

The 3rd Matsu Biennial

Open Call for International Proposals

Brief Outline of the Matsu Biennial 2025

- **Deadline for Proposals:** 17:00 (GMT+8), 24 January 2025 (Fri.)
- **Event Period:** 5 September – 16 November 2025.
(73 days in total, official event period to be announced by the organizer)
- **Location:** Matsu Islands, Lianjiang County, Taiwan (for details please refer to p. 5)
- **Organizer:** Matsu Biennial Promotion Committee
(comprising Lianjiang County Government, and the General Association of Chinese Culture)

Introduction to Matsu

Matsu Archipelago is administratively part of Taiwan's Lianjiang County and comprises Nangan, Beigan, Dongyin, and Juguang Townships, along with many uninhabited islets. It is narrow east-west and long north-south topographically, with each island boasting unique geological features.

Matsu Archipelago consists of 19 islands and islets, including five main islands: **Nangan, Beigan, Dongyin, Dongju, and Xiju**. Smaller islets include Liang, Gaodeng, and Daqiu that belong to Beigan Township.

Matsu's administrative center, Nangan, is about 114 nautical miles from Taiwan and 54 nautical miles from the Min River estuary, China. Its Huangqi Peninsula is the nearest point to China, only about five nautical miles away.



- **Coordinates:** 26°09'04''N, 119°55'38''E
- **Area:** Approximately 29.52 km²
- **Population:** Around 14,000. (The resident population is only about 60% of the total population.)

*Population Breakdown by Township: Nangan 7,831; Beigan 3,088; Juguang 1,500; Dongyin 1,580

- **Historical Overview**

Matsu, a fishery island always in eager anticipation, has been annually awaiting a bountiful harvest in the fishing season since ancient times. Fishermen's songs in Eastern Min echo around this island, and settlements of granite houses in Eastern Min style arise from the coves. People pickle food and make wine, whilst ships depart and arrive. Maritime powers seek to occupy this island for replenishment, while the fishermen crave as much the seafood beneath the tide as the terns do.

Matsu, a frontline island ever waiting, had been subject to military control over fishery, culture, and residents' life in response to the Cold War after 1949. Tunnels, bunkers, strongholds, and barracks were constructed all over the island. The nearly 50-year military readiness control had made Matsu an important fortress for Taiwan's naval defense against China. Matsu remained under the war zone administration until 1992, and the war had never come.

Matsu, a destination island looking forward to tourists, is 114 nautical miles from Keelung, Taiwan, and the boat ride takes eight hours. However, it is merely 16 nautical miles from China, and the boat ride takes less than 30 minutes. Matsu is known for the lapping "Blue Tears" and the "Green Aurora" on the horizon. Both the islanders and tourists expect the "red tide," terns, red spider lily, and golden-and-silver honeysuckle. As a potential World Heritage site, Matsu is undergoing a new type of cultural landscape transformation into a more sustainable island of cultural charm.

For details of the previous Matsu Biennial editions, please visit the official website:

<https://matsubiennial.tw/>

[Guidelines for Applicants]

Purpose of the Open Call for International Proposals

This open call encourages global creators to address Matsu's cultural preservation and perpetuation by translating the Cold War legacy on this island from external perspectives. Artists are invited to visit Matsu so as to experience the distinctive landscapes, maritime cultures, and precious heritage of Eastern Min culture (e.g. language, architecture, cuisine, and religious rituals) of its four townships and five islets. In conjunction with the "Stronghold Translation" residency program, this open call unveils the mystery of Matsu's military relics from the war zone administration period, prompting international artists to reflect on the future possibilities of Matsu as a contemporary frontline island.

The 3rd Matsu Biennial will attract visitors from all over the world with Matsu's mesmerizing diversity. Through artistic creation, the biennial will also introduce to the world the island's fascinating natural scenery and social customs as well as its priceless Cold War cultural assets.

Theme of the Open Call for International Proposals

"Your Sea, My Land"

During the war zone administration period (1956-1992), Matsu's cove settlements were transformed from fishing villages into strongholds of coastal defense. Premised on the strategic objective of defense, bunkers, outposts, artillery, and tunnels soon thickly occupied Matsu's coastline, making it the world's most densely militarized island. Coves became the front line of this military island against the enemy, whereas the residents' quotidian existence retreated to the farthest area from the sea. "Your Sea, My Land," the theme of the 3rd Matsu Biennial, is conceived to rethink and redefine Matsu's relationship to the sea on the basis of the dialogues at the coves and military strongholds. In traditional fishing, coves were where the households confronted the challenge of survival from the sea. In the Cold War context, the uncertainty and apprehension over the enemy haunted the frontline soldiers at the military strongholds. Sparking public discussions about this space via the stronghold translation, the curatorial perspective of this biennial breaks the siege with art in the New Cold War, defends Matsu's island identity with the sea, and creates exciting possibilities for customs exchange at the coves.

The open call for international proposals will not only present Matsu's cultural heritage and modern life in pluralistic art forms, but also address the issues concerning ecological environment, identity, spatial politics, and relational aesthetics. In the binary dialectics of "sea/land" and "you/I," "you" are strangers, others, as well as temporary viewers, curators, and artists who engage in dialogues through the biennial and see the cultural pride of "my" island, whilst "I" represent the fishermen, the garrison troops, and the islanders who have experienced the vicissitudes of Matsu for generations. This biennial moves towards an open and fluid maritime identity by subverting the stereotyped imagination of continental hegemony. Starting from the coves and stringing the four townships and five islets, this biennial re-examines the symbiotic relationship between the sea and humanity. The mutual inspiration

between artistic creation and Matsu's frontline feature will unlock the cultural potential of this island.

Sub-themes

- Cold War and New Cold War Culture
- Island Cultural Identity
- Maritime Cultural Sustainability

(Determined at the artists' discretion)

- **Cold War and New Cold War Culture**

Matsu used to be a frontline island in the Taiwan Strait due to the military tension between China and Taiwan during the Cold War. In 1956, the Nationalist government promulgated the "Experimental Measures for the War Zone Administration in the Areas of Kinmen and Matsu," which coordinated all the manpower and resources on the islands through military control. It made Matsu a military island by means of "total war," asking all the civilians and soldiers on the island to share the spirit of "one island, one destiny." It was not until 7 November 1992 that the war zone administration in Matsu formally ended with the waves of democratization and social movements, making Matsu gradually liberalized and transformed into an island of tourism and ecology. Nonetheless, Matsu's special geographical location has bestowed considerable Cold War cultural assets upon itself, and there are still garrison troops on the island today. Given the frontline tensions of contemporary geopolitics, Matsu remains symbolically significant in the global New Cold War.

- **Island Cultural Identity**

Matsu Archipelago is adjacent to the eastern coast of China's Fujian Province. The architecture, cuisine, language, and traditional culture in Matsu are all crucial Eastern Min cultural assets. However, they are different as much from their origin in Fuzhou for political and military reasons, as they are from the context of the main island of Taiwan. Surrounded by the sea, Matsu's geographical context has given rise to a sui generis fishing and culinary culture, and the islanders are born with a resilient maritime spirit. The islanders' unique cultural identity is Matsu's most precious cultural heritage.

- **Maritime Cultural Sustainability**

Matsu, with its four townships and five islets, is rich in fishing culture resources. Besides, by promoting its tourism in recent years, Matsu has attracted tourists with the nighttime spectacle of *noctiluca scintillans*, commonly known as the "Blue Tears." Meanwhile, ecological surveys have also shown that Matsu is an important transit habitat for migratory birds, accommodating 35 species in the List of Protected Species in Taiwan. April to September is the best time of year for tern-watching in Matsu. Of all the world's 40 tern species, the Chinese crested tern (*thalasseus bernsteini*) here is the rarest, and it is compared to the "mythological bird" by scholars and experts because of its elusiveness. In view of the global trend of sustainable development, critical environmental issues

such as overfishing and marine debris have been re-addressed and emphasized in Matsu, which further stimulates sustainable thinking on Matsu's ecology and tourism.

Proposal Categories

We invite all kinds of in-situ or participatory proposals that include but are not limited to brand new works, and the works should reflect Matsu's genius loci and cultural context. The applicants are encouraged to utilize Matsu's characteristics or resources, such as its natural ecology, history, culture, weather conditions, religious rituals, and landscape forms. The works from the successful proposals will be exhibited at the "Stronghold Translation" spaces or other potential exhibition venues.

*Each artist or team may submit a maximum of two proposals.

1. Installations in Situ

The proposals' concepts shall resonate with the biennial's spirit or Matsu's genius loci and lifestyle. Both indoor and outdoor proposals are acceptable.

2. Participatory Creative Projects

The proposals may take the forms of performance, literature, cuisine, fashion, design, technology, immersive experiences, or community-based interactive projects. We encourage the successful applicants to interact with the islanders in the creative process, and the specific results must be displayed for the visitors to experience and appreciate during the biennial.

Potential Exhibition Venues

(Detailed photos of each venue are available in Appendix 1. The Curatorial Advisory Committee and the organizer will decide on the final exhibition venues.)

- Nangan: Stronghold 26, Stronghold 53, and the Meishi Military Brothel
- Beigan: Stronghold 40, and unused residential property
- Xiju: The route from Stronghold 32 to Stronghold 35, the Zhongzheng Gate, and the Tianwo Settlement
- Artists may suggest other venues and indicate them in the proposals.

Eligibility and Requirements

Any individual or team interested in the Matsu Biennial is welcome to apply regardless of nationality.

Proposal Selection and Financial Support

- Approximately **3-4 proposals** will be selected, contingent on the actual situation.
- The successful applicants will receive **up to NT\$1,000,000** (about US\$31,000 - 32,000) as the financial support for production. The organizer and the Selection Committee will determine the final amount. (Expenses of travel, board and lodging, as well as workshops required for the creation should be included in the proposal, and the amount of financial support shall be adjusted according to the proposal's scale.)

- The applicants shall not violate the biennial's local consensus clauses. Participatory creative proposals shall respect the wishes and rights of local residents. Collaboration with local residents or groups is encouraged.
- The successful applicants shall **complete their works by 20 August 2025** (The deadline is subject to the biennial's trial run).
- As the biennial's exhibition venues are governed by the Tourism Administration, Matsu National Scenic Area Headquarters, and as some of the strongholds are registered as important cultural assets of the Lianjiang County Government, the successful applicants may need to fine-tune their works under the relevant venue regulations. Artists should discuss the final details of presentation with the Curatorial Advisory Committee.
- The initiation costs of visitor engagement in culinary or participatory projects shall be discussed case by case according to each project's needs. The allocation of revenue derived from the non-profit projects shall be discussed and agreed upon with the organizer of the biennial.

Required Documents

1. Project Proposal

- a. Title / Philosophy / Description / Production Process / Materials / Method / Dimensions / Schedule for Creation and Installation
- b. Visual materials, such as sketches, digital models, or 3D simulations
- c. Budget plan (incl. the costs of design, conceptualization, production, personnel, material, tool, freight, workshop, installation/dismantling, venue restoration, travel, as well as board and lodging)
- d. Project schedule

*Given the relative inaccessibility of Matsu as an outlying island and the susceptibility of the ferry's schedule to the weather, it is suggested that the materials and equipment needed for the project, as well as the work, be delivered at least 10 days in advance to facilitate the following operations on the island.

*We encourage sustainable thinking by suggesting the priority use of recyclable materials or locally sourced resources according to the project's needs. The artists shall consider the subsequent use and disposal of the works after the end of the biennial, and meanwhile assess the relevant carbon footprints to mitigate the environmental impact.

2. Artist CV and Portfolio (maximum six pages, A4 in PDF)

- a. Artist CV
If you apply as a team, please provide a brief introduction to the team. If you apply as a newly founded group, please provide a compilation of the members' CVs.
- b. Portfolio

Please provide 3-5 previous works with brief descriptions of concepts and content.

3. Motivation Letter (maximum one page, A4)

In addition to introducing yourself, please explain why your work fits the theme of the 3rd Matsu Biennial and why you would like to participate in the open call for international proposals.

Proposal Format

- The total submission of the required documents should be set in A4 format for printing, maximum 10 pages.
- The electronic file format should be PDF, JPEG, or MP4, and the total file size should not exceed 1GB.
- All the submitted documents should be in Chinese or English.

*Please feel free to write to us if you have any questions about the submission process.

Proposal Submission

Proposals should be submitted by email.

- Proposals should be emailed to “proposal.matsubiennial@gmail.com.”
- Email subject: “MB2025 proposal_ Artist name_ Project name”
- If you submit the files in the cloud, please make sure to give us access to them.
- Once the project proposal is submitted, no further changes or adjustments can be made to the content of the proposal.

Selection Procedure

1. Selection Principle: The subject and content of the submitted project proposal should reflect the biennial’s genius loci and vision for exchange, together with due consideration of the applicant’s experience and discourse.
2. Up to four project proposals will be selected according to the selection principle. The final number of proposals selected will be contingent on the actual situation. In the event of withdrawals of successful applicants, the other candidates will fill the vacancy in the proper order.
3. Selection Committee: A jury of 5-7 Curatorial Advisory Committee members and international curators will evaluate the submitted proposals. Five or more jury members can convene relevant meetings and conduct the selection procedure based on the actual proposal selection items. The jury members are not allowed to extend personal favors so as to ensure the objectivity and fairness of the selection. They are not allowed to review the proposals pertinent to them, either. In order to maintain the independence and objectivity of the selection meetings and to respect the privacy of the applicants, the selection procedure is not open to the public.
4. The list of the jury members will be released in phases on the official website and fan page of the biennial.

5. Selection Process
 - a. Preliminary Selection: eligibility review in written form – conducted by the submission working group.
 - b. Final Selection: review of the written proposals – the jury members convene selection meetings.
 - c. Shortlist: interviews and comprehensive discussions in the selection meetings.
6. The final results of the selection will be confirmed and announced on the official website of the Matsu Biennial (<https://matsubiennial.tw/>) by the end of March 2025. The successful applicants will be informed individually by email. No further notice will be given to unsuccessful applicants and those who have not entered the selection process for any reason.
7. The successful applicants shall sign the agreement with the Matsu Biennial not later than April 2025 and shall complete the proposed works as agreed.

Artists' Rights and Obligations

- The finalists are required to attend the online/face-to-face shortlist meeting scheduled in early 2025 (date and time to be announced) to further discuss the details of the proposals and the modes of in-situ creation with the Curatorial Advisory Committee.
- The artists shall recruit their own assistants and teams for production. The artists are responsible for the board and lodging as well as transport arrangements of all team members (including the artists themselves). The artists/teams shall prepare their own creation paraphernalia.
- The organizer will provide the successful applicants with suggestions about transportation and accommodation along with creative assistance according to the needs of their projects.
- If the artist fails to complete the project due to personal reasons, or if the result differs widely from the one proposed or fails to meet the basic requirements of the proposal, the organizer, after confirming that the project is unable to be publicly exhibited, will reduce the amount of the financial support for the project according to the agreement in proportion to the extent of completion, or will disqualify the artist and recover the sum incurred by the production and creative activities.
- Ownership of the work: The artist has the moral rights over the work. The finished work shall be exhibited for at least 73 days (2025/9/5-2025/11/16) at the specified location. The organizer is entitled to use and publish the images of the work, including but not limited to the rights to research, photograph, publish, publicize, and promote the work, as well as to authorize the development of derivative merchandise.
- In the event of a typhoon during the production, the artist must take measures to suspend the work or move away from the site. In the event of force majeure or man-made damage during the exhibition period, the organizer will coordinate the maintenance of the works and may ask the artists to assist in the restoration of the works in order to manage a smooth exhibition.
- The successful applicants shall deal with visa, travel, and medical insurance matters and pay the

resultant expenses on their own, and shall not ask the organizer to tackle these matters and cover the expenses for them.

Contact

Email address: proposal.matsubiennial@gmail.com (The submission working group, Matsu Biennial)

1. If you have any questions about the “The 3rd Matsu Biennial Open Call for International Proposals,” please send them to the above email address. The organizer will not provide telephone or other means of contact to answer individual questions.
2. All latest updates and adjustments regarding “The 3rd Matsu Biennial Open Call for International Proposals,” will be announced on the official website and fan page of the Matsu Biennial. For more details, please visit <https://matsubiennial.tw/>.
3. The Q&A related to the open call will be compiled and posted on the official website and fan page of the Matsu Biennial.
 - 1st-round Q&A: The deadline for email receipt is 2024/11/29, and the questions will be answered by 2024/12/06.
 - 2nd-round Q&A: The deadline for email receipt is 2025/01/03, and the questions will be answered by 2025/01/09.

Major Dates

- Deadline for Proposals: **17:00 (GMT+8), 24 January 2025 (Fri.)**
- Announcement of Results: **Before 17:00 (GMT+8), 31 March 2025 (Mon.)** (contingent on the actual review situation)
- Completion of the Works: Before 20 August 2025
- Event Period: From 5 September to 16 November 2025

Appendixes

1. Venue Information

- a. Nangan: Stronghold 26, Stronghold 53, and the Meishi Military Brothel
- b. Beigan: Stronghold 40, and unused residential property
- c. Xiju: The route from Stronghold 32 to Stronghold 35, the Zhongzheng Gate, and the Tianwo Settlement

2. Copyright License Agreement