

how they did it

Whimsical table, serious structure

BY JONATHAN BINZEN



Here Osgood describes his Wave table, with its curves and contours imitating ocean waves and its legs inspired by reeds, as “metaphorical furniture.” But there’s nothing metaphorical about the techniques required to build such a playful piece. From its curved and twisting legs, each one unique, to its S-curved and deeply carved aprons, the table required engineering solutions just as inspired as its unusual shapes.

Leg that pierces the shelf is screwed into a notch in the apron.

Slip-tenon joinery simplifies the challenges of joining curved parts.

Outside legs are tenoned into the apron and stretcher; the other two legs are joined only to the apron.

End of stretcher is custom-coped to the leg.

SLANT-GRAIN GLUE-UP

Osgood ran the grain of the top and shelf at 45° to the length of the table, which required a series of glue-ups. With the boards angled, the grain lines work with the sinuous curves of the table instead of competing with them. Osgood deliberately mixed the sycamore’s lighter sapwood and darker heartwood to create an effect he hoped would suggest tidal streaks on a beach.

Outline of tabletop

Milled sycamore planks

CURVED APRON IS AN UNEVEN SANDWICH

Back apron is built up at the corner to provide a solid home for the tenon that connects the inside leg.

Thinner layers inside make the sandwich easier to bend onto the gluing form.

To make strong aprons that would retain their S-curves without springback, Osgood used bent-lamination instead of steam-bending, gluing up three layers of solid wood on a curving form. Because he would later be carving contours into the face of the apron, he used a thicker layer of wood on the outside, but kept the inner layers thin to make bending them easier.

Thick outer layer allows deep carving.

HOW TO ATTACH A THICKET OF LEGS

The curving, twisty legs on Osgood’s table are hand-shaped and no two are alike, so each joint is a custom operation. He uses slip tenons for all the legs except the two that pierce the shelf. Those two are screwed to a notch inside the apron and are attached only after the shelf is in place. They are not glued in, so they are removable in case the shelf needs repair.