

# Tips from a RISD Fulbrighter!



Gayle Forman  
RISD BFA '14 Glass  
Fulbright Brazil 2019  
“Gambiarra and Material Malleability”



Workshop I helped develop with Instituto Campana



Another workshop with Instituto Campana



Talking with other residents at Pivô

## What did she propose?

To investigate the nationwide practice of repurposed materiality entrenched in Brazilian culture. She asked: How has Brazil's spontaneous and makeshift style of problem-solving woven its way into Brazil's cultural fabric? How can integrating this mindset at the beginning of a process change the end product for the better? In her work, Gayle was striving to find something she refers to as the "wiggle" -- instances in which materials, objects, or people no longer have defined limitations and can fluctuate between hard and soft, rigid or flexible. Her line of inquiry in Brazil focused on the quest for this "wiggle."

## What was her experience like?

Gayle split her time between projects with her two affiliates -- work with the Instituto Campana and classes at the Graduate school of Architecture & Urbanism at the University of Sao Paulo. Plus, she participated in two different artist residencies.



## What was the highlight of her experience?

The artist residencies. She didn't propose these residencies in her application, but when she arrived she found her two affiliations had less projects than she thought. She found herself with idle time and decided that finding a way to incorporate her studio practice was the best way to pivot. Plus these residencies essentially created a social life for her as both programs had 12 other artists participating.

## What were additional highlights?

Traveling around Brazil and learning to speak Portuguese, which was a personal goal of hers.



Open studio event at first residency, Pivô



My studio at Atelie397, second residency



University of São Paulo  
School of Architecture & Urbanism





## What was her biggest challenge?

A tie between learning the language and figuring out how to do a project once she realized her affiliations were not going to be as time-consuming as she had originally thought.

The two residencies helped her overcome both of those challenges.



### **What was the most surprising?**

Gayle had not had much time to work on her own work since graduating from RISD. So she was happily surprised to have time to spend in a studio researching and making along side other artists.

She wrote “It was such a valuable experience to have the support to work for myself.” This is also what she was most excited about continuing when she returned to the U.S.



# Application Tips from Gayle Forman, RISD BFA '14 Glass, Fulbright Brazil

## ❖ Apply through RISD or At-Large?

It is super helpful to have RISD support throughout the process. Plus, the conversations that came up during the RISD Fulbright interview brought up a few crucial conceptual details that I ended up including in the proposal and became an anchor throughout the proposal -- and my practice to this day.

## ❖ Timeline Pointers?

I started an application in 2013 (beginning of senior year @ RISD) but did not go all the way through the process because I knew my idea was just not together. I re-started research in February 2017 for an arrival in Brazil February 2019.

Start as early as possible and be expansive in your research! I let my mind wander, flirt with ideas/artists/places with very loose limitations (at first), and that allowed me to revisit old inspiration while discovering the new info that led to the final proposal.



# Application Tips from Gayle Forman, RISD BFA '14 Glass, Fulbright Brazil

## ❖ Helpful resources?

Use your network! Friends, family, colleagues at the museum I worked helped review and edit. It was incredibly helpfully in the beginning to get a lot of feedback. Look it over and edit it a million times, solicit many opinions, critiques... until a certain point. Once it gets close to the end, trust what you've put together.

Also, I started my research at the library and diving into old sketchbooks/papers. ***So....a combination of mining the universe and my own mind.***

## ❖ How did you choose Brazil?

Brazil was not my plan when I began researching places for Fulbright. I had no prior experience there, but through the process it became the only place I could put all of these ideas together. --Why this country may not be clear at first – and that is okay. After months of research, writing, and making connections. It will make perfect sense at the end. Why this country is so critical to Fulbright.



# Application Tips from Gayle Forman, RISD BFA '14 Glass, Fulbright Brazil

## ❖ How did you focus your two statements?

Through my editing process and with help from the wide net of people I asked to review. I wrote 8-10 drafts of each! People who helped review and edit were incredibly good at sussing out the important guiding questions that enabled me to focus the writing and make my ideas more concise.

Little secret (that I actually use for all written materials, applications, anything) ....

I never typically start blank – mine through past applications, bios, and artist statements for somewhere to start.

## ❖ How did you find your affiliates?

The internet is a magical place...don't be afraid of cold-emailing! The University and final host professor I actually found online in researching Architecture departments in São Paulo. My other affiliation was a design studio's non-profit wing that I had been following since undergrad, and managed to get connected with through some mutual colleagues.





## Application Tips from Gayle Forman, RISD BFA '14 Glass, Fulbright Brazil

### ❖ How did you choose visual materials?

As an applicant for Fulbright under Design/Craft but applying with a project that did not include my actual “main” material (glass), I felt a need to balance images that demonstrated craft technique with concept. To pull it together I combined past feedback, my sense of knowing what images elicit strong responses, and staying true to what I felt needed to be included.



### ❖ How did you meet the language requirement?

Brazil allowed Advanced Spanish/Intermediate Portuguese. It had been about 3.5 years since I had used any Spanish and I hadn't studied Portuguese. So prior to the application deadline I did a combination of refreshing Spanish and attempting to learn Portuguese. I worked with a tutor, who ended up doing my language evaluations. This was incredibly helpful because she had a very good sense of what I was capable of, rather than what I currently knew. For Brazil this was important because I was allowed to apply with Advanced Spanish, as long as I was in the process of learning Portuguese. ***It was an investment but worth it!***

# Why was Gayle's Proposal successful?

- **Why Brazil was so strong.**

The connection between her practice and ideas of the “wiggle” with the Brazilian mindset of re-purpose and re-use was a great fit.

- **Her community engagement was obvious.**

Her project was collaborative – she had university and non-profit affiliates. Plus her past work documented not only her collaborative spirit but her fun, engaging personality.

- **There was a strong exchange element.**

You could clearly see her participating in workshops – as a teacher AND student - exchanging ideas and techniques.

In her application she included past activities that proved she would share with her new community in various ways.

- **She was prepared but she made a case for room for growth.**

She clearly had the art/design background but this cultural exploration would allow her to experiment with materials and take her work to a new level.

- **It was well written, clear, narrow, structure AND her passion for the experience shown.**

Her application overall was a pleasure to read.

- **It was memorable.**

The “wiggle” is something reviewers likely didn't forget.





**And a final word of wisdom from Gayle – in her always clever style....**

“I have a very important ice cream recommendation. : ) Start early, don’t be afraid for things to change throughout the entire application process (or even the project itself). You are all artists, so I personally think that our way of researching should allow for some unknowns!”

