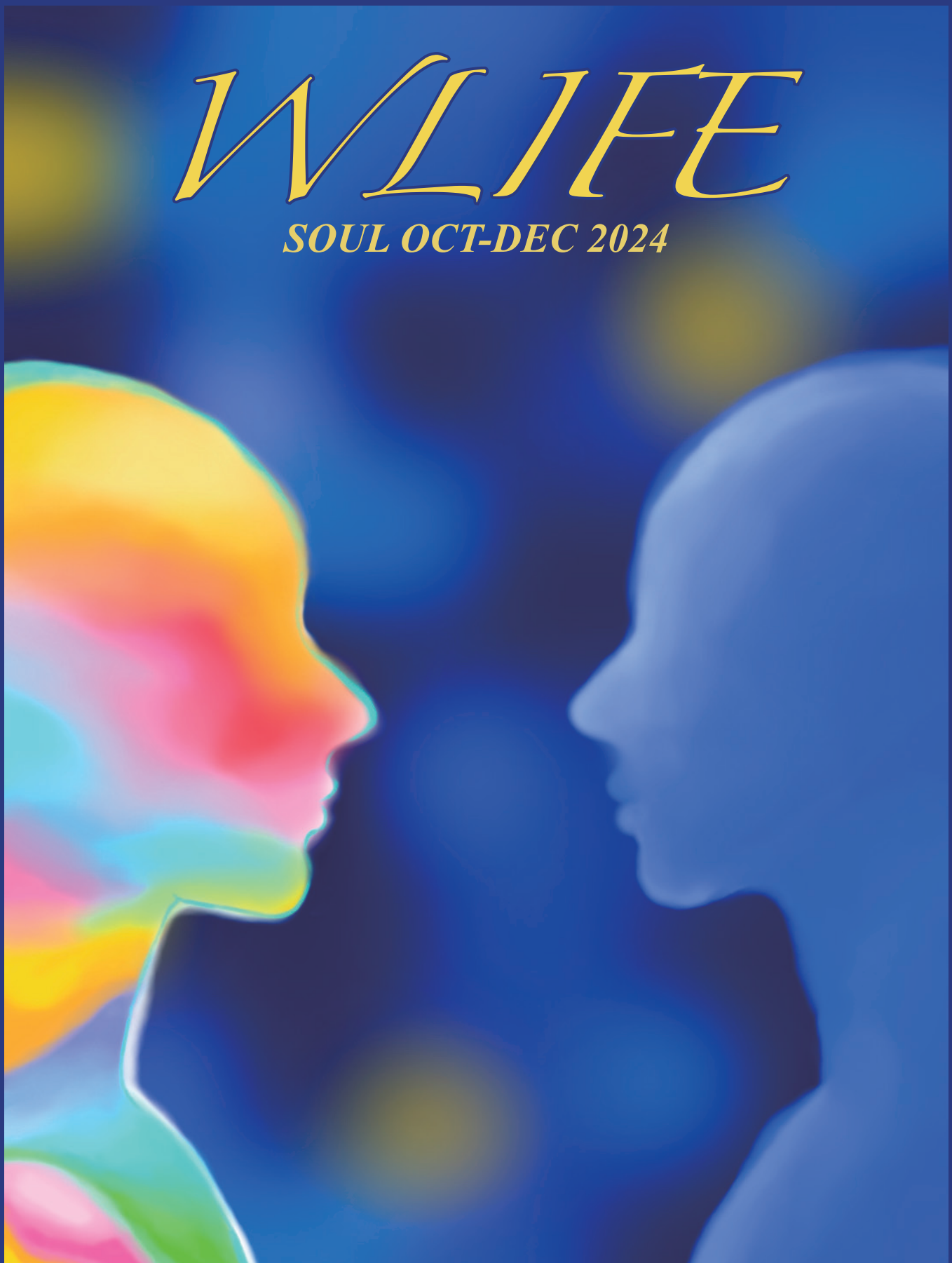
WLIFE

SOUL OCT-DEC 2024



Whisper of Souls
Cover by Olivia Tang



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Dear Readers,

Dear Readers,

"There was kind of a relief in having your own smallness laid bare before you, and I realized something: spirals grow infinitely small the farther you follow them inward, but they also grow infinitely large the farther you follow them out." —— Turtles All the Way Down, John Green

Souls, whether we like to admit it or not, are always on the back of our minds. We don't know (yet) whether they are realistically existent, and sometimes we don't even have a clear understanding of our own souls. But even then, through the turns of seasons, the scent of freshly baked bread, and the caught eye of a familiar friend, we are constantly reminded of its figurative presence. Thus, in the spirit of the new school year, your word of the season is "Soul".

This issue features wide-ranging artworks, poems, stories, and journals that beautifully exhibit the delicate and kaleidoscopic souls populating our school. We hope that through these strokes and sentences, you are able to find a comforting echo in your own perspective.

The season we have ahead of us isn't guaranteed to be easy. We may run into issues, no matter professional or personal, that challenge us and weaken our souls. But no matter what, remember that you come out of everything stronger than before.

Every time anything happens, the world turns into a more interesting place. May your soul have the luxury to bear witness to that.

Thank you, and enjoy.

With Love,
Emmie Zhang
Editor in Chief

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SOUL

OCT-DEC 2024

WLSA SHANGHAI ACADEMY
JOURNAL

01 Literature

Call of the Night

Author: G10 Phi Jason Wang
Designer: G11 Gamma Alice Qin

16 year old slips out beneath the moon,
To flee the weight of day too soon.
Society's rules, the chains of light,
He breaks them all in search of night.

With quiet steps, he walks alone,
The streets his realm, the dark his throne.
Forbidden beer, a daring quest,
He seeks the taste, the night's sweet rest.

But in the shadows, fate takes flight,
A girl appears, wrapped in the night.
A vampire's eyes, a knowing grin,
She draws him close, inviting him in.

No questions asked, no judgment cast,
Just freedom found, as hours pass.
Together they, in silence roam,
The night becomes their secret home.

Her world of stars, her midnight sky,
Becomes his heart's deep, silent cry.
He craves the dark, the rule-less air,
And in her presence, sheds all care.

Yet gives him more,
A love that wakes his longing core.
No school, no rules, just endless space,
A bond that time cannot erase.

Their souls entwine with each new dawn,
As night gives way, their hearts hold on.
Forbidden paths they walk with pride,
Two souls as one, the world defied.

And in the quiet, they both find,
The night is where their hearts unwind.
A vampire's touch, a boy's soft sigh,
Together, they embrace the sky.

Under stars that never sleep,
Their souls, the night will keep.



鸟啼树下

斜日遥指，分阴为界，

半分金波坠苍枝，一味鸟绿遥相望。

风吹叶，破碎声，平坐依稀闻鸟啼。

作者：GIO Eta 翟子墨 Jerry
排版：GII Delta 区桂瑭 Rebecca



随行小记

山亭若沙丘一壑，环海共长天一色

环山小湖围山居，崖畔小城依山立

而亭立于群山下，心腾飞于云间霞

会当临于江端上，独享盘云独揽月

光

作者：李响 Richard G10 Phi
排版：张智涵 Lucas G11 Eta

翌景斥雾终有散，浮云沉舟怎敢当！
独立屋外沐暖阳，心有所思意悠长。
心有千结未曾解，未知之路亦有光。
叶舞空中风飘扬，光穿层云洒面旁。
后途迷茫归何处，思绪黯淡意彷徨。
墨染素笺笔轻沉，心有困惑在何方？
续路斥雾遮望眼，云海沉沉光渺茫。
落墨如雨落纸上，心海惘惘何至疆？





朦胧烟霞中
你看到了雨。

在雨中
轮廓逐渐清晰：
那是一辆熟悉的车
以及同样熟悉的熙熙攘攘的街。
你静坐在车里
车穿行在喧闹的流里；
轮胎后溅起水雾
整个街道弥漫在水雾里。
窗外是打着各色伞的影
熟悉的抑或是陌生的影。
你看着驾驶座上两个最熟悉的影
揣着沉甸甸的书包

——而祂们也回头笑着看你。

未能辨认祂们的面孔
你便忽地抽离
色块被凌乱的雨水打湿
又诡异地聚合出木色的纹
你恍惚的抬头——
场景逐渐鲜明：
熟悉的卧室
熟悉的米黄色的灯光和墙壁
以及久违的饭菜香。
无意间
你看到了熟悉的日记本
封面被你精心地装饰过
在摊开的某页
你看到了
你的梦想。

Author: G10 Delta Vincent Dong
Designer: G11 Eta Carol Dong



“——我要去北极看极光！”

不知不觉间
场景开始坍塌
像素被肆意地扭曲 蹂躏
又如融化的蜜一般流淌
化为一片喜庆的红
它如斑斓的晚风
席卷了一季季寒冬。
烟火冲向漆黑的冬夜
在逐渐模糊的说笑声中
绽放出万千色彩……

“过往的梦如琉璃般炫目又易碎
记忆中鲜活的人
早已成为虚无的影。”

色彩隐去了。
你看到了一片漆黑。
这次
你看到你自己倒在桌前
黑白的表格散落一地
电脑在黑暗中亮着冷光
屏幕被大小文档所充斥
办公桌的角落里
静静立着两张黑白照片……

你失去了很多。
生活一向如此。
记忆被现实的巨潮打湿
发皱 泛黄 撕裂成梦的碎片。

但是
至少
我们会一直在这雨中。
我们会陪着你
我们会看着你
即使我们早该离去。

你的故事不该在此结束。
色还未消逝。
梦还未褪色。
你心中的火还未熄灭。
请谨记


你
并不是
孤身一人
梦该醒了。



The Tides

Author: G12 Eta Lancelot Li
Designer: G11 Gamma Alice Qin

I

I crossed off another day on my calendar.

A week had passed since White Dew, yet the air was hotter than ever, far from the coolness I had hoped for. I turned up the air conditioner, shut all doors and windows tightly, and headed to the fridge in search of food. Leaning against the sofa, I opened my mouth mindlessly, tossing food in and chewing slowly.

What was I supposed to do? I muttered to myself, my mind blank. It felt like I had forgotten something important.

A broadcast blared from outside the window:

"This is the village broadcasting station. Due to an astronomical tide, this year's Qiantang River Tide will be stronger than ever before, with a tidal range predicted to reach 12 meters. Residents, tourists, and construction sites along the river are advised to take precautions..."

"The tide... drowning..." The words triggered a memory, but it slipped away just as quickly.

Forget it, I thought. I might as well take a walk.

At the door, I put on my shoes and noticed a large message written on the door:

Do not go out! Check the diary!

A diary?

II

When did I ever keep a diary?

I tried hard to recall recent events, but nothing came to mind—not even why I was in this house, who I was, or what I was waiting for.

I searched around the small house and soon found a diary with a red leather cover. I opened it to the first page:

If you forget who you are or what you've done, start from page one. If you need reminders, go to page five.

Remember to update the diary daily.

Naturally, I started from page one.

"I killed someone. I must not go outside."

I killed someone? Did I really write this? I doubted it but kept reading.

"The body is hidden behind the river embankment. Once the tide arrives on August 18th, it will carry the body into the sea. I just need to stay here until then, and I'll be free."

Pages two through four were blank. On page five, there were reminders:

1. Don't use the internet. Looks like I'm not addicted to the web.

2. Avoid contact with strangers. I glanced at the locked windows and doors, feeling relieved.

3. Mark the calendar daily. Once August 18th comes, I'll be free to leave.

I looked up at the calendar. It was August 17th—just one more day to go.

One more day to freedom! I smiled to myself, flopping onto the bed. Drifting off again, I sank into sleep.

III

I don't know how long I slept, but when I woke, the sunset had painted the sky red.

A knock on the door jolted me fully awake.

"Hey, buddy! You home?"

I stumbled off the bed, heading to the door in a daze. Through the door, I thought I heard the faint sound of sirens and saw flashes of red and blue lights reflected on the walls.

Sirens... police lights. Have they found me? Are they closing in on me? Should I make a run for it?

"Open up! Your air conditioner's so loud—I know you're in there!"

Without hesitation, I bolted. Leaping through the back window, I dashed into the fields bathed in the glow of the setting sun.

But I overestimated my stamina. After only a few steps, I staggered. I knew I couldn't stop—they were behind me. I pushed on, stumbling through the mud, until I tripped over a stone and realized I had run farther than I thought.

I collapsed and slept in the field.

At dawn, I opened my eyes.

IV

Fortunately, my memory hadn't reset overnight—I still remembered what had happened the previous day.

The thought of the approaching tide filled me with renewed energy. I blended into the crowd heading toward the river to watch the tide.

At the riverbank, people gathered behind the safety line, bustling with excitement. Photographers set up their tripods, waiting for the river's roar. Like me, they couldn't wait for that moment to arrive.

"How have you been, Lao He?"

A voice came from behind me, and someone patted me on the shoulder. I shuddered and turned to see a man with thinning hair, at least 20 years my senior, with a strong grip.

I didn't know how to respond, so I mumbled, "I'm doing okay."

"So why didn't you open the door yesterday? Acting all mysterious. Haven't seen you these past few days—I thought you were sulking over last year's incident again. Come to the station after this, ca-



tch
up with
your old colleagues.”
He turned and started walking
away.

Last year’s incident? What happened last year? And what station?

I grabbed his sleeve, unsure how to ask about the past. Instead, I blurted out, “Whatever happened last year, it’s in the past.”

“It’s good that you think that way. Come on, let’s move closer—the view’s better up ahead.” He crossed the safety line.

I expected the police to stop us, but instead, someone saluted him: “Good morning, Chief!”

“Thanks for your hard work! Keep the crowd in order.”

Only then did I realize—he was the chief of the police station.

We reached the bridge, and fear gripped me. If the diary was right, the spot where I dumped the body was just ahead. If the chief got too close, it would be impossible to cover it up.

“Let’s stay here,” I suggested. “It’s too dangerous to go any farther.”

“Fair enough,” he agreed.

I looked down at the water. It was calm, without any hint of the incoming tide. Across the river, I noticed a white stone monument that drew me in, almost against my will.

The monument was new, erected just last year. The name on it was *He Zhu*. I stared at the tombstone, lost in thought, until the chief’s voice startled me.

“Xiao Zhu was a good kid.” I hadn’t even noticed him standing behind me. “It’s hard to believe he’s gone so suddenly...”

He Zhu... Lao He... Xiao Zhu... The tide... Drowning...

It all came rushing back.

I am He Lan, He Zhu’s brother.

Last year, during the tide, I was on patrol on the opposite bank, in charge of security. My little brother begged to cross the safety line, and as his big brother, I couldn’t refuse. I let him stay close by my side.

When the tide surged in, a call came over the radio—someone’s section of the safety line had broken. I rushed over on my motorcycle to control the crowd.

Only after the situation was under control did I realize my brother was alone. I raced back, but it was too late—he was gone.

After the tide receded, his body washed up on the back side of the embankment, battered and unrecognizable.

“I killed him,” I had believed ever since.

“Come on,” the chief said, patting me on the back. “The tide’s coming—let’s move back to the shore.”

I finally came to my senses and replied, “In a moment.”

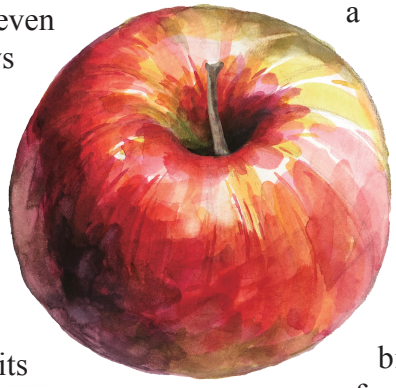
I knelt before the tombstone, wanting to cry, yet knowing that tears would feel meaningless here.

After a long while, the tide came. And I leapt into it.

ACCIDENTS

Author: G12 Phi Tegan
Layout: G12 Kappa Sharon

The Greeks had a woman, be she was and may- an: with the head of a lion and the body of a goat and the flicking tail of a snake. They called her their chimera. In hospital beds, mothers with too many eggs in their bellies birth human chimeras. Babies with stars for necks and suns for hands and moons for toes. And the poets, they call their chimeras those whom they reach for but even though they are poets, even though they believe in themselves over all else, they cannot quite touch. It is not clear who is right, but maybe that is the point. A real chimera is all: she is the dream-daughter of the poet and the mutant and the beastly goddess. And she is more than that, and even more, and more and more, always needing and wanting—and finding—more. She becomes her food. She feeds on everything until she only has herself to eat. She keeps chewing.



Margaret stared at the apple in her lap. It was hardly an apple. Hardly a thing. Its skin was mottled brown, its flesh bruised and nearly liquid. She pressed her middle finger into the apple; when she removed it, a Margaret-finger-sized dent remained, moisture seeping out. She didn't quite know how it had gotten this rotten. She'd only been sitting here for five, ten, minutes. Right. Right? To be honest, she wasn't sure. And her name was Margaret, wasn't it? Wasn't it? Well. Let's start here: she had a brother, whose name was Billiard, though he was in fact quite terrible at the game. Perhaps Billiard had given her this apple. But then she remembered that he had died in a bicycle accident when she was only a little girl in a pink floaty dress. So disregard.

She shook her brain up, trying to think of something else, anything else. Her teeth chattered from the shaking and the cold—it was cold, she realized, freezing, actually, and she was only in a small blue t-shirt and leggings. Ouch. She looked around herself: windows, chairs, tables, plants. A house. A home. Her home? No; it had throw pillows and blankets and glassware, all the lackings of spunkalicious delicious Margaret. Still, it was someone's, so she'd better treat it with at least a bit of respect. She sighed, and sank down a bit, into what must be a cushion. On a wooden chair. At a table. Next to her was a stove and an oven, and so she was in the kitchen. A dog bowl two meters from her feet with the name "Pluto."



A plate in the sink, bread crusts floating in cloudy water. A glass of orange juice (half full or half empty?) in the glass-doored cabinet. Her feet were tapping viciously on the linoleum floor, which was also cold. Was there a draft in this house? Ah, well, it was only going to get colder, and the apple was only going to get more rotten. So here goes.

Margaret stuffed the apple in her mouth, cheeks round, and dug her teeth into the skin. She tried to swallow the whole thing in one go, but her throat was too thin, and then she was picturing her esophagus splintering and melting away, and she stopped forcing the fruit down any harder. So her lips ovaled numbly, spit pooling in the recesses between gum and cheek, her buck teeth dipping in and out of the flesh. Over and over and over she bit, in the same place every time, and the fruit was only getting soggier. Bits of apple broke off and spilled over her lips. She could just spit the thing out, she supposed. But wouldn't that be giving up? Margaret did not give up.



Now would be a nice time to mention her sugar intolerance. It was mild and mostly triggered by fear; she'd discovered it at the age of seven when Billiard told her you could get high off of dried molasses, and then he punched her, hard in the throat, and she lapped the crystals out of his palms like a sad, pathetic dog, and then she passed out. But she knew she did not fear sweetness. She loved sweetness. So she got around the sugar thing, told herself the occasional asphyxiation was a part of the creative process. She was an artist. Candy could not stop her. Even leaning over a toilet bowl, sick to her eye sockets, retching out every last memory and feeling and taste bud, she promised to herself these things were not allergies. Only symptoms of a greater purpose.

She loved her brother, really, and more importantly, she admired him. Did you know she was conceived for him? He's told her this story often. Many Augusts ago, the family of three, Billiard, Mommy, and Dada, they were all having a picnic in the grass as the moon bloomed in the black sky above them. Dada was playing a song on his ukulele. Mommy was tickling Billiard's tummy, and his laughs filled the night, strangely on beat with Dada's strumming.

"Mommy? Dada?" Billiard gasped in between happy shrieks.

"Yes, our lovely Billiard?" Mommy and Dada sang to their lovely boy.

"Can I have a sister?" Billiard asked.

The night didn't reply. Mommy's fingers paused over Billiard's tiny belly button, his most ticklish spot, and he breathed a sigh of relief. Mommy and Dada looked at each other, their chins wobbling above Billiard as they spoke words he didn't yet understand.

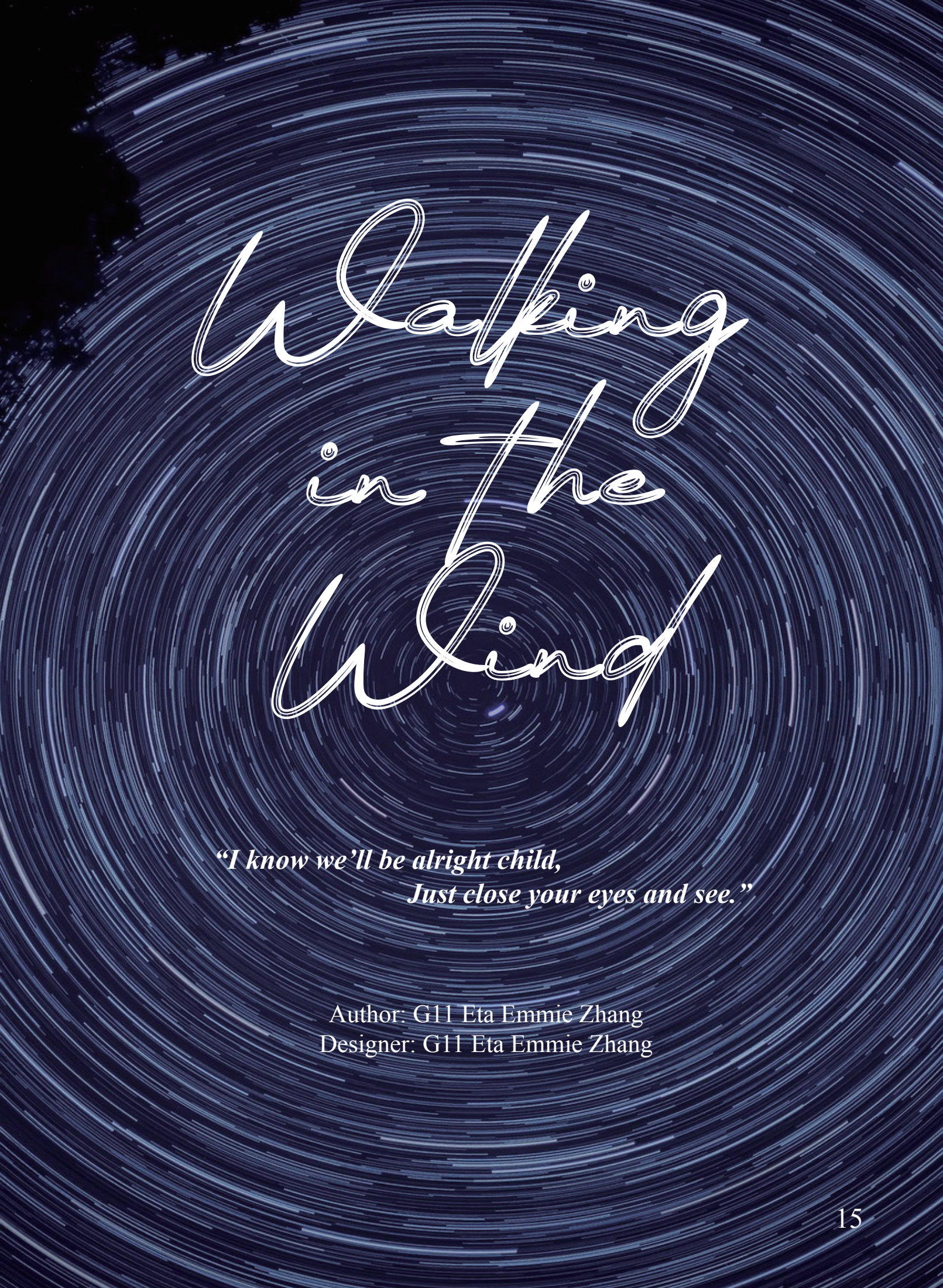
"Well, Billy-boy," Mommy said. "Well, Billiard," Dada said.

"Well, yes," they said together. "What will we name her, though?"

The summer grass stroked at Billiard's back. "Play my song, Dada," the boy said, "and let me think for a little bit."

Mommy leaned back next to her son, and Dada began to play Billiard's favorite song. He crooned and crooned about Margarita, a woman in the sky looking for love and—he cast a sideways glance at Mommy—finding it in the ferny forest yonder. He strummed and hummed and loved and loved and loved, and he loved forever and ever.

02 Journal



"I know we'll be alright child,
Just close your eyes and see."

Author: G11 Eta Emmie Zhang
Designer: G11 Eta Emmie Zhang

I've been thinking a lot about souls. A lot more recently especially, ever since I woke up on Thursday morning October the 17th to the news of Liam Payne from One Direction passing.

It's far too hard to try to explain the dedication and connectedness a fandom brings to an outsider, but being in the One Direction fandom was my finest experience of exclusive intimacy. It was an integral part to my soul — I was a "directioner". Obviously, looking back as an older person now, it seems a lot more immature and overly stereotypical of myself to fall into the rabbit hole of a 2010s British-Irish boy band. There really is no more teenage girl thing on Earth to possibly do. And while I do try to paint myself as more than "just a fangirl", I was exactly that — I swooned over them in the most humanly possible basic outfits; I was chronically online for any update about them; I smiled uncontrollably whenever they smiled in interviews; and I had a favorite member I adamantly defend- ed against any (sometimes valid) slander (Harry Styles, whom I honestly am not over yet). I was just another fangirl.

But so what? Being a fangirl was, and still is, a part of how I defined myself. To the thirteen- year-old girl trapped inside her home during the pandemic without a soul to confide in, denied the cinematically extroverted teenage years she spent her childhood looking forward to, One Direction was everything. Through everything else crumbling down in the outside world, they were my only 100% safe place no matter what. Truly, madly, deeply.



Which is why it seemed like the world ended for me the moment that safe place collapsed.

To wake up and see a full page of Google headlines entitled "Former One Direction Star Liam Payne Found Dead at 31" was something five universes away from what I expected to happen in this lifetime.

I don't think what I went through could be categorized as typical grief — that's far more obtrusive. Still, I went through every stage as if I was grieving someone I truly knew. It took me what seems like decades to get over denial, where I would still be happily watching their old inter- views for album promos and listening to their hit singles as if back in my preteen self, coming home from middle school without a care in the world and comfortably loitering around. Denial began to fade when people — people who actually knew him in person — starting posting statements online ex- pressing their grief. If I had to count the amount of times I, in tears, have gone to each individual member's grieving post for Liam, I might as well have counted all the stars. But eventually, it did slowly start to register in my head more and more that what happened was real. That was its own branch of pain that hit hard, hard enough to have myself go back to a pathetically childish act I hadn't performed in years: closing my eyes and wishing really, really hard that time would just go back. I only ever allow myself to be this wishful when I'm lonely. The depression still persists now after more than a month, always an undertone. Life would never be the same. I had lost too important of a part of me.

It all seems a bit melodramatic, even from my own perspective. After all, I have changed



a lot since I was thirteen. I have friends that understand me now, people who not only know how to pull me out of the spirals I tend to create for myself, but also don't need me to explain to them how it happened in the first place — they just get it. I have a better idea of who I am (though even the "better idea" of it is still nowhere close to an actual definition). I'm more confident in my own skin, and more unapologetic about so many things I couldn't even admit to myself in the past. But even with so much more, there's a core in me that hasn't changed since that first moment I looked around and saw no one there. Sometimes I'm scared things are taking a turn for the worse not because they actually are, but because some twisted facet in me doesn't want myself to feel like things are going fine. Maybe I need sadness to create. Maybe I run on sadness. So I create this false sense of loneliness for myself, even though I'm surrounded by love. I convince myself that loneliness is one of those things you can't shake once you've seen it, even though I'm not even sure if I've ever truly seen it. I keep debunking myself with the notion that I'm only 16, but I'm not even sure if I'm that. Sometimes I'm scared I'm stuck with who I was when I was 13. That I haven't grown since. Now I'm terrified that if that's true, and if thirteen-year- old me died alongside One Di- rection that morning like I felt she did, then I'm nobody at all. have counted all the stars. But eventually, it did slowly start to register in my head more and more that what happened was real. That was its own branch of pain that hit hard, hard enough to have myself go back to a pathetically childish act I hadn't performed in years: closing my eyes and wishing really, really hard that time would just go back. I only ever allow myself to be this wishful when I'm lonely. The depression still persists now after more than a month, always an undertone. Life would never be the same. I had lost too important of a part of me.

So, for the first time in a long time, in the midst of all that lostness, I went out for a walk. The walk, to no surprise at all, was painful. I spent the majority of it reliving the past. I thought about the joy I had every day in getting off school because of the sheer notion that I would finally get to watch their same old interviews on my phone; I thought about when I had no idea who I wanted to become or where I might end up, I listened to Walking in the Wind repeatedly, for the sole reason of the consolation that was Harry singing "I know we'll be alright child, just close your eyes and see" in the bridge; I thought about how much I felt at the time, how deeply. Every minor thing could hit me like a million rocks, and I missed it. I missed experiencing life to that degree, where everything was something. I missed effortless optimism. I felt ludicrous. I was going through all these stages of a midlife crisis when I wasn't even through a quarter of my life yet. I didn't know whether to trust my own sadness, if any of it was war-

ranted, or if I was just pathetically seeking material in my mundane and privileged life. I didn't know when I had started thinking like this. I couldn't remember the last time I was able to feel emotion in its entirety without trying to justify it. Staring at myself from above now in the real world, where I felt the wind through my hair and on the same path surrounding my home, I've never felt further from myself. But I knew that my straying away wasn't viable. That distance would catch up to me eventually, and when it will, it'll hurt.

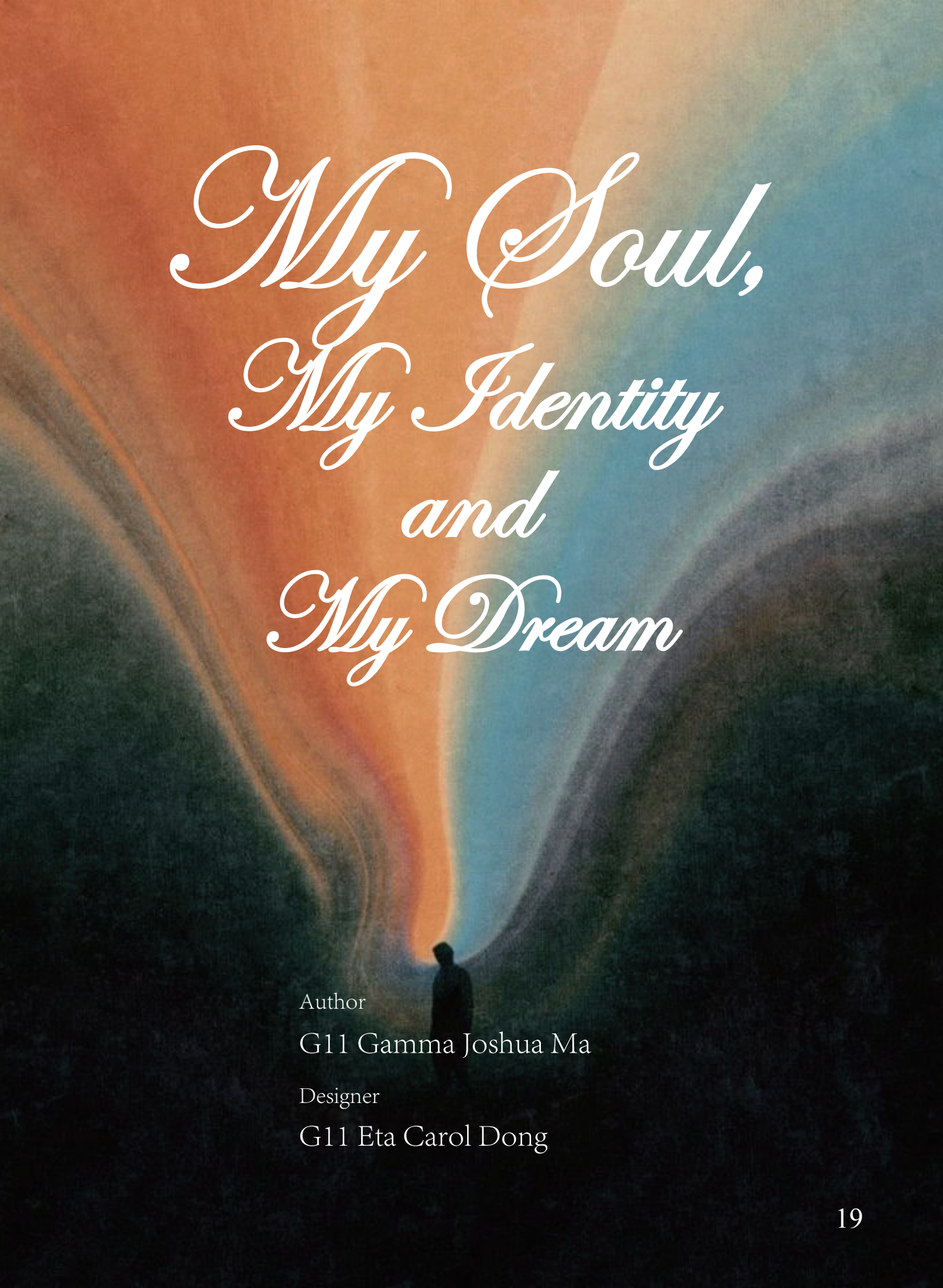
Spiraling down a pitch-black sinkhole of existential crisis, I desperately tried to grab onto what should've been a soul. Some metaphysical manifestation of myself that wasn't a slave to nostalgia. But no one answered to my call. It was just me, walking alone in the wind.

For the longest time, I've been idealistically trusting in the existence of souls, not for any reason that I knew that had to be for sure, but more that I wanted to believe in them. I needed to believe in them. It's much too hard of a concept to admit that outside of atoms and cells, there's nothing more. Which isn't true: there's love, trust, joy, hope, all those ineradicable human things we hold, as much as we don't like to admit it. But regardless of manmade poetic attributes, I felt my 13-year-old self brutally ripped from myself over and over again every time I thought about One Direction, and I didn't know how to come back from a pain that never seemed to die down. The violence of it all was too raw for me to take in.

My lobe piercing bled for the first time in 18 months recently. I've been treating it as just another part of my body that could be casually reckoned with, but it wasn't. It was a healed wound, a wound I had willingly placed onto myself. And in picking at it, in disrespecting the effort I had put through 18 months ago to heal it, in distrusting the damage it could've caused me, it bled for my cause, leaving crusty blood stains over me.

I don't think I wrote this for anything. It started as a tribute to One Direction, but about two paragraphs in I knew I wasn't strong enough to go there. And truth be told, I couldn't go there even if I wanted to. One Direction is too heavily infused with my own story, my own emotions, that whatever remark I make on them will always be more about myself than about them. I guess this whole journal isn't really anything at all. But in a way, that's the best possible format I could've gone with. There isn't a neat little box I can check for what One Direction means to me, or who my 13-year-old self was. There isn't a perfectly worded statement for a 3-year long experience. There isn't a concrete thank-you speech I can deliver to countless instances of refuge. There isn't a conclusion to all of this. There doesn't have to be. I can find it weird to become this parasocially attached to something in my present self's point of view, but I can also choose to live in memories at times because of what they have to offer. They always have something purer than the shell of what it was I have now. I keep making these choices, no matter how self-contradictory. I keep watching the same interviews I could quote word for word by now; I keep listening to the same song on loop even though I'm almost nauseous at the repetition; and I keep thinking back even though I know it hurts.

Maybe souls don't exist at all, but maybe that's a good thing. Maybe we don't need a container for everything we've become. Maybe self-contradictions and moments of out-of-place weaknesses don't need anything more to them. Maybe we should be allowed to just exist. Maybe then, souls, emotions, human connections, parasocial relationships, all the messy things I've claimed throughout my life can be pushed back a bit in the analyses I will throw into them in due time. Maybe for now I can just close my eyes, listen to One Direction sing "I know we'll be alright child, just close your eyes and see", and allow myself to believe in those words.



My Soul, My Identity and My Dream

Author

G11 Gamma Joshua Ma

Designer

G11 Eta Carol Dong

When I was just a little boy, my grandmother told me many family legacies. My grand grandfather, a well literate bureaucrat specializing in railway engineering, with the aspiration to serve public and to help up the poor people by constructing more railways, was exiled to a desert in 1958. They spent their best years in deserts fighting with hunger and illiteracy, but they held the strong belief that these sufferings would be over and the country, their dear motherland, would be saved and eventually healed. With this belief, they kept reading and learning in the deserts from every piece of reading materials available and they took 15 years coming back to the university and started their academic career focusing on Marco economics research. These family legacies enhanced our belief of self-assurance, resilience ahead of all challenges.

Meanwhile , as a native Chinese, I live and breathe the heritage of brilliant Chinese culture. China, a civilization in spite of different invasions and upheavals, survived over 5000 years. More than 1.6 billion people of China speak the same language, follow same lunar calendar, and live on grains vastly. Like it or not, they are blood in our blood vessel. Jean - Paul Sartre has put it, that whatever exists has its reason. An emperor, with 25 dynasties and countless rebellions and overthrows, until nowadays, with democracy has been introduced to Chinese over 107 years after the stepping down the last emperor in 1912, the most popular TV dramas in 2024 are still sagas of great emperors or rulers, like Emperor Qin, the Great Kang Xi? Why in deep mind of most Chinese people, an all-mighty ruler is always the most admirable icon? What a path China has to take to democracy finally? How will I, as a teen born in 21th century will endeavor to this mission?

With above lingering questions, I try to approach Chinese history. There seems is an interesting statistic patten in China history that every union of this civilization along the 2 mainstreams of The Yellow River and YangTse River would bring about a boom of population, and at the flipside, every upheaval took millions of people's lives and brought about countless homeless and hungry people, which worsen the upheavals. As Jared Diamond tried to explore in hismasterpiece of Guns, Gems and Steel, that geographic and natural conditions, in early stage, played such a significant role to impact local people's lifestyle and to cultivate their civilization.





Take China as the example, because majority of Chinese people took grains as their primary foodstuff and different from hunting, farming required people's stabilization on the land versus mobilization, plus, continuous flooding of the 2 rivers required all the states along the rivers to collaborate for waterproofing and reservoirs constructing purposes. At the same time, farming tribes along the verge of grassland and farmland continuously lived with the threats from lived with the threats from northern nomadic peoples, the threats from lived with the threats from northern nomadic peoples, and for safety and

security purposes, they had to work together to build collective fence like the Great Wall. Remember, the Great Wall was not only the once-off project in Qin Dynasty at 221 B.C., but rather, it was a dynasty-by-dynasty project which was disrupted until the fall out of Ming Dynastic around 1644. Such nationwide safety projects require a centralized ruling administration with top down ruling power. Likewise, it also happened to many early civilizations that rely on agriculture, like The Inca Emperor. This centralized top-down administration is the greenhouse for dictatorship and autocracy and in turn, dictatorship and autocracy will reinforce involution of information control to power control, leading to closing-up and isolation.

However, this primitively cut balance was entirely broken by the Great Voyage. With the centuries' military enforcement, globalization has taken the place of primitive isolation, trade, culture and people exchange has become the un-introspective reality, never to mention the penetration of technology and the common fatal threat of nuclear power and climate change and exhaustion of natural resources.

By reflecting on all these factors from my family life to China history and world trends, my soul has been framed up step by step, that as a Chinese in 21the century, I's so privileged of our history heritage as a custodian, therefore, mission for me is to build up a channel for culture talk to culture, values talk to values, community talk to community, east to west, past to present and connector is my best identity. Finally my dream is an inclusive world, that people respect others' rights at sharing different opinions and appreciated the variation by diversity.

Vision Transformers for Detecting AI generated Images

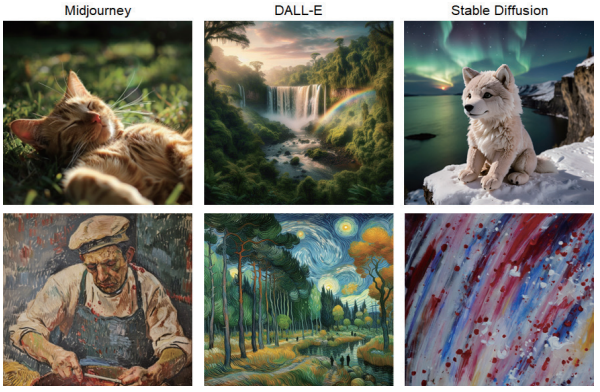
Author: Anonymous
Designer: G12 Eta Thea Zhang

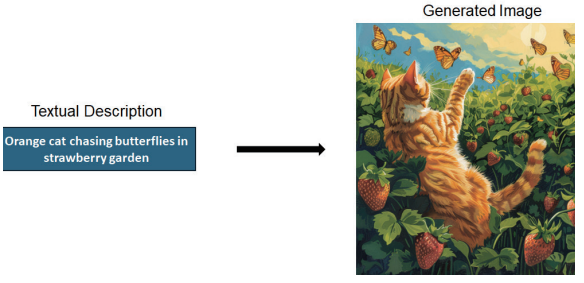
I. Introduction

The rapid development in artificial intelligence has led to the advancement of image generation models such as MidJourney (Midjourney, 2022), Stable Diffusion (Rombach et al., 2021), and DALL-E (OpenAI, 2023). As shown in Figure 1, it is hard to distinguish AI-generated images from real ones for both photorealistic and artistic images. While such technology could help designers and creative industry workers finish their work efficiently, it could also lead to the creation and spread of false information.

To combat this, researchers have proposed multiple approaches to classify these images,including classifiers that are based on CNN (Bird & Lotfi, 2024), DenseNet, and ResNet (Baraheem & Nguyên, 2023). However, traditional methods of detecting AI-generated images are increasingly being outpaced by the continual improvement of AI algorithms. This shows the necessity of developing more reliable detection techniques trained on the latest datasets. This paper contributes to detecting AI-generated images by exploring the application of Vision Transformers (ViTs).

We created a dataset using the latest text-to-image generation models. Unlike previous datasets, which often rely on images generated by outdated GAN models or include low-resolution images, our dataset includes high-resolution images from cutting-edge diffusion models. We trained the dataset using both a ViT model and a DenseNet model for comparison, and the ViT model demonstrated significantly better performance.





Text-to-Image Synthesis

Text-to-image synthesis is a subfield of computer vision that aims to create realistic images that match the text descriptions, as shown in Figure 2 There are two commonly used model architectures for this task: Generative Adversarial Networks(-GAN) models and Diffusion models.

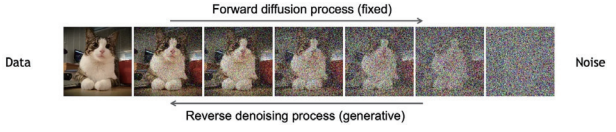
GAN Models

Generative Adversarial Networks(GAN) have been a pioneer in text-to-image synthesis. A GAN contains two neural networks, one generator, and one discriminator. They are trained simultaneously through adversarial learning. The generator starts with a random noise vector as input, and its goal is to create images that match textual descriptions. The goal of the discriminator is to distinguish whether an image is AI-generated or not so that the generator can improve its outputs by adjusting the weights in its network. Figure 3 shows a common GAN model architecture for image generation.

Powerful GAN-based models like StyleGAN (Karras et al., 2019) and Attn-GAN (Xuet al., 2017) have shown remarkable power in generating highly detailed images that accurately capture the textual description. The iterative loop of the discriminator and the generator allows these models to produce images that are increasingly realistic and accurate over time.

Diffusion Models

Diffusion models are another method for text-to-image synthesis. Unlike GAN, which relies on adversarial training, diffusion models generate images by denoising random noise vectors, transforming the noise into an image that matches the given textural descriptions.Specifically, it includes a process called Reverse Diffusion Process. This process aims to reverse the corruption by removing noise step-by-step. It starts from a pure noise image and works backward to generate a clean image. This denoising process is led by a neural network that can predict the noise added at each step of the forward process. By repeating this process of applying the denoising function, the model will continually refine the image and produce a high-quality output.



Transformers

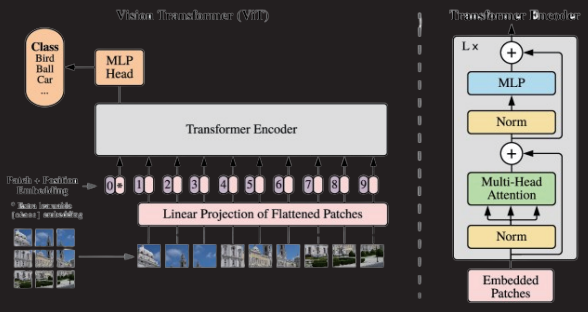
Transformers represent a revolutionary architecture in deep learning, initially introduced in the paper “Attention is All You Need” (Vaswani et al., 2017). This revolutionized multiple fields in machine learning, especially in natural language processing (NLP) and, as the core of this work, in computer vision.

Attention Mechanism

Before the emergence of the Transformer architecture, attention mechanisms were primarily used within sequence-to-sequence (seq2seq) models, particularly in tasks such as machine translation and NLP to enhance the model's ability to generate more contextually relevant outputs. The early attention mechanisms are called "vanilla attention." Vanilla attention creates a context vector by computing a weighted sum vector. The weights are from a combination of the current decoder's and encoder's hidden state, calculated by a linear transformation and a Softmax operation. This context vector will be concatenated with the input and passed to the next layer.

Vision Transformers (ViT)Vision

Transformers (ViT) represent a novel application of the transformer architecture to the field of computer vision. Introduced in the paper "An Image is Worth 16x16 Words: Transformers for Image Recognition at Scale" (Dosovitskiy et al., 2021), ViT has shown that self-attention and multi-head attention illustrated above used in NLP can be effectively applied to image data, thus achieving high performance in various vision tasks like image classification. An illustration of the vision transformer model architecture is shown in the figure.



II. Methodology

Datasets

Current datasets used for detecting AI-generated images have several severe limitations. The dataset created by Gragnaniello et al., 2021 relies on images generated by GAN models only. Although GAN models performed well in image synthesis, they are increasingly replaced by more powerful diffusion models. On the other hand, although some datasets are based on the diffusion model, like the CIFAKE dataset that is based on Stable Diffusion (Bird & Lotfi, 2024), it is limited to a resolution of 32x32 pixels, which is insufficient for both model training and practical applications.

To address these limitations, this work developed a new dataset that used the latest and most advanced diffusion models to generate high-resolution images. This ensures the dataset remains relevant to the most advanced image generation techniques, improving the model's performance.

Fake Image Collection

To gather a diverse collection of fake images, we sourced user-created images from platforms such as Civitai (Civitai, n.d.), MidJourney (Midjourney, 2022), and the DALL-E (OpenAI, 2023) website.

On these platforms, images are generated based on prompts provided by users, which allows our dataset to be more representative of what a user might generate every day, contrasting with other datasets that rely solely on prompts provided by the dataset authors. Therefore, our dataset better reflects the real-world scenarios an AI detector will likely encounter.

Real Image Collection

Most of the real image subset is from websites like Unsplash (Unsplash, 2024) and Pexels (Pexels, 2024) that provide high-resolution images without copyright concerns. These platforms exclusively accept original photos with accompanying camera metadata, eliminating the need for extensive data cleaning. Additionally, we observed that our fake image subset includes non-photorealistic content generated by users. To enhance the generalization capability of our model, we incorporated a selection of artworks in various styles from WikiArt (Wikiart, 2019), a website featuring a diverse range of artistic styles.

Organization of Data Set

The final dataset comprises 30,000 real images and 30,000 fake images. The fake images are sourced equally from Civitai (Civitai, n.d.), MidJourney (Midjourney, 2022), and the DALL-E (OpenAI, 2023), with 10,000 images from each platform. The real images consist of 22,500 photos from Unsplash (Unsplash, 2024) and Pexels (Pexels, 2024) and 7,500 artworks from WikiArt (Wikiart, 2019). The dataset is divided into training and test sets with a ratio of 4:1.

Structure and Pipeline

The model accepts an image of any resolution as input and outputs a classification indicating whether the image was created by AI or not. Since Vision Transformers require a fixed input resolution, instead of simply resizing the image—which could distort its aspect ratio—we randomly cropped a section of the image while maintaining its original resolution before training. For our base ViT model, we use a resolution of 384x384 pixels. This method preserves the image's integrity and provides a more realistic representation of its features. Figure 8 illustrates the random crop process.

Implementation

We use the popular Transformers library by Hugging Face (Wolf et al., 2020), with PyTorch (Paszke et al., 2019) as the underlying machine-learning framework. The Vision Transformer model has 3 variations: the 'huge' model, the 'large' model, and the 'base' model, where larger size means more layers, bigger MLP size, more heads, and more parameters. We initialized with pre-trained weights from the 'vit-large-patch32-384' model that has the same structure as introduced in the Backgrounds section due to GPU power constraint. This model uses 24 layers and 307M parameters. This model has been pre-trained on the ImageNet-21k dataset, which consists of 14 million images and 21,000 classes, and further fine-tuned on the ImageNet dataset, containing 1 million images and 1,000 classes.

The model is trained for 35 epochs using the Adam optimizer, with a batch size of 128 on an NVIDIA A100-40G GPU. The training takes about 7 hours.

To provide a comprehensive comparison, we also trained the same dataset on a DenseNet model, a CNN-based model with dense connections between all layers. This model was trained for 60 epochs with a batch size of 128 and the Adam optimizer on the same machine as the ViT model; the training takes about 4 hours.

III. Analysis

Classification accuracy1 is used to evaluate the model. The test dataset consists of 12,000 images evenly distributed between the real and fake classes. The final accuracy achieved by the ViT model was 0.9651, which is exceptional compared to similar works introduced previously. This high level of accuracy demonstrates the model's practical applicability in detecting AI-generated images. The confusion matrix2 on the test dataset is shown in Figure 9. The confusion matrix shows a similar number of false positives and false negatives, suggesting the model has a balanced performance on each side.

The DenseNet model achieved an accuracy of 0.932 on the test dataset. The ViT model outperformed the DenseNet model by approximately 3.3%. This significant improvement highlights the potential of the ViT model on this task. However, regarding training time, the Vit model took 7 hours to complete 35

epochs, while the DenseNet model took 4 hours to complete 60 epochs. The superior accuracy of the ViT model offset the longer training duration per epoch.

Figure 10 shows three misclassification examples. Examples (a) and (b) are real images incorrectly predicted as AI-generated, while example (c) is an AI-generated image incorrectly predicted as real. These misclassifications could be attributed to the random crop processing of high-resolution images. During evaluation, our script may have selected the black portion in (a), the out-of-focus portion in (b), and the white background portion in (c). These crops provide insufficient information to the model, leading to misclassification.

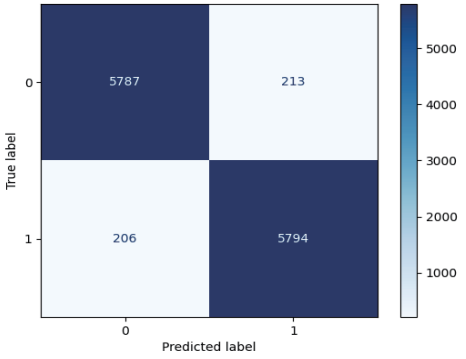


Figure 9

IV. Future Works

This work is a promising exploration of the effectiveness of Vision Transformers in detecting AI-generated images. However, it represents only an initial evaluation. Future work could involve modifying the model architecture and incorporating the self-attention mechanism more extensively to explore potential improvements.

Although this study includes a dataset containing high-resolution and high-quality images generated by the most advanced models, generative models will continue to evolve. Therefore, updating the dataset with images generated by future models is necessary. Also, the size of the dataset is also limited to 60,000 images. So, training the model on a bigger dataset might increase its performance. Expanding the dataset to include beyond diffusion models like GAN models or including more image genres could improve the model's generalization ability.

Furthermore, this study only utilized raw pixel data for image classification. Future work could explore additional features such as histograms, frequency domain features, and image metadata. Training models based on these additional data and combining the models with the model may improve classification accuracy.

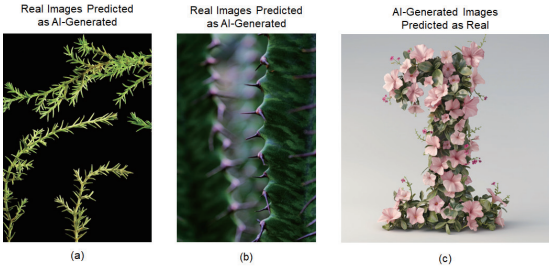
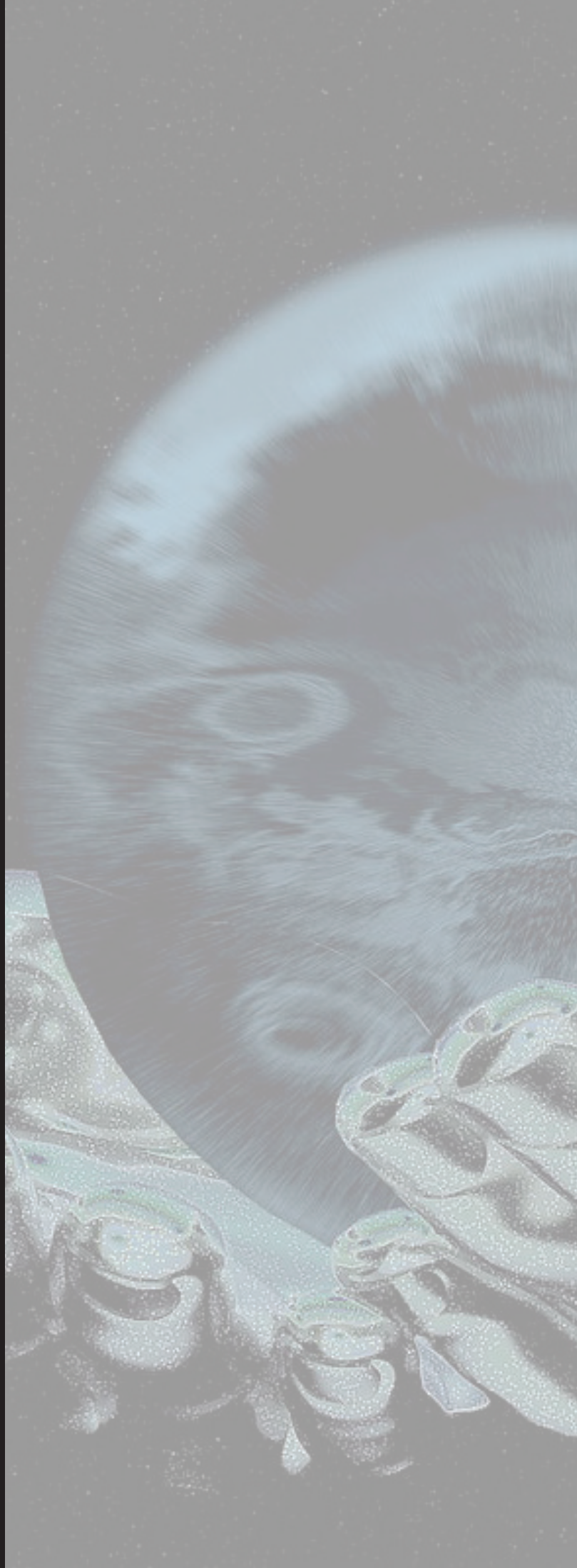


Figure 10

V. Conclusion

In this work, we demonstrated the potential of Vision Transformers in detecting AI-generated images. The rapid advancement of AI-driven image generation tools, such as MidJourney, Stable Diffusion, and DALL-E, has made distinguishing real images from fake ones increasingly difficult. Traditional detection methods are becoming less effective, underscoring the urgent need for advanced techniques. By building a dataset of high-resolution images from cutting-edge generative models and training the base Vision Transformers model on this dataset, we achieved an impressive classification accuracy of 0.9651.

Overall, this work establishes a solid foundation for using Vision Transformers in AI-generated image detection and can serve as a baseline for future research. By continually improving such a system, we can significantly reduce the potential for abuse of generative AI in creating fake news and other misleading content, thereby promoting more responsible use of AI technologies.



https://doi.org/10.3390/jimaging9100199
https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2311.00962
https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2010.11929
https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2104.02617
https://doi.org/10.48550/arxiv.1912.01703
https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1706.03762
https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2020.emnlp-demos.6
https://doi.org/10.1109/wifs47025.2019.9035107



Vision Transformers & AI Generated Images

03 Art

乡村冬日



vision of a rural winter—a serene and tranquil world. In creating it, I opted for simple lines and soft tones, hoping to convey a sense of warmth within the chill. The withered tree at the center symbolizes the stillness of winter, while the small house beside it exudes a familiar, cozy atmosphere, reminiscent of my hometown.

01 桃花嫣红兰花幽 -- 相映成趣

作者：G12 Delta Finnie Chen
排版：G11 Eta Thea Zhang



左侧的作品是我心中对乡村冬日的描绘，一个宁静而淡然的世界。在创作时，我选择了简洁的线条和柔和的色调，希望传达出一种清冷中的温暖感。画面中央的枯树象征着冬日的静谧，而旁边的小屋带着熟悉的温馨气息，那是我记忆中家乡的样子。我特意用了深蓝色的屋顶，与周围浅淡的背景形成对比，想让人感受到一种朴素的生活气息。那些零星的树木和屋舍仿佛隐匿在薄雾中，让画面显得遥远而神秘。

在右侧画面中，桃花与兰花相映成趣。桃花以粉色为主，花瓣层层晕染，如同少女娇羞的脸颊，充满生机。兰花则以淡紫与绿色呈现，淡雅清幽，似有暗香浮动。每一朵花、每一片叶都在色彩的交融中展现出独特的韵味。我在创作时，力求通过细腻的笔触和准确的色彩搭配，展现出花卉的自然之美，传递出一种宁静、优雅的氛围，让观者能感受到大自然的生机勃勃与和谐之美。

中国画，是中国传统绘画的一种形式，故被简称为国画。国画一词，起源于汉代，当时汉朝人认为中国居于天地之中，所以称为中国，因而汉朝人将中国的绘画称为中国画。

国画具有悠久的历史，凝聚着中华民族的智慧，性格，心理，气质。它用毛笔、墨、彩作画于绢、宣纸、帛上以具象和写意的技法，展现人物、山水、花鸟等题材，并装裱为卷轴，以其鲜明的特色和风格，在世界画院中独具体系国画的优劣，与其能受人尊重与否，并不在国画本身，而是在于国画家之品格，正所谓画以人重。

国画按照题材可以分为以下几类：人物画，内容以描绘人物为主，因绘画侧重不同，又可分为人物肖像画和人物故事、风俗画。人物画一直是我国传统绘画最主要的画科；

山水画：以描写山川自然景色为主题的绘画，主要有青绿，金碧，没骨，浅绛、水墨等形式，在艺术表现上讲求经营位置和表达意境。；

花鸟画：以描绘花卉、竹石、鸟兽、虫鱼等为画面主体。四五千年以前的陶器上出现的简单鱼鸟图案，可以看作最早的花鸟画。

国画也可以按技法分类：白描：用墨线勾描物象，不着颜色的画法。也有略施淡墨渲染。多用于人物和花卉画。

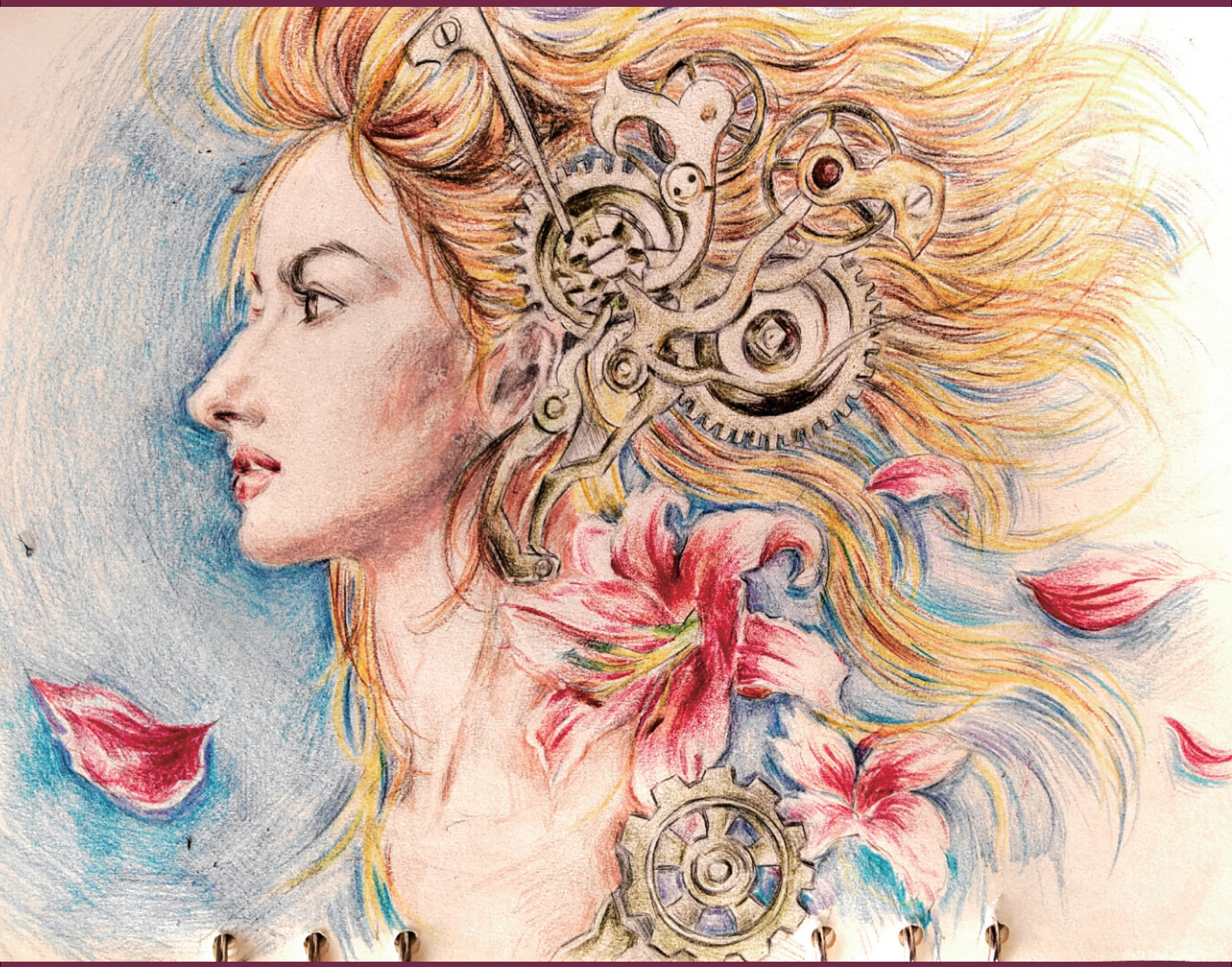
工笔：用细致的笔法制作，着重线条美，一丝不苟，是工笔画的特色。

写意：心灵感受、笔随意走，视为意笔，不重视线条，重视意象，与工笔的精细背道而驰。

没骨：不用笔线为骨，直接以彩色或水墨描绘物象。

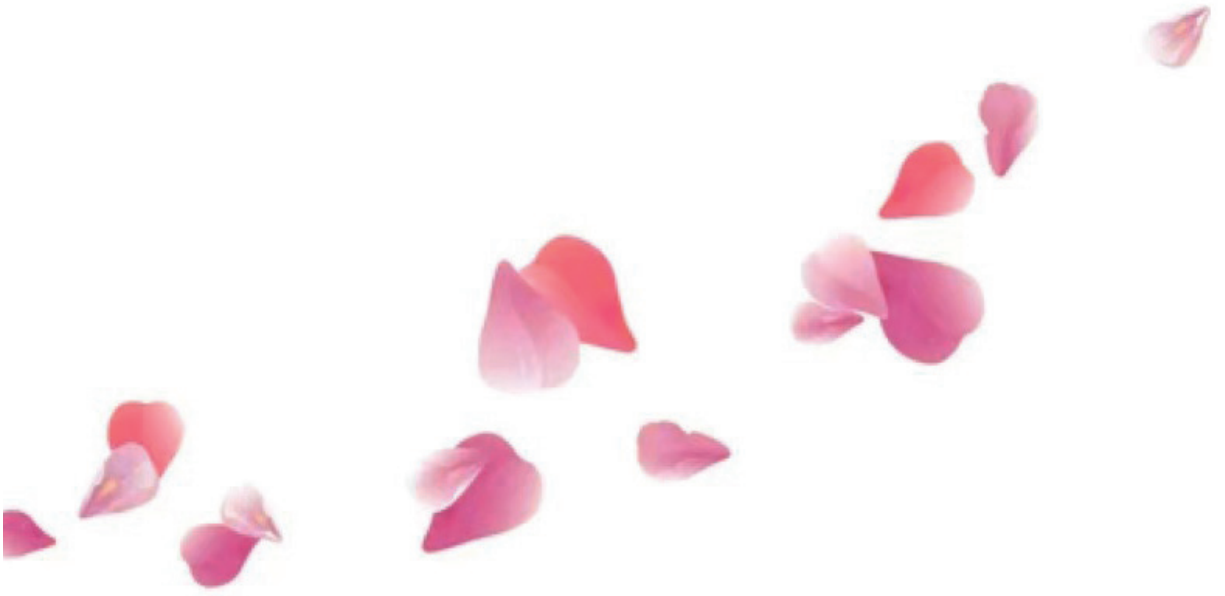
界画：以宫室、楼台、屋宇等建筑物为题材，而用界笔直尺画线的绘画也叫“宫室”或“屋木”。

水墨：纯用水墨所作之画，基本要素有三：单纯性、象征性、自然性。以笔法为主导，充分发挥墨法的功能。



Romance

Artist: G10 Omega Doris Tao
Designer: G11 Eta Carol Dong



The painting expresses the resonance of soul through music. The gear wheel on the woman's hair is inspried by a Japanese book alled Palepoli. In the book, a human-shaped robot that consist of series of gear wheels could make vivid music which makes people feel calm and be kind to others. The Utopian theme allow readers to envision a world with no pain, conflicts and capitols. In the meantime, the readers'll also question themselves whether we really want this world.

04 School Events

Spirit Week

A Celebration of Joy, Teamwork, and School Spirit

As the autumn sun embraced the campus with gentle warmth, WLSA was filled with excitement for the long-awaited Spirit Week. This annual event regards the school's mission to blend vigorous academics with vibrant sports and activities. The theme for this year's celebration was "Enjoy Sports, Enjoy Life, Dream Future," inspiring students to find passion in sports activities, approach their limits, and chase their dreams.



A Glimpse Into Spirit Week: Student Vibes and Festive Attire

Throughout Spirit Week, the campus became alive with creativity and camaraderie. Students followed specific dress codes every day.

On Cosplay Day, students delighted in dressing as their favorite characters from movies, TV shows, and books. The hallways buzzed with laughter as superheroes fought with witches and wizards, each shouting 'This town needs an enema' and 'Expelliarmus'. Teachers and staff joined in the fun with costumes that surprised and amused the students. All together, a vibrant scene was created imagination interwining and laughter bursting out.

Vintage Day brought a touch of nostalgia as students sported retro outfits like bell bottoms and polka-dot dresses, strutting confidently and sharing stories of eras past. The cultures that students chose to present varied: some were wearing traditional Chinese clothes, Hanfu, while others decided to recreate the magnificence and decadence of the 1920s in the United States, pretending to be





one of the many attending Gatsby's party. The campus turned into a lively time capsule, each corner telling a different corner.

Twins Day was filled with playful coordination as friends and even teachers paired up in matching outfits, showcasing everything from identical t-shirts to mirrored hairstyles. There were many really good imitators, not only dressed up like one another but also imitating the habits of talking and walking. The spirit of unity was palpable as students posed for shared jokes and stories.



Oversize Day added a sense of coziness to the week. Oversized hoodies, sweaters, and shirts comforted students' bodies of the day, letting them lounge on the grass, chatting while enjoying the relaxed vibe. Sleeves hanging loose, students and teachers are all immersed in the easygoing vibe.

Pink Day closed the week by conveying a message of kindness and solidarity. All the students gathered around in BS campus for the school Carnival, and in the gym, there was a sea of pink, with students dressed to show support against bullying. Heartwarming messages and smiles were exchanged, and the pinkish environment emphasized the values of empathy and inclusivity.



Spirit Week at WLSA not only showcased the diversity and unity of WLSA's student body but also created lasting memories filled with fun, laughter, and school pride. It was more than just a series of themed days and athletic events; it was a testament to the school's commitment to promoting a lively, inclusive, and supportive community. Through creative dress codes, friendly competition, and shared experiences, students not only freely demonstrated their unique identities but also strengthened their bonds with one another. The School Carnival, crowned by the charity market, encapsulated the core values of joy, teamwork, and empathy that WLSA holds. As our students walked away with big smiles and fresh memories, we continued to carry the powerful message of embracing and supporting ourselves and those around us paved the path toward a brighter future where dreams are fulfilled.

Author: G11 Gamma Nina Chang
Design: G12 Sigma Nancy Xu

School Carnival









Author: G10 Eta James Ge
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On October 18th, 2024, our annual Carnival took place. A demonstration of WLSA's energy and creativity, this year's Carnival involved numerous sports activities, a charity fair, arts performances and various other celebrations.

Carnival celebrations started off at the school gym, where students heard from our International Principal, Mr. Marcel Gauthier, and enjoyed arts performances from dances to DIY displays. This year's theme - 'Enjoy Sports, Enjoy Life, Dream Future', centred around sports activities, mental wellbeing and enhancement of equality in education.

For many students, the highlight of the day was sports. Teams involving students from both campuses, as well as the teaching faculty were on and around the football field, attracting big crowds as competitiveness filled the air. The technique of our players brought awe for those watching on from the sideline. Inside the gym, the flipping of scoreboards and shouts of the crowd were even louder. 13 sports made their appearance at the carnival, each with their own unique beauty.

Another meaningful activity was the charity sale. As basketball matches commenced indoors, tents and temporary stands were set up under the hoops, as students flocked among them. This year, all of the income from the charity was donated to organizations supporting minorities. This shows the heart of our event – the persistence of kindness and respect for all strumming throughout WLSA. Inside the stands, students could select from a variety of beautiful handicraft and works of art, all coming from other students as well.

All students were also invited to wear pink clothing for the special occasion. Signalling a firm stance against bullying, students also reaffirmed the WLSA spirit of openness and respect. A rare break from the energy-consuming study life of high school, the activities and their meanings would remain inside the minds of everyone at WLSA. Thus, it was no surprise that many are already looking forward to the upcoming Carnival next year.

Editors' PICKS



Recommended by
G11 Eta Lucas Zhang

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

"It talks about a life that ordinary people can but often never pursue. Skateboarding in Iceland, filming the erupted volcano, and meeting a service member of an app face to face, the artistic but passionate movie characters convey a very positive message to try the unknown and never be afraid to express ourselves. This movie is the best answer to a bad day."

The Good Place

"The Good Place is the ultimate balance between comedy and philosophy. Every single joke in this show lands, but it also gets you to genuinely reflect on the meanings we place in our lives and the relationships we form with all kinds of people. It appeals to the soul in a way that's relatable to the most ordinary audience."



Recommended by
G11 Eta Emmie Zhang



Recommended by
G11 Theta Alice Jiang

Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"This book was such a masterpiece that delves deep into the human condition, exploring themes of ambition, desire, and redemption. The carefully crafted diction and sophisticated philosophical ideas will definitely bring you food for thought!"

Love Will Keep Us Alive by The Eagles

"Love is the key to creating everlasting souls. And a part of my soul stays with the album Hell Freezes Over by Eagles. Sometimes slow songs and rock n roll can truly capture something deep within, speaking to your soul. Even in dark times, love will keep you alive. Love will keep us alive."



Recommended by
G11 Theta Seven Xu

DID YOU KNOW?

Soulmates

by G11 Eta Emmie Zhang

The idea that every soul has its corresponding perfect match, or a "soulmate", dates as far back as hundreds of years B.C. in Plato's time. In Symposium, Plato suggests that human beings were originally born with four arms, four legs, a single head, and two faces. However, because they were arrogant and challenged God, Zeus punished them by zapping them in half. After this, humans have spent their whole life searching for their original other half, searching for completion. While our scientific knowledge can easily disprove this theory now, it's still fun to think about what this infers about the soul: do we, or our souls, fundamentally need each other to be whole?