

Dear Reader,

It would feel dishonest not to acknowledge the challenges of my final publication of *The Catalyst*, and the overwhelming weight, or self-imposed pressure to make this issue exceptional. I often saw its success or failure as a metric for how good, bad, or mediocre my presence serving as Editor-In-Chief had been. In retrospect, this notion feels twistedly vain in comparison to the contributions of every student, artist, and collaboration: as I have learned—it is the people who define the magazine.

Nonetheless, in these final weeks, I have struggled.

Feeling stuck in a liminal, transitory period is something not only I, but many of us are feeling. Fearful of the future, the “real” world and its contracts and clauses—the only constant for me throughout this quarter was my writer's block, the belief that I had lost my creative edge. In these moments of uncertainty, I found myself feeling small and childish, wishing and praying, as kids are prone to do.

In these moments I look to my parents as heroes—keepers of knowledge—even though I am now entering 20 something-hood, a part of me will always remain a child searching for shared wisdom. And though my problems have become much larger, and my father has since passed, I often think about the motto attached in his memory, “*Success is doing what you Love.*”

In this respect, I can rest easy as I pass on the torch, my love for *The Catalyst* ineffable, and with Issue 38, the belief that we have done something wonderful. The success of this magazine can be attributed to the creative hands who have partnered and contributed, those who love and embody *The Catalyst*:

To Michelle Zauner, author of *Crying in H Mart*, for bringing a shared space for grief and the inspiration for the *Love, Language* Interlude in this issue. It was a pleasure to meet and collaborate with you, and a special thanks to Sara Kelly from *UCSB Reads* for making this opportunity possible.

To *The Devereux String Quartet*, thank you for bridging music, writing, and art with the project, *Intone*—what a beautiful synergy. And to the writers, artists, designers, the young Shakespeare's of the world,

“*If music be the food of love, play on.*”

And on we play—with this creative collective, spring should remind us that even in the brightest of times, motivation is never guaranteed, but commitment remains—a quiet agreement with oneself: to *The Catalyst*, to art, and to the enduring purpose of instructing, delighting, and surprising.

Rooted in this commitment, I approached our spring aesthetic as an extension of Issue 37, playing on writing and art as a movement that can change the way people think, feel, or understand the world. Taking these principles, we shifted the narrative to focus on embodiment and the environment. How we navigate our natural world: the communities we inhabit, the cultures we share, the emotions we feel.

I intended for this issue to feel rich, organic, and authentic, thinking about how we are inspired by materials in our daily life, though initially, this perspective was nothing more than a skewed fantasy, focusing on the truly beautiful and idyllic: fractals, symmetry, and balance. But while sitting in on one of our student peer review groups, a poem about a plastic lawyer led me to formulate an honest version of “environment.”

In a world so filtered and curated, the questions began to surface more urgently: how do we distinguish between natural and artificial? How do consumers exist within nature itself? And what does it mean to inhabit a world we are constantly reshaping?

When you begin this journey through Issue 38, I ask you to think through these unknowns with us: to appreciate our art and writing for their idiosyncrasies, their organic progressions, and their imperfections—but most of all, the way they persist in making us ask questions.

And as you reach the end of these pages, I find myself at an ending of my own—my final words as Editor-In-Chief: migration is a rite of passage, but *The Catalyst* was a home, thank you for bringing me purpose.