

CLASSIC DRIVER

Sky's the limit for Thai Porsche enthusiast Chanond Ruangkritya

Lead

Chanond 'Ko' Ruangkritya is not only one of the most passionate car collectors in the boomtown of Bangkok – he is also building the very first Porsche Design tower in Asia. We visited him at Curvistan Bangkok, where he gave us a preview of things to come.



Imagine a real estate developer who has built almost a hundred skyscrapers and condominiums all over Thailand, and you might think of a tough business man in a power suit engulfed in cigar smoke, smiling at you over a game of South-East Asian Monopoly while taking over your priceless Silom Road property. But Chanond Ruangkritya, who's friends call him Ko, is none of that. With a boyish smile, black T-Shirt and the physique of an athlete steeled in daily gym sessions overlooking the sprawling megacity of Bangkok while listening to 1990s Hip Hop, the entrepreneur comes across as the most easy-going, casual and friendly guy in the room. We meet Chanond on the opening night of [Curvistan Bangkok – a pop-up gallery, bar and playground for Porsche fans](#) he created together with Curves publisher Stefan Bogner in the vibrant Thong Lor neighbourhood.



In a metropolis exuberant with sights, sounds, colours and smells, the Curvistan space is an eclectic experiment, an immersive experience where art, fashion, music and nightlife are remixed with contemporary car culture infused by the local Porsche scene. Stop by for an iced cappuccino and croissant on a Sunday morning, and you will see the rarest sportscars – from RWBs to Dakars – casually parked under giant exotic leaves in the backyard, while the owners discuss their next road trips. But for Chanond, Curvistan Bangkok is only the beginning, a preview of things to come: together with Porsche Design, he will create the brand's first skyscraper in Asia – a sleek, state-of-the-art ultra-luxury residence that will start growing in the building site next door and open in 2028. Naturally, we want to learn more. So we leave the old-school Rap tunes behind us and relocate to Chanond's garage for a talk.



What's your first automotive memory?

It's a memory from the 1980s, I must have been five or six years old, and my father brought home these exotic sports cars – a Porsche 911 Turbo, a Ferrari 308. You almost never saw these cars on the road in Thailand, as there was a 600 percent import tax, and the economy wasn't as well developed as it is today. I thought 'Woah, they look like race cars!'. My dad was truly enthusiastic. He also built the first race track in Thailand, the Bira Circuit. So I blame my father for infecting me with the car virus! (*Laughs*)

It's always the dads, isn't it? And once you got your licence as a teenager, what cars did you fancy then?

My first car was a BMW 323. It was the 1990s, we lived in the US and sometimes I sneaked the keys from my dad and went on a joyride, running away from the police. Like everyone back then, I was into Japanese JDM cars, like customised Toyota Supras and such. In college I bought a Mazda RX-7 with a rotary engine. I put a bigger turbo into it, but it was way too powerful and had a massive turbo lag, so I crashed it. Later on I crashed an NSX. It took me a while to learn how to drive properly.



There are some pretty interesting cars from the 1990s in your collection – a Rubystone Red 964 Porsche 911 Carrera RS, a Ferrari 512 M. What was the car culture like back then in Thailand?

The import tax was still at 300 percent and the cost of capital was high, but the economy was booming. It was before the Asian financial crisis, and people started buying these expensive cars. Porsche 964s, Ferrari 355s. Some of these cars you see here came into Thailand back then and never left.



However, the core of your collection are hardcore, track-focused lightweight sportscars from the new Millennium - from here I can see two Porsche 911 GT3RS - a 996 and a 997 - as well as a Lamborghini Murcielago SV, a Ferrari 488 Pista, a tailor-made Ferrari F12 TdF. What fascinates you about those tough cars?

When I was younger I was fascinated the the looks of cars, the flashier the better. I loved the big V12s from Lamborghini and Ferrari. But I was also a passionate go-kart racer, I spent much of my days on track improving my performance. Driving a shifter kart is like driving a Mini tuned for Formula 1, just without the aerodynamic grip. There I learnt that you can't beat light weight. So I started looking for cars that were built for the racetrack. I drove the purpose-built GT3 track toys like the Ferrari Challenge cars or the Porsche Cup cars, which was exciting. But you know, Thailand has some amazing roads, and I didn't want to spend my time just driving in circles - so these street-legal but fine-tuned, manual lightweight sports cars were the perfect compromise. I fell in love with the driving experience, connectivity they offer. Now I often do these road trips with a couple of friends, we get up at sunrise and drive for 12 hours straight. It does not get any better.



How about classic cars? Despite the fact that it's almost impossible to import them into Thailand from abroad now, do you have a taste for classics too?

Well, driving these modern lightweight sports cars like the Porsche 911 GT3 RS made me interested in the history of the RS cars, the ancestors. I owned a wonderful 1973 Carrera 2.7 RS homologation car which I later sold to Bruce Meyer in Beverly Hills. I also went to Pebble Beach and joined the judges at dawn patrol, listening to them geeking out about the tiniest details. Slowly I started to understand the modern cars in the context of their history, their role in the automotive timeline, the transition of technology from decade to decade. But for me, the ultimate car of all time is still the Porsche 917. In terms of aerodynamics, space frame aluminum architecture, turbo technology it was the absolute peak of mechanical engineering without any electronics. Driving these massive fibreglass go-karts in Le Mans without ABS or any safety net required massive stamina. With cars like the 917, Porsche has proven itself on the racetrack for good - the value for the aura of the brand is priceless.



There's a big Porsche community in Thailand. Why's that, considering the eye-watering taxes on these cars?

It's funny, a Generation X guy like me with a disposable income in Europe would probably collect fine art. But in Thailand, we grew up knowing that if you earn money, you buy cars. We like to enjoy our lives and spend time with our friends, we're very social. So it's a very vibrant community. My friend Tenn is organizing the biggest Porsche meeting in South East Asia called "[Das Treffen](#)". To all of us, the Porsche brand is a connector, it brings like-minded people together.



You are a real car guy - but also a very successful real estate entrepreneur with your company Ananda Development. Interestingly, you made your fortune by making people spend less time in their cars, not more.

Yes, exactly. During our research we found out that people in the Bangkok metropolitan region spend an average 42 days per year stuck in traffic on their way to work and back. So I came up with the idea to build residential buildings around BTS train stations, so people could sell their cars, take the tube for their daily commute and get back a good part of their lifetime they could better spend with their family and friends. The idea was very successful with investors, we had a clear mission statement and 300 stations to scale our idea. From the very early days I was interested in what my business could contribute to society. I always tell my team and my contractors that helping to sculpt the skyline of Bangkok is something they can be truly proud of, that they can show their grandchildren. That's why I want my buildings to be aesthetically appealing too. Like a Porsche 911, I wanted my architecture to be modern and functional, sustainable and effective, but also timeless and classic.



Which brings us to your next project: Together with Porsche Design, you are building a ultra-luxury, 95-meter, 21-story skyscraper in the heart of Bangkok. It's the third Porsche Design tower in the world after the ones in Miami and Stuttgart, and the first of its kind in Asia. How did you convince Porsche to team up with you?

Like Miami or Dubai, Bangkok is a playground city where affluent people from all over the world want to loosen up, spend their money and simply enjoy life. In this context we were researching branded residential building concepts - and when I found out that Porsche Design has already realized two towers, I got very excited. But my next thought was: why would they do anything with me? Then I shot a video with some friends explaining my passion for Porsche, my family's automotive history and my track record in real estate. It's a very casual video, but I guess it was honest and authentic. So I sent it to Porsche - and it caught their attention. They understood that my personal passion for Porsche would protect their brand. For me, this is the peak of my career: my 100th building, and a dream come true.



So what will the Porsche Design tower look like?

Well, it is located in the most vibrant part of Bangkok and it will not be a high-rise with hundreds of flats - it will just have 22 units. The average price for each of these private villas is 15 million dollars, the penthouse will cost even 50 million dollars. So we need to offer something truly outstanding.



What's particularly Porsche about the architectural concept? How can you even translate the Porsche spirit and design language into a building?

Our architects are working closely with the Porsche Design team to make sure the whole building reflects the Porsche design criteria. The whole building is very sleek, timeless and contemporarily luxurious, it blends tradition and modernity. In my other real estate projects I need to plan very cost efficiently, but here there is literally no compromise. That is reflected in the forms and materials we use, the highest quality down to the tiniest detail. In terms of automotive similarities, the tower is closer to a Porsche 911 Sport Classic or a 918 than to a GT3 RS. The living spaces will be light, vast, warm and welcoming. We work with exclusive materials, luxury furniture, and the latest technologies. Inspired by the roof mechanism of the Porsche 911 Targa, the façade features a sophisticated, fully automated terrace door system that allows residents to blend outdoor and indoor living. Another architectural highlight is the exposed pedestal structure, called "X-Frame": the shape is inspired by the design of the Porsche Mission R concept car and its exoskeleton structure - the entry experience it creates is really unique.





I guess there might be the occasional car collector among the buyers, too.

Of course. There's a spiral access ramp for cars in the center of the Porsche Design Tower and each unit in the building will have its own passion space. In the past you would have called it a man cave, but we are of course also counting on female buyers. In there you can have your private garage, with a spaceship-style elevator that takes you directly to your duplex, or a Michelin-star kitchen. That's totally up to you. And the top of the tower is crowned by a light signature inspired by the lighting designs of the latest Porsche sports cars. It will certainly become a landmark in Bangkok's skyline.



How does Curvistan Bangkok integrate into all of this?

I met Stefan Bogner at "Das Treffen" in December 2023 and we instantly connected. We speak the same language, moved at the same pace. He showed me the Curvistan pop-up space he had curated in Singapore and I loved it. Stefan is a very creative spirit, and he's a true Porsche guy - even if he's not employed by the company. But the important people trust him. So we decided to take the Curvistan concept to the next level in Bangkok. We transformed this space in less than four months. Porsche is the most inclusive and socially accepted luxury brand in the world. In this sense, Curvistan Bangkok is meant to be a very inclusive space where we celebrate the Porsche spirit and contemporary car culture for the next two years together with the local community.

With all these exciting projects cooking at the same time - on what kind of energy source are you running on, what's the force that drives you?

You know, I am a Buddhist and very spiritual, so I am interested in the purpose of my existence. Life is a gift granted to you by the universe. But what do you do with that gift? It's certainly not about amassing wealth. You cannot take anything with you when you die. And we all die, there's no way around it. So how can you use your abilities and your leadership position to create something for others, to inspire people to strive for improvement and to create a better version of themselves? It's all about finding a positive mind set and creating positive experiences, for yourself and even more for others. That's the spiritual goal.

Photos: Stefan Bogner / Porsche Design

Gallery

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