

FGL Community Newsletter

**Florals and festivals left
and right!**

Immerse yourself in the Miyagi Museum of Art,
try some new foods, and master some board
games as you flip through the FGL newsletter
Summer 2026 edition!



**ASK SENPAI: SERA KOO
MIYAGI MUSEUM OF ART
THREE MUST-TRY SUMMER FOODS IN JAPAN
PLAY BOARD GAMES IN SUMMERTIME!**

Ask Senpai: Sera Koo

Jagriti Srivastava, Xinyi Liu

This semester, I got the opportunity to interview Sera Koo, a first year PhD student from Korea.

A little bit about Sera

Sera came to Japan 6 years ago as an undergraduate student in IMAC-U, after which she pursued IMAC-G and secured an early graduation to proceed to her PhD. She is a member of the Okabe lab and her area of interest is composites used in Aircrafts. She also had the MEXT scholarship during her study in IMAC-U.

Q. What do you like the most about Sendai and Tohoku University?

I really like the nature that surrounds the university. I like to watch the seasonal changes on my way to the lab. Along with that, I really like Japanese food. I wanted to do Engineering and always wanted to come to Japan to study abroad, so getting into Tohoku University fulfilled both my dreams. After getting exemption from the exam for Master's, since I was very satisfied with my assigned lab, I decided to continue here for Master's and now PhD.

Q. What made you want to pursue a Doctorate degree and what are your plans after finishing your Phd?

I decided that I wished to do a PhD back in undergraduate. I did not hate what I was doing here, and I wished to pursue research in RnD, so that was pretty much a requirement. As I enjoyed my time in the lab and this place, I decided to continue my studies here. After completing my Doctorate degrees I think I want to do a Post Doc here too, and then slowly enter the field of RnD.

Q. Could you describe your time in your lab, how much has it changed since when you were in undergraduate?

In my undergraduate years most of my labmates only spoke Japanese. This made interaction with my peers really difficult, but it motivated me to learn the language. After learning Japanese I was able to become good friends with my peers. After I transitioned to Masters, most of my time was spent in research. I put a lot of effort into the work I was doing and secured an early graduation, but now that I look back at it I feel it was a bit unbalanced. With my life in Phd my life is a lot more balanced, and I live a little more too. I realised that a right balance between work and other enjoyable activities was very important.

Q. During your time in Tohoku University was there anything special that you learnt outside the classroom?

I think one of the most important things I learnt was about being an adult. Being independent, finding an apartment and even paying my rent. I even learnt how to make friends during my time working at the GLC. I developed the skill of being extroverted around groups of people and presenting in front of an audience.

Q. That's so nice to hear! What is your life like outside of academic work here in Sendai, any culture shocks in Japan and what would you like to tell those who are new here?

I like to watch movies in theatres. I really enjoy the process of reserving the seats in a theatre and buying food to be there and watch movies. For those who are new in Sendai, it is a nice and quiet place. It is not like Tokyo or Kyoto with its hustle and bustle, so if you are the kind of person who enjoys nature and peaceful areas then you shall like it here.

For the culture shocks, I think my biggest culture shock was that there were escalators and elevators everywhere. I don't think they are that easily available in Korea or other parts of the world.

Q. Anything that you wish to tell the present IMAC-U students or yourself back when you were in IMAC-U?

I think I would like to say good luck to all the present students. I think it is important to study Japanese too. I see some students getting upset about not getting into their preferred labs, but it is not really anything to worry about. Please don't have low self-esteem as it is always possible to change what you do. There is also always a possibility of finding something you really like in your present lab.

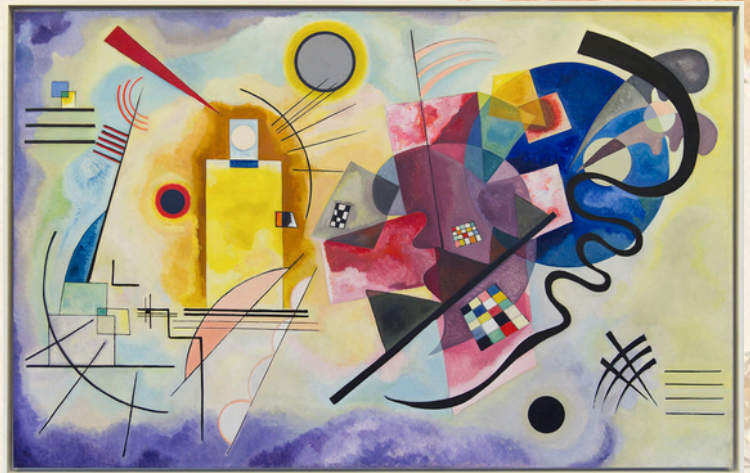
Miyagi Museum of Art

Chonmabhum (I-nam) Chaisrisawatsuk

Closed for renovation since June 2023 (before I even started my studies here), the Miyagi Museum of Art has been a particular interest of mine ever since arriving in Sendai. First opened in 1981, the museum, nestled near the Kawauchi campus, has housed more than 7,000 works over the past decades.

Marking the 45th anniversary of the museum, the Miyagi Museum of Art has completed its renovation and reopened with a new exhibition celebrating artists from within the Tohoku region, Japanese modern art contemporaries, and foreign figures that shape the western-like style of many modern Japanese paintings. Tohoku University students can enter the general Collection Exhibition for free if you show your university ID at the manned window; for special exhibitions, the fee is half price.

Headlining the first half of the exhibition are multiple pieces by Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky. Heralded as one of the pioneers of the abstraction of modern art, Kandinsky's works are often compared to classical music pieces. As some of the first few examples of pure abstract paintings, Kandinsky's paintings are characterised by their use of dynamic geometry and sharp contrasting colors.



Kandinsky, Wassily. Yellow-Red-Blue. 1925. Oil on canvas, 128 × 201.5 cm. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

While the Japanese art forms that are most commonly depicted in western media are often *nihonga* and *ukiyo-e* paintings, during the Meiji period, the word *bijutsu* was first used to categorize so-called "fine arts" within the era, often influenced by western painting styles. One of the pioneers of the *yōga* (洋画, Transliterated as Western Art) movement, whose paintings are exhibited in the museum, is Takahashi Yuichi. Often referred to as the first Japanese artist to fully master western oil painting, Takahashi's paintings usually depict modern portraiture, landscapes, and still lifes. One of his most famous works, *Salmon*, depicting a hanging dry-cured salmon, is recognized by the Agency of Cultural Affairs as an Important Cultural Property of Japan and is currently exhibited in the Miyagi Museum of Art.

Spread across the many exhibit halls are works of other culturally impactful artists such as one of Picasso's paintings from early in his career, one of Alfon Mucha's acclaimed posters for Theatre Bernard, and even an entire exhibition room for the Japanese bronze sculptor, Sato Churyo.

While the exhibition will run until the 23rd of August of this year, many of the pieces mentioned are parts of the gallery's permanent collection and would be available for viewing all year round, except when a specific painting is loaned to another museum. The Miyagi Museum of Art also runs community painting classes and exhibits pieces drawn by local students and residents alike, as well as many paintings made by and/or depicting residents of Miyagi prefecture and its culture.

Three Must-Try Summer Foods in Japan

Koharu Miyoshi

Japan is well known for its seasonal events, such as summer festivals and spring cherry-blossom viewing. Quietly flourishing alongside these events are special seasonal foods that make the most of in-season fresh ingredients. I'd like to highlight three of the many popular summer dishes in Japan: one luxury dish, one dish with special ties to Sendai, and one dish with unique ingredients.

In addition to the cooked dishes listed below, some fresh summer ingredients to pick up at the store are eggplant, cucumbers, tomatoes, corn, and watermelon. These are especially helpful to combat summer fatigue, since they're very hydrating and not heavy on the stomach.

Unagi

Eating eel in July has been a tradition since the Edo period. Although the peak season for eel is winter, it became popularized in the summer as a rich, nutritious food to celebrate Doyo no Ushi no Hi, a zodiac-based holiday that marks the transition from spring to summer. The most common unagi dish is una-jyu: grilled eel with a sweet soy sauce-based glaze over rice.

Cold noodles

A well-known trio of cold noodle dishes in the Tohoku region is Yamagata cold ramen, Morioka cold noodles, and Sendai hiyashi chūka. The origin of hiyashi chūka is rumored to be the Chinese-style restaurant Ryutei in Sendai, but it is so ubiquitously enjoyed throughout Japan that its origins are sometimes contested. Adopted from a Chinese dish, it uses cold ramen noodles topped with sliced cucumbers, ham, tomatoes, and omelettes and with a soy sauce and vinegar-based cold broth. In addition to hiyashi chūka, you may see cold udon and cold soba dishes being offered at restaurants that normally serve warm dishes.

Gōya Champurū

One of the more unique summer dishes in Japan is gōya champurū, a dish originating in Okinawa. Gōya is the Japanese name for bitter melon— which is a summer vegetable— and champurū is a type of Okinawan stir-fry using vegetables and fresh Okinawan tofu. As its name suggests, the dish is made by stir-frying bitter melon, eggs, pork, and firm tofu. Some make arrangements to the seasonings to soften the bitter taste of the gōya, which can be an acquired taste.

Sources:

<https://japantravel.navitime.com/en/area/jp/guide/NTJjtg2602031-en/>

<https://hiraganatimes.com/japan-savvy/hiyashi-chuka-now-serving>

https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/k_ryouri/search_menu/3951/index.html

Play Board Games in Summertime!

Alicia Adrian, Pavarit Phanichkul

The weather is changing every day: you can feel the heat waves coming from the sun, and on some other days, the rain and humidity might make you want to stay indoors. Even though we encourage everyone to go outside and enjoy summer vacations; for example, beach trips with your besties or participating in summer festivals around the Tohoku region, weather can limit us to just indoor activities sometimes. In our opinion, board games are great alternatives to have fun with your friends and families during this hot season. Therefore, we, the board game enthusiasts, would like to make a few recommendations on summer-themed board games so that your summer won't be boring.

Survive – Escape from Atlantis

This game is your beach trip with besties and a little bit of danger included. Survive – Escape from Atlantis is a 4-player board game where your explorers are scattered across the landscape of Atlantis, aiming to bring back treasures to the dry land before getting lost in the vast sea. Here, you are competing with your friends to take out the most treasures from the sinking island. Each explorer is removing a secret number of treasures, so you can still win even if you have not saved as many explorers as others. However, getting out of the island unscathed is no easy task. With limited available ships and a sea full of sharks, whales, and even monstrous sea serpents, you need to come up with a strategy to utilize the boats and each creature to your advantage by helping your own route to the dry land or hinder other players. The end of the game is then triggered by the eruption of a volcano where everything that is still on Atlantis will be removed. So, go find the treasures but beware not to run into too many creatures or the expedition will be in danger!

Camel Up

Not so sure if the weather outside will be as hot as the sun in the Egyptian desert, but these camel racings will heat up your excitement! This 3-to-8-players family-friendly game is about betting on which camel will come up on top. And when we say coming up on top, the camels actually do come up on top of each other and that is why the game is called 'Camel Up'! In the game, players can bet on camels as they race around the pyramid with a twist that these camels can stand on top of each other, offering a ride and highly changing the outcome of the entire race. In addition, if you place your bets before others, you will also have a chance to earn more money. However, there are also two crazy camels running in the opposite direction, causing chaos by lifting other camels and bringing them in the wrong direction. Knowing all that, are you still willing to take the risk with these unpredictable camels? If so, gather your Egyptian coins and let the race begin!

Thank you for reading the Summer 2026 issue of the FGL Community Newsletter! See you next season!

Proofreading: Akshat Fendar, Hanbin Jin

Typesetting: Koharu Miyoshi

Cover art: Yuan Zihao

Background photos: Koharu Miyoshi, Yuan Zihao