

Enhanced/Build-Up Wooden Cutouts

Items needed:

- 4'x8'x 1/2" Plywood
- Wood Glue - Outdoor/Weatherproof— ex. Tightbond III
- Glue Spreader
- Bondo / Spackle / Wood Putty
- Tracing Paper
- Transfer Paper (optional)
- Wax Paper
- Drawing Charcoal
- Sand Paper 100 & 150 Grit
- Primer
- Paint (various colors as required)
- Paint Pens—Black
- Pattern or Idea
- Painters Tape

Tools needed:

- Jig Saw
- Roto Zip
- Band or scroll saw (optional)
- Router - Router Pad / Router Table (Table Optional)
 - 3/8" Round Over Bit
 - Trim Bit
 - 1/4 Pointed Round Over Bit (Optional)
- Sander
- Clamps (Handscrew— C Clamps — Bar Clamps)
- Paint Brushes (Various sizes)
- Pneumatic Brad Nailer (Optional)

NOTE: Since my original publishing, I have since gone to using Acrylic Oil based paints. While more difficult to work with due to cleaning with Mineral Spirits, the advantages far outweigh the inconvenience. I also would stay away from High Gloss, and stick with a satin sheen.

Overview—Background:

First of all, the project that this How-To is based on is a Peanuts Nativity Pageant. The original idea was from Tim Fischer—Plymouth Lights in Minneapolis, MN. This has been a mainstay with Tim's display now for going on 8 years. I have long admired this vignette since I have been growing my display, and poking around Christmas display sites. Last year, Tracy and I were visiting some of my other Light Enthusiast brethren in the Seattle area, specifically Kyle Carlson. Kyle decided last year to borrow Tim's idea, and built upon it. When Tracy saw his characters, she stated, "You HAVE to add that to the display next year". I usually attempt to get her ideas implemented, as it helps keep some peace around the house and gives her a sense of contribution to the outdoor display. Kyle was kind enough to loan me his characters so I could leverage them as templates. I owe both of them a big Thank You for allowing me to borrow the idea and put my own spin on the characters, and create this How-To.

One of my first display additions I made about 10 yrs ago, was a Winfield Collection, Sno-Family. This project consists of Mr & Mrs Snowman and their son Jr. It has gone through several renovations and is still used in my display today, and is seen in my Yellow Snow vignette. It used intarsia style wood enhancements to make the characters really pop or stand out. I have gotten several comments about them over the years.

The above 2 items were the spark behind my version of the Peanuts Nativity Pageant. The intent of this How-To is to provide some guidance on using this technique to make your wood cut outs different from any others that you will see. This can be done to almost any pattern you can buy, or idea you can come up with. It is my no means all inclusive, and if there is any input, I welcome that data, as I am not a master craftsman by any stretch. Please read this How-To a few times before you embark on your project, there is data here that can help you make some decisions on your approach.

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Before You Begin:

1. This document assumes you have some familiarity working with wood and basic woodworking tools. There will be steps I mention that I DO during the process. I assume no liability, and caution you to do what you are comfortable managing. Working with power tools has inherent risk. Use caution at all times. I will attempt to suggest alternate methods where appropriate.
2. Wood Selection. I use hardwood plywood, pressure treated, or marine grade. It is more expensive than your typical ACX or CDX. Plywood is made up of veneers that are glued together. AC(X) or CD(X) refers to the quality of the outside veneers. "A" being the highest grade in terms of smoothness or defects. "D" being the lowest grade and can be very rough. Sanded and patched a bit, this could be fine for the backs of your characters. "AC" or "CD" refers to the quality of one side of a sheet of ply and the opposite. "X" refers to the glue use in the layup. In this case, exterior. Hardwood ply implies that the outside veneer is just that, some sort of hardwood. It is more expensive, but USUALLY it requires less work overall. In any case, the edges of your wood, is the most critical to manage. More on that later. 1/2" or 15/32" is the best in terms of value, and handling. Once you get above that, it gets heavy quickly, both in weight and cost. [See Note 1](#)
3. Determine how you will manage your idea. Is it a bought pattern? Do you have to transfer the idea to paper first? The latter requires the ability to transfer, enhance or enlarge the image. A computer/projector, or overhead projector helps with this. Once you have your template. Study how it lays out on the plywood. The idea here is to economize your wood investment. Turning parts, possibly modifying items slightly will increase the images you will be able to cut out of a 4x8 sheet.
4. Do not be anal about exact fits. This is not Marquetry. Interfacing parts do not have to exactly match, they do have to be close enough but not precision. Sanding, and trimming are performed on all parts to some extent. You will be enhancing parts that will visually reduce these small differences once you are finished.
5. Study your project. Attempt to visualize what it will look like when complete. You want to enhance your image, but you will not be building up the entire character. Overall bodies or faces do not require emphasis (IMHO). Hats, scarves, arms, gloves/hands, feet, upper bodies, make good candidates. This is where you can be as creative as you want. Parts of your patterns will want to jump out at you. Be sure you do not rush through this process. Also note, that you do not have to have just one layer of build up. Note Peppermint Patty on the last page. The present is 3/4" material, and the bow is 2 layers on top of that. The bottom bow, then the top emphasis bow. The knot in the middle is 2 glued layers of 15/32" ply to match the bow layers. I will refer to the Blank Layer, Added layer 1, then added layer 2 (if there are 3 buildups). [See Note 2](#)
6. You will have a bit more wood waste using this technique, because of how you will cut out your build up parts. Plan for that when you purchase your plywood.

Pattern Considerations:

1. Do you want to KEEP your patterns in tact. Possibly for historic, duplication or disaster recovery. The key here is transferring your image to the plywood. I prefer to keep my bought patterns, and will make a working copy that can be cut up and drawn on.
2. Transferring your patterns to the plywood can be done in 2 ways. Using transfer paper, or the method I prefer is to take drawing charcoal, and on the back side of the image, trace the outline with the charcoal first then turn it over and trace your image. You may think this could take a bit more time, but in the long run it saves me time. Transfer paper has 2 draw backs. First it should be secured to the plywood. This means that you should trace all your parts at one time. Otherwise managing the transfer paper, image, wood relationship can be interesting. Next, no matter what you do, transfer paper and your image will always want to "creep" when tracing no matter what you do to secure them. You will have to manage and expect this. I feel the tracing paper/charcoal method minimizes this.

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3. Patterns /transfer paper can be taped or tacked to the ply. If tacking, the holes can be easily filled, there is going to be plenty of sanding anyway.

Making Your Blanks:

1. This is probably the easiest part of the project. The basic idea is to get your overall blank traced, and cutout using either a jig saw or Roto Zip type tool. I use both at times, it just depends on the piece and cut. I will use the Roto Zip specifically to cut any internal holes in the blank, such as gaps in legs like Franklin's pants or the gap by Peppermint Patties ankles. See pictures on the last page.
2. Rather than spend a lot of time re-creating a wheel that has already been invented, Mike at Land O Lakes in Florida has an excellent How-To on his website in the DIY Corner that covers cutouts. I have it listed along with the URL link in the [Reference Section](#) on the last page. I will focus this document on the aspects of the build up techniques.
3. The key differences between the two techniques is that you will be tracing your build up parts onto your blanks before you get to your prime/paint stage. See picture 2. Here Charlie Brown is cutout. You can see his hat is in place testing the fit, and the rest of his parts are traced onto the blank. For Charlie, there is a lot of emphasis. I try to go for a natural layered look. In his case, the veil off his hat is behind his shoulders. I chose to keep that at blank level along with his neck, face, and the yellow part of his shirt. His left arm/hand an added layer 2 that sits on top of robe. See picture 4.
4. Next, I route the blanks edges that do not have any 3D parts immediately on top of it. This is to soften the overall look of the project. The 3/8" round over bit is used in this instance. I markup the blank a lot with notes as you can see in picture 3 to tell me what I need to route on the blank. I do however, freehand route his face/veil to delineate those features. I do this a lot where it makes sense. This is where the pointed round over router bit comes in handy. If you have not freehand routed in the past, it is VERY easy if you take your time. No worries about slight deviations, that gives it a more natural look. I talk more about this later.
5. At this point, I inspect the edges of the blank and fill any gaps/holes with bondo. I prefer this to spackle but that is my preference. A lot of Painters use bondo when patching holes and cracks in wood trim before painting. It sets up quickly, so only push out of the tube what you will need in about 5 minutes. I use my fingers to spread it and push it into the cracks. This helps with the overall integrity of the wood as well. You can find it in tubes at paint stores like Sherwin Williams, Benjamin Moore etc...

Build Up Parts:

Here is where we get a departure from your standard cut out. I have had a Shop Smith for 18+ years, and it has been invaluable for my situation. I leverage several add-on that help with this process, but it is not required. One tool being a band saw (I use a 1/8" band), another a sanding disk/drum. Lastly it also allows me to have a routing table as well. Picture 1 gives you an overall view of that set up. This gives me

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2.



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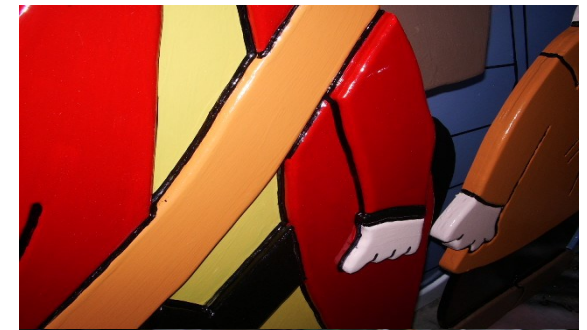


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multiple surfaces to work on without a lot of moving about, or set ups. I use the band saw to cut most of the build up parts. A jig saw can be used as well. I prefer these 2 methods and put the Roto Zip away at this point. I feel these give you more control to follow a pattern line, than the Roto Zip does. After your blank is marked up, now start to see the project. This is now like a jig saw puzzle.

- Let's go back to the tracing stage for a few pointers. Where possible, trace mating parts together on your plywood. Cut them together using the best possible method, if they will fit on a band or scroll saw this is best because the kerf width of the saw blade is the thinnest. If you have to use a jig saw, split the line between the parts evenly. Then on the opposite side of the part, if there is not another mating part, be sure you stay on the outside of your line.
 - The main point above is that you have to consider what the sawing process is going to do to your part and think of compensation. At times, I will "unlock" mating pieces, when cutting them out, and have them side by side on the plywood with a little gap between them. Again, do not get overly anal here. This is not precision, sanding and trimming help a lot.
 - Refer to pictures 5-6-7 to see the stages of Linus's blanket creation. I drew the build up onto the blank. Used tracing paper to copy it, and then on the BACK of the pattern, used the charcoal to outline the part. Taping the pattern to my plywood, I then re-traced the build up to transfer it. I had to use both my band and jig saws to cut this out. So note that the thumb ended up next to the blanket in picture 7. That was cut out on my band saw.
- Once the parts are cut out, I mark each one on the TOP or BOTTOM with a corresponding "T" or "B". You need this reference for the next step:
- The upper most build up parts gets routed with a 3/8" round over bit. In Charlie Brown's example, his left arm/hand is the top most part. Where his arm meets the sash and sits on top of the robe, see picture 4. This is a great example of the 3 layers, yellow being the blank layer, sash & robe added layer 1 and the arm/hand added layer 2. **MAKE SURE YOU ROUTE THE TOP OF THE PART.** That is why I mark them and make it either consistently a "T" or "B" for the project. I make sure I see my marking as I move to the router.
 - Using a router table in this step is invaluable if you have one. 2 points here. First, you do not *NEED* a router table, if not, a routing pad is a must. You have to secure your parts when routing and the pad assists with this. They are fairly reasonable and can be found in hardware or woodworking stores. Second, I route even all my small pieces. Note the black cuff on CB's left arm, picture 4. That is a separate piece and I routed the edges. I have a routing table *AND USE EXTREME CAUTION* with my fingers in relationship to the part to hold and move, and the router bit. I *AM COMFORTABLE* with this, but I have had small pieces get away from me as well. I do not recommend this method, as it is not considered safe. It is my fingers. An alternate to routing is to file and sand these small pieces. Once painted and complete, you will hardly notice the difference.

4.



5.



6.



7.



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4. Check the edges of the parts and fill cracks/holes with bondo and let set up. Push the bondo into the crack with your finger to help fill the hole a bit. It does not need to be completely filled, you just want to seal the hole, and add some filler. If needed you can add a second application since it will dry and shrink some as it sets up. We have another gap check coming up later in the process.
5. Once routed, and the cracks filled, sand all your parts. The 2 things to really take care of is saw splintering on the rear, and the routing burrs that can occur with the round over step. This can be quick and not heavy.
6. At any point, you can start to dry fit your parts onto your blank. If needed, mark areas on the parts that need to be sanded to assist with the mating. This is an iterative process. See picture 8. In the case of Peppermint Patty, she was my most detailed character. There was a lot of mating between pieces. Shirt (upper and lower pieces), collar, arms, present (note the bondo—red) on the edges. Her shorts are blank level, her sandals are added layer 1. I had to tweak the present as it was not so critical as her shirt. On detailed pieces, you can and will spend some time in this process.
 - Do not worry too much if your outside parts are not aligning with the edge of the blank or if they are “undersized” some. Move the parts around to minimize the gaps internally. The external edges will get sanded or trimmed later after glue up. So do not PANIC at this stage.
 - This is a good time to look at added detail for the level you are working on. Charlie Browns neck/veil relationship in picture 3 and Peppermint Patty's shirt detail. As shown in picture 9, I freehand route the lines between the stripes on her shirt. Note the routing pad under the lower shirt piece and one of her collar pieces. Believe it or not, I own 3 routers. The one pictured here is a Rockwell, and is over 25yrs old. I keep one mounted in my routing table while working and just change bits as required. This process requires the 1/4" Pointed Round over bit. I found this to work best. It is not as prevalent as the 3/8" you use to round the other parts, but sufficient enough. Also the point does not route so deep as to harm the rigidity of the wood. Draw your reference lines on the piece, place it on the router pad, and in this step, pull the router toward you keeping an eye on the reference line. This detail can be done on any level to enhance the piece.
 - If a mistake happens, you can always bondo the piece, let fully set up and re-route.
7. Work with all parts, sanding, re-routing the top if required due to sanding, and testing the fit until you are comfortable with the overall look and mating.

Assembly / Gluing:

Depending on the project, not all steps in this overall process are in sequence, they can be, but not necessarily. The more you work with this method, the better you will get for what steps need to be done at what time. I may glue up a section that is not related to another part, while I am working on another section. Refer to Peppermint Patty in picture 8. I could get her hair/beret in place and glued while working on her sandals or main body. It can save time working on your piece, especially when you have a

8.



9.



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Assembly / Gluing (Con't):

lot to make. Get yourself a roll of paper towels and keep it handy, as doing the gluing step right, will require a lot of wiping of excess glue.

1. Once all parts are completed, and your assembly has been checked, re-mark your blanks with the new part outline if they have been modified. It helps for assembly. The original lines may be off slightly, it is not critical to do this step, I find it helps, especially in the complex areas like Peppermint Patties body in picture 8.
2. To assist in the glue up stage, I make additional alignment marks on all my pieces as noted in picture 10. This is Snoopy's hand. This has 2 shown, but I also put a third on the back of his hand with reference to the blank edge. The part outlines will help with positioning the piece, the alignment marks get you exactly where you want the part to be once placed on the blank and the original outline starts to get covered with glue bleed out.
3. To start the gluing process work with a section at a time, rather than the entire assembly.
 - Work from the inside out to the edges of the blank or:
 - Work with a key part first, such as with Peppermint Patty, the upper part of her shirt and collar was glued first, then her arms and lower shirt, the present assembly was glued up separately as an individual assembly, then glued in place on Patty.
4. When it comes to glue, do not skimp. I use Tightbond III for it's outdoor rating. It also is good to work with, as it does not set up quickly, so it gives you a chance to glue several pieces and get them in place. It is easy to clean up with a dry or damp paper towel. Cover both surfaces with glue, then spread it as shown in picture 11. In your junk mail, you usually get those fake plastic credit cards in all the credit solicitations, I keep them for just this purpose.
 - An even spread is optimum, but ensure you get a good spread on the edges of the part.
 - Your pieces will want to float around some with all the glue. To secure the piece in place, I have a pneumatic brad nailer, and I nail the edges and pieces a lot. I live in Seattle with a lot of moisture, so I want the piece to be secure. You may choose not to shoot as many brads as I do, I would suggest at least 4 per piece to keep it secure until you get to the clamping stage. You get a feel for how much I tack parts by looking at Lucy in picture 12. Be sure to check your alignment marks before shooting any brads. Get some paper towels and start wiping up the excess glue that will no doubt be spilling out. This does not have to be perfect as more will seep out at the clamping stage.
 - Get into the mating joints and clean as much glue as you can with the paper towels.
 - An alternate to gluing would be screwing the parts from the backside. My Sno-Family project used this. In some of my renovation work, I have since gone to the gluing method. The project will last a lot longer IMHO. If this method is used, I suggest stainless steel screws.

10.



11.



12.



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Assembly / Gluing (Con't):

5. Depending on the piece, clamping can be done one of 3 ways, see pictures 13, 14, 15. Take some waxed paper, and rip off a piece to cover the top of the assembly. You can secure the different clamps directly to your project, or what I prefer to do is spread the pressure out by using another piece of wood on top of the assembly as seen in picture 14 & 15.
 - Bar clamps are good for smaller sections or pieces, picture 13
 - Handscrews are good for larger sections, picture 14
 - Using weighted objects as in picture 15. That is a bin of extension cords and weighs 30-40 lbs. This does require wood on top and is good for large sections that can not be clamped easily.
 - Let the glued assembly set up for at least the minimum time recommended on the glue bottle. Longer is OK too. In some cases I even let set up overnight.
6. Remove the clamps, wood and wax paper. There will still be some glue remnants in joints or edges. Use a flat blade screwdriver or wood scraper, to carefully remove any unwanted excess. Even several hours later, this will not be completely solid hard. On edged of parts or blanks, you can use the screwdriver, scraper or even sanding.
7. Continue gluing until the project is fully assembled.
8. Fill all the brad holes with bondo or spackle, then check your edges once again. You may need to 2 coats of filler because when it dries it shrinks some.
9. Sand the filler off the top and edges of the project, and any areas where glue remnants exist
10. Lastly, if there is over or under lap with the pieces that interface with the outside edge of the blank, I use a trimming bit on my router to clean up the differences. Depending on what aspect needs to be trimmed to match the other, you may have to work from the top or the bottom or both. This will also remove any glue that spilled out in the clamping process. I lieu of a router, a sander can be used as well to get the edge to be flat and smooth. We are done with the blank.

Priming:

In this project, I did all the assembly of all the characters first, then chose to prime and paint in an assembly line process. Priming, I recommend **oil based primer** so that it penetrates into the wood deeper. Whichever you choose to use, go 2 coats of primer on both the top and bottom sides. For each coat, I ensure I get the edges. The edges are the most critical on the part. That is why we filled the cracks and holes. Water will find it's way into your project where it can and delaminate the plywood. That is why I choose to prime the full 2 coats, which in effect give me 4 primer coats on the edges (the same goes when I paint as well). I have talked to some that even go so far as put a thin layer of caulk on the edges as extra protection. [See Note 3](#)

13.



14.



15.



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1. Prime the first coat. This is going to reveal if you missed any holes or cracks in the assembly or edges. Recheck and fill any missed areas as in picture 16.
2. The first coat will also raise some wood burrs on the routed edges. Sand these down before the second primer coat along with any filler that you applied.
3. Finish priming

Painting:

Paint—Again, there are decisions to make here. First what type of paint. Acrylic, latex, spray paint etc... Because of my weather (wet), I go with a good exterior acrylic. I upgrade here because I do not use a poly coating as a final top coat sealer. You can do this as well. Mike covers some excellent points in his How-To on his Land O Lights DIY Corner article. I moved away from spray paints as I found it "alligatored" over time, meaning cracked. That was also when I use a spray sealer. I personally now stay away from spray can applications, but they can be used. Lastly, what type of sheen do you prefer. Flat, satin or high gloss. I would use flat or satin. High gloss, especially in a latex never fully cures, and will require additional attention in storing during the offseason. See Note

Colors— There are 3 primary colors that can not be made by mixing, red, blue and yellow. Secondary colors, green, orange and purple can be easily made by mixing 2 of the primary colors. Black and white are used to either darken or lighten a color to give you different hues. Keeping this in mind, your project will dictate what colors you need. Paint can get expensive. One idea is to scan the cull shelf whenever you go to your favorite hardware store. You can get colors very cheaply this way. For this project, my local Hardware store, McClendon's, was discontinuing a very high grade, high gloss Benjamin Moore line. I pick up a lot of paint colors at 1/3 the regular cost. If you are going to mix paints, I was told to not mix brands or types. Mix like paint with like paint. I can not say if this would have an effect in the long run since our displays are only in the weather 6-7 weeks at the most. They do have to be stored though, and in many cases, those areas can get pretty hot in the summertime. I have a tendency to be anal about these things, so you decide based on your budget. [See Note 4](#)

Brushes—I use a number of brushes in the paint process. I find the angled painters brush to be invaluable. It allows you to keep a nice wet edge on a straight line very easily. If you have painted a house or room, and have to cut in areas like a ceiling to wall, you know what I am referring to. The smallest angled brush they make is 1". I use a number of artists brushes as well, but there are times in smaller areas, when I wanted the volume of paint a regular paint brush provides, along with the control of the angle brush. An artists brush does OK here, but I find you have to add several extra coats because they can't hold a lot of paint. What I chose to do is take a 1" brush and remove half the bristles. You can see that in picture 17, third brush from the right.

1. Before I get to the color detail, I paint my primed blanks in white front and back. If a character has a lot of white as the color, I go 2 coats, again, ensuring the edges get painted with each coat.

[See Note 3](#)

16.



17.



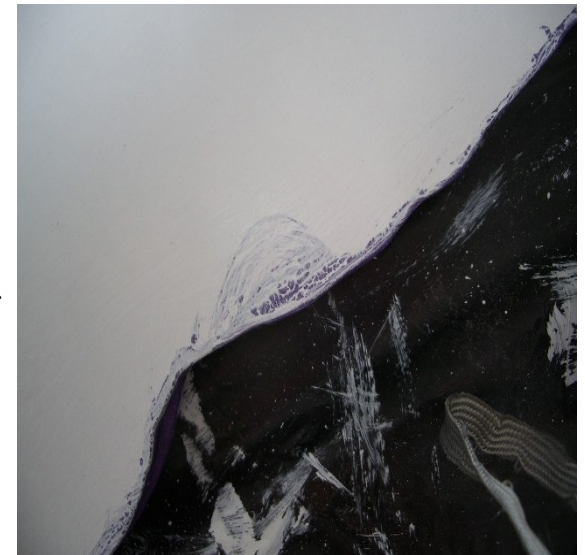
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2. I continue with my assembly line approach as seen in picture 18. That way if different characters have the same color, I do it all at the same time.
3. I find it easier to paint top down. Paint your upper layer parts first moving down to your base blank. This allows you to get good coverage on the sides of your added layer parts where they meet the base. I find it easier to then paint the base using the angled brush up to those part edges. Also you want to be careful, but you don't have to be precise when painting colors next to each other. We make that look great later in step 4.
3. Enhancement detail— once you get your base color down, using a contrasting color can provide a great look. This requires some playing around with how much paint you need to dump off your brush before you set it on your project. Snoopy's staff and overcoat, Linus's blanket, as well as Peppermint Patties hair are good examples of layering colors to provide detail.
4. To outline the project, I use a medium point paint pen. These can be bought in any craft store like Michaels, etc... Some use permanent markers to do this. I prefer the paint pen. I will also use a very fine round artists brush to fill in between colors, where the paint pen can not reach. Picture 4 give you a good idea of the outlining, also look at Schroeder and Peppermint Patty on the last page. The detail on the shirts was easy, using this technique.
5. Lastly, transfer your final detail to your project such as faces, or other detailed work that was not part of the build up. Do this again with the pattern and transfer paper, or tracing paper/charcoal, or using a pencil to freehand draw them. Paint as required. [See Note 5](#)
6. Once all the main detail is complete and completely dried, some touch ups may be required. Also as part of this step, I turn the project over, lightly sand the edges where drips occurred. Do not sand too heavily to get down to the bare wood. You want to knock off only the larger bumps, then paint the edges using a light stroke that is from inside the edged to over the edge. This will keep this color from dripping over onto your edge color. If it does, a damp paper towel cleans this up.
 - One problem I found with exclusively high gloss brushable latex paint. I have found that in touching up, if you have to go white back over another darker color, the white will separate, and look like it spider webs over the darker color. I have shown this to paint experts and they say that high gloss can do this at times, but sanding should take care of it if you dull the surface. This perplexes those I have asked, especially when I used such a high grade of paint on this project. Picture 19 gives you a small idea of what this looks like. This example is on the back and on the edge so it is not critical as there are many layer of paint in this area. Sanding helped, but it can still happen. Snoopy was my worst offender, up by the scallop on his hat. Once the paint dried, I sanded it to get it as smooth as possible, then did another touch up coat and it took care of the problem. I have only seen this issue with white high gloss latex.
7. When you are done, determine if you want to apply a sealer coat that will be the final coating.

18.



19.



On Item 6 and picture 19, I am now recommending using Oil Based Acrylic. It will not cause these problems.

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Notes:

Since I first wrote this tutorial, I have revised some of my approach. To keep the spirit of the original material, I am adding some experience notes here on this page for your benefit. The original material is still relative.

1. I have moved away from buying plywood at a big box store like Home Depot or Lowes. I find they have inferior grade wood. If you go to a lumber supply, they will have better quality. I have had issues over the years with my plywood delaminating, from the inside out, causing a lot of fix its in the off season. This is due to voids in the glue up within the sandwich layers. No amount of good priming will fix inferior plywood. Something I have started moving to is marine grade plywood as my blank. It is more costly, but worth it in the long run to create a family heirloom.
2. Along with the above issues, for my enhancement pieces, I use 1/2 solid wood such as hemlock, pine or other wood. This too is to combat the internal splitting of the wood.
3. Since I have gone to oil based primer, I prime my blank 2 times, and my enhancement pieces only once. The plywood is the critical element to ensure you have the edges well sealed. You will put 2 coats of paint on anyway which is sufficient.
4. I have learned NOT to use High Gloss paint. This is for several reasons. First, it is really not necessary. If you properly light your vignette, satin or even flat paint is sufficient. High Gloss takes a LONG time to fully cure. In some cases it may never fully cure. The major drawback here is in off season storage. I have found that high gloss paint will cause the characters to "stick" together and pulling them apart will mar the paint. Another tip here is to put some Packing Wrap or Foam in between your characters in the offseason. Home Depot, Lowes, Office supplies, U-haul all sell this stuff by the roll.

Displaying:

This too has been refined over years. What I mean here is how will you stand them in your display. I have used mount pipe/tube/conduit how down straps. These are the "U" shaped brackets you see. These need to be screwed to the back of your character. However with the 1/2" plywood, this does not give a lot of room for a good tight cinch down, but it can work. You would pound rebar into the ground and slip the brackets over the rebar. Another option I have used, is at glue up, glue a 1/2"x2"x2" block somewhere close to the top of your character and use that to mount a hinge with a stilt piece of wood to make a tripod. The end of the stilt wood can be drilled a hole so that you can zip tie this to a stake in the ground to keep the wind from pushing them over. Something else I have considered, but not used, is to have a 2"x12"x12" wood block that you paint black. "L" brackets could be use to bolt the character to the block. This has its own inherent issues as well. So think through your methodology. If you find a better method, please by all means let me know.....

Enhanced/Build-Up Wooden Cutouts

Plywood Fixing:

Since these characters were first created, as indicated in this document, I have had issues with the plywood delaminating, and deteriorating. To combat this, there are a few fixit techniques that can be employed:

1. Sand and Glue. Sand the affected area as much as possible. Separate the area with a flathead screwdriver and saturate with wood glue. As mentioned Titebond III is what I use. With clamps and if needed wax paper to keep things from sticking to your original piece, apply pressure for the recommended amount of time, Re-prime area with Oil Based Acrylic primer, and repaint.
2. Should the plywood severely deteriorate, I have found something that will help tremendously. Products from [PC Epoxy](#) are specifically geared toward strengthening rotted wood, and rebuilding or reshaping the damaged area. There is a liquid hardener called [PC Petrifier](#) that can be sprayed, brushed or poured into the rotted area. Be forewarned that this may cause further separating of your plywood. However you can re-glue as above, or continue with the fix below.
3. Next is to use a product called [PC Woody](#). This is a 2 part epoxy based product that has wood fibers. The benefit of this product is that once mixed, it has the consistency of a thick paste, and is workable with gloved hands or a putty knife. The working time is approx. 30 minutes, so you want to mix up only what you will need. It does take a while to dry, especially if you have thick areas you are working on. It can be sanded, and primed/painted, and is very durable when dried. Both of these can be found in your hardware store or online.



[PC Petrifier](#)



[PC Woody](#)

Enhanced/Build-Up Wooden Cutouts

Reference Material:

Tim Fischer - www.plymouthlights.com

Woodinville Wonderland - www.woodinvillewonderland.com

The Winfield Collection - www.thewinfieldcollection.com/category/Christmas_Designs

Questions? Please email them to modec@frontier.com

Woodinville Wonderland's Peanuts Nativity



Lucy



Franklin



Charlie Brown



Peppermint Patty



Sally



Snoopy



Schroeder/Piano



Linus



Snoopy's Dog House/Woodstocks