforcers appeared at the gallery and tried to physically force them out, Choi said. One artist was seriously injured, causing a two-week hospital stay, she said.

PSY’s lawyer has filed defamation suits against four of the artists for criticizing the singer on the internet.

Norwegian art collector returns two stolen stone statues to Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodia recently welcomed the return of two stone statues from the Angkor period that were looted during the country’s civil war and taken to Europe, where they spent the past three decades.

The sculptures — a ninth-century head of the Hindu god Shiva and a late-12th- to early-13th-century male divinity head — were formally handed over by Norwegian collector Morten Bosterud at a ceremony in Phnom Penh attended by government officials.

“I see myself not as a donor but as a returner of these art objects to their true owner,” Bosterud told reporters after touring the National Museum, where the sculptures will be kept. “I have had time to have a brief look around this museum and it made me realize that my decision was correct, and that my previous thoughts of being a caretaker of these objects were not correct, as I at least was not the best one.”

He refused to say when or how he obtained the statues and how much he paid for them. He only said he has been collecting such artifacts for many years.

Cambodia’s minister of culture and fine arts, Phoeurng Sackona, said the statues are believed to have been stolen from temples in Siem Reap province, which is also home to the famed Angkor Wat temples.

She praised Bosterud for returning the artifacts, saying he set a good example for other collectors.

“Your noble decision and very kind gesture to return the Cambodian artifacts reflect the support for combatting illegal trafficking of antiquities,” she said.

Bosterud also handed over nine other works of art that were copies, not genuine artifacts.

A 1993 Cambodian law prohibits the removal of cultural artifacts without government permission. Pieces taken after that date have stronger legal standing to compel their owners abroad to return them. But there is also



ANGKOR ARTIFACTS. The statue of a male divinity head is seen during a ceremony after the artifact was returned by Norwegian collector Morten Bosterud, at the Cambodian National Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Cambodia welcomed home two stone statues from the golden Angkor era that were looted from a temple during the country’s civil war and spent the past three decades abroad. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

general agreement in the art world that pieces are deemed to be acquired illegitimately if they were exported without clear and valid documentation after 1970 — the year of a United Nations cultural agreement targeting trafficking in antiquities.

In June last year, three 1,000-year-old statues depicting Hindu mythology were brought back to Cambodia. They were also looted from a temple and put in western art collections.

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