

# Dough dolls wow foreigners

Nine-year-old sculptor one of many fun attractions for international athletes to discover in the Games village

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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**A**s a huge crowd headed to the Youth Olympic Village square for a party and other activities, several foreign athletes and officials, like Jessica Fullalove and Amelia Maughan, took time out to stop in front of the Chinese culture booth and gaze at the dough figurines on display.

The British swimmers showed a great interest in the YOG mascots and various other figures made of dough and were stunned when the producer of the artwork appeared.

Wang Sirui, a 9-year-old primary school student from Nanjing, has wowed numerous international athletes in the village, like Fullalove and Maughan, with her exquisite sculpting and vibrant imagination.

"It's quite amazing, we've never seen anything like this before. We didn't even know people could make toys or mascots with dough," said Fullalove, an 18-year-old swimmer from England.

Wang, who started learning the handicraft on her own two years ago, demonstrated the process and moulded different colors of dough into a mascot and gave it to Fullalove as a gift.

"It's really fun. I've never been to China before so this experience is really new and really good," Fullalove said of visiting the World Culture Village booths.

Manned by student volunteers from local schools, the WCV booths are scattered throughout the YOYV to showcase the world's cultural diversity.



An official from Algeria learns to make pottery at the Chinese culture booth in the Youth Olympic Village, which has interactive activities for foreigners to experience Chinese culture and traditions. PHOTO BY XINHUA

National Olympic committees will also have booths during four successive time periods. Athletes who visit the booths can gain an understanding of the customs and cultures of other countries and territories and also interact with local students.

The fun atmosphere in the YOYV highlights the theme that taking part in the YOG is not only about trying your hardest in your chosen sport, but also learning about different cultures.

"I like the culture side of it. It's completely different from the sports side. Normally, a lot of the downtime (at regular meets) after training is quite boring but here these things are really good," said Fullalove.

Maughan, also 18, said the YOG offered opportunities for them to try something new.

"We've been to like every continent in the world just because of sports. I will say I never thought I'd be in China. It was one of the places I probably wouldn't have gone to because it's just

so far. To get this opportunity is really good. I am so glad that I've come," said the gold medalist at the European Youth Olympic Festival in Tampere, Finland, in 2009.

While most athletes prefer to stay in their comfort zone, Fullalove and Maughan like to try new things, such as exotic food in the dining hall.

Located in the functional building of the village, the main dining hall offers a wide range of dishes categorized as Asian, European, Continental and Chinese.

Some of the dishes have intrigued the British girls.

"With sports, you have to explore because you can end up anywhere in the world so you have to be able to adapt," said Fullalove, who started swimming at the Manchester Aquatics Club in 2006.

"Coming to Asia is completely different for us, so to get involved with the culture and the food is exciting," she said.

## The write stuff a hit at village

Despite a wide range of YOG merchandise in the village shop, calligraphy with the athletes' names in Chinese characters is a very popular souvenir among international residents.

Dius Clauzelma, a track-and-field athlete from St. Lucia, has been long interested in traditional Chinese culture but never had a chance to visit the country until these Games.

Now, he has not only been to China but has also learned how to write his name on rice paper with a brush pen.

"It looks like a painting. I think I will take it home and hang it on the wall so that I can keep the memories of being in China for a long time," said the 17-year-old.

Like many other demonstrations in the Chinese culture house, the calligraphy booth has attracted lots of visitors each day.

"The most common thing they want to do is learn how to write their names and their countries' names in Chinese characters. Quite a lot of them show great talent in calligraphy," said Feng Yuyuan, a volunteer at the booth.



Famous folk artist Xu Fang demonstrates the process of making a gold leaf. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

## EXHIBITOR DISPLAYS A GOLDEN TOUCH

By ZHENG XIN

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An exhibit of traditional handicraft on the second floor of the Youth Olympics Games' main media center in Nanjing has attracted many athletes.

Many traditional Chinese handicraft, including purple and golden clay ware, ink-wash paintings, bamboo carvings and Yunjin brocade, are being presented at the center during the second Youth Olympic Games.

The Nanjing Arts and Crafts Industry Association is one of the exhibitors presenting ancient Chinese folk arts, which includes an exhibition on gold leaf making, the extremely thin sheets of gold used for gilding.

Several foreign athletes said they were amazed by the process of making solid gold into an extremely thin piece of metal.

"I have seen people dine with food and drinks decorated with the gold leaf before, but this is the very first time I have seen it produced," said a German athlete named Karim.

The traditional handicraft in China, which is about 3,000 years old and produces sheets less than 0.1 micrometer in thickness, is also available in a variety of karats and shades. In ancient China, gold leaf was used for royal and religious decorations.

Wei Jinhua, a staff member of the Nanjing Arts and Crafts Industry Association, said the most frequent

use of the gold leaf was in Buddhist art to decorate statues and symbols.

"It was also used to decorate temples or used to decorate food or drinks, in an attempt to promote a perception of luxury and high value," he said.

Wei said much of the gold leaf they produce is exported to European countries, for architectural decorations or to promote the perception of luxury in desserts and confectioneries.

In many Asian and European countries, people drink liquor with tiny floating pieces of gold leaf, he said.

"People also buy the souvenirs made of gold leaf. For example, a gift of a gold leaf Buddha or a business card decorated with gold leaves," he said.