

Wat Rong Khun

Is a contemporary, unconventional, privately owned, art-exhibit in the style of a Buddhist temple in Chiang Rai Province, in northern Thailand. Is known by tourist as the "white temple".

It was designed, constructed, and owned by Chalermchai Kositpipat, who opened it daily to visitors in 1997 and There is no charge for admission. It isn't completed yet. But it will have nine buildings.

The principal building is the Ubosot, a big hall.

The bridge of "the cycle of rebirth": is a bridge over a small lake. In front of the bridge are hundreds of outreaching hands that symbolize unrestrained desire. The bridge proclaims that the way to get happiness is by foregoing temptation, greed, and desire. Next to the lake stand two very elegant "Kinnaree", half-human, half-bird creatures from Buddhist mythology.

Gate of Heaven: After crossing the bridge, the visitor arrives at the "gate of heaven", guarded by two creatures representing Death and Rahu, who decides the fate of the dead. In front of the ubosot are several meditative Buddha images.

Ubosot: The principal building, the ubosot is an all white building with fragments of mirrored glass embedded in building's exterior. The ubosot embodies design elements from classic Thai architecture such as the three-tiered roof and abundant use of Naga serpents. "Inside the temple, the decor swiftly moves from pristine white to fiery and bewildering. Murals depict swirling orange flames and demon faces, interspersed with Western idols such as Michael Jackson, Neo from The Matrix, Freddy Kruger, and a T-800 series Terminator. Images of nuclear warfare, terrorist attacks, and oil pumps hammer home the destructive impact that humans have had on earth. The presence of Harry Potter, Superman, and Hello Kitty confuses the message somewhat, but the overall moral is clear: people are wicked."

The golden building: "A structure that stands out because its color is different. It is another very ornately decorated structure, this golden building represents the body, whereas the white ubosot represents the mind. The gold symbolizes how people focus on worldly desires and money. The golden building represents the idea to make merit and to focus on the mind, instead of material things and possession."

Sadly, the White Temple was severely damaged in a 2014 earthquake, and has been marked as structurally unsound. Though initially marked for demolition, it is currently in the process of being restored. It can still be visited, but may not be allowed inside.