This project centres on the theme of goddesses. Back in 2020, I had a residency with Ting Shuo, where I explored the role of females in temples and Taoist traditions. During that time, I visited several goddess temples in Tainan, such as the Lady Linshui Temple, Kailong Temple, Wufei Temple, the Temple of Lady Gu, and the Auties' Temple. As I visited these goddess temples, besides the aspect of loyalty, sacrifice, and devotion that is commonly associated with becoming a goddess, I also encountered goddesses who possessed a lot of energy and agency, inspiring a kind of admiration in me—like Lady Linshui. While she is often assigned the role of blessing people with fertility, ensuring women's safe childbirth, and protecting unborn children, she is also, on the other hand, known for vanquishing demons and evil spirits.

Before (being invited to participate in this project with Ting Shuo), I had just returned from a trip to Brazil, where I encountered African myths that had travelled to Brazil and evolved into new forms there. Among the deities, I felt a strong connection to one goddess in particular—the ocean goddess Iemanjá. We also have an ocean goddess in our culture, Mazu. Their ocean goddess, Iemanjá, captivated me with her mythology. She embodies such gentleness and strength. One of her most famous deeds is that when the sun was on the verge of scorching the earth to the point of being lifeless, causing human suffering, she intervened. At that time, the deities held a council, and Iemanjá suggested a solution: she offered to absorb the sun's light into her skirt and hide it in the depths of the ocean, letting the sun rest and cool down. Once she had gathered enough light, she released it from her skirt's folds, where it reflected back up to the sky, forming a gentle, enduring light—what we now call the moon. This myth about Iemanjá, the ocean goddess who transformed sunlight into moonlight, deeply resonated with me.

My website is called Suotsana, which comes from the language of the Tsou people. More than a decade ago, I visited the Tapangu tribe in Alishan, where I learned of a goddess from

Tsou beliefs. Legend has it that she lives in a waterfall in Tapangu. If you are a gifted singer and stand before the waterfall at midnight, the goddess will teach you songs; but if you approach it without respect, you will hear nothing. This myth reflects the power of belief: the presence of the goddess is invoked by faith.

During my time in Tainan, I also visited the Siraya tribes, who revere ancestral spirits they refer to as Alid. In the Kabua sua tribe, for example, they honour Alid. I saw a story painted on the walls in the Kabua sua tribe about Alid, during a time of war, caught bombs in her skirt to protect her people. I had heard a similar story in a Mazu temple in Anping, where a woman in the gift shop told me that during wartime, Mazu caught bombs in her skirt as well. These stories connected, I thought that goddesses are often just depicted as embodying not just loyalty, sacrifice, and devotion, but they also need to have remarkable skills for catching bombs.

The connection between feminine energy and survival is significant. Feminine energy tends to be looser, more flexible, less rigid, and institutionalised. Civilization may be built on masculine energy, which establishes order, but excessive order can lead to problems. However, an excess of feminine energy could potentially create chaos, an overwhelming, unstructured state. Both masculine and feminine energies have positive and negative aspects.

In Taiwan's Taoist tradition, I noticed a strong connection between goddesses and all women. Some temples, like Wufei Temple, Yongkang Auties' Temple, or Temple of Lady Gu, and other temples for maidens all over Taiwan, are classified as yin temples, dedicated to spirits of deceased women. In Taoist beliefs, there are natural gods and human gods. Natural gods appear in myths, such as Nüwa or God of Thunder and Lightning. But even revered goddesses like Mazu, classified as human gods, are essentially humanised figures.

The goddess, the ghostly woman, and then a shaman—they all, to me, could be called a goddess. She isn't just one-dimensional. For instance, we mentioned earlier the revered Lady Linshui or Mazu, who in some research has been shown to be something akin to a shaman in her time. She was someone with clairvoyant abilities, able to summon spirits—a shaman of sorts with these powers.

It feels like the goddess embodies humanity's awe and fear of the unknown. In any case, after following this long line of investigation, I found that ghostly women, shamans, and goddesses are really all expressions of feminine energy, or rather, not merely feminine energy but a gathering of humanity's reverence for this yin power—a kind of maternal, nurturing energy. During these two years of working on the goddesses project, starting roughly in 2020, I felt some changes within myself, also a need for healing began to emerge. And as I was creating this project, I wanted to incorporate a sense of personal transformation and healing power into it.

In this search for goddesses, I sometimes use methods— hallucinatory, imaginary, or even by casting divination blocks—to try to communicate with them. Before leaving my last residency at the Ting Shuo studio, I went again to Lady Linshui Temple. I really wanted to draw divination sticks and get a bit of inspiration. Persistently seeking an answer, I had a feeling at that moment, as if she were telling me to simply follow my heart—whatever I'm thinking, whatever I feel like doing right now… For instance, I asked her, "Can I just freely reinterpret the goddess's story?" It was as if everything I wanted to do received positive blocks. But whenever I sought her direct opinion, there were only negative blocks.
Throughout each residency and each story, I've often gone to temples to observe how people interact with these gods, how they connect and converse with them, why they choose to remain devoted and follow one god, or why they volunteer at temples, forming a community. Often, people would say things like, "I have a connection with this temple" or

"I feel this god's presence," as if they instinctively know it. For me, the Lady Linshui Temple in Tainan is such a place.

In temples, I prefer to remain quiet, which might be a habit of someone who works with sound—to sit in silence, to listen, and to wait. In my experience, whenever I'm really eager to ask something—when I've got a very clear question in mind and go in with that exact question—I usually end up empty-handed or just don't get the answer I was looking for. It's like I've got too many preconceptions in my own mind.

For instance, in Founding Jade Emperor Temple, a Taoist senior approached me, asking what I was there to learn about. We ended up chatting for a long time. I was asking about the instruments the Taoist priests use. He said these instruments serve to create sound and explained, "Sound has the power to open or destroy worlds," serving as a gateway between three realms. That quote, to me, is the essence of this project. The inadvertent discovery of meaning through these long casual chats.

In Tainan's Kailong Temple, a temple devoted to a variety of goddesses, the main deity is Seven(th) Star Goddess. There is also Lady Linshui, The Goddess of Child Birth, and Matchmaker God. There, I encountered an elderly temple caretaker, a woman in her seventies or eighties who dresses formally in a Chinese cheongsam every day. For me, it's these real-life connections with goddesses that are most precious. In my conversation with the caretaker, I wanted to know more about people and their beliefs, but all she said was, "Sincerity brings miracles." Again, this was not the answer I expected, it was too simple.

Eventually, as I lingered there longer, she began asking about my personal relationships, whether I was married. When I said I wasn't, she advised me, "A woman should love herself more." She said, "Any love you have to beg for isn't yours; and don't go loving

others more—love yourself more instead." At that moment, the temple caretaker suddenly seemed a bit like some kind of spiritual guru. She never once actually told me to go pray, which was quite strange.

In this whole process, I'm gathering stories of connections between goddesses and people. And more precisely, I'm exploring why people need these connections. Through speaking to some mediums and researchers, I've learned that these deities, while often envisioned as female, are in essence clusters of energy, transcending gender. For example, Guanyin was originally genderless, but during certain periods of turmoil in Ancient China, they became feminised. In Tainan's Baoan Temple, there's a White Lotus Holy Mother. She's represented by a spirit called the Shí Bìxì, which looks like a turtle. The White Lotus Holy Mother is also known as the Stone Turtle Holy Mother. The Stone Turtle doesn't actually have a gender, nor is it human, but it's been "humanised" and even feminised, being called the Holy Mother. When we humans have these kinds of needs, it's actually a need for "maternal nature ".

I think what I want to present in this project is the connection between the goddess and humans. I want to speak from the perspective of the goddess. If I were to imagine it, the goddess would speak in the first person, telling her own story—how she views her history, how she sees the present situation she finds herself in, or even how she views the people who come to her with their prayers.

These goddesses actually have very different personalities. They're not just those gentle, nurturing, motherly images we talked about earlier. The goddess can also be fierce, selfish, self-centred, or even extremely destructive. In this project, I'd like to present these different aspects, making the goddess more dimensional because, in the end, they are human too. What happens in the divine realm also happens in the human realm. Some

ancient myths from long-forgotten civilizations have been passed down because they resonated with humans. People could empathise with the god's situation. The oral tradition is interesting because it's passed down orally, and so there are bound to be misinterpretations. In this oral transmission, the essence of the myth is often preserved, but many parts have been forgotten and later speculated upon, added in by people.

In this project, I also want to create a kind of "space" that isn't rigid, where you can bring in your own experiences and stories. I think this kind of space is something we encounter in our lives…… can't be provided with these intimate relationships with family, partners, or friends. There are things that can only be done on your own—self-transformation or self-healing. It's a moment when you need to change or just take a pause. These moments feel like personal work or things we need to complete on our own. So, it's important to have time and space for yourself.

In this project, I also want to use different mediums or actions to give people a chance to approach a space that might resemble this kind of state. I keep talking about connection, and I think it really is quite important—to find the connection between yourself, the story, the sound, or the environment of action. When I speak of connection, it's more about the individual, yourself and your environment, and your relationship with the divine, independent of other people.

The space I've been talking about feels somewhat intangible, almost virtual, but, for example, when we enter a temple or partake in certain healing rituals in spiritual practices, we also need a space. The sacredness of that space doesn't necessarily come from having a god inside it or from anything specific being in there, but rather from the fact that it's a space where you feel safe, where you can surrender yourself and focus solely on what's important to you at that moment.