

LIMITED EDITION

CHENGYU

成語

FOR CHANGE

The background features several large, expressive black ink brush strokes. A prominent, thick, curved stroke sweeps across the lower half of the page. To its right, a smaller, more delicate stroke curves upwards. In the upper right, a brush tip is visible, and another stroke extends downwards. The overall aesthetic is traditional Chinese ink wash painting.

CLIMATE
ZINE

DECEMBER 2025



CHENGYU

成語

FOR CHANGE

SPONSORS

ChangemakerXchange &
Florida Community Innovation (FCI)

LAUNCH

Miami Beach Regional Library

**ABOUT
FCI**



floridainnovation.org/handbook

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LETTER

from the editors

Thank you for picking up this first edition of Chengyu for Change, whether you joined us at the Miami Beach Regional Library for the workshop or discovered this zine afterward through your community. We are happy it reached you.

This project began when the three of us, Caroline, Ryn, and Annika, met through ChangemakerXchange, a global network that brings young people together to work on social and environmental issues. During the Changemakers for the Planet program, we began talking about how climate change creates challenges that cross borders and cultures. We wanted to explore how art and storytelling could help people connect while thinking about our shared environmental future. Those early conversations eventually became this zine.

A central part of this project is the Chengyu (成语) featured throughout these pages. Chengyu are traditional Chinese idioms that often come from stories, histories, poems, or philosophical texts. They usually contain four characters. Each one carries a complete idea in a very small space. Some Chengyu offer moral lessons, some describe emotions or relationships, and many draw on images from the natural world.

Because they are concise and metaphorical, they invite personal interpretation. We saw them as a meaningful way to spark reflection about climate, nature, and culture.

All three of us came to the Chinese language in different ways. One of us through family, one through study, and one through curiosity and lived experience. Many of the artists in this zine have similarly varied connections to the language. Some are native speakers, some are heritage learners, and some are encountering Chengyu for the first time. We wanted this project to honor those different entry points. You do not need one specific background to engage with cultural wisdom, especially when the goal is shared learning.

We also want to acknowledge Florida Community Innovation (FCI), our fiscal sponsor. FCI is a youth-led nonprofit in Florida that supports community-centered creative and civic projects. Their support helped us bring the workshop to life and make space for artists to share their work.

Hosting this gathering at a public library felt important to us. Libraries are true public spaces that welcome everyone. They encourage people to learn together in ways that feel welcoming. That is the energy we hope you feel in this zine.

As you read, we hope you sense the care and curiosity behind every contribution. Once again, whether you joined us in person or are encountering this zine on your own, thank you for being part of this shared exploration.

With warmth and gratitude,

Ryn, Caroline & Annika



The chengyu featured on this page is 后知后觉 (hòu zhī hòu jué) – “Late to know, late to feel” (realizing the importance of something after the fact—like environmental loss)

Ryn Delpapa

Caroline Nickerson

Annika Luo



林睿仁



倪若莲

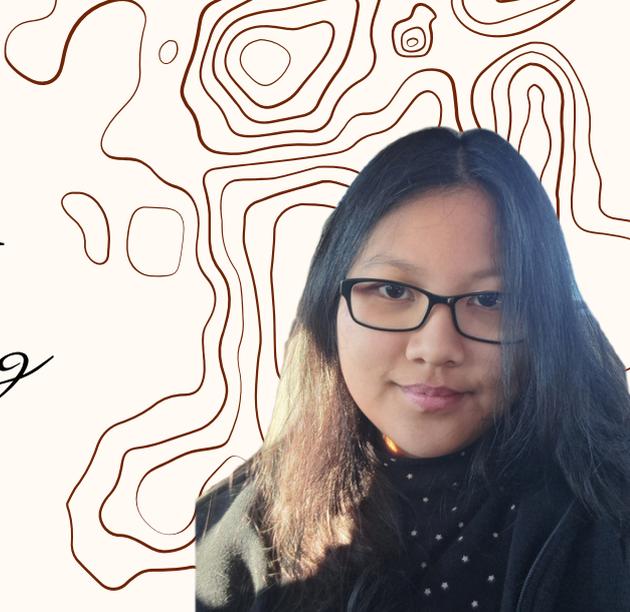


骆瑞玉

成語

ART + REFLECTIONS

OLIVIA Zhang



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Olivia is an undergraduate student at the University of Florida studying geography and data science. She creates digital artwork that reflects data about the world and the complicated emotions interconnected with our identities and experiences.

Growing up in coastal cities, she knows the reality of the climate crisis, yet found the massive amounts of data surrounding climate change and its impacts to be overwhelming. The creativity and flexibility of digital art allows her to better process environmental data—emphasizing both the urgency of the climate crisis and the hope for collaborative, equitable, and intersectional solutions. Art is her way of expressing these emotions at once—strength and urgency, fear and hope.

WHY CHINESE? IN OLIVIA'S WORDS

Art is my form of expressing the intersections of my experiences, passions, and Chinese-American identity. Having grown up speaking Mandarin Chinese with family, I have always been inspired by the intricacies and history behind the language.

OLIVIA'S
LINKEDIN



[linkedin.com/in/via-zhang](https://www.linkedin.com/in/via-zhang)

OLIVIA'S
PORTFOLIO



via-zhang.github.io

WATER DROPS CAN PIERCE STONE

IN OLIVIA'S WORDS

水滴石穿 (also written as 滴水穿石) translates to water drops can pierce stone. Collective action, no matter how small, has the power to create real change. The artwork, titled "Coalescence" (the process of coming together to form a larger whole), includes a self portrait paired with a data visualization of Apalachicola River in Florida.

Coalescence happens when multiple water drops combine to form a larger droplet, eventually becoming strong enough to fall to the ground as rain. It also happens when people come together to fight for climate justice, lifting and supporting each other as a community.

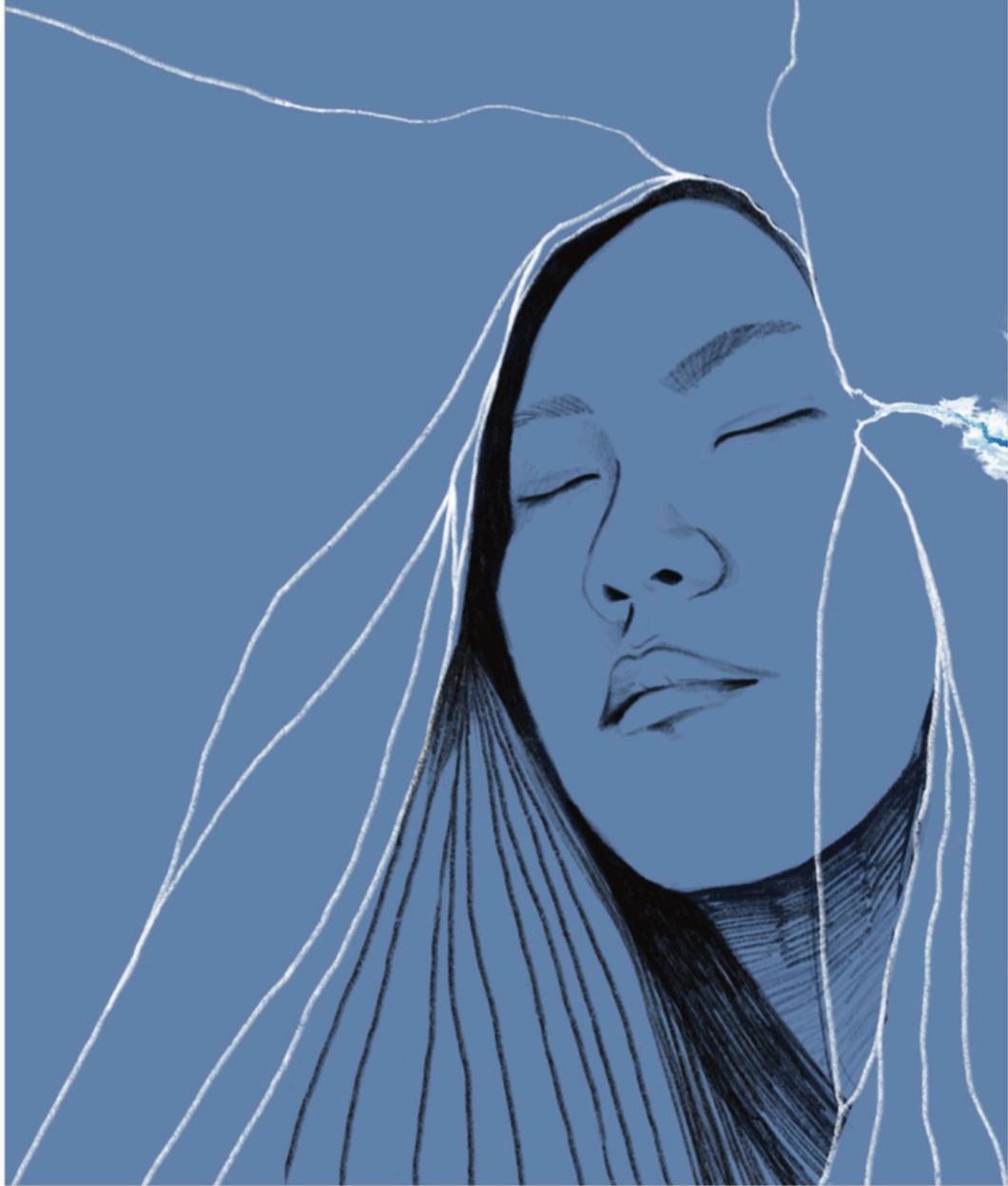
The data for the river visualization comes from the NOAA Office for Coastal Management.



OLIVIA ZHANG

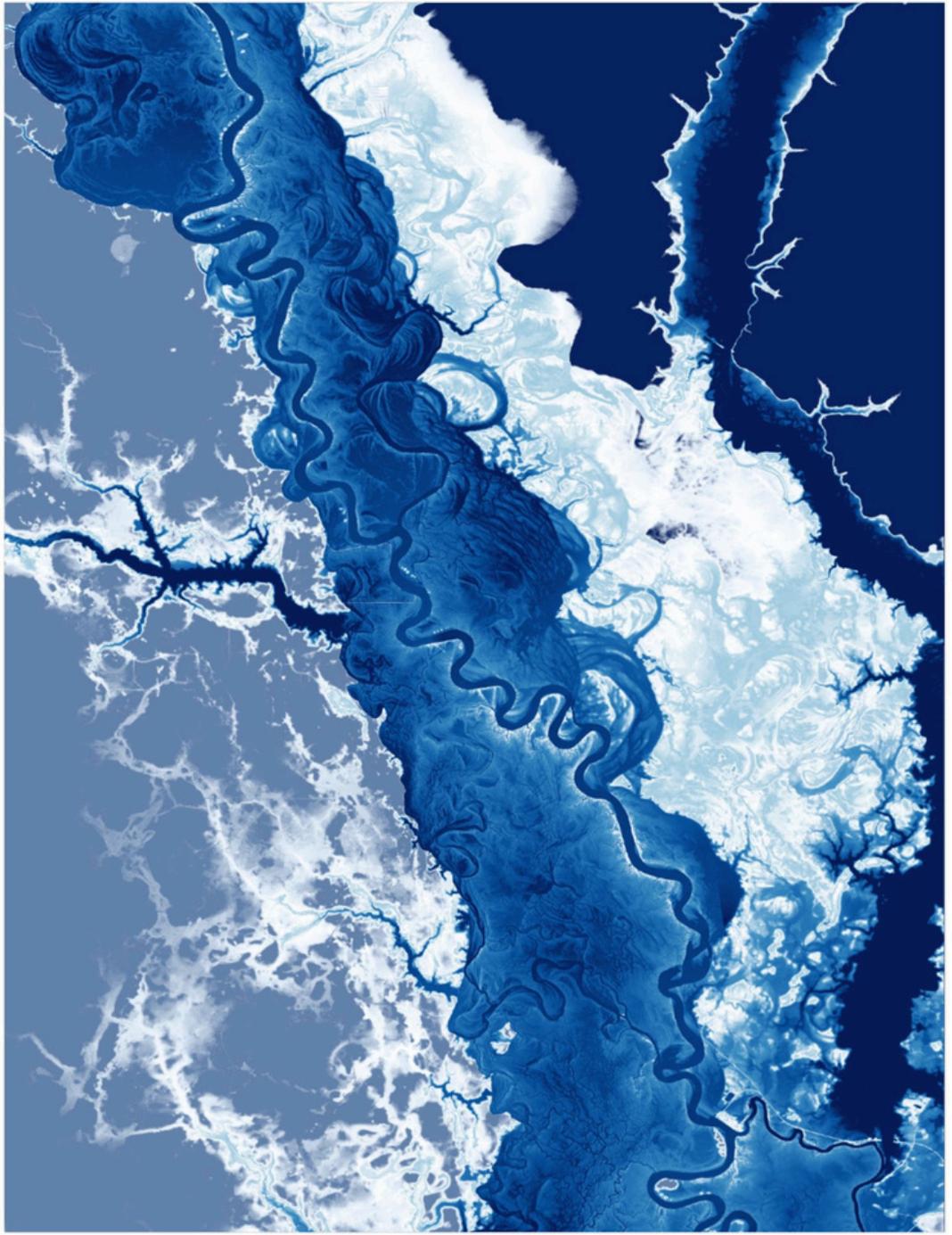
Expressing Emotions Through Art

滴水穿石



OLIVIA ZHANG

Expressing Emotions Through Art



OLIVIA ZHANG

Expressing Emotions Through Art

GLORIA LI & *Isabella Dinelli*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Gloria Li was born and raised on Florida's Atlantic Coast, where she developed a passion for nature that led her to work in ocean conservation throughout undergrad and eventually move to Washington, D.C. to work in environmental/renewable energy policy. After 5 years in D.C., she just moved back home to Florida and is reconnecting with the wilderness: mermaiding, sailing, paddling, scuba diving, painting (landscapes, seascapes), and of course... exploring Florida's springs!

Isabella Dinelli is a Japanese American artist and medical student whose work reflects a lifelong connection to nature. Raised on the Gulf Coast and in Sasebo, Japan, she began by volunteering with the Florida project Panhandle Manatee, raising awareness to protect manatees, and now uses nature-inspired art to explore how environment and health are intertwined.

Gloria and Isabella met and became friends during undergrad at the University of Florida – Go Gators!



ISABELLA'S
PORTFOLIO



isabelladinelli.art/work

DRIPPING WATER WEARS AWAY STONE

IN GLORIA'S WORDS

This Chengyu is traditionally interpreted to mean that small actions, applied consistently over time, lead to great successes. And it is true that persistence pays off in any new feat that we tackle, whether it be amateur freediving or underwater photography... But lately, I've been more drawn to the phrase's non-human, naturalistic origin. I have not been able to stop thinking about the teachings of water.

This intrigue spurred a recent trip to one of Florida's beautiful first magnitude springs with my friend and photographer Isabella Dinelli. Tracing the path of water is like reading the handwriting of the universe. What story has it written into the rocks, tracing the path of gravity and other forces through limestone, over the last 20 million years? And what role do humans play in the story?



GLORIA LI & ISABELLA DINELLI

The Wisdom of Nature

IN GLORIA'S WORDS

America's environmental record – whether it's regarding carbon emissions, land use, energy production, or conservation – is oftentimes compared to that of China's. Growing up as Chinese American, and having visited my grandparents in Shenzhen many times, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of development and technological advancements in both China and the United States. I've been curious about the paths these two giants will trace across world history, especially in regards to global environmental challenges such as habitat destruction and climate change. I have hope that they can still wield the dual powers of cooperation and competition to approach these challenges effectively, for the good of all people.



GLORIA LI & ISABELLA DINELLI

The Wisdom of Nature



IN ISABELLA'S WORDS

The chengyu 滴水穿石 is a physical law. Water shapes stone through abrasion, pressure, and time. In Florida springs, that law is visible: minerals smooth limestone, buoyancy redistributes weight, hydrostatic pressure slows the lungs, and refracted light bends the body into shapes no artist could plan. Underwater, photography becomes collaboration rather than control: you wait for breath, for current, for a beam of light to pass cleanly through the surface. Each image records that dialogue between body and environment, reflecting the lesson I see in medicine and in nature: change is quiet, cumulative, and born of small forces repeated over time.

IN GLORIA'S WORDS

I'm a native English speaker. My grandparents and mom spoke Mandarin Chinese at home growing up, and I've taken a few classes in it, but my skills have deteriorated with disuse over time (especially after my grandparents moved back to China). Like many second-generation Chinese Americans, I was always better at speaking Chinese than reading and writing it. And the really interesting part is thinking in Chinese... there are still some phrases or concepts that I can only truly articulate and understand in Chinese, rather than in English.

GLORIA LI & ISABELLA DINELLI

The Wisdom of Nature

YUDING

Lin

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Yuding is a senior professional photographer. With a foundation in photojournalism, he has developed a distinctive practice that bridges documentary precision with an artistic sensibility. Yuding specializes in portraiture, public relations photography, architectural photography, and culinary photography. He created thousands of images that captured pivotal moments in civil aviation, from international airshows and new fleet inaugurations to historic global events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games. His work has been widely published across media platforms, establishing him as a trusted visual storyteller in both corporate and cultural contexts.

WHY CHINESE? IN YUDING'S WORDS

What excites me most about Chinese language and culture is its profound sense of continuity — the way stories, symbols, and emotions are carried through time, always evolving yet deeply rooted in tradition. As a photographer, I am inspired by this timeless rhythm. I see photography as a visual language that, much like Chinese calligraphy, balances structure and expression, order and emotion. Through my lens, I strive to capture the harmony between people and place, heritage and modernity — revealing how Chinese culture continues to inspire creativity, resilience, and beauty in an ever-changing world.



YUDING'S
PORTFOLIO

starchampsphoto.com

高山流水

HIGH MOUNTAINS
& FLOWING WATER

自由自在

FREE & UNRESTRAINED

IN YUDING'S WORDS

High Mountains and Flowing Water (高山流水) and Free and Unrestrained (自由自在) together express a deep harmony between nature and the human spirit. Through my photography, I seek to capture the quiet dialogue between landscapes and emotions — from the misty mountains of Guizhou, China, to the open shores of Southern California, to the majestic Twelve Apostles in Australia. Each image reflects a state of balance and freedom, where nature's grandeur meets the soul's serenity.

YUDING LIN

Harmony with Nature



Twelve Apostles, Australia



Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong

YUDING LIN

Harmony with Nature

Waterfall in Guizhou



YUDING LIN

Harmony with Nature

MARGARITA

Johnson

MARGARITA'S
LINKEDIN



[linkedin.com/in/margarita-johnson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/margarita-johnson)

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Margarita Johnson is a Russian American psychology student. At the University of Florida, she leads the Tau Sigma National Honor Society, which helps transfer students thrive as they navigate new academic and social environments.

Her creative and research practice extends beyond campus. With Florida Community Innovation, a civic-technology nonprofit, she contributes to community storytelling and public-facing cultural work as a lead policy researcher for the THRIVE initiative, a partnership with local governments, businesses, and nonprofits working to envision a stronger and more connected Central Florida. With Tanit XR, a nonprofit digital-heritage project, she helps document and preserve endangered sites in Tunisia, transforming archaeological memory into accessible narrative form.

For Chengyu for Change, Margarita collaborated with a close friend from China to explore the proverb “塞翁失马，焉知非福.” Her piece intertwines Russian and American experiences with Chinese perspectives, reflecting on how loss reorients us and how renewal often arrives from unexpected directions.

She plans to pursue graduate study in Museum Studies, with the goal of creating exhibition spaces that bring people into conversation across cultures and perspectives.

IN MARGARITA'S WORDS

This artwork speaks to me personally, bridging my Russian upbringing and my life in the United States.

Growing up in Russia, I was surrounded by stories and landscapes that reflected endurance, long winters giving way to spring, and people finding strength in patience and renewal.

In the United States, I've seen a similar spirit expressed differently: a belief in reinvention, in turning challenges into opportunities, in beginning again after loss.

The proverb "When the old man lost his horse, who could know it was not a blessing?" unites these worlds for me.

It captures a universal ecological truth that transcends language and culture: nature and life move in cycles of loss and renewal.

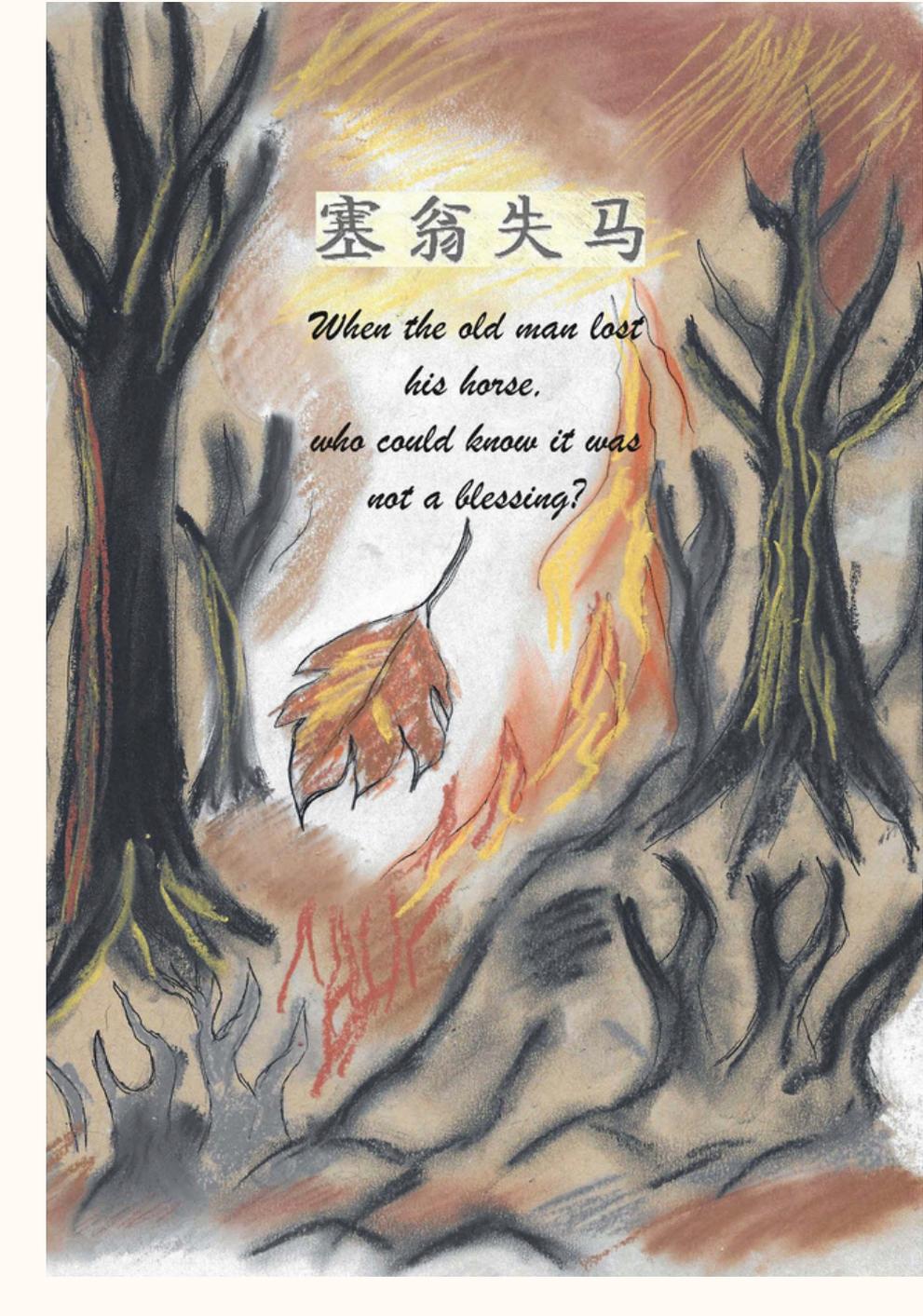
A forest fire or a personal setback can lead to unexpected growth.

Across continents, this wisdom invites us to trust resilience: the Russian sense of quiet endurance meeting the American faith in transformation.

Both remind me that renewal, whether in nature or in ourselves, is always possible.

MARGARITA JOHNSON

Reframing Loss

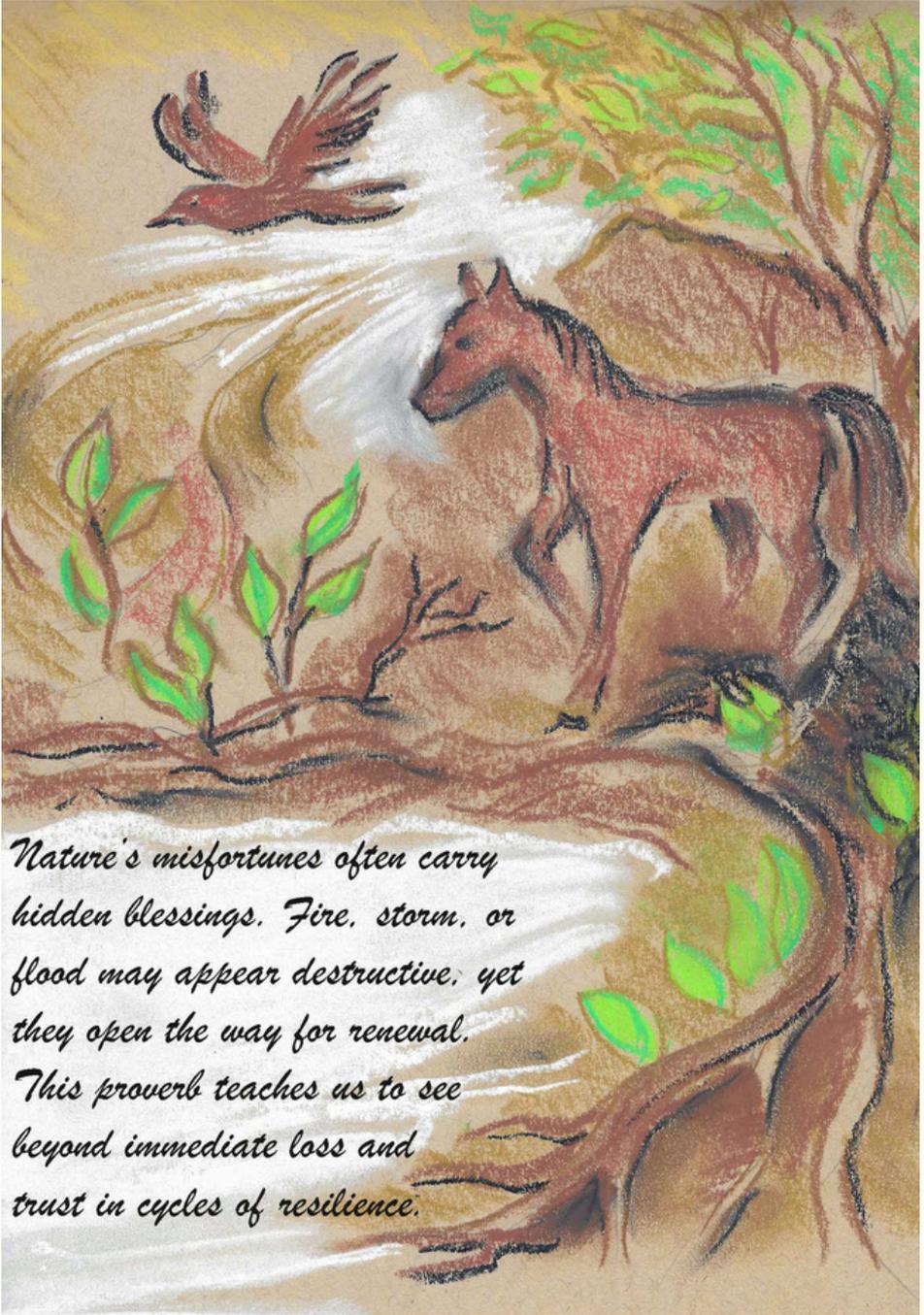


塞翁失马

*When the old man lost
his horse,
who could know it was
not a blessing?*

MARGARITA JOHNSON

Reframing Loss



Nature's misfortunes often carry hidden blessings. Fire, storm, or flood may appear destructive, yet they open the way for renewal. This proverb teaches us to see beyond immediate loss and trust in cycles of resilience.

MARGARITA JOHNSON

Reframing Loss

成語

FACILITATION GUIDE

QUESTIONS

to ponder



ryndelpapa.com

In this section, we share questions excerpted from a facilitation guide one of our editors, Ryn Delpapa, created for our event in Miami. We invite you to reflect on the featured questions and themes with your community.

ECOLOGICAL WISDOM ACROSS CULTURES

1. What is one thing your family or culture taught you about respecting nature? Whether it's a specific memory, saying, or practice. How do you see this wisdom today?
2. Imagine you could share that nature lesson to someone from a different country. How could that wisdom be shared, and what do you think they might teach you back?
3. Think about the elders in your life (family, community, or culture). What is one wisdom they know about living with nature that the younger generation may have forgotten?



CREATIVITY HEALS. COMMUNITY THRIVES. PLANET TRANSFORMS.

ARTECOMETS.COM | [@ARTECOMETS](https://twitter.com/ARTECOMETS)
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CHENGYU AS A LINK BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

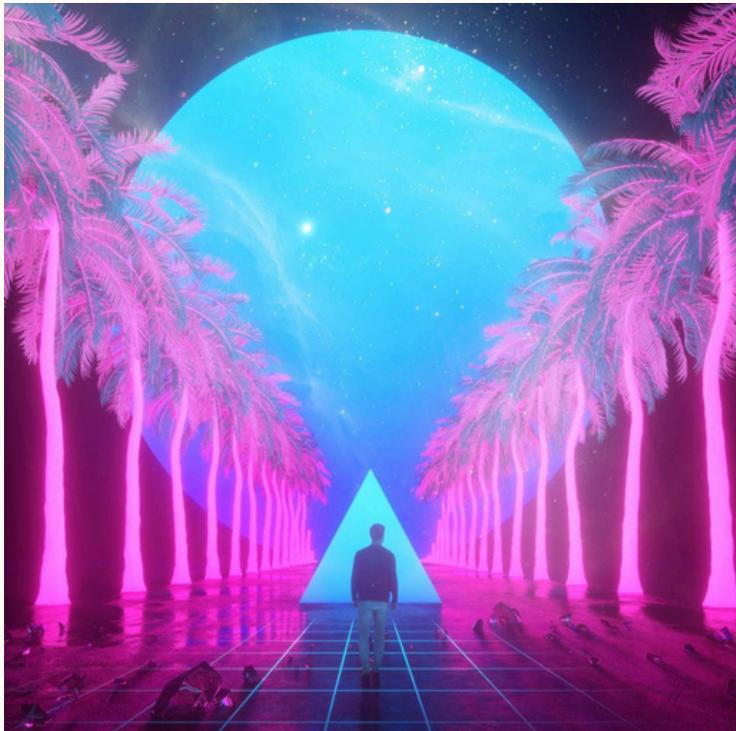
1. Imagine you have to create a four-word phrase that captures the most important lesson about climate change. What would your four words be? Why did you choose these?
2. Language shapes how we think. Some languages have specific words for things English doesn't (like "the smell of rain on dry earth"). What is a word or phrase from another language you wish existed in English, especially about nature?
3. If you could send one sentence of wisdom to people 100 years in the future, what would you tell them? What do you hope they remember from our time?

HOW ART OPENS SPACE FOR CLIMATE REFLECTION

1. Think about a piece of art (painting, song, film, dance—anything!) that made you feel something about nature or the environment. What was it, and what did it make you feel? Why was art better than just reading facts?
2. Some people feel scared or sad when thinking about climate change. How can art help us feel these big feelings without getting stuck in them? Share an example if you have one.
3. Imagine you're creating art about climate change for someone who doesn't care about the environment. What would you make to help them care? What would make them actually pay attention?

LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH NATURE

1. Think about the weather and seasons where you live or grew up. What has changed in your lifetime? Share one specific thing you've noticed.
2. Miami is surrounded by water and faces rising seas. What is your personal relationship with water? (Ocean, rain, rivers, pools—any water counts!) How does water make you feel?
3. If you had to explain climate change using only your own experiences (not news or science), what would you say? What have you seen, felt, or noticed yourself?



“Miami” From Everyday by Mike Winkelmann, CC BY

成語

CLOSING ESSAY

SEE SOMETHING STRANGE, NO LONGER STRANGE

CAROLINE NICKERSON

Essay

I first heard “jiàn guài bù guài” when I spent a summer at Tsinghua, in Bei Jing. It immediately resonated with me: truly, it is possible to get used to anything. I think of it now in reference to climate change. There are certain impacts that will be irreversible, that we will have to become accustomed to. But what can we save?

I’m a born-and-raised Floridian, and despite love for my state, I live in fear that a category five hurricane could wipe out everything I know and care about.

As climate change brings about “global weirding” writ large – worsening natural disasters, raising our sea levels, and making our weather just, well, weird – I often focus on the resilience adaptations we can implement locally, responding to inevitable changes. We can build homes that can withstand hurricane winds, plant mangroves to anchor the shoreline in place and soak up sea water, care for trees that cool off our communities and lessen our risk of heat-related illness. But what about mitigating the issue entirely?



How can we stop the problem of climate change, rather than just respond to it?

Climate change is the epitome of an “think global, act local” predicament. In our neighborhoods, we can adapt to what’s already here, but we need wisdom from around the world for big, bold solutions that aren’t just reacting to the immediate localized problem, that try to address global systems upstream.

That’s one reason why I was so excited to be part of this project: I personally feel defeated by and scared of the climate impacts I see in my community, and I’m hoping that with intercultural art, we’ll have the wherewithal to dream. Maybe the new conversations we have together could propose solutions I’ve never before contemplated.

So: let’s start the conversation. What wisdom can you share? What can we imagine together?



顺其自然

CLOSING CHENGYU

顺其自然 (shùn qí zì rán) means “go with the flow” or “let things follow their natural course.”

It suggests not forcing outcomes, allowing events to unfold as they naturally do, and finding peace in that process.



Cover Art © Annika Luo

annikaluo.wixsite.com/portfolio

Flow, 2018