

Carlo Hensch

10/5 – 10/18/2024

### Uchiyama's Student Workshop and Stay Report

My stay at the Uchiyama Kominka started with a student workshop where we learned how to apply plaster to walls, roll and knead clay, and forage for some vegetables in the garden. Fostering a connection between individual and nature facilitated through hands-on activity, the workshop set the tone for my stay in the Kominka; a space that lends itself to surrounding oneself with nature and being open to flexibility. During the following week, I joined Okada Komuten to work alongside them in constructing some cabins for “ウニトピア”. This experience was very exciting for me as I was able to work with my hands and understand contemporary construction practices. Seeing the combined utilization of hand tools and power tools was interesting because it showed that traditional techniques and practices are still being used in modern construction and have an influence on how the end product looks and comes together. My last activity during my stay at the Uchiyama's was learning how to manage a Satoyama in collaboration with Uchida-san. Using axes and chainsaws, we cut down dead trees and utilized the wood to fix a winding path up the steep mountain landscape. In this experience not only did I learn how to cut down trees, but I was better able to understand the importance of various tree species and the current “landscape” of forest maintenance in Japan. This experience highlighted the difficulty that is involved in creating a healthy environment for the trees and mountains of Japan and how it influences population density in these rural areas of Japan. Overall, my stay at the Uchiyama Kominka helped me understand the importance of hands-on work and a connection to nature that we don't find in major cities and I am very grateful to the Uchiyama's for allowing me to inhabit their Kominka and understand what it means to live in a space such as that.