

KUAN YIN
**Accessing the Power of
the Divine Feminine**

Daniela Schenker

Hardcover

6 x 7 ½"

208 Pages

33 watercolor images

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Creating Your Kuan Yin Altar

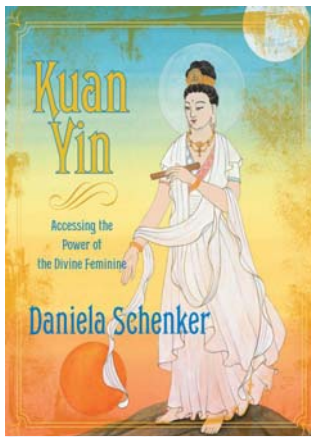
An altar is an important power spot in your home, a place for you to contemplate and honor the divine. An altar devoted to Kuan Yin embodies boundless compassion and provides protection for you and your loved ones.

In private homes, there are generally two main types of altars. One can be thought of as a “guardian” altar. It faces the main door, and the figurines upon it protect the entryway to the home. They welcome your human visitors as well as your personal guardian angels, and the positive energy they radiate counteracts any subtle harmful energies that may enter, such as negative thought projections or unfriendly intentions. The other kind of altar is the “family” altar, which is usually placed in a more enclosed space; ideally, it’s in a separate room where people can spend time in meditation or prayer.

The ancient Chinese art and science of Feng Shui is key to creating your Kuan Yin altar. Feng shui brings harmony and balance into your environment, which is especially important when creating a sacred space. The principles of feng shui are complex, and if you are new to this discipline some of my suggestions may surprise you. It may help to think about it this way: you will be controlling the way energy flows around your altar, ensuring that the energy of the items upon it, as well as that of your spiritual practice there, is preserved and concentrated.

Following are some guidelines for creating your altar. The layout of your available space may make it difficult to implement them all, and that’s fine; simply incorporate as many as you can, and be assured that you will create a very powerful space.

- ❖ It is best to place your “guardian” altar just off to one side rather than directly in front of the main door. Strong Qi energy (life force energy) enters there; this is like a form of energetic attack. Be sure that there is a solid wall or a divider behind it to form a firm backing.
- ❖ If the layout of your space is such that you have no choice but to place your altar in a direct line from a door, put a small table or a plant between it and the door, a little distance in front of it. This will slow down the incoming flow of Qi.
- ❖ When positioning statues or figurines on the altar table, always put them a bit closer to the back wall than to the front of the altar.
- ❖ You might enjoy adding the element of light to your altar. Your light source can illuminate it around the clock, like the sanctuary lamp or eternal flame of the Christian tradition. A small, soft light is best.
- ❖ Do not place your altar in the bedroom. It’s perfectly fine to have decorative figurines in the room, perhaps on a bookshelf or a table. But an altar, a space that contains beloved statues, candles, incense, and other items that are meaningful to you, is spiritually charged. It is said that it will attract wandering spirits, whose energies may affect the quality of your sleep.



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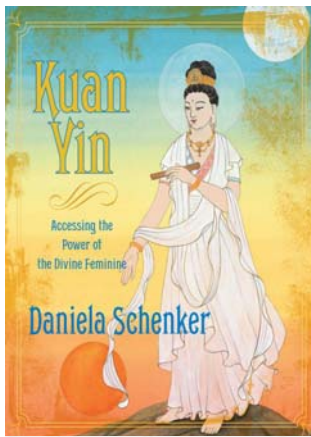
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- ❖ Keep your altar clean and well maintained; this reflects purity of mind.
- ❖ Your altar needs to be grounded. Never set it on a shelf above a door, for example, where people will pass under it. It should be placed on a solid table or in a special cupboard.
- ❖ There should be no heavy ceiling beams in the altar area, nor should the altar be placed in the space below a staircase. Both of these large structures will suppress its energy.
- ❖ Make sure that there are no sharp corners or other pointed structures aiming toward your altar; according to feng shui principles, they will “attack” it.
- ❖ Avoid placing your altar near drainage pipes or an enclosed chimney. The flow of energy from these structures has the effect of disturbing and draining the positive energy you are creating.
- ❖ Also avoid setting it up opposite a bathroom or any other space that emits stagnant or unclean energies; do not place it against a bathroom wall.
- ❖ The altar should not be placed immediately next to a window. The concentrated Qi energy it will contain escapes faster through windows.
- ❖ Altars made from wood or other natural materials are best, and most beautiful. Plastic altars should be avoided, as plastic has very low energy.
- ❖ Ideally, the altar should follow traditional auspicious measurements. You can find details in many textbooks on feng shui. The feng shui “ruler” is $16^{15/16}$ inches long; one approach you can take is to build your altar in multiples of this length. Eight other auspicious measurements for tables and cupboards are: 25½ inches, 27 inches, 32½ inches, 42 inches, 44 inches, 52 inches, 61 inches, 78 inches, and 85 inches. These can be any dimension of your altar: height, width, or depth.
- ❖ Your altar can be very simple, or you can adorn it with an abundance of beautiful ornaments—it is entirely up to you. Follow your intuition and your heart. Avoid including any large mirrored surfaces, though, as the energy of statues or figurines will be disrupted by their reflective qualities.
- ❖ Because an altar often contains incense and candles, it includes the element of fire. If your altar has these things, do not place it near an aquarium or a big fountain; there will be a clash between the elements of fire and water.
- ❖ According to the Feng Shui system of the Eight Life Situations, the northwest direction is attributed to helpful people and mentors. Hence, an area in the northwest part of your room or home is ideal; there, your altar will receive enhanced support from the celestial beings.

Statues and Figurines

Just as feng shui principles can be used to create the best possible altar space, there are principles that apply to the statues or figurines that you will place upon it as well. Here are a few tips.



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Ideally, your statue should be made from wood or stone. Wood represents growth and creativity. Jade is a gemstone that is specifically attributed to Kuan Yin, and it has strong protective power. Quartz crystal and amethyst also make wonderful spiritual statues. White or light-colored marble represents purity and solidity, while white porcelain is a symbol of innocence. Ceramic and porcelain figures can be fragile, so make sure that they have a wide base or pedestal for extra stability.

Do not put a statue that is obviously damaged on your altar—one that has big cracks or chipped areas, for example. It will be neither beautiful nor powerful.

Place your statues at eye level or higher. Remember, they represent celestial beings who gaze compassionately down upon us.

Blessing Your Altar Statues and Figurines

A statue is even more powerful once it has been blessed and “activated” by a priest, a master, or another person of high spiritual rank. You may ask a temple priest to bless your Kuan Yin statue or figurine. He will do this by dipping a willow branch in holy water and sprinkling the water upon it. Some priests or spiritual masters will chant a prayer and softly blow this energy toward the statue in a blessing. After the blessing ceremony, wrap the statue carefully in a cloth, take it home, and put it on your altar. Think ahead about where you will place it: it is best if you do not move it once it’s in position.

Another way to activate your statue is to briefly touch it at the crown, the third eye, both eyes, the heart, and the base. In this way, the eyes of the figurine are opened spiritually. Some sensitive people are able to perceive a glow from these activated eyes. You can also touch these same areas with a dot of vermilion paint, but this should only be done on materials that the rich, red color cannot penetrate—glazed porcelain, for example.

In my travels, I have found several kinds of Kuan Yin altars. You may wish to adopt one of these approaches when you create your own space for Kuan Yin.

The Basic Elements of a Chinese Altar

In Chinese or Taoist tradition, the altar usually has three levels, and statues are placed upon it in a certain hierarchy. At the top level, Kuan Yin, Amitabha, and other bodhisattvas find their place. The middle level is dedicated to the ancestors—it contains special plates upon which their names are engraved. The lower level is reserved for the Earth God. Fresh fruits, candles, small lotus-shaped lamps, and incense burners may also be placed on the altar. To avoid fire hazards, small electric lamps are frequently used in lieu of candles, and electric candles and incense burners are available as well.

The Basic Elements of a Buddhist Altar

With this kind of altar, the statue to be worshipped stands upon a table or a cupboard shelf. A *thangka* (a picture on a scroll) showing a buddha or bodhisattva hangs on the wall, either above it or beside it. Seven small cups filled with seven offerings are placed in front of the statue. Cups contain clear water, scented water, flowers, and incense. One cup serves as an oil lamp, and one contains food—for example, sweets. The last cup holds a white snail, a symbol of divine music.