



## “Ring the bells you still can ring”

U3A Dunedin has good reason to ring the bells this year as it celebrates thirty years of providing intellectual stimulation and social connection to its members. The first course was “The peopling of Otago,” held from February to April 1994. Ten years later in January 2004 the first issue of Forum was published during the chairmanship of Professor J.G.T. (Sam) Sneyd with Brian O’Rourke as the founding editor (another reason to ring the bells as Forum will also celebrate an anniversary this year, its twentieth).



Elizabeth Wilson

The Board commissioned a special 20th Anniversary issue of Forum, edited by Geoff Adams. Dated October 2014 and available on the U3A website, as is the first January 2004 issue, it is an interesting and informative read. Rosemary Hudson, Convenor of the History Committee, and her team did sterling work on researching the key milestones of the previous twenty years. Doug Holborow, Chair of the U3A Board, and Board members hosted an afternoon-tea party for all members at the Otago Golf Club to celebrate 20 years of U3A activities in Dunedin (written up in Forum November 2014).

The present Board is working on fitting ways to celebrate the two anniversaries this year and to acknowledge the special people and the highlights of the past ten years, and will keep members informed through the Newsletters and Forum.

Let’s ring a peal now for all the other organisations which strengthen our community and contribute to our enjoyment and well-being. Locally organised talks, concerts, plays, exhibitions and festivals abound. The Dunedin Fringe Festival goes

from strength to strength while the recent Dunedin Race Relations Week offered a diverse and thought-provoking programme. The opening celebrations with Kotahitaka at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum on the 16 March featured the induction of entries from Otago Girls’ High School and the Iranian Community in Dunedin in the “We are Otepoti Dunedin” book which showcases the rich tapestry of communities and cultures in Dunedin. The book is housed in hard copy format, and digitally, at Toitū and may be viewed on request. Every year during Race Relations Week new pages from groups of people who identify with a particular culture or ethnicity are added to it.

The Kotahitaka Charitable Trust was founded by a group of Dunedin people as a response to the terror attacks on the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch. It is based in Dunedin and is chaired by Dr Noelyn Hung. Its aims are to promote unity and to celebrate cultural and multiethnic diversity, particularly in Dunedin. The name ‘Kotahitaka’ was gifted to the Trust by Ngai Tahu with its blessing, in the Kāi Tahu dialect, to express the concept of unity in diversity.

Leonard Cohen’s exhortation to ring the bells to celebrate where the light, that multivalent word, gets in resonates with the aims and objectives of so many organisations in Dunedin and with U3A’s 30th anniversary and its ongoing commitment to celebrating light for its members.

Best wishes

Elizabeth Wilson  
Chairperson  
Board U3A Dunedin 2024

“Ring the bells you still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in every-  
thing  
That’s where the light gets in.”

Leonard Cohen, Anthem

## Thanking Linda!



Alan Jackson gives flowers to a very worthy recipient -- our past Chair Linda Kinniburgh...

## Programme Committee Report

# The U3A Engine continues!

Now well into the year, with the Autumn series successfully behind us, the great Dunedin U3A engine continues its onward course and we have now finalised our Winter offerings. As usual there is good variety. Art in Dunedin will tell of different ways the visual arts are blended with our city's life and history; the ever-popular Doug Hart will once again be revisiting English Stately Homes; the thorny, passionate topic of education will get another airing with What's Going on in Our Schools?; serious music lovers are in for a treat with Terence Dennis on Why Wagner?; medical science, always popular with our members, will have Drugs, Medicines and Miracles for their interest; and the lighter side of musical taste will be catered for with Dunedin Tales of Musical Theatre. And, looking ahead, we now have our sights set on Spring 2024 and even beyond.

Separately, it is timely to reflect on the value of site visits as a useful complement to the normal format of course presentations at the Otago Golf and Leith Bowling Clubs. They do not happen often but when they do they are much appreciated. Ones that come to mind have been visits to the Hocken Collections, Allied Press and most recently the Geology Museum as part of the Current Fossil Treasures course. This last attracted 105 visits, limited to 30 at a time on four occasions, out of a total enrolment of 129. And then there was the course at the Otago Museum's planetarium completely off-site. At their best, and so far they have all been good, they allow those visiting to behind scenes areas in operations not normally open to the public as well as giving added value to the course as a whole. Who can forget seeing an issue of the Otago Daily Times being printed

and collated before distribution? It was an awe inspiring sight. However, such visits are not suited to every course and with our large numbers they work best with staggered multiple visits to a single site. Only for very small enrolments, say thirty or less, could more than one site be visited. Which is a shame. Video visits are of course always possible but generally lack immediacy. Nevertheless, we believe that site visits are always an option worth exploring



Finally, RideShare has not been as popular with our members as originally hoped. Matching those able to give ride with those needing one has not always seemed straightforward. To make this easier an ingenious new behind-the-scenes functionality has been implemented that shows to those requesting a Ride the names and contact of those members residing within one kilometre of their own home. Try it and see!

**Linda Kinniburgh  
Stuart Strachan  
Co-chairs  
Programme Committee**

## Email Alert Spark to charge for Xtra

**Alan Jackson**

Spark have announced that they will charge for the use of an XtraMail address from May.

Some people might rush off to a free service such as Gmail or Yahoo, but the caveat is that so many services, I estimate

90 of those in my case (just to name a few: DCC, Contact Energy, Health Centre, Pharmacist, and all the newsletters I subscribe to), are linked to my e-mail address. Changing would be harder than getting a new credit card and updating the numbers with companies on auto pay!

Advice to members is... if you do decide to change your e-mail address, then let the U3A Membership Secretary know so that you don't miss out on U3A...

Though as well as grumbling about having to find a few extra dollars each month, I may be able to review my 'phone bill and remove any additional services that I might not now need.

## U3A Email Directory

Sending email correspondence to U3A Dunedin? Using addresses below will take your messages to the person who can assist.

### General information:

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### Programme Committee

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## U3A Postgraduate Award

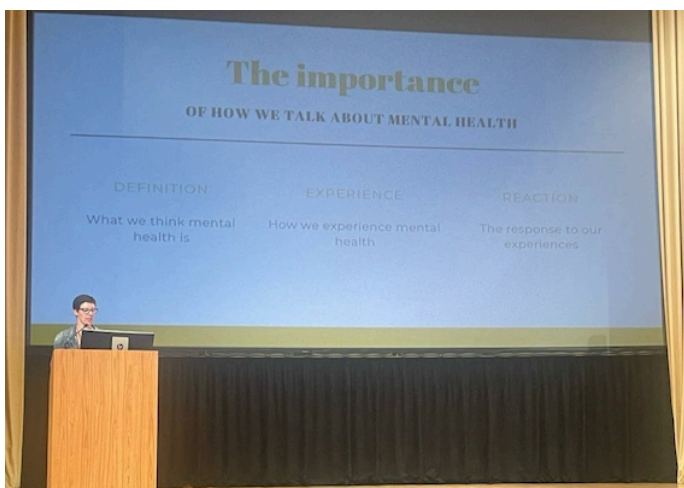
# Restorying youth mental health

Julia Watkin

In March 2023, with a little over a year to go on my doctoral clock, I decided I wanted this final dash to be about more than just writing up the thesis.

Finding the European Conference on Mental Health to be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in September, I set about the search for funding. The U3A Dunedin 150th Postgraduate Award happened to be closing at the end of the month and I figured I'd give it a shot, no expectations—if it worked, it worked, if not, that's that.

Spoiler alert—I'm writing to you now, so I guess it must have worked? I have so much gratitude for the U3A Dunedin—for giving opportunity to older students, for not having a whole raft of hoops to jump through in the application process, for choosing me and giving me the experience of a lifetime. I owe a lot to my supervisor, Susan Wardell, who wrote a beautiful reference letter, and I'm indebted to you all to make the most of the gift that you so generously gave me and to pay it forward in every way I can.



Here I am, presenting on the main stage at the Grand Hotel in Ljubljana—as nervous as all get-out, but also pretty proud. Proud to be from Aotearoa. Proud of the mahi we're trying to do and the story we're telling through this project. A story of youth mental health that is different from the one you read in the paper. A story in which our young people

aren't in crisis—they actually have a mature, holistic, realistic view of their mental health and how to educate and support it. This is the story that's come out of the research I've done for my PhD—which I'm currently writing up in a less-than-traditional thesis. I started out doing a grounded theory project on what mental health means to young people and I ended up with a grounded patchwork ethnography story redefining mental health and exploring what education and support services should look like, from the perspective of young people—for young people.

As well as presenting at the conference, the U3A award helped me to learn more about how mental health is being addressed in other countries. I visited Trieste, Italy, famous for its model of care. I was lucky enough to get a tour of the Trieste Mental Health Department, which is also a WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health—all the photos and artwork throughout the building show that they put people at the heart of everything they do.



I was also warmly met at The Mix in London, a UK charity that provides online support for young people. They're trying to break into the education space and finding it hard to get buy-in from schools, and it just shows the importance of having the framework in place at a policy level to bring education and support services together in a way that benefits all.

As we discovered through this research, education should act as a support and, likewise, support should be educational. It's my hope that the mahi we've done here can act as a conduit for constructive collaborations in youth mental health. Watch this space.

## Word Wonders

Playing *Mantis*

John Hale

Last weekend, three generations of our family played a new card-game called Mantis.

You have to collect and match cards by colour, from a pack containing all the combinations of three colours out of a range of seven. Only one colour on the reverse, out of three showing on the obverse. You must guess which, and declare whether you are scoring or stealing. Thereby you collect pairs or more, you hope, by either drawing from the pack or stealing from other players if you guess the fall of the card right. If you don't, you surrender your pick to the victim.

Quite a noisy game, though not so hectic as Pit or Snap. What struck me, was its conformity to the analysis of the French games-theorist Roger Caillois. He discerns four key ingredients in Play as such, be it in card-games, or sports, or playground games; or by extension, to fictions like comedy.

First is Chance, or *alea* in this case the chances of the draw. Next is rules as just described; *loi*, laws: givens, which limit successful playing in a way opposite to *alea*. Third comes *mimicry*, as the players move beyond their usual or full personalities to the different behaviours required to compete and win in the game. Have you noticed how in games a quiet person becomes noisy, aggressive, proactive and so forth? Or wins by stealth, staying quiet? Poker-faces are produced.

Caillois final ingredient is also psychological, *ilinx*. This Greek word means the excitement or giddiness when the game heats up. Game ON. People get excited and voluble, and

tense, so tense that you may wonder why games can be worth such passion. But thus it is, whether or not there is betting on the outcome. Gaming, note the name, certainly unbalances.

Coming back to Mantis, it makes you choose between the joy of winning and the joy of stealing, as they often don't go together.

Quiet accumulation of points brings success, only slowly. Stealing successfully is more fun, and competitive in spirit. It can get personal, and prove distracting. Ilinx takes you over. Stealthy, steady accrual may score better than stealing, but equally it may not. And it makes you furtive and smug: is that better than manic dis-possession?

Games are a licensed, temporary unsociality; antisocial behaviour. They encourage deception. O, deplorable. We are a curious species; why do we need this licensed release?

Watch out for the crafty players who can mix slyness and timely aggression. They are the ones who will

come out on top of the heap. Gosh, it sounds like politics!



## U3ADUNEDIN CHARITABLE TRUST

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## Photography

# Whats a nice gull like you doing in a place like this?

Graham Corbett

On a journey to Lake Ohau I stopped to photograph the lenticular clouds gathering around the mountain tops lining the glacial valley up which my road meandered. But then, I had the feeling that I was being watched.

There! A black and white shape perched close by? Just hang on whilst I grab the bird-lens from my car. And hang on it did, perched on top of a fence post and clearly trying to puzzle out what it was that I was doing.



Through the lens's magnification I could see that my observer was actually not a gull, but a black-fronted tern. Terns aren't gulls, although they may seem so at first, as they have that same athletic, seabird shape and are mostly black and white. Close inspection reveals a more delicately built creature though, with a rather pointed looking beak. In flight, terns are almost acrobatic, performing stunts of abrupt changes in direction like swallows and martins do. It has earned others in the tern family the title of sea martin in some parts of the world. There are many types of tern in the world, but *Chlidonias albostratus* is one of the four so-called marsh terns and the only one of them that lives solely in New Zealand.

Some weeks before, I had spent a pleasant day photographing the antics of white-fronted terns near The Mole at Aramoana, where they had gathered in large numbers, sitting on the rocks and piles or

else whirling as if they were clouds made of birds, twisting and turning around one another and then, suddenly one would peel off and dive to catch a really small fish. Fish in beak, they'd then return to the rocks and perch alongside another tern and seem to proffer the fish as a gift. Not always with ready acceptance I noted, but then not every cinema outing results in a kiss for humans either.



Black-fronted terns visit the seaside to feed also, but I have never photographed them there before they depart inland to the braided rivers where they are known to breed.

Black-fronted terns are also called the ploughman's friend for their apparent confidence when in close contact with humans and for following the ploughs upturned soil in search of food. So it's no surprise that this tern is unafraid to be so close to me.

Further down the valley, by the stony banks of the braided river that runs out of Lake Ohau should be the place for the springtime family raising, but I'm guessing that there were juicy worms to be easily had in the moist pasture alongside my route on this misty morning and that green pond under the trees mid-way to the mountains foot was probably also another larder stuffed full of tasty morsels. Everybody needs a break from their routine now and then.



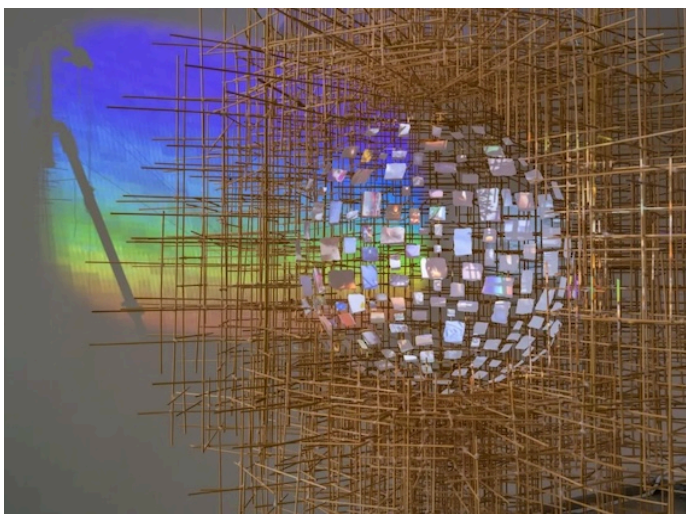
Trying hard at my landscape photography, I'm easily distracted by a pretty gull.

## Art Life

## Sarah Sze's Worlds

Most (all?) conceptual art is baffling, of course.

What distinguishes Sarah Sze's stuff from, say, Duchamp's is her insistence on bafflement as a form of realism, instead of an avant-garde prank. If art is about making sense of things, she said in a 2019 TED talk, then her goal is "to try and find the kind of wonder, but also the kind of futility, that lies in that very fragile pursuit." She's not provoking, she's depicting—her work might not add up, but neither does the world.



*"Things Caused to Happen" Sarah Sze 2023*

Instead, ask yourself what has been left out—what's been chiselled away from the raw slab of Everything? Individuality and interiority, for starters; like J. M. W. Turner or James Cameron, Sze doesn't really do human-scale art. There's something refreshing about her work's impersonality; while other artists wallow in their silly little lives, daring audiences not to care, Sze goes for something more coolly universal. She was born in Boston in 1969, got her B.A. from Yale and her M.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts, and then set about winning the kind of success normally reserved for soul-sellers: commissions for M.I.T. and the High Line, a MacArthur grant, biennials around the world. Her work, unburdened by backstory or cultural particulars, plays as well in Venice as it does in Guangzhou.

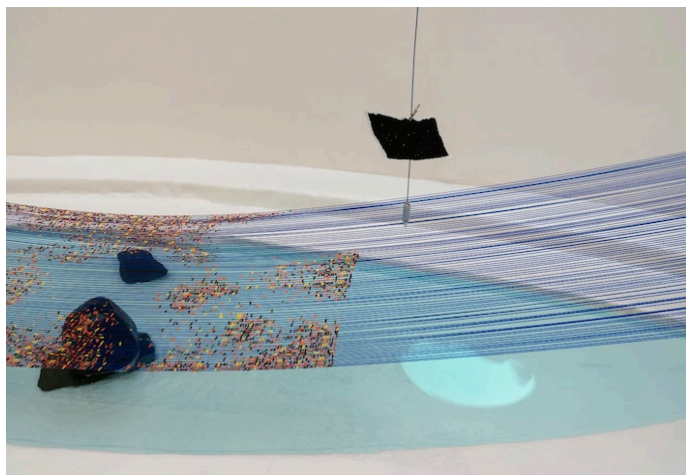
And as you spend more time with these installations, you do begin to see how their parts fit together. A sharp little "eureka" strikes when you realise that the long blue string in "Diver" reaches all the way up to the oculus of the Guggenheim and then down to the fountain on the ground floor; a second one comes a few feet later, when you notice that a pendulum is being guided by a fan.

Sit and watch, and the explosion of images becomes more predictable, until you can sense the little square of static zipping by a second before it actually does. You may never understand Sze's art, but you can't help but adjust to its rhythms.



*"Slice," 2023*

The intended effect seems to be something like runner's high for the mind: a sense of being exhausted yet euphoric, trudging and floating at the same time. When Sze does enthrall, it has little to do with size or complexity. She knows that futility need not be dull.



*"Diver," 2023*

You may feel a certain sheepishness on behalf of our species (after eons of evolution, this is all we've come up with?). You may also find yourself praying that the twenty-first century makes more sense in hindsight than it does right now!

[This article is abridged from the *New Yorker* under license. Read the [original article](#).]

## Review

# Dinner with Darwin!

**Andre Smith***Food, Drink, and Evolution*, by Jonathan Silvertown, University of Edinburgh (Chicago Press)

There are too many books about food, so Silvertown tells us right at the beginning. He is most probably correct, but this book isn't one of the too many in fact, anyone with an interest in biology, food and evolution will find this volume irresistible, although even people who don't care about these subjects should still find plenty of interest in these pages.

As befits a good chef, Silvertown, professor of evolutionary ecology at Edinburgh University, presents an enticing menu with four entrées: natural science, anthropology, physiology and history. The menu also has a large choice of starters in the form of interesting snippets of information, such as that there are more than 4 000 edible plants, and that mice can smell carbon dioxide!

After a brief introduction, readers are invited to an imaginary dinner with the hominin family, such as *Homo heidelbergensis*, *H. erectus*, *H. habilis* and of course *H. neanderthalensis*, all with eating habits unknown to modern humans.

Food can only be enjoyed when diners can smell and taste what they eat, and Silvertown discusses these two senses in moderate detail, also the large number of associated pseudogenes, a truly fascinating part of our evolutionary heritage.



This is followed by a review of how humans probably discovered cooking, how shellfish contributed to our journey out of Africa and our domestication of some animals to adapt to our dietary habits or, perhaps, the other way round.

An extremely interesting section deals in a very clear manner with the biochemistry of plants defence mechanisms against herbivores and how humans render those toxins harmless or make

use of them. In the process makes a very profound remark: A heroin addict is a bystander casualty of the war between poppies and caterpillars.

Herbs and spices, quite properly, get their own chapter after all, what is a piece of meat or fish without pepper, curry or any of the other wonderful spice mixtures available? Desserts are also considered. Silvertown does an admirable job of explaining the dangers of too much carbohydrates, although, strictly speaking, too many calories by themselves are also undesirable, irrespective of the source.

The future of food security also comes under the spotlight and his sober analysis of genetically modified crops should (or so I hope) put at least some anxious minds at rest.

This is a book about food, but anyone looking for recipes will be disappointed. Instead, the reader gets a thorough and very interesting survey of the natural history of the human diet through the ages, as seen through the lenses of evolution, physiology and the prehistory of *H. sapiens*, with a strong focus on evolution as the driving force for genetic change in humans, plants and animals. As such it explains much or most of the present state of affairs with regard to our diet.



Apart from the above-mentioned topics, there are clear discussions of the physiology of digestion, changes in grains, the evolution of muscles in fish, the importance of ortho- and retro-nasal olfaction, the evolution and breeding of chickens, the arms race between plants and their predators, toxic honey and alcohol tolerance, to name just a few.

The book has 232 pages, but because of extensive and very interesting notes at the end, the text fills only 195 pages. Remarkably enough, Silvertown managed to distill an amazing amount of fascinating information into less than 200 pages.

I highly recommend this book!

[Andre is leaving us, after being such a effective and helpful Interest Groups Convenor. We hope very much to continue to have contributions from him -- Editor]

## Poetry pieces

## Ono no Komachi



We are accustomed to thinking of great writers as men, with Shakespeare, Dante & Milton in mind. But over a thousand years ago, by a strange linguistic quirk in which for 400 years men wrote in a foreign language (Tang Chinese) -- with the native tongue and script kept by women -- notable female geniuses arose in Japan.

The two most prominent, Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, lived at the turn of the millennium. Murasaki wrote the great psychological novel *Genji* -- story of the 'shining prince' who is yet no prince: nothing like it would be written in the West for nine centuries.. Shōnagon composed a long 'diary' of essays, lists, and memories, the *Pillow Book*; which opens with the evocative phrase "In the summer, the nights..."

Two hundred years before though, a woman poet named Ono no Komachi was born around 820. Considered in her youth to be a great beauty, she lived ninety years. She is named as one of the six 'immortal' poets of Japan, writing of love, of nature and of old age.

Her poems took the imperial *waka* form of 31 syllables (modern *tanka*), which even more than other Japanese verse is virtually untranslatable; since Japanese has an abundance of homophones, words pronounced alike, and *waka* abounds with these and with connecting 'pillow' words, which turn the reference and meaning.

But let's look at two or three poems, just to get a sense of this amazing woman:

*Seeing the moonlight  
spilling down  
through these trees,  
my heart brims  
with autumn.*

Ono is a poet of autumn, the season occurring frequently in her work, tellingly in love poems:

*The Autumn night  
is long only in name--  
We've done no more  
than gaze at each other  
and it's already dawn.*

But a later season is coming:

*Truly now I've grown old  
in the winter rains  
even your words of love  
have altered--  
falling leaves.*

(From the Japanese, by Jane Hirshfield)

## Design corner Site-specific sculpture!



London's Barbican Centre's Conservatory has been hosting an immersive and site-specific exhibition from Indian artist Ranjani Shettar of luscious greenery spilling over concrete balconies and labyrinthine pathways. What entrancing design it shows!

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