Welcome to the second issue of KNOTS: Undergraduate Journal of Disability Studies. Inside this journal you will find a range of work, spanning from academic essays to visual artworks. We, the Editorial Collective, have worked hard to put together a collection representing some of the best work being done in Disability Studies at the undergraduate level. This peer-reviewed journal is a collaborative project between us, all of the authors and peer reviewers, as well as faculty and staff from the Equity Studies program at New College, University of Toronto. We want to especially acknowledge the work of our seven volunteer peer reviewers, who donated their time to give indispensable feedback to our contributors.

As first time editors and curators, taking on the second issue of KNOTS was both exciting and nerve-wracking. Although our peers who put together the inaugural issue of Knots: geoff, Sarah Hoedlmoser, and Siva-Jeevini Sivarajah, provided plenty of guidance, the practicalities of producing a journal still proved tricky. As our process continued, we grappled even more with the many conceptual questions that arose, specifically regarding Disability access and representation in academia. Perhaps the best way of summing up these questions is: what kind of space were we looking to create in the pages of KNOTS?
In thinking this through, even more questions were raised. We had significant curatorial freedom, so, in order to find direction, we asked ourselves things like: Who is this journal for, who is our audience? Whose voices are ‘heard’ in the pages, and why? Conversely, who is being left out, and what do these absences tell us? Finally, is Disability theory accessible beyond the academic circles we’re writing from, and how can we work towards making it more accessible? As we worked, we continuously attempted to answer these significant questions.

At the end of March, we presented at the Reclaiming Our Bodies and Minds conference with several contributors to KNOTS. In this panel and the discussion that followed he blurring distinction between Disability theory and Disability art amongst the works featured in the journal became indubitable. This theme—the blurring of theory and art within Disability Studies—was raised again at Crippling the Arts, a 3-day symposium on Disability art that took place at the end of April. Here, our editorial advisor Laura Thrasher led a roundtable discussion on Disability aesthetics and pedagogy. She asked the group, “What can encounters with Disability aesthetics tell us about pedagogy?” And so, while distinctions between Disability theory and Disability arts exist, part of our practice as editors and ‘curators’ of an academic journal is to continue blurring these distinctions. We have tried to produce an issue in which theory and art intermingle in productive ways, where art becomes a form of theorizing and theory becomes an art.

As such, the works we chose for this publication range from visual art to academic essays, poetry, and to a mixture all of these mediums. Instead of compartmentalizing the pieces by genre, we interspersed them within a set of four themes: Disrupting tropes and binaries; Re-defining Madness; Bodies under surveillance; and Contesting normative narratives through Disability arts.

KNOTS is full of stories. Each author in this issue has a story to tell, and as editors, we thought of ourselves as also trying to tell a story
through this entire issue. The story we aimed to tell was one about contesting the dominant narrative of Disability that is simplistic and silencing, overwriting this narrative and providing alternative ways to conceptualize Disability, that give a glimpse into the complex and boundless nature of Disability. It is our hope that the spaces between these pieces are generative for our readers, viewers, and listeners—not only in considering the ways in which theory can be arts-informed, or art can be theoretically-informed, but also in questioning the ways in which the academy works to maintain the distinctions between these categories, what barriers this binary poses in terms of disability access, and how these distinctions can limit our understandings of disability, art, and theory.

KNOTS does not attempt to fit neatly into the category of ‘academic journal’ that is primarily comprised of dense theoretical writing. Instead, to borrow from Disability activist and educator Rod Michalko, we aim to highlight and celebrate “the difference that disability makes.” KNOTS strives to be a space that challenges and subverts (dis)ableism within academia, showcasing exciting undergraduate work in the field of Disability Studies, and contributing to ongoing conversations about Disability Justice.

_Sincerely,_

_Caleigh Inman and Aysha Natsheh_