

My Christmas Includes Nostalgia

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My sister and I have lately been creating nostalgic ornaments for each other's trees, and this year we independently decided to make an ornament inspired by a yard art Santa design we recalled from our youth.

Way back then, many homes displayed Christmas lawn art, cut from plywood and painted by Dad or Grandpa.

My dad's friend Earl, recently retired and having taken up woodworking, traced and cut his chosen Santa pattern and painted it with a base coat of red and white, but when it came to painting the face and other details, Earl's shaky hands weren't up to the task.



My sister and I were volunteered to finish up painting the Santa, and it made annual appearances on Earl's front porch for the rest of his life.

I don't know the name of the company that issued this pattern; there were many Santa lawn art designs out there, and some are even still available, but I had to search a long time to find an image of Earl's Santa. When I finally did find him, I re-drew the image to make my ornament.

I made two ornaments – one for my tree and one for my sister's – using several layers of cardstock glued together. This makes a flat ornament, but that's okay, because the original plywood yard art was flat too, so this mini version recalls him just as we painted him back then.

I started by printing my re-drawn image on cardstock, twice for each ornament, reversing one image of each pair so my ornament would be two-sided.

I fussy-cut the image and pasted it to three layers of black cardstock, then cut it out, leaving a narrow border of black. Then I carefully positioned and glued the reversed image to the back. The whole thing was given a coat of Mod Podge, and I glittered the white beard and trim with iridescent glitter.

At the time I made this ornament, I had not seen one of the yard art versions in decades, although I'd been searching. And then . . .



As fate would have it, within days of my having posted this ornament project on my website, I came across the exact vintage yard-art Santa in a thrift store!

He's rather weather-worn from having been displayed outside, but he's the real deal, cut from 1/2" plywood and standing about 3 feet tall.



I was even able to nab him at half price when the store reduced its Christmas stock, bringing him within my budget. I haven't decided whether I'll touch up his paint job or leave him as-is -- an authentic piece of vintage kitsch.

Either way, I couldn't be more thrilled to have found him. Here he is standing in my entry way.

Now he'll have a special place in our Christmas celebrations for the rest of my life.