



Ziegfeld Brollies

A twist on the classic umbrella stand!

When you look at woodworking magazines you don't see many curves. I'm not talking about attractive female models, I'm talking about the furniture. Most woodworking articles are written by guys, for guys. And guys' designs are often manly and angular.

Many guys eliminate undulating, sensual curves from their designs, which is a complete mystery because men do think about undulating, sensual curves. Quite a bit, I'm told. But apparently not when they're doing carpentry. What a waist, er, waste.

So let's declare this International Curve Month, and envelop wood in the smooth, softly rounded expressiveness of our imaginations. How? Two words: 'snake ply' (also known as 'wiggle board' or 'wacky wood'), a wonderful kind of plywood that's supple and sinuous and can be formed into curvy shapes; For example, my post-modern umbrella stand.

TIP: (You might have to hunt a bit for this material. I've found it at RONA / Revy / Lansing, some Home Depots and plywood specialty shops.)

Materials:

- 4' x 4' piece of 3/4" plywood
- 4' x 4' piece of 3/8" snake plywood
- Wood trim/moulding - about 3'
- Many 1-1/4" pan-head screws
- Carpenter's glue
- Wall-patching compound
- Pictures cut from magazines
- Paint
- Metal leaf from art supply store
- Shellac

Tools

- Jigsaw
- Drill and driver bits
- Clamps

Cut List:

- Bottom - 4" x 17-1/2" (rigid 3/4" plywood)
- Front and back - Two 17-1/2" x 21" (rigid 3/4" plywood)
- Sides - Two 5-1/2" x 48" (snake plywood)



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Steps:



Draw and cut out the shape for the umbrella stand



Determine the depth of the umbrella stand and cut correct length of wiggle board



Be sure the grain runs across the short dimension so the wiggle board will bend

Verve to Curve

Cut out all the pieces. When you're cutting the snake ply, make sure the grain runs across the short side of the piece, rather than running lengthwise: otherwise it won't bend. Draw a curvy pattern on the back piece and cut it out using a jigsaw. Be careful not to make the curves too tight because there is a limit to how much the wiggle board will wiggle. A three-inch radius is about max. Trace the same shape onto the second piece and cut it out too.



Finish the interior of the umbrella stand before assembly

Stain and seal the inside surfaces so that moisture from wet umbrellas will not penetrate the plywood, making it split and crack. I used peacock-blue aniline stain followed by two coats of water-based urethane.



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Clamp one sidepiece in a vise



Apply glue, clamp and attach the wiggly board with screws

Nice attachments

Next, attach the first strip of wiggly board to the side edge of the back using glue, clamps and screws. First, secure the rigid piece in a vise and apply glue to one of the curvy edges. Starting at one end, line the wiggly board up neatly with the outside edge, then clamp it in place and drive in a screw. Continue driving in screws about every half-inch along the length of edge. (There will be a bit of excess wiggly board left hanging over the end.)



If the radius is too tight, make some shallow cuts on the inside of the radius



Make four or five shallow cuts with a handsaw to ease the curve

Tip:

If you find that one of the curves you've made is too tight for the snake ply, use a hand saw to make five or six cuts across the snake ply over the tight spot. However, saw **JUST** to the centre layer of the snake ply, but don't saw **THROUGH** that center layer or the darn piece will snap.



When the glue is dry, remove all the screws

Glue and screw the bottom in place.

Let the glue set up for about thirty minutes and then cut off the long bits and remove all the screws.



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Apply a coat of plaster or wall repair paste, embedding pictures from magazines



Pull the plaster over the edge of the picture

Spackle Ho!

Using wall-patching compound ("spackle"), fill the holes left by the screws and even out rough spots. Patching compound can be sanded smooth or left deliberately rough to add character and texture.

Add small pictures cut out of magazines to the wet plaster, coaxing the plaster over the picture a bit to disguise edges. Rub down any high spots in the plaster with a damp cloth. The first layer usually shrinks a bit, so the screw holes may need a second coat.



Paint the plaster with milk paint



Examples of various kinds of metal leaf



Deep gold leaf



Seal the surface with shellac



When the shellac is just tacky, apply the metal leaf



Use a shaving brush to texture the metal leaf

Next, paint the umbrella stand (I used barn red milk paint) covering all the plaster but avoiding the pictures. Coat the surface with shellac. Wait until the shellac is almost dry to apply the leaf, using a soft brush to pat it into place. If you brush it a bit more, the leaf will break up showing the surface below, which is kind of a cool effect.





Trim the top with readymade moulding, gluing it in place



Detail of the base

Finally, apply wood trim to the top edge, then seal the entire piece with a coat of satin water-based urethane.

Your umbrella stand is an emphatic endorsement of curves, so invite a few friends over on a rainy evening to celebrate International Curve Month and your new umbrella stand.



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