

**Elizabeth Reeck**

**Candy R. Wei Prize Submission**

My international experience has been so important to me that I chose to do it twice. My first trip abroad was to Gabon. This design-build focused trip was carried out in a workshop setting. In sharing our clean cookstove design with Gabonese villagers, I realized the privilege I carry. And as I practiced my feeble French, I saw my ignorance. The photographs I took captured the light and landscape well enough. But they could never capture the personal, national, and cultural narratives embedded in the history of Gabon. However, the greatest change came as I reflected on how to move forward from here, with my own creative practice and education. I was no longer invested in the concept of an isolated studio where the artist cooks up original ideas to be disseminated to the world outside. I want my ideas to come from the outside in, not the other way around.

The following summer I travelled to Shigaraki, Japan where I explored my love of ceramics while working with Japanese community partners. While touring facilities for adults with cognitive disabilities, we spent time working with local clay. Our only directive was to play with the material. I found myself calling the work that came out of this process "doodles." This playfulness further broke down the "isolated studio" model. I learned to embrace open and relaxed making, focused less on a rigidly defined end-product and more on enjoyment of the process. The work I made in Shigaraki became the seed that developed into my IP project, *Dudeltopf*. The work I have made during my senior year has developed my creative practice even further, while honing the skills and themes I plan to pursue in the future.









