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Model Kit Report

AK Interactive Paints, Pigments and Weathering Products

Kids of all ages enjoy playing in the mud.

A bright and shiny showroom finish is a must for realism on a model car, but not an armored fighting vehicle. Military trucks and tanks often travel cross-country rather than on paved roads. In dry conditions, they can be covered with dust and debris, but in rainy weather they are always a muddy mess. In order to create a military



The starting point of the diorama was the Heavy Muddy Weathering Set used to replicate the Kursk landscape.

vehicle model in the most realistic presentation, the model really needs to be covered in dirt, grime, and mud just like the full-scale vehicle would have been.

The Battle of Kursk occurred in mid-1943, during World War II, when the Germans began an armored offensive assault against the Soviet Union. Considered to be one of the largest tank battles of the war, the Soviet victory became the turning point in the war on the Eastern Front. With a combined number of over 1000 tanks rolling over the ground, any rain quickly turned the dirt roads and countryside into acres and acres of mud. To accurately replicate a Soviet tank from this battle in miniature, the modeler wants to show the elements of the battle, and AK Interactive paints



and pigments are an excellent choice for an added element of authenticity by weathering.

The Soviet T-34/76 tank was a workhorse for the Red Army, so it was chosen to be the subject for a display. To weather the model, and replicate the color and texture of the Russian landscape during the Battle of Kursk, the AK Interactive Heavy Muddy Set (#AK077) was the starting point. The set includes enamels in Damp Earth, Summer Kursk Earth, and Wet Effects Fluid, as well as Dark Earth Pigment and a small package of plaster. Additional pigments, including North Africa Dust (#AK041), Light Dust



During the Battle of Kursk, the Soviet T-34/76 tank was a workhorse for the Red Army so it was chosen as the display subject. (#AK040), and European Earth (#AK042) will also be used to add dirty effects to the upper portion of the tank, as well as streaking effects from rain.

The model was built in sub-assemblies with Plast-I-Weld plastic cement and painted according to the instructions and references. While the paint was drying, a base for the model was prepared. The base was prepared using a



Dark earth pigment was slopped all over the wheels tracks and lower areas of the tank surface and then a

stiff brush was used to remove the excess material from the raised edges leaving behind what looks like dry crusted mud.

paper mache craft product, American Art Clay Sculptamold Molding Material. The material is basically a combination of finely ground cellulose and powdered glue, and it's easy for anyone to use.

Mixed with water into a thick paste consistency, it was spread on the plaque to a thickness of approximately 1/8 inch. When the paper mache had partially dried, the surface was covered with plastic wrap and the tank was pressed into the clay to form the appearance of tracks on a muddy road. A boulder, created from Woodland Scenics Lightweight Hydrocal, was also pushed into the base. The plastic wrap was then removed in order for the base to dry.

The edges were masked, and the AK Interactive Damp Earth enamel was thinned and airbrushed over the surface. After this had dried, the Kursk Earth enamel was dry-brushed onto the ground area. When the paints had cured, the boulder was painted and epoxied into place. Additional Woodland Scenics landscape materials were used for small rocks, turf, and low-growing weeds. Woodland Scenics Realistic Water and Water Effects were used to create puddles and splashes.

Tanks have a tendency to rust when bare metal is exposed to the elements, but the vehicles are painted with a coat of primer prior to being painted with the camouflage color. Any rust is going to be limited to areas where the paint and primer have been damaged, so subtlety is the key with only a slight bit of rust portrayed. The AK Interactive Rust Effect Colors Set (#AK551) can depict rust and chipped paint, and includes six acrylic colors of Light Rust, Medium Rust, Dark Rust, Old Rust, Shadow Rust, and Chipping Color.

Rust tends to form in layers, and as it ages, the colors



To replicate splattered mud, a thin mixture of plaster and dark earth was blown off an old paintbrush and onto the tank.

tend to darken. Applied with either an airbrush or a paintbrush, the AK Interactive paints can be layered or mixed to authentically replicate the varying colors of rusted metal. In this case, tiny amounts were used around bolt heads, hinges, and other small areas where the paint would have chipped during routine use.

The kit included figures and to bring some life to the finished model, the Commander and Gunner figures would be used in open turret hatches. The Flesh and Skin Colors Set (#AK3010) is part of the AK Interactive Figure Series line, formulated for realistic miniature figures. The set includes colors for Base Flesh, Light Flesh, Highlight Flesh, Shadow Flesh, Dark Shadow Flesh, and Cheekbone Glaze.

Applied with an airbrush or paintbrush, the set can duplicate skin tones of a variety of races and conditions. Once the exposed skin was painted and finished, the uniforms were painted flat blue and the helmets were painted in flat black. The figures were given a dark wash to deepen the shadows. A drybrush technique was used to apply lightened base colors for highlights, the figures were then set aside until final assembly.

Next up was the AK Interactive Pigments. Pigments are a powdered color, similar to paint without the liquid carrier. They can be applied dry to surfaces to replicate settled dust and dirt, or mixed with liquids. The Dark Earth pigment from the set was mixed with water, and a few drops of liquid soap, to form a thickened type of paint. Using an old brush, this was slopped all over the wheels,

tracks, and lower areas of the tank.

Once the mixture had dried, a stiff brush was used to remove the pigment from raised areas, leaving some of the material crusted in the crevices and deeper surface details to represent older mud that had dried. This is extremely effective, and could serve as a final weathering on any armored vehicle model. Small amounts of the North Africa Dust, Light Dust, and European Earth pigments were mixed



The Figure Series Flesh and Skin Colors set includes everything needed to replicate the skin tones of a variety of races.

together to approximate the lighter Kursk earth, then this was applied to the upper surfaces of the tank where dust and dirt that would have accumulated. A flat brush was dampened very slightly with acrylic thinner, and then brushed downward on the sides of the tank to replicate streaking.

At this point, the model looks used and dirty, but we're not even close to finished. To represent the sloppy wet mud, it is time to add the next layer. The AK Interactive Heavy Muddy Set includes a packet of white plaster powder. This is mixed with a small amount of the Damp Earth Enamel to form a thick lumpy paste. Care is required not to add too much paint, only a drop at a time. This does an outstanding job of replicating the thick, wet mud that would have been thrown up onto the tank and running gear when it was moving across rain-soaked ground.

Once this had dried, the tank was attached to the base. More thick mud was mixed, and added to the tracks, wheels, and the roadway on the base. When that layer of mud had dried, the next step was applying the Wet Effects fluid. Wet Effects is a clear gloss enamel, which was painted over the mud and tracks to make them look wet and shiny, just as the name implies.

Now, we have a model with areas covered in older



With the proper material and a little imagination, a battle weary tank and crew has been modeled into a masterpiece.

dried mud and other areas with fresh, thick, wet mud. There is one final layer to apply, splattered mud. This is another mixture of plaster and Dark Earth enamel. To create the effect, the soupy paint-plaster mixture was picked up with a paintbrush and then held a short distance from the model. This was splattered onto the fenders and hull of the tank by blowing the mud off the brush with a 35psi airflow from an airbrush. After the paint had

dried, the Wet Effects fluid was again used to obtain a glossy finish on and around the splatters.

Final assembly included adding the figures, various equipment and bedrolls, and the radio antenna which was slightly bent as if blowing backwards while the tank was moving. It has been said that weathering scale models is an exercise in restraint. It is so very easy to overdo the effect and turn the finished model into a caricature rather than a replica. While there is a learning curve involved, AK Interactive Paint & Weathering products are versatile enough to accommodate almost any application technique, and can make the process easy and enjoyable. The results are incredibly realistic, and let's face it, kids of all ages love to play in the mud.

AK Interactive paints and weathering supplies are available to hobby dealers through Sevens International. **HM**

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