

Exchange student blends Indonesian characteristics into Chinese elements

Xu Chenyi and Yang Di

Recently, videos tagged China Travel have become the new “traffic secret,” inspiring many foreigners to begin their adventure in China.

Chacha went one step further and attended Shanghai Arts and Design Academy in Jiading, where she was able to genuinely experience the essence of China.

Six months later, she placed purple clay teapots and Chinese paintings in the exchange students’ graduation exhibition, showcasing Chinese artifacts with a unique Indonesian flair.

Chacha is a student at the Indonesia Institute of The Arts in Yogyakarta, where she studies batik printing and fashion design. This exchange program is her first visit to China.

“I’ve always wanted to visit China because it has a rich history and is constantly evolving,” said Chacha.

This is the first exchange program between the Indonesia Institute of The Arts in Yogyakarta and the Shanghai Arts and Design Academy. From December 11, 2023, to June 20, 2024, six Indonesian students visited Jiading for study and exchange.

Chacha has been striving to better comprehend traditional Chinese cultural traditions. She selected three courses: ancient architecture restoration, Chinese painting and purple clay teapot techniques.

“I packed my schedule to the brim, sometimes working late into the night. Life here has reignited my desire to learn,” she said.

Chacha was eager to learn about the new Chinese culture while also being well-versed in Indonesian culture. She decided to use the opportunity to incorporate Indonesian characteristics into her art.

During the last purple clay crafting class, Chacha showed off her “pride and joy” work to her classmates.

“This piece was inspired by a Chinese picture. I carved my favorite magnolia flower on the purple clay plate and inscribed my Chinese name



Chacha (front right) and Nasha (front left) pose for a photo call during a class at the Shanghai Art and Design Academy’s Purple Clay Art Studio. — Photos by Xu Chenyi

Editor’s note:

Jiading District, known for its rich culture and rapid development, is a dynamic hub where people chase their goals. Every aspiration has the potential to become a reality. This column focuses on various young people, mostly from Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), who have studied, worked, and lived in Jiading. They’ve found a way to demonstrate their skills and are actively crafting their future professions.

beside it,” Chacha said.

Even though Chacha is involved in a variety of school activities, she finds tranquility here.

Sitting at a wooden table, turning a wooden wheel and polishing the purple clay with various tools, the



Chacha’s creation features ancient Chinese square-hole coins and Indonesian white jasmine.

sounds of tapping mingled with the laughter of kids outside the window as the day passed.

“Creating a purple clay teapot takes time and patience. A teapot’s final firing time can be more than 10 hours. This approach relaxes me and boosts my creativity,” Chacha said.

Natasha Nisa Islami (Nasha), who came to study with Chacha, is majoring in product design. Nasha focused on learning how to shape purple clay teapots in class, whereas Chacha was more interested in creative skills like clay carving and decoration. The two created Indonesian-style purple clay plates to display together.

“Chacha has offered me numerous suggestions for cultural assimilation.

When we return to Indonesia, we can teach others how to make such lovely purple clay teapots,” Nasha said.

In recent years, the Shanghai Arts and Design Academy has prioritized initiatives focused on “integration, expansion, and collaborative development.” It proactively fosters the global dissemination of intangible cultural heritage by partnering with prestigious cultural institutions worldwide. These platforms showcase traditional Oriental crafts, narrate China’s stories, and enhance the international spread of Chinese culture.

The exchange program not only allows Chacha to fully immerse herself in traditional Chinese culture, but also exemplifies the Shanghai Arts and Design Academy’s commitment to “cultural outreach.”

For the past 12 years, the academy has hosted the International (Shanghai) Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Forum, recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as a significant event celebrating the “Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.”

Chacha participated in this year’s event on June 6 as a student representative.

“When you come here to learn from and communicate with Chinese intangible cultural heritage masters, you will gain a deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture and design from a different perspective,” she said. “I believe such opportunities are valuable for both countries.”

Making a clay teapot by hand is a meticulous process that takes time and patience.

