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Tickling the Rhino

Multimedia kit brings to life the arrival of tanks on the Western Front

BY JOE HUDSON AND AARON SKINNER

Surprised by their first sight of a British tank, German infantry try to breach the beast in this 1/32 scale diorama.



From the first deployment of British Mark Is at the Battle of Flers–Courcellette in 1916, tanks revolutionized warfare, making firepower mobile and providing protection for the crew and accompanying troops. Dedicated anti-tank weapons were years away, but early tanks were vulnerable to artillery and infantry with grenades.

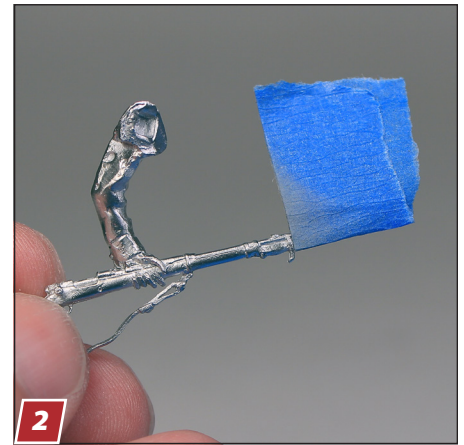
The latter is depicted in Andrea Miniatures' 1/32 scale Tank Fight diorama kit. Inspired by an illustration published during World War I entitled *Tickling the*

Rhino, this multimedia kit includes a Mark I tank with steering trailer, ten figures, a scenic base, some stowage, and two rats.

While the bulk of the tank is cast in large resin pieces, most of the parts are white-metal. A few photo-etched (PE) items and a small decal sheet round out the package.

We split the work with Joe assembling and painting the figures and Aaron building the tank and bringing all of the components together on the base.

Joe kicks things off.



1 I inspected each figure for mold seams, flash, and pitting. To clean up the parts, I used the backside of a No. 11 blade to scrape lines, and assorted files and a wire wheel in a rotary tool to smooth surfaces.

2 I covered the bayonets with tape to maintain the bare metal appearance of the weapons.



3 Then, I assembled each of the figures with 5-minute epoxy leaving some limbs and weapons off to ease painting. This process required a lot of small batches of adhesive to assemble all 10 of the multipart figures.

4 After pinning each figure and placing them on cork stoppers, balsa blocks, alligator clips, or pin vises to use as handles, I airbrushed them with a primer coat of Tamiya sky gray (XF-19).

5 Working in assembly-line fashion, I hand-brushed base coats on the uniforms. I kept the mixes simple — easy to replicate if I needed to correct mistakes across the eight German soldiers. Altering the highlights and shadows painted later gave variety.



6 To match my mixes, think of an eye with the initial color as the iris and the second color added like the pupil. This can be replicated in small and large amounts of paint.

7 Because these figures were going on a diorama that would be viewable from all angles, I didn't want to give them a specific light source as I do with single figures. Instead, I painted shadows almost to black using AK-Interactive's WWI German Uniforms three-color set (AK3090). I started shadows with the unmixed color uniform base, ...

8 ... then added progressively more of the AK set's uniform shadow color to gradually deepen the centers of folds, underhangs, and creases.



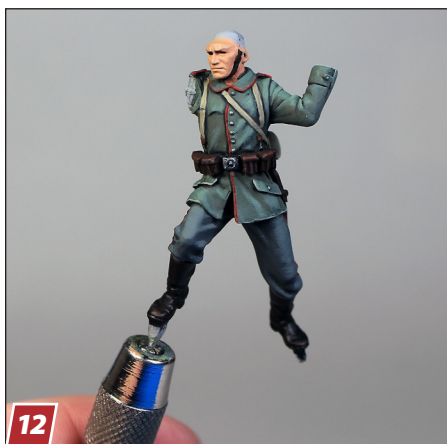
After completing shadows under folds, equipment, and limbs, I checked where the figure would be up against the tank and added large shadows with thin Vallejo Model Color black in the contact areas.



For highlights, I added AK uniform light to Scale 75 field gray and applied this mix to the top side of folds, limbs, and others salients.



The brightest highlights were added to the most extreme spots with reference to how the figure would be positioned on the diorama.



The finished work shows how the harsh shadows contrast nicely with the highlights. That should allow the figures to pop without overwhelming the diorama. To learn about the colors I used for flesh and equipment, see the list on p. 15.



Attaching the pre-painted parts with 5-minute epoxy left gaps at the seams. I filled them with a mix of Squadron Green Putty and Tamiya Extra Thin Cement. Once it was dry, I smoothed the putty with sandpaper, sanding foam, and Scotch-Brite pads.



But the work often took the paint to bare metal requiring me to repaint those spots. This is where those simple base coats are essential to easily match the patches. At this point, I sent the figures to Aaron, who takes it from here.



After sanding the bottom of the exhaust covers flat, I attached them by flowing super glue into the seams. Solvent-based plastic cement won't work on the resin or metal.



To ensure a good fit, I smoothed the mating surfaces of the wheels for the steering trailer against a sheet of sandpaper held flat on a solid surface. The wheels were joined with super glue.

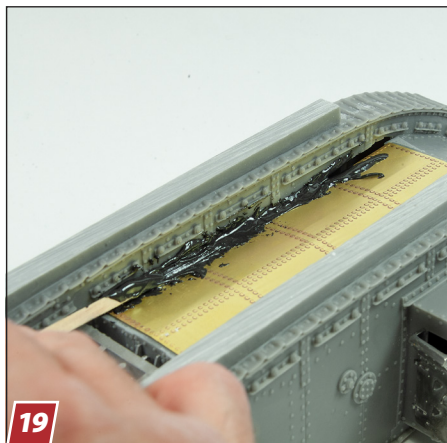


The advantage of the soft metal is that its shape and pins can easily be adjusted with a little gentle pressure. A razor saw quickly separates the parts from attached sprues.



18

I joined one side and the center section with 5-minute epoxy to be sure the heavy parts stayed together during painting and weathering.



19

I filled gaps between the PE belly with JB Kwik. Pushing the thick 2-part adhesive into and across the seam sealed it. I wasn't worried about it being too neat as the seams are under the tanks and will be covered with mud.



20

Priming is essential on multimedia kits to cover disparate materials and provide a uniform base for the camouflage. I primed with Tamiya sky gray. Tamiya lacquer thinner was used to thin all of the Tamiya acrylics used.



21

The first British tanks in France wore multicolored camouflage. For the base coat, I airbrushed the tank with Tamiya IJN gray (XF-12) a pretty good match for stone gray. Andrea's instructions lacked clear painting diagrams, so I followed one of the patterns provided in Takom's Mark I Male kit.



22

To help break up the finish, I sprayed IJN gray mixed with a drop of German gray (XF-63) along panel lines and rivets. Then I sprayed a thin mix of IJN gray and white into panel centers.



23

The green is a mix of equal parts Tamiya NATO green (XF-67) and flat green (XF-5) with just a touch of flat yellow (XF-3). I mixed the mustard with Tamiya flat white (XF-2), yellow green (XF-4), and a little desert yellow (XF-59). The final shade is Tamiya NATO brown (XF-68).



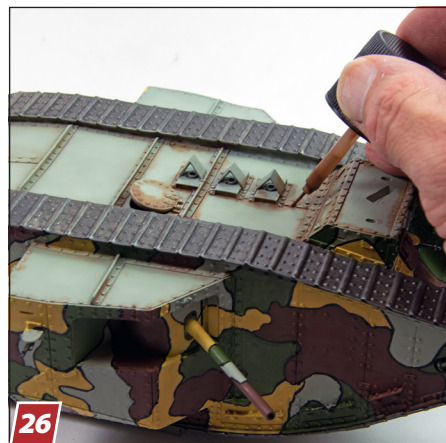
24

I hand-painted the lines separating the colors with Tamiya flat black (XF-1) and a 0 brush. Keeping the bristles damp with thinner helps the paint flow. Later, I cleaned up the edges of the color areas by hand.



25

To base coat the tracks, I hand-brushed a mix of Vallejo gunmetal gray (70.863) and Ammo by Mig Jimenez dark tracks (A.MIG035).



26

I enhanced the terrific surface detail with Tamiya brown Panel Line Accent Color, first flowing it into recesses and around rivets, ...



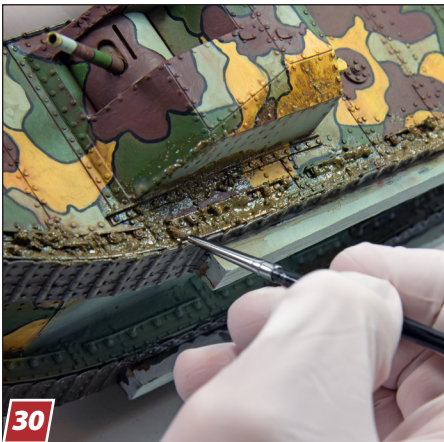
27 ... then I refined the wash with clear enamel thinner to feather edges and remove excess. Use a paper towel to clean the brush between applications of clean thinner and prevent reapplying the wash you just removed.



28 On the vertical side plates, I removed excess wash by stroking the clean brush down the sides replicating water streaking on the sides of the full-size tank.



29 To further weather the sides I applied dots of several colors of oil paint to the panels, then drew a saw-tooth brush with a little clean Turpenoid down the plates until almost all of the color was removed.



30 Who doesn't enjoy playing in the mud? I applied Vallejo Environment European thick mud (26.807) around the running gear with heavy deposits on the lower sections and on the tracks ...



31 ... and a little lighter along the edges of the upper runs. The acrylic mixture remains workable for about 30 minutes, so it's easy to push around on the surface. A little water thins it, and I brushed a few streaks down the sides.



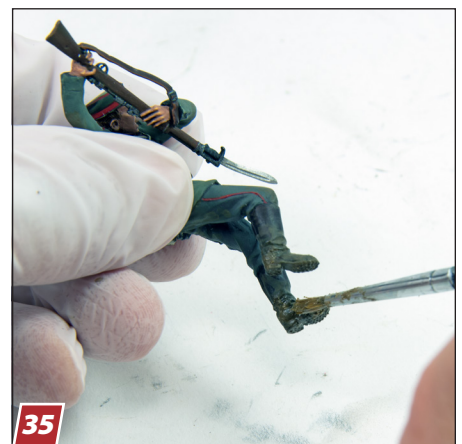
32 Using a chunk of sponge, I textured the mud and feathered the edges. Photos showed mud collected on top of the sprockets so I built up sizable deposits there.



33 With a plastic knife, I scraped the mud from the ridges between the track links. A pencil gave those ridges a steely sheen.



34 After spraying the display base black, I applied Vallejo mud to the area underneath the tank that would be inaccessible once the vehicle was in place.



35 I also brushed a thin mix of the mud and water onto the boots of the figures to tie them into the scene.



36 Before adding the model and mud, I picked out details: sandbags were painted khaki with buff fading, the gas can red, the trench wood walls a mix of Vallejo Model Color deck tan (70.986) and Panzer Aces new wood (70.311).



37 Just before I attached the tank, I brushed Vallejo mud around the track marks. Then, while the mud was still wet, I liberally applied two-part epoxy to the grooves and pressed the tank's locators into the base.



38 Now I could cover the rest of the base with Vallejo mud, carefully working it up to the tank, steering trailer, and molded details like the abandoned machine gun ammo box.



39 Before attaching each of the figures with 5-minute epoxy, I brushed the mud around its molded locators, ...



40 ... then pressed the figure into place so it appeared to be in, rather than on, the soft material. I refined the fit by pushing mud around hands and feet.



41 I drilled holes and glued in the white-metal posts before stringing them with PE lengths of barbwire. Posts and wire were painted with Vallejo Environment rust texture (73.821).



42 To weather the trench wall, I flowed on a thin light brown enamel wash to highlight the wood grain. I sprayed the lower portions of the wall with thin Tamiya flat earth (XF-52) to hint at the trench below. For a final touch, I streaked Vallejo Environment rainmarks (73.819) down the planks. **FSM**

Figure paint mixes

Flesh: Base: Vallejo beige red (70.804) + mahogany brown (70.846)

Shadows: Base + more mahogany brown

Deepest shadows: Pure mahogany brown

Highlights: Base + more beige red

Next highlight: Pure beige red

Final highlight: Beige red + sunny skintone (70.845)

Tunic: Scale 75 field gray (SC-46) + AK-Interactive field gray base (AK3141)

Pants: Scale 75 field gray + Vallejo Model Color dark sea green (70.868)

Weathering: Gray base color mixed with Vallejo flat earth (70.983) or burnt umber (70.941)

Gas Canisters: Vallejo stone gray (70.884)

Rifle straps: Vallejo Model Color German beige (70.821) + Vallejo Model Color burnt umber (70.941)

Haversack: Andrea khaki light 5 + Andrea khaki base 4 (from Khaki Paint Set ACS-014)

Boots: Base: Vallejo flat black (70.950) + Vallejo mahogany brown

Shadows: Vallejo flat black

Highlight: Base + Vallejo mahogany brown

Next highlight: Vallejo mahogany brown

Final highlight: Vallejo mahogany brown + Vallejo flat earth

Rifles: *Metal:* Vallejo Model Color gloss black (70.861), then apply Vallejo oily steel (70.865), followed with a black wash

Stock: Andrea Brown Paint Set 5 (ACS-013) + Andrea Flesh Set 5 (ACS-01)

Next, randomly apply Andrea Flesh 5, then apply a thin coat of Vallejo woodgrain (70.828). When everything was dry, add a thin coat of Vallejo clear satin (70.522)