

Painting your figure's face

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Why add figures to a model??

I like to build small armour vignettes with a vehicle and one or more figures interacting with it. I have been heavily influenced by the work of modelers Steve Zaloga and Glenn Bartolotti and try to emulate their style. The figure has to be at least as good as the vehicle. If it looks good, it adds to the vehicle. If it looks poor, it can really detract from your model.

Why add figures to a model??

A figure, or small group of figures with your model can do the following:

- Show the relative size of the vehicle
- Give some indication of the purpose of the vehicle
- Help set the vehicle in its historical context
- Add a focal point to the model

Steve Zaloga

Soviet SU-76M SPG



US M3 Stuart tank



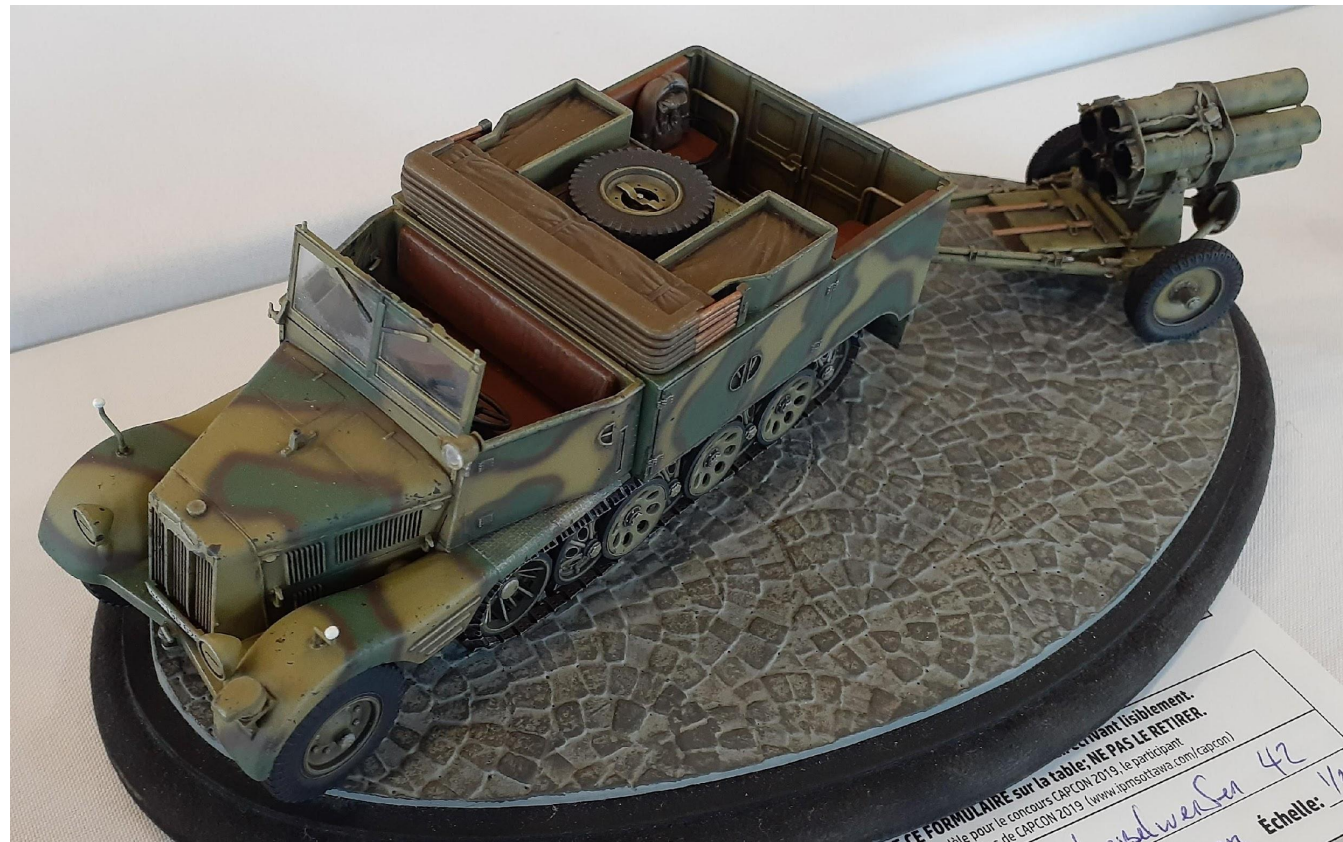
Glenn Bartolotti

French Renault UE tractor

French Renault UE tractor



To me, an armour model on a base without a figure looks like a still life. Where are the people??



...avant l'isiblement.
CE FORMULAIRE sur la table: NE PAS LE RETIRER.
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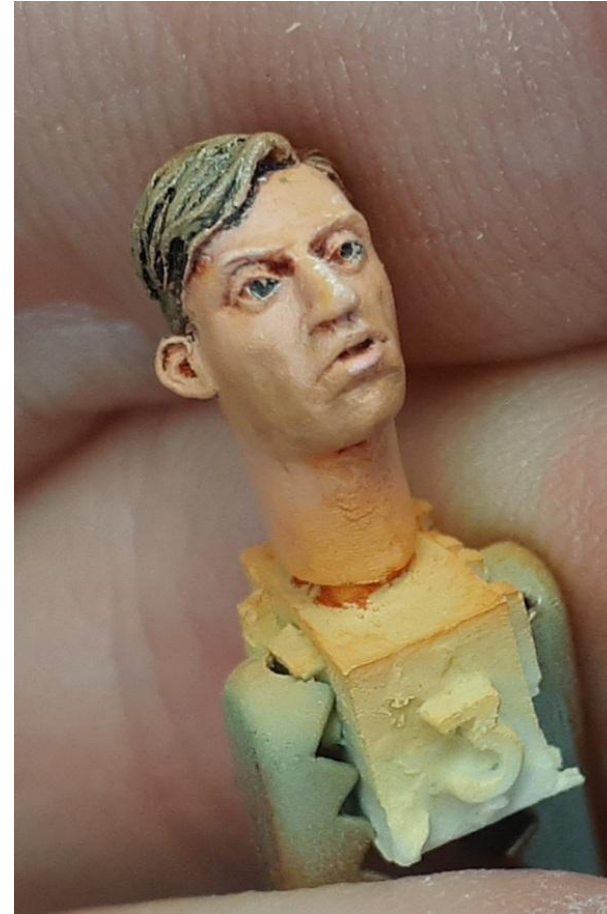
My attempts to be Zaloga or Bartolotti



A modeler buddy said that he believes that a modeler should always be asking himself the question: “*what do I need to do to improve?*” I decided that I needed to improve my faces. And that meant (YIKES) adding eyes!



Before you start painting, remember that a good quality aftermarket resin head is easier to paint than a stock plastic head because the detail is so much better defined.



Also, adding a good character face can make a mediocre figure look great!

This stock Tamiya figure....



With the head cut off and drilled out.....



you get a completely different looking figure.



My favourite aftermarket heads are Hornet. They have a vast variety of heads and the details are exquisite.



Ultracast heads are terrific too and an excellent choice to start with because the figures are all squinting, which makes painting eyes a snap!

British / Commonwealth WWII Tankers



Ultracast Soviet tanker head on Tamiya body.



Step one of my method is to airbrush the aftermarket heads with Tamiya flat flesh.



Step two is to paint the pupil in the centre of the eye using your favourite black acrylic paint and a 5 zero brush. Do the best you can, but don't sweat too much if it's not perfect. You can fix it up later. This is probably the most difficult aspect of my technique. But like anything else in modeling, it just takes practice.



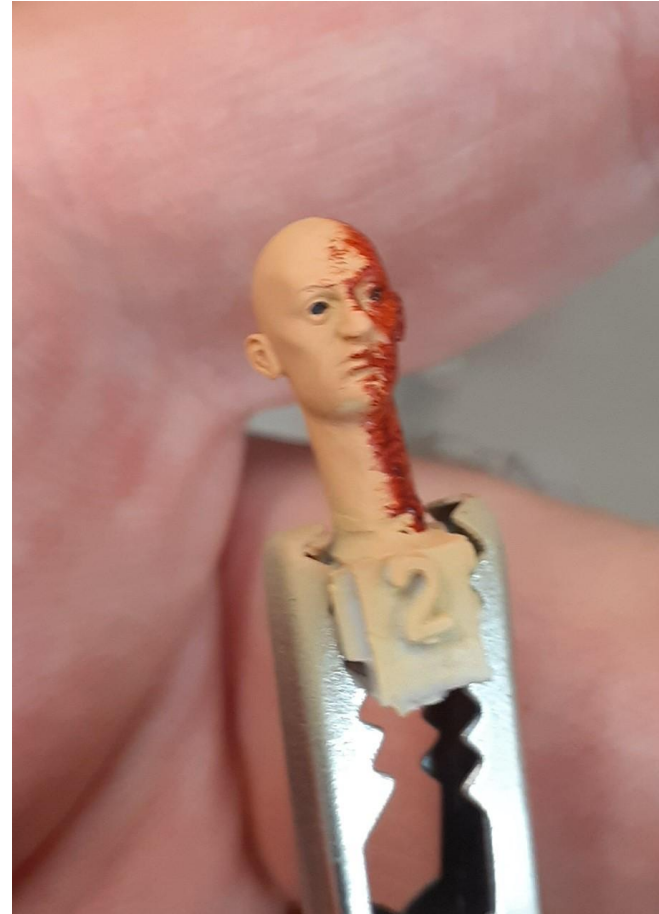
If you mess it up completely, toss the head into an ultrasonic cleaner with a 25% solution of ammonia and the paint will come right off and you can try again!



Now is the time to pull out the oil paints and steal your wife's makeup applicators! (Also available on Amazon)



Once the acrylic paint used to paint the pupil is dry, coat the entire head with Burnt Sienna oil paint using a throw-away makeup applicator.



After every nook and cranny of the face is painted, using a clean makeup applicator, very gently wipe the oil paint off, making sure some remains in all the crevices and lines of the face especially the eyes. Replace the applicators often as the paint builds up quickly. If you remove too much add more oil paint. Practice here is the key. After this I put the figure aside for about a week to dry. **At this point it will look awful! Have faith!**

Incidentally, the exact same method is used if there are arms or legs to paint.



After a week to dry, mix flesh tint with a small amount of yellow ochre. You want a slightly pink flesh tone. Apply this to the upper head with a small brush, around the eyes and the cheeks. Go around the eyes and even them up if the pupils are different sizes. Make sure not to cover up the pupil. Blend colours with a blender brush.



Add a bit of burnt sienna to your flesh colour and do the beard area. Go back over the cheeks with the initial flesh colour if necessary to even things up. Use blender brush to blend colours, but don't over blend. You want a faint line between the bearded area and the cheeks.



Add some white paint to the highlights of the face; end of nose, top of cheeks, tip of chin and softly blend. Again, be careful to not over blend.



Check the face and see what it needs. More highlights? Darker beard area? Keep playing with it until you're satisfied with the look. Sometimes success is beyond your grasp, especially at the beginning. Is it an over blended mess? This was my biggest problem when I first tried this method. Toss it in the ultrasonic cleaner and better luck next time.

For the hair I use
Tamiya panel liner,
either black or brown
and then drybrush with
Humbrol enamels.
Final step is to flat coat
the figure once it is
completely dry.



Some of the figures I've painted.



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