



Keith Pruitt

Model Kit Report

Creating a Diorama

Merging plastic kits and model railroading.

Scale modelers spend hours applying layers of paint to replicate fading, slathering washes for shadows, dry-brushing highlights, and adding pigments for dirt and grime. Then, the finished model sits on a shelf, losing the achieved perspective, diminishing the weathering effects, and wasting all the time and effort.

Placing the model in a diorama can actually highlight the effects and enhance the realism of the model. While some model kits include bases, others need a scene built around them. Figure kits are an example requiring a vehicle or base to give the model context and perspective.

Woodland Scenics produces scenery and landscaping materials which can be used to create realistic ground-work for bases, vignettes or dioramas. It offers complete

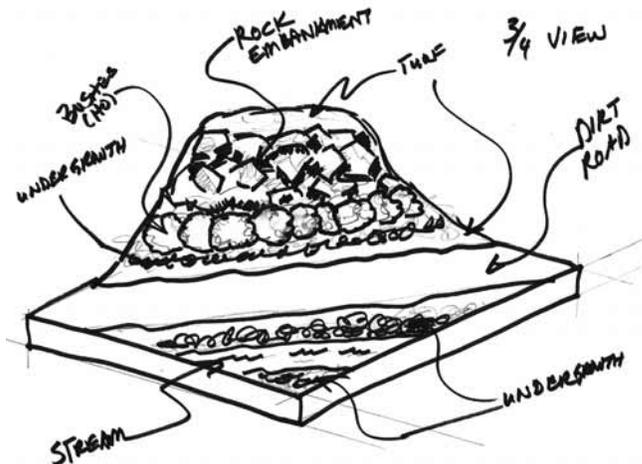


For this diorama, the ICM 1/35 Soviet Horse Drawn Artillery Limber is the primary subject. The kit features the artillery cart, four horses, and two soldiers/riders. This model needs a base of some sort, since the connections between the various components are fragile unless securely mounted to a firm surface. The completed scene also includes a goat from the Master Box Domestic Animals kit, a MiniArt Farm Cart, and some fuel drums from the Tamiya 1/35 Jerry Cans Set. The models were built and painted according to the instructions.

Determining the proper dimensions is essential, as there needs to be enough space so that the subjects aren't crowded and seem to be in a natural setting. By drawing a sketch, with the planned scale dimensions, the best size and shape can be established based on the finished size of



Even though the box depicts a train in a tunnel, a Woodland Scenics SubTerrain Scenery Kit was used as a starting point. systems to create features like water, trees, groundcover and rocks. The SubTerrain Manual and the Scenery Manual, with their valuable techniques and advice, are excellent starting points. To build a medium sized diorama base, the SubTerrain Scenery Kit is a good choice, as it provides all of the materials needed, including Plastercloth, rock castings, talus, pigments and ground-covers. Other Woodland Scenics products used are the Rock Faces kit, Trees kit, Scenic Glue, Scenic Cement, Realistic Water and Water Effects.



The biggest mistake modelers make is they don't have a plan, and in most cases saying it's all in my head isn't good enough.



Once a plan had been established the foam base and profile boards of the scenery kit were cut to size and glued together. The subject model. For this diorama, the scene will be a dirt road, with a rocky wall as the background and a flowing stream with two waterfalls in front. The foam base and profile boards of the SubTerrain Scenery kit were cut to size, and assembled with Foam Tack Glue.

Since the road travels down the middle of the scene, a foam riser was used to establish a base for it. The foam sides are cut at the level of the road, leaving a deeper area in front for the stream, and sloping upward in the back to

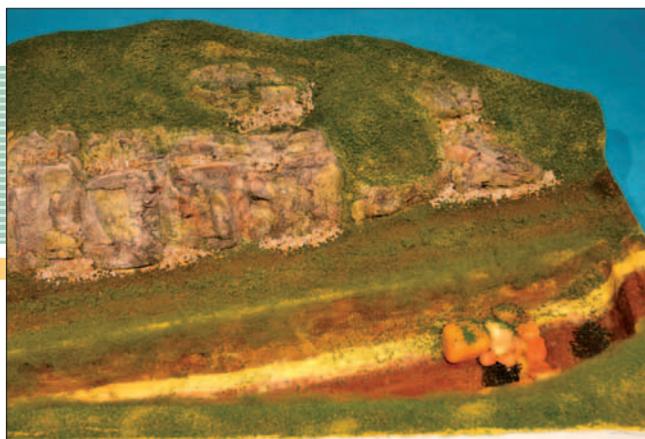


After the road was in place, the voids were filled with wads of newspaper in preparation for the application of Plastercloth.

create the backdrop for the rocky hill, which is filled with newspaper wads. Plastercloth, a gauze-like cloth impregnated with plaster, is used to cover the top and sides to form the surface. When dipped in water, the wet plaster can be smoothed by hand to form a solid surface.

Woodland Scenics Lightweight Hydrocal was mixed with water and poured into Rock Molds to create the rocky wall behind the roadway. When the rocks had cured completely, they were attached and gaps were filled with more Lightweight Hydrocal.

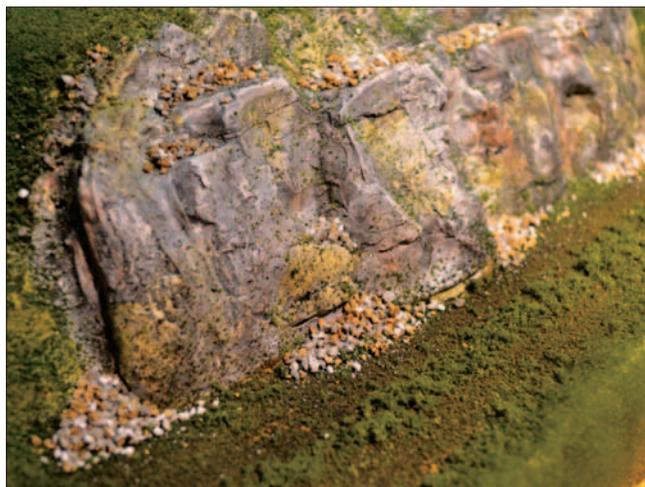
The rocks were colored using the “leopard spot” technique, in which diluted Earth Color Liquid Pigments are dotted on the rock faces in a random pattern, fol-



There are three focal points to the base of this diorama. The rocky hill, a lightly traveled road, and a stream bed.

lowed by a dark wash. The ground surfaces were painted with diluted Earth Undercoat and Green Undercoat Liquid Pigments to establish the bare earth and grassy areas, as well as the streambed. The pigments do not contain binders, so the entire surface is sprayed with Scenic Cement, a thin water-based glue, to seal the pigments in place. This creates an effective color pattern and assures that the white plaster is completely covered.

Earth and Soil Fine Turf were added to the roadbed, and Green Grass, Burnt Grass, Light Green Grass, and Yellow Grass Turf of various textures were applied to the grassy areas, then everything was sealed with Scenic Cement. Natural, Buff, and Brown Talus and Ballast were added around the rocky areas to replicate smaller rocks, and sealed with Scenic Glue which had been diluted with water and applied with a dropper. Dark green and medium green Bushes were attached in random clumps. Using full strength Scenic Glue, green Poly Fiber was glued along the banks of the stream to replicate hanging vines.



Liquid Hydrocal was poured into rock molds, and once set they were glued in place and painted to create the rocky wall.

Some small smooth rocks from the backyard were also glued in the streambed with Foam Tack Glue to form the smaller second waterfall. The HO plastic tree armatures in the Tree Learning Kit work nicely for low growing trees or large bushes in 1/35. After the armatures were



Waterfalls take time as Realistic Water can only be poured in

twisted and bent to form the basic shapes, Hob-E-Tac Adhesive was brushed on the limbs, and Dark Bushes and Medium Green Bushes were used for the foliage. The trees were attached to the base, and the MiniArt Farm Cart and Tamiya Fuel Drums were attached in the streambed with Foam Tack Glue.

The stream was created with Realistic Water, which has an initial milky appearance but dries to a crystal clear gloss. It has to be poured in layers no more than 1/8 inches thick. Humidity does slow down the curing process, so each layer was given a few days to insure a complete cure. The waterfalls were made with Water Effects, a thick white paste, which dries clear and glossy, but remains flexible.



Who's going to win this contest? Will it be the goat or the horse drawn artillery cart? That's what makes dioramas so much fun.

A simple paper template was used to get the right size and shape of the two waterfalls in the diorama, and the Water Effects was spread on a sheet of wax paper using the templates as a guide. Once dry, they were carefully peeled from the wax paper and attached to the diorama using more Water Effects as an adhesive. To create ripples and currents, Water Effects was then spread in patterns on the surface of the Realistic Water. The frothy white splashes around the debris, rocks and waterfalls were done by mixing a couple of drops of White Pigment into more Water Effects, and stippling it in place with a flat paintbrush.

The figures were then attached to the base with pins, made of beading wire, glued into holes drilled in the hooves of the horses, goat, and wheels of the Artillery Cart. A sprig of Medium Green Bushes was attached to the goat's mouth as if she were eating from the vegetation along the roadway. A few other detail items were added to the groundwork, and the diorama is complete. For the finishing touch, an engraved brass nameplate holds the title, "Contested Right of Way, Eastern Front, c.1942".



There is a lot more going on than one sees at first glance. Notice the broken wheel on the cart that fell into the stream.

In addition to dioramas, Woodland Scenics products can be used to add depth and texture to vignettes or basic display bases. As an example, the Hobby Boss 1/72 Soviet Draisine 'Krasnaja Zvezda' is a kit base featuring ballast, crossties and rails. Placing the finished model on a wooden base, and adding Woodland Scenics rocks and ground covers, can increase the realism of the scene and highlight the model.

Building a diorama can be a great experience, but the process takes time to correctly produce the finished piece. Woodland Scenics products have great versatility, incredible ease of application, and outstanding final effects. The adhesives are excellent choices for gluing certain details on plastic models; the groundcovers can be used for



Dioramas can be simple also, as demonstrated by this Hobby Boss Soviet rail gun placed atop a section of ballasted track. almost any scale scene. And in general, the possibilities are endless. Model railroaders have known this for years, but scale modelers might need a nudge toward the railroad section so they can see what is available to help them enhance their miniature masterpieces. **HM**