

Japan America Society of Minnesota



通 信

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Recap: Artist Talk “Water Flows, Life Blooms” with Mayumi Amada



On February 25th, JASM members, friends, and staff gathered virtually for Mayumi Amada’s artist talk. The evening’s falling snowflakes made an appropriate backdrop for many of Amada-san’s works. JASM director Rio Saito described first meeting the artist and

discovering that they grew up in the same small town in Gunma prefecture! Mayumi Amada came to Minnesota to pursue education and her dream of becoming an artist. “And now I am living my dream,” she said.

Mayumi-san described an influential art experience from her grad school days. Minimalist artist Donald Judd (1928-1994) created a huge, peaceful space filled with large aluminum boxes arranged in a simple pattern. The forms and peaceful atmosphere made a deep impression on Amada.

Doilies have been a recurring theme in Mayumi-san’s work. Why doilies? According to the artist: they are beautiful, elegant, and delicate. Patterns and techniques have been handed down from generations of needleworkers. Amada’s own grandmothers taught her to crochet. Repeated stitches make patterns which repeat in circular forms. Circles are often used as a metaphor for mortality and life – life “cycles” – and this adds meaning to the designs.

Experimentation follows ideas in the artist’s work. Amada described how empty fields and lakes got her thinking about what materials would work to create the art she envisioned. She eventually discovered buoyant rope and crocheted giant floating doilies. The movement of the doilies added to the effect; you can watch a short video of the undulating forms here:

mayumiamada.myportfolio.com/remembering-grandmothers



Recap: Artist Talk continues on page 2.

Recap: Digital J-Quiz 2022



(Bottom left) Level IV winners from Madison County Day School (top, left to right); Rio Saito, JASM Executive Director; Mina Morichika and Patricia Breun, teachers of Japanese at Madison County Day School

On Saturday, February 12th, high school students from across Minnesota and Wisconsin gathered for J-Quiz 2022 online, due to the COVID pandemic. This year, 74 students from seven high schools competed in a battle of cultural knowledge and Japanese language proficiency for a chance to advance to the 30th National Japan Bowl in April.

Whether online or in person, our goal for J-Quiz hasn’t changed: to increase cultural awareness and understanding and to bring together students who have an interest in Japan. This event was organized by JASM in cooperation with the Minnesota Council of Teachers of Japanese (MCTJ), supported by the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago and many volunteers who want to support our youth. JASM expresses our deep appreciation for our J-Quiz sponsors and volunteers. Please take a look at the acknowledgements on page 3.

This was our second Digital J-Quiz. We brought back Level I competition, a T-shirt contest and a college fair.

Following student check-in, the event began with the opening ceremony. JASM Executive Director Rio Saito gave a warm welcome to all the students and teachers. Then we received a greeting from the Honorable Consul-General of Japan in MN, ND, and SD, Ron Leonhardt, who addressed the importance of learning about other cultures. Next we heard from Consulate General of Japan in Chicago Consul-General Hiroshi Tajima, who is grateful for JASM’s ongoing commitment to events like J-Quiz. He thanked teachers and parents for supporting and encouraging students as they learn Japanese.



Honorable Consul-General Ron Leonhardt



Consul-General Tajima

Recap: Digital J-Quiz 2022 continues on page 2

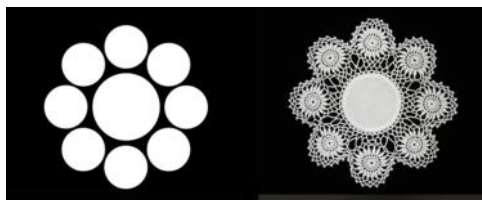
Recap: Artist Talk “Water Flows, Life Blooms” with Mayumi Amada *continues...*

In works large and small, Amada often reminds us of our mortality, in words, images, and devices such as mirrors, light, and shadow. It was fascinating to see how the artist worked with various materials until she achieved the effect she had imagined. I was inspired by the way she literally magnified the humble doily into giant hanging, floating, or wearable artworks. It's a wonderful lifting up of what is traditionally women's craft into museum environments and large spaces. Mayumi-san's artistry helps us see what might be thought of as “ordinary” in new ways.



Light and shadow, form and emptiness, single and overlapping patterns: Amada's large, carefully lit works transform rooms dramatically. Using large flat or cylindrical forms and special lighting, crocheted or cut-out patterns become an entire stunning environment.

This artist has been inspired by decades-old crochet books from many countries. She has used these traditional designs in many ways: for cast metal works, a piano, clothing, and huge museum and outdoor installations. She has worked alone and in community project settings.



Mayumi-san next talked about the form and meaning of her Japanese family crest, an arrangement of nine circles. She

discovered this pattern in many places and objects, from doilies to kimono silks to corporate logos to an ancient Japanese Buddhist mandala.

Recycled materials are another form and theme of the artist's work. She discovered a doily- or flower-like form at the bottom of common soda pop bottles. Recycling is another “circle of life” metaphor embedded here. The recent scientific discovery of several species of plastic-eating mushrooms inspired more art, crocheted from recycled grocery bags.



Generations, re-generation; beginnings, endings, form and emptiness; light, shadow, tradition, mortality. These concepts flow through Mayumi Amada's work. Many thanks to the artist for giving the JASM community an introduction to this

thought-provoking and meaningful art.

There was a brief Q&A at the end of the talk. Amada-san said that she is actively looking for new projects and connections.

You can see more of the artist's work on her web site:
mayumiamada.myportfolio.com

Betty Tisel, JASM member and volunteer

Recap: Digital J-Quiz 2022 *continues...*



The students checked into session rooms to compete privately in teams of two to three, starting with Levels I and II. Level III and IV students were offered two cultural presentations while they waited for their sessions. This year we were fortunate to offer two great videos. One was from Maria Traxler and Jenn Justad, who showed us how to dance Seicho Yosakoi, and another from Harisen Daiko (taiko drumming). These cultural presentations both taught and entertained.

In addition to the cultural presentations there was an online college fair where students could learn about colleges in Minnesota and Wisconsin that have Japanese language courses. Another J-quiz option: viewing J-Pop & culture videos curated by Aiko Hatano, Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) Coordinator who has been working for JASM since January of this year.

While results were being tabulated, JASM President Bob Luck shared his thoughts on the strengths of language learning and J-Quiz. Even though Luck lived in Japan for a long time and speaks Japanese fluently, he was impressed with the difficulty of questions the students were answering in this quiz questions. Finally, Rio Saito announced the winners and closed the 2022 Digital J-Quiz.



Bob Luck, JASM President



Level I: Shakopee High School

JASM would like to congratulate the winning teams as well as all this year's competitors. Students who participated at J-Quiz showed their strong teamwork and passion from beginning to end. Here are the results.

J-Quiz 2022 Winners



Level II: Shakopee High School

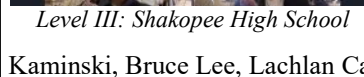
Level I: Shakopee High School, Anna Haremza, Think Tran, Celine Thomas



Level III: Shakopee High School

Level II: Shakopee High School, Thony Iv, Joanna Lin, Lashley Pambuen

Level III: Shakopee High School, Luth Khairulfuda, Chandra Tran, Nick Nguyen



Level IV: Madison County Day School

Level IV: Madison County Day School, Nicholas

Kaminski, Bruce Lee, Lachlan Canavan (pictured on page 1)

The J-Quiz committee received 19 creative t-shirt designs from participating high schools. The winner was Hazel Onsrud from Southwest High School. Thank you and congratulations!

Special Thanks for Supporting Digital J-Quiz 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

JASM would like to thank the following supporters for their tremendous effort. Without their help JASM could not held the J-Quiz 2022 successful.

Minnesota Council of Teachers of Japanese
For planning the event and helping their students prepare

Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago
For sponsoring the event

**Michiko Kato Dressen, Hiroko Nagai, Miho Nagai,
Rio Saito, Naomi Satoh, Yoko Ueno**
J-Quiz Planning Committee

Michiko Kato Dressen, Fusako Muro, Miho Nagai
Question Preparation

Motoko Hioki, Michiko Smith
Volunteer Coordinators

Sukanya Momsen, Miho Nagai, Sheryl Patricelli
Question Readers

**Mariquita Anderson, Chris Armacost, Marc Bleher, Kat Dalager,
Shelbie Gray, Marnie Jorenby, Hae Ree Jun, Keiko Kawakami,
Maria Lin, Gabrielle Madjus, Akiko Matsumoto, Fumiko Matsumoto,
Ayumi Mita, Satomi Mitani, Fusako Muro, Miho Nagai,
Ritsuko Narita, Neena Peck, Kenichi Tazawa, Debbie Wang**
Graders and Moderators

**Wendy Jo Gertjeanssen, Marit Hanson, Julie Schramke
Christopher Stephan, Tristan Stephan, Vanessa Stephan**
Cultural Segment—Harisen Daiko

Jenn Justad, Maria Traxler
Cultural Segment—Seicho Yosakoi Dance

Aiko Hatano
J-Pop & Culture Video Making

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Ken Port Scholarship supports Japan Bowl expense
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Hinamatsuri at the Rourke Art Museum in Moorhead, MN



Hinamatsuri, the Japanese Doll Festival, is held on March 3rd as a seasonal event to celebrate girls and pray for their continued health and happiness. The set of dolls (*hina*) associated with this festival is displayed in public settings and private homes.

On February 26th, I visited the Rourke Art Museum in Moorhead, MN to see the whole set of Hina dolls. The dolls are on loan from the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society <https://www.npbgs.org/gardens> and they welcome the public to visit the exhibit through March 27 at the Rourke, <https://www.therourke.org/>, 521 Main Ave, Moorhead, MN.

Doll exchanges between Japan and America began in 1927 when each state in America received at least one doll as a sign of friendship between the two countries. In 2013, JACES (Japan -America Cultural Exchange Society) of Okayama renewed friendship with North Dakota by gifting a complete set of 15 hina dolls to the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society in recognition of a plan to create a Japanese garden at Yunker Park in Fargo. Each year the Hina dolls are displayed in a different area venue.

At the Rourke Museum, on the first floor, there are a lot of beautiful oil paintings by artists from Fargo, North Dakota. The Japanese displays are on the second floor. There are some Japanese *ukiyo-e* (a traditional art form from the Edo period) and other Japanese art objects in the same room. I didn't expect there to be any other displays besides the Hina dolls. It was worth visiting!



The Rourke Art Museum is open 1 - 5 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Admission is free. Face masks are required but disposable surgical masks are available at the reception desk. I highly recommend visiting the museum during your spring break!

Aiko Hatano
Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) Coordinator

Tom Haeg's Book Review

1. *Japan, Russia, and Their Territorial Dispute: The Northern Delusion*; James D. J. Brown, Routledge Press, 2016
2. *Japan's Russia: Challenging the East-West Paradigm*; Olga Solovieva, Cambria Press, 2020
3. *Russian Policy towards China and Japan: The El'tsin [Yeltsin] and Putin Periods*; Natasha Khurt, Routledge Press, 2011



On Thursday, February 24, 2022, Russian armed forces unlawfully attacked and invaded the sovereign territory of Ukraine. This certainly is an inflection point in international relations. Condemnations by heads of state were swift and vocal. Japan, while hesitant to impose sanctions on Russia in 2014 when Crimea was annexed, made haste to embrace them now.

Here are three books for the JASM reader to better weigh the aftermath of February 24, 2022, as it affects Japan's foreign policy. All three are relevant because they were written during Putin's regime.

Japan, Russia, and Their Territorial Dispute is a comprehensive study of the relations between the erstwhile Soviet Union and Japan and their claims to the Northern Territories, the four islands north of Hokkaido. The study finds that Japan's diplomatic corps initially overestimated their leverage over Russia and consequently return of the islands remains problematic.

Japan's Russia was recently released in September 2020 and is over 560 pages. It is an excellent analysis of background history between Russia and Japan and geo-political relations of the Far East.

Russian Policy is part of an extended series published by the British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom. The series includes Ukraine's Foreign and Security Policy (No. 1) and State Building in Ukraine (No. 10). It is partly based on Khurt's doctoral thesis that rapprochement between Russia and Japan was made difficult because of Japan's relations with the United States. Khurt opines that Putin intends an 'economization' of foreign policy with Japan to fashion new initiatives dealing with energy policy and disputes over the Kuril Islands. He figures that high oil prices in Russia's favor translated into intransigence in dealing with the territories.

Tom Haeg

Japan America Society of Minnesota

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Japan America Society of Minnesota
P.O. Box 26639, Minneapolis, MN 55426

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Thanks to the following new JASM members:

Catherine Hunter, Christopher Kelly, Nanoko Sato

Thanks to the following renewing JASM members:

Jameson Collins, Aaron Eastwood, Laura Johnson,
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Maggie Quam, Jose Rivera,
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2/22/2022

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1/31/2022

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通信

Tsūshin
March 2022

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a non-profit, non-political association engaged in bringing the peoples of Japan and the United States closer together in mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Through programs and interchange, it endeavors to promote an appreciation of cultural, educational, economic, public, and other affairs of interest to both peoples. Membership in the society is open to individuals, corporations, and other organizations interested in furthering its programs.

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a member of the National Association of Japan-America Societies.

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Digital J-Quiz 2022



Level IV 3rd place, North High School



Level II 2nd place, North High School



Level IV 3rd place, Denmark HS



Level II 3rd place, North High School



Students from Southwest High School



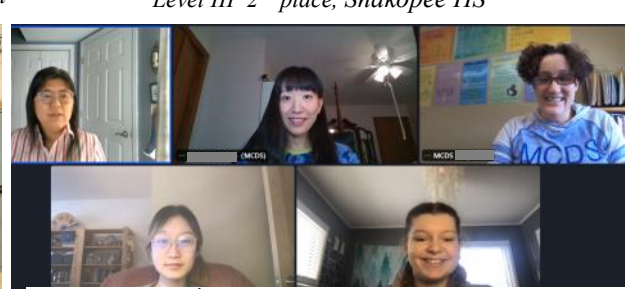
Level III 2nd place, Shakopee HS



Level II 3rd place, Southwest High School



Students from Denmark High School



Level IV 2nd place, Madison County Day School