

Gnome With Balloons

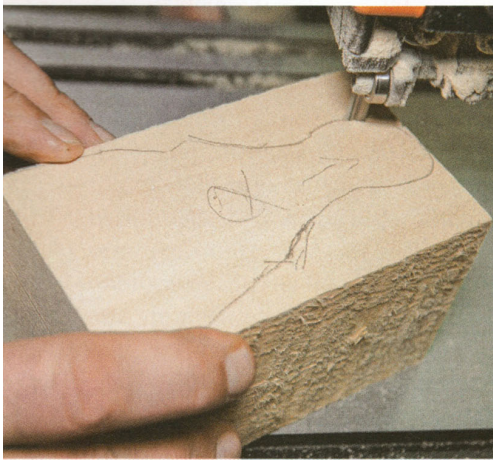


Carve and paint a vivid character with a fun accessory in tow

By Mirosław Czeladka

I've been carving this style of gnome character—which I call a *nochal*—for years. They're universal figures meant to resonate with everyone, from age 1 to 100. Although I invented this balloon-toting caricature in my head, his friendly, innocent appearance makes it possible for everyone to identify with him, whether he's just returning from the funfair or a birthday party. Paint and finish the piece as your preferences dictate; maybe even give him an umbrella or a lollipop instead!

Note: Always wear a carving glove and thumb guard. The photos were taken without them to clearly show hand and knife positions.



Getting Started

Prepare the blank. Sketch on the front and side view patterns, with the grain running vertically. *Note: You can sketch the pattern on freehand or use graphite transfer paper.* Then cut the front view on a band saw. Reattach the waste pieces with clear packaging tape, flip the block, and cut the side view.

ROUGHING OUT



1

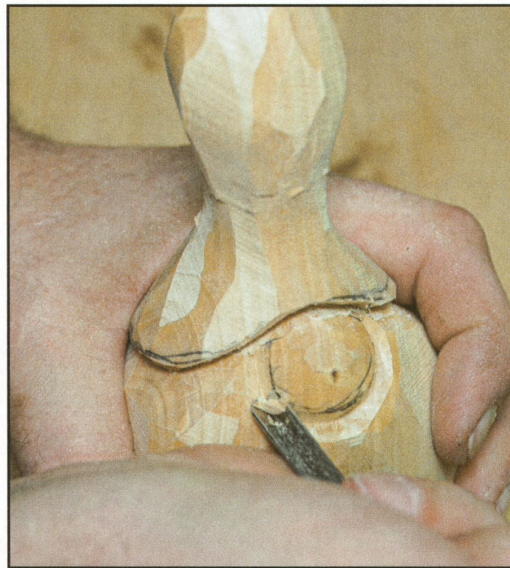
Rough shape the body, head, and hat. Use a rough out knife to round the sharp edges with long, thin cuts.



2

Define the hat.

Carve along the bottom of the hat with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) 60° V-tool to separate it from the face. Then carve up to the divot from the face side at an angle; this causes the hat to hang more noticeably over the face. Use the rough out knife. Draw the nose, switch back to the $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) 60° V-tool, and then use it to carve along the drawn nose line, angling the bottom of the tool slightly inward so the outer plane of the V-shaped cut is wider and less sloped.



3

Refine the nose. Bring down the level of the face around the nose using a $\frac{13}{16}$ " (21mm) #3 gouge. Then round over the nose with the rough out knife.

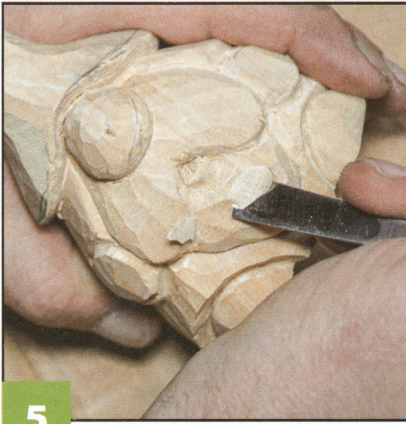


4

Draw the hands, feet, and facial features.

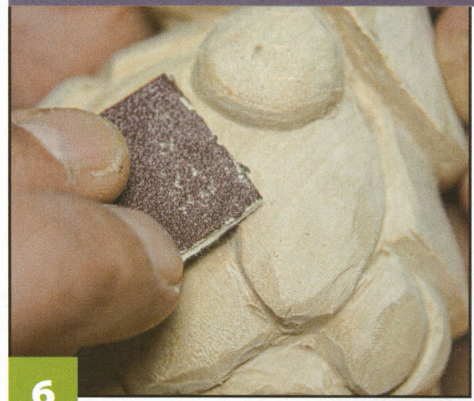
Then follow these lines with a $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10mm) #4 gouge. The precise placement of each feature is somewhat dependent on the natural quirks of your wood block, so modify the mustache, hair, and limb positioning accordingly.

ADDING DETAILS & PAINTING



5

Relieve the individual features. Use the $1\frac{3}{16}$ " (21mm) #3 gouge to make the bottom of the robe overlap the feet, the beard and hands overlap the torso, and the mustache overlap the beard. Profile the bottom lip with the $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10mm) #4 gouge, and then soften the lines with the $1\frac{3}{16}$ " (21mm) #3 gouge. Use the same tool to define the fingers and shoe soles.



6

Sand the carving. Start with 150-grit and move progressively through the grits to 320. I prefer to sand away all carved facets left by the gouges and knife for a smooth feel, but you can leave these visible, if desired.



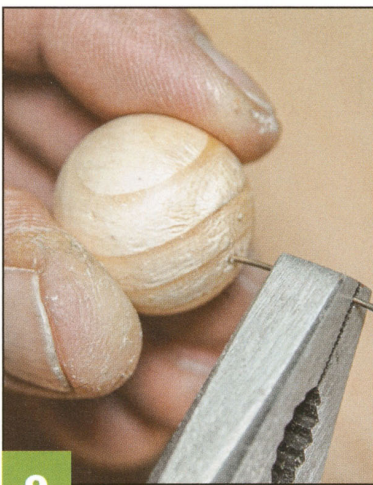
7

Texture the mustache, hair, and beard. I used a $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) 45° V-tool to make thin cuts of varying size and depth.



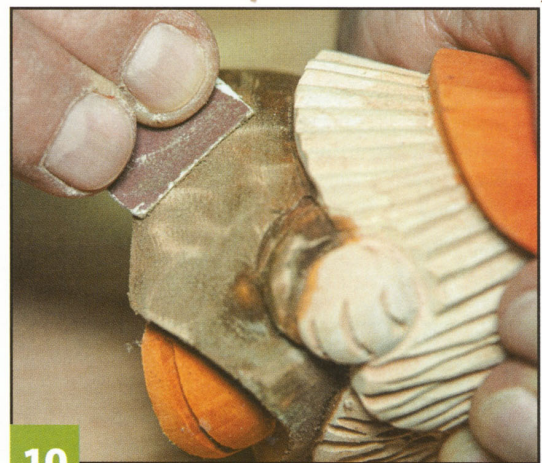
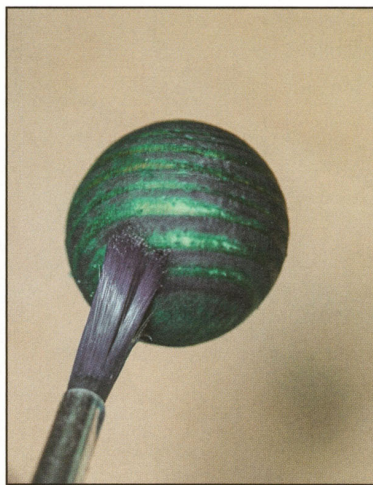
8

Add color. I used water-based stains to paint the robe brown and the hat and shoes orange.



9

Make the balloons. Sand each pre-turned ball smooth and mark the location for the wire with an awl. Use pliers to drive a length of craft wire into each balloon and secure with cyanoacrylate (CA) glue. Paint or stain as desired; I stained the balloons red, green, and blue. Let dry.



10

Distress the carving. Once the stain has dried, use 320-grit sandpaper to rub the surface of the piece. Sanding parts of the applied stain highlights any remaining carved facets and gives the piece a rustic look.



11

Finish the piece.

I used a natural paste beeswax, heating the product to a temperature between 105° and 120° F to allow for even coverage. Use a coarse brush to apply the wax to every surface of the carving (including the balloons). Let dry, and then polish the piece with a coarse brush to make it shine.



12

Add the finishing touches. Drive the other end of each balloon “string” into the gnome’s balled-up fist using the same method you used in Step 9. For a windy-day effect, you can bend the wires slightly.

materials & tools

MATERIALS

- Basswood, 3" (7.6cm) square: 5" (12.7cm) long
- Graphite transfer paper (optional)
- Pencil
- Turned wooden balls, 1" (2.5cm)-dia.: 3 each
- Sandpaper: assorted grits to 320
- Assorted acrylic paints or water-based stains: blue, brown, green, orange, red
- Paste wax
- Craft wire
- Glue: cyanoacrylate (CA)

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

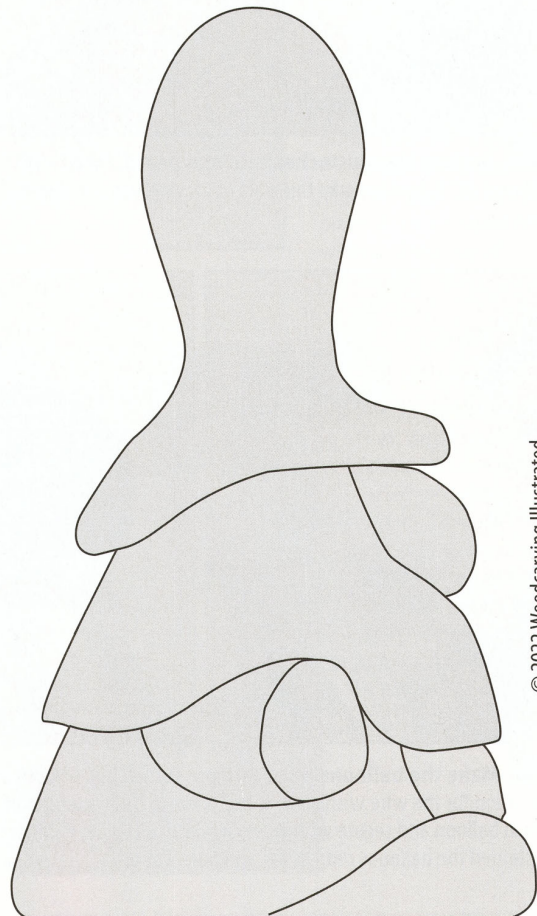
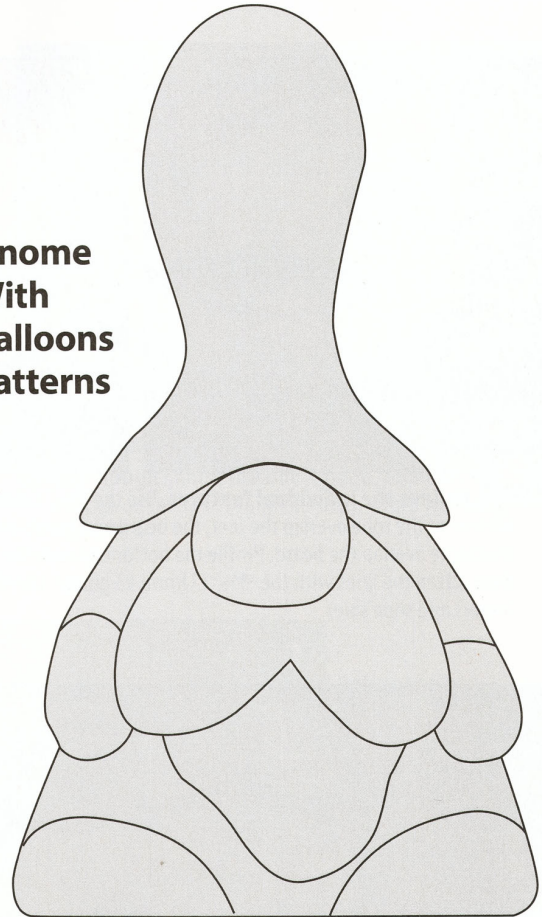
TOOLS

- Band saw
- Knives: rough out, detail
- #3 gouge: 1 3/16" (21mm)
- #4 gouge: 3/8" (10mm)
- V-tools: 1/8" (3mm) 45°, 1/4" (6mm) 60°
- Paintbrushes: assorted
- Polishing brush
- Awl
- Pliers



Mirosław Czeladka is a carver based in Bolesławiec, Poland. For him, carving is a return to a childhood passion; he has been a professional woodworker for ten years. Find more of his work on Facebook at [Mirosław Czeladka](#).

Gnome With Balloons Patterns

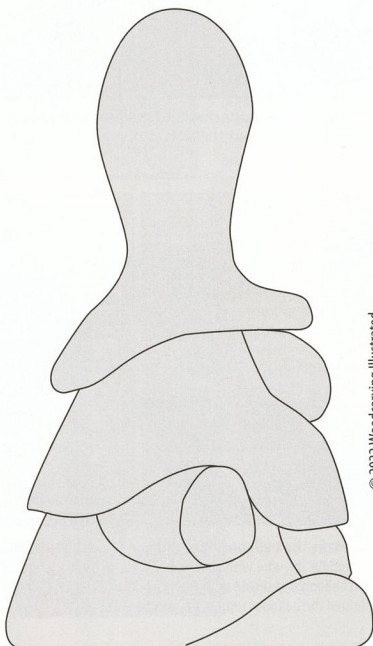
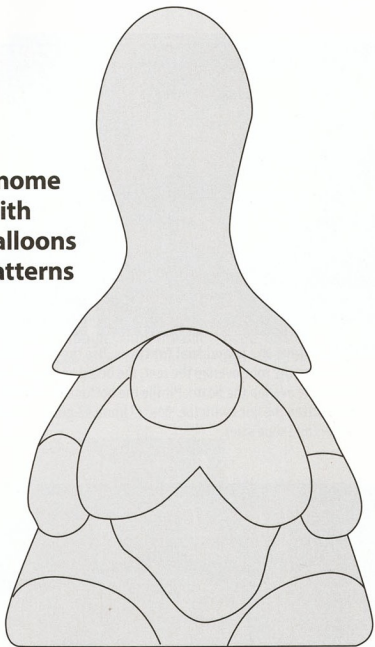


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Gnome With Balloons Patterns



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Scaled down to 2/3rd of original
Now is 2 x 2 x 3 1/3"