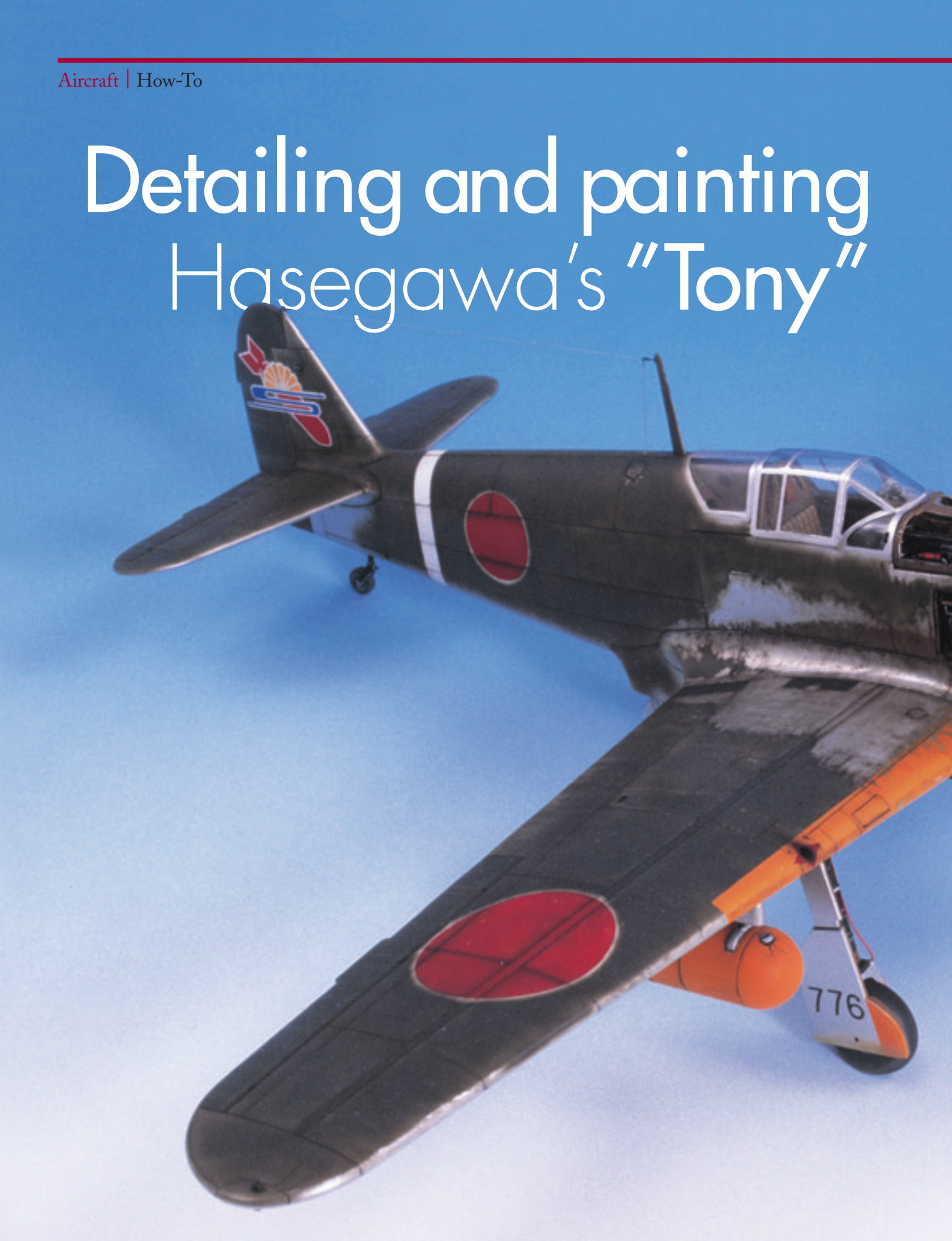
Detailing and painting Hasegawa's "Tony"



Improving the sleek Ki-61 Hien

By Alfonso Martinez Berlana
Photos by Aurelio Gimeno Ruiz



Code-named "Tony," Kawasaki's Ki-61 Hien (Swallow) was the only Japanese World War II production fighter with an in-line, liquid-cooled engine. This resulted in a graceful aircraft, and I just had to have a model of it in my collection.

Hasegawa's 1/48 scale kit was easy to build. The pieces fit together well, and it's not an expensive kit. With such a good start, I decided to add a detailed cockpit and machine guns, and improve the engine exhausts with aftermarket parts. I chose 149th Sentai (group) markings from AeroMaster's decal sheet.

Aires interior. Aires' detail set includes resin and photoetched parts that fit perfectly into the Hasegawa kit, **1**. It includes cockpit and back-deck parts, and provides detail for the nose-gun bay as well, **2**. To show them off, I had to cut away part of the top deck and right side of the nose behind the engine.

I painted the interior parts with Vallejo acrylics, **3**. The base color for the cockpit and landing gear wells is a 50-50 mixture of 984 matte brown and 981 orange-brown.

While the fuselage halves were open, I cut out the kit engine exhausts and substituted Moskit aftermarket hollow metal exhausts, **4**. After they were installed, I closed the fuselage, **5**.

The only extra detail I added to the landing gear was copper wire for the brake lines, **6**. I had to fix the trailing edge of the wing where I had gotten a bit too zealous sanding the seams. I used thin strips of plastic and super glue to restore the sharp trailing edge, **7**.

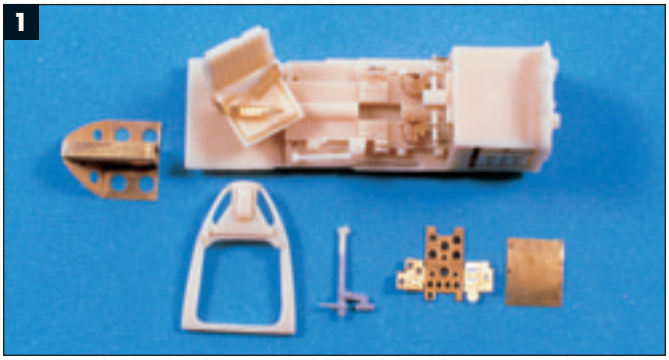
I decided not to try cutting the one-piece canopy apart to pose it open, so I carefully attached it with very tiny drops of super glue, polished it with compound, and then masked it with Tamiya tape.

Airframe preparation. The color scheme I chose was a field-applied camouflage over natural metal. As with any natural-metal finish, the surface of the model must be flawless. I sanded the entire fuselage and wing assemblies so there would be no bumps in the finish. First, I used 1,000-grit sandpaper, then I polished the surface with Tamiya rubbing compound and a cotton ball. This process eliminated seams and buffed out the tiny scratches left by the sandpaper.

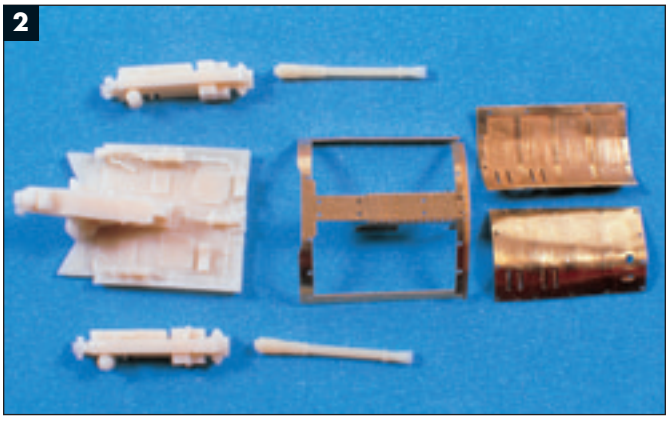
Many Japanese factories left their planes unpainted with only national insignia applied. Camouflage and unit markings were often applied in the field, and the quality of the paint and its application were usually poor. That resulted in scruffy looking aircraft. My Tony would be no exception.

I used a European-brand acrylic paint for the underlying natural-metal finish. Whichever paint you choose, it should be fine-grained to resemble aluminum and should be able to withstand masking tape and enamel washes. I tinted several panels with aluminum mixed with a little white or a little black. After three coats, I buffed the finish with a cotton cloth, **8**.

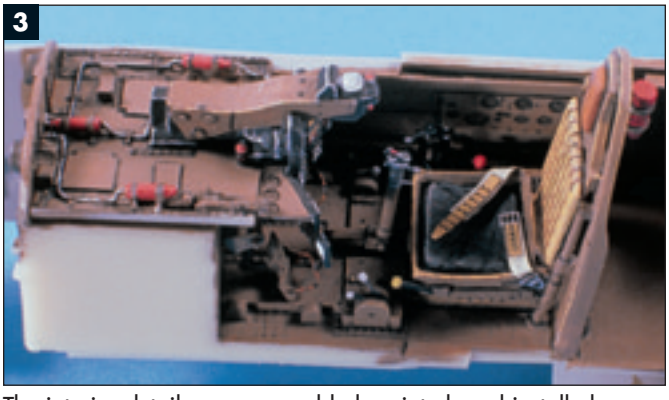
For the field-applied camouflage, I thinned Tamiya XF13 green and varied the density of the paint as I went along the surface to sim-



The Aires interior set includes resin and photoetched details.



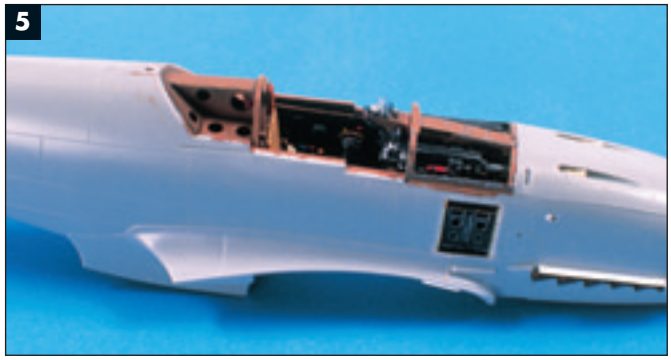
Aires' set also includes the nose guns, bays, and covers.



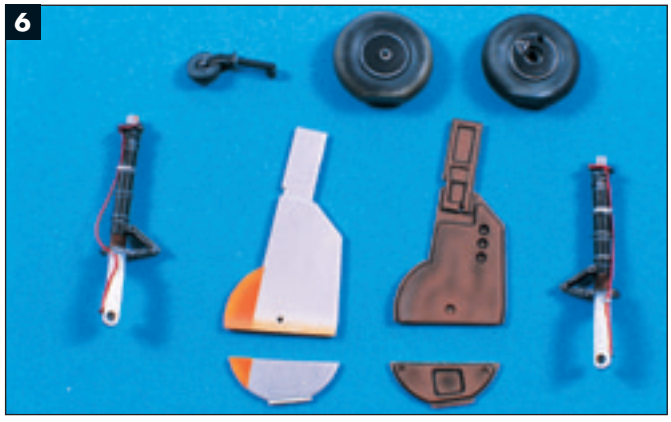
The interior details were assembled, painted, and installed.



Alfonso modified the nose halves of the Tony to fit the Moskit metal exhaust pipes.



The fuselage was assembled and ready for canopy and wings.



Other than a terrific paint job, the landing gear needed only copper wire brake lines.



Here's the model ready for paint. Note Alfonso repaired the trailing edge of the left wing with strip styrene and super glue.



The first coats of paint were shiny aluminum, the look of the real aircraft before camouflage was applied.

ulate the original haphazard paint job. Next, I applied a wash of Tamiya XF55 light gray on the wing spars, then started to "wear" the green off of the airframe. I lightly dabbed a little alcohol with a fine-tipped brush on the areas around the cockpit and wing root. The alcohol dissolved the green paint and revealed the natural metal beneath without affecting it. I continued lightly removing the green paint until I achieved the look I wanted, **9**.

Painting the details. I masked and painted the hinomarus (national insignias), fuselage identification stripe, and the yellow wing leading edges, **10**. I painted the bottoms of the flaps and elevators XF14 light gray. When all the paint was dry, I airbrushed a light coat of Micro Gloss in preparation for a detail wash. I thinned black enamel and brushed it into the engraved details and recesses.

I painted the exhaust pipes and stains on the fuselage with a mixture of XF64 dark brown and XF1 black, **11**. Next came decals for the unit emblem on the tail, and markings on the main gear doors.

The last paint step was an overcoat of clear flat over the painted areas, keeping it off the natural-metal areas as much as I could. At that point, I removed the masks from the canopy, then attached the landing gear and made a pitot tube from fine stainless-steel tubing.

The finished Tony looks decidedly unkempt; just what I wanted! **FSM**

SOURCES

Interior detail set Aires (No. 4017), www.aires.cz
Metal exhaust pipes Moskit (No. 48-21), GreatModels Webstore, 801-565-0823, www.GreatModels.com
Decals AeroMaster (No. 48-116C), 786-293-6859, www.aeromaster.com
Vallejo paints Brookhurst Hobbies, 714-636-3580, www.brookhursthobbies.com

The Kawasaki Ki-61 Hien ("Tony")

In April 1940, Kawasaki received blueprints and several examples of the Daimler-Benz DB 601A 12-cylinder, inverted-V, liquid-cooled engine from Germany to begin licensed reproduction of this engine as the Kawasaki Ha-40. Manufacture of this 1,100-horsepower engine began in November 1941, with the official name "Army Type Two engine."

Meanwhile, Kawasaki developed two fighter designs to use the new Type Two. The Ki-60 heavy fighter did not go into production, but the Ki-61 Hien lightweight fighter did. It is possible that Allied analysts dubbed the aircraft "Tony" because it looked similar to the Italian Macchi Mc. 202.

Prototypes were tested in simulated combat against an imported Messerschmitt Bf 109E-3, a captured Curtiss P-40E, Nakajima Ki-43 (Oscar) and a Ki-44 (Tojo).

The Tony first flew combat missions in April 1943 in New Guinea with the 68th Sentai and 78th Sentai, and was superior to Allied fighters. Maintenance problems resulted in minor redesigns, but the fighter held its own until outclassed by the P-51 Mustang in 1944.

– Alfonso Martinez Berlana



After applying the green camouflage, Alfonso removed some of it with an alcohol-dampened brush. This simulated the heavily-worn field applied paint.



The gray-painted ailerons and elevators, the yellow leading edges, and the red hinomarus were masked and painted.



The exhaust pipes were painted and stains were added along the fuselage.