

Chinatown Station*



Chinatown Station is situated on a historical site. At the south of the station (Temple, Pagoda, Trengganu and Mosque Streets) is the historical conservation district. The buildings are mainly traditional four-storey shophouses. At the north, the buildings are predominantly modern high-rise structures.

The challenge was to design the station and its related surface structures to fit in within a tight historical site that would suit the varying architectural styles and streetscapes. Significantly, the architecture met the dual challenge of serving not only functional necessity as a transit station, but also as a timeless civic building. The cultural identity of Chinatown is preserved and translated into the artwork, narrating the metaphysical history of Chinese culture in Singapore. The Pagoda Street entrance is located within a historical conservation area. A transparent canopy was designed to reduce the visual impact on the narrow street.

The Artist

Tan Swie Hian was born in Indonesia in 1943. He has a Bachelor of Arts (English Literature) from Nanyang University, Singapore, 1968. "It will be good for commuters to experience the calming, uplifting effect of the murals as they pass through the station," Swie Hian says. Interestingly, Swie Hian describes the kaleidoscope of colours of this mural as "tantric", influenced as he is by Tibetan Thangka painting.

*Notes drawn from a variety of sources, including *Art in Transit, North East Line MRT—Singapore*, Tan Su Yen, with photography by Ken Seet, published by the Land Transport Authority, 2003. Available through Art Outreach Singapore Ltd at (65) 68739505 (www.artoutreachprogram.org).