

Last month, we showed you how Mark built Dragon's SdKfz 234/1. To display it, Mark imagined European midsummer terrain (appropriate for the camouflage). A sloped surface breaks the horizontal plane – more visually interesting than a flat patch of grass.



Jim Forbes photo

DISPLAY BASE *EXPRESS*

Model railroad materials and techniques for scale scenery

By Mark Hembree • Groundwork by Cody Grivno

It's true that a scale figure brings a model to life. However, what makes it look like life on this planet is a realistic setting.

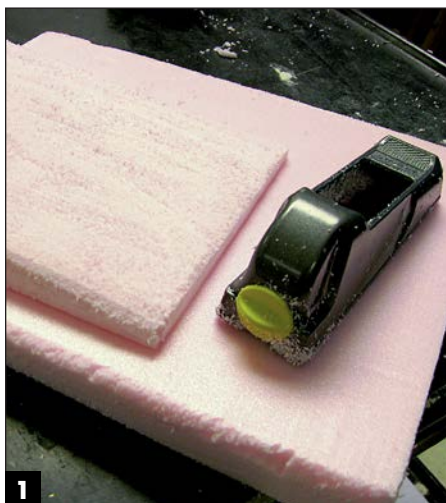
You can buy premade display bases of all sorts for aircraft: Tarmacs, runways, and carrier-deck sections are easily available in several scales. On the other hand, armor modelers have more diffi-

culty finding prefabricated scenery in popular scales.

Model railroading provides a direct line to scenic supplies – so, for scenery tips and techniques, whom better to ask than a model railroader? That's what I did – and *Model Railroader* magazine Associate Editor Cody Grivno was ready, willing, and plenty able to show me how it's done.

Tips for a display layout

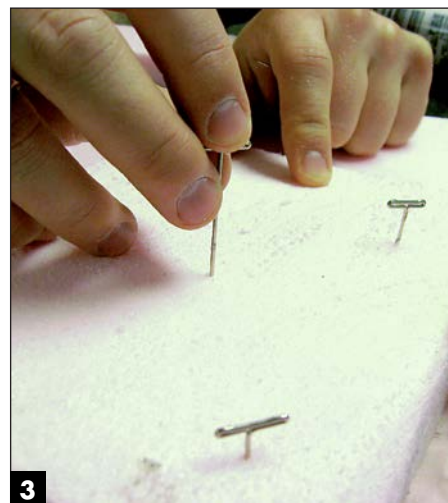
1. **Have an idea:** Imagine your model in a credible setting.
2. **Make a sketch:** Visualize to plan the scene.
3. **Compose:** Avoid symmetry; size the base to the scene; don't place anything directly parallel or perpendicular to the edges.
4. **Break the plane:** Raising one edge or letting elements exceed the base adds visual excitement.



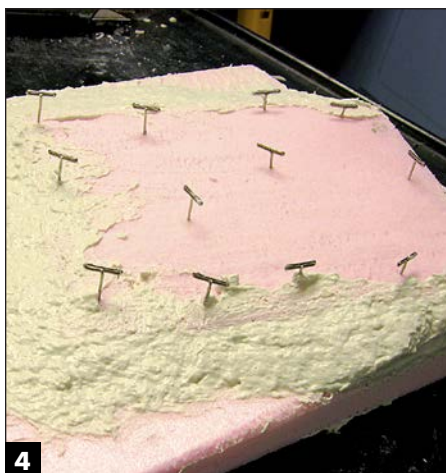
1 The base begins with extruded foam insulation board. Shaving a second layer of foam starts the sloped terrain to come.



2 Latex caulk holds the foam layers together ...



3 ... and Woodland Scenics 2" foam nails ensure they stay together while work proceeds.



4 Sculptamold, a cellulose compound mixed with water, can be shaped or cast, and a thin layer will set like plaster in about 30 minutes. A lumpy consistency makes a rough, earthen texture.



5 Working quickly before it sets, Cody shapes excess Sculptamold into a rocky outcrop. Rough edges will later suggest encroaching vegetation.



6 A watery base coat of flat tan latex paint covers the groundwork. Everything takes a couple days to dry thoroughly; if it's cold to the touch, it's not dry yet.



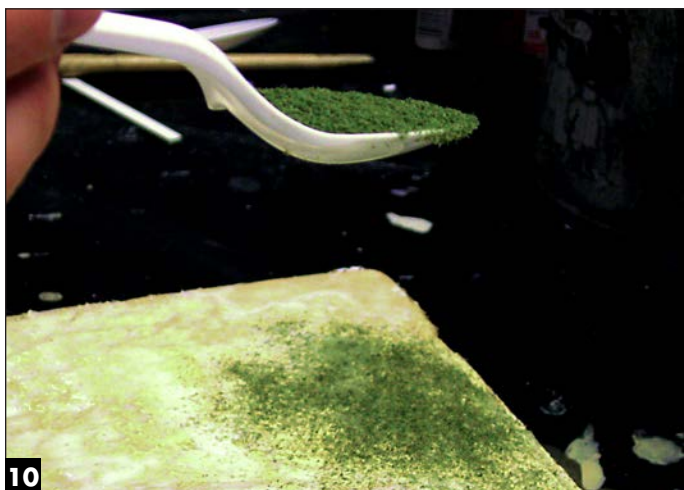
7 Cody added a wash of Polly Scale acrylic railroad tie brown to the rocky area and dry-brushed with rust and sand.



8 To prepare for the first layer of vegetation, Cody applies a 4:1 mixture of Elmer's white glue and water. He likes the foam applicator; no brush strokes, no bristles left behind.



9 No glue was applied to the rocks, and very little between them, to keep them free of the vegetation to come. Polly Scale's railroad colors are great for weathering armor or landscape.



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Grass begins to grow with a sifted layer of Woodland Scenics burnt grass fine turf. Scale, season, and locale determine the color and grade of turf (coarse or fine).



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Additional colors of Woodland Scenics fine turf – soil and yellow grass – add realistic variety. HO scale (1/87) ballast looks like rocks on a model railroad; in 1/35 scale, it replicates gravel.



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A twin track of gravel (ballast) depicts a country lane. Composition note: Angling the track slightly off-center keeps the layout asymmetrical (thus, more natural-looking).



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Seasoning like a pro, Cody scatters light green coarse turf to depict clumps of grass or weed patches.



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The result further diversifies the surface to depict open country. You don't want a rural field to look like a manicured lawn.



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Camouflage in reverse: Mark's German late-war European tricolor scheme dictated the colors of Noch static grass dunkelgrün (dark green, No. 07106) and beige (No. 07101).



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Static grass? Well, first, Cody gently sprays the surface with 70 percent alcohol and lets it soak for a few minutes.



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The alcohol aids the absorption of Woodland Scenics Scenic Cement, a diluted matte medium that will affix the turf and ballast and provide an adhesive surface ...



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... for static grass, rayon-based fibers applied here with a Noch Gras-Master. A damp paper towel blocks grass from the road. Note the grounding clip in the turf.



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The Gras-Master's 9-volt battery and grounding clip give the grass and base the same electrical charge. The grass is repelled but cannot escape from the scenic cement – so, it stands up.



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Final twist: Cody lays down damp paper towels to mask the twin tracks of a gravel path while allowing grass to sprout in the middle ...



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... which it does, making the path look a little more overgrown. Now it's ready for any 1/35 scale vehicle display. **FSM**

SOURCES

Sculptamold, Amaco, www.amaco.com
 Turf, ballast, and scenic cement, Woodland Scenics, www.woodlandscenics.com
 Static grass and Gras-Master, Noch GmbH & Co., www.noch.de/en