

INK GETS A NOD AND A WINK!

By Mike Isermann

I have been working with ink as a tissue coloring agent for several years now and I am convinced that it is one of the best ways to achieve a light, colorfast finish. Ink combined with a little chalk here and there to highlight or blend areas can produce some wonderful color schemes! There are a number of companies that make acrylic ink these days and it is readily available at your local arts and crafts store or via the internet. I am partial to Doc Martin's India Ink because they have a nice selection of colors including a white ink.

Some of the colors available are absolutely perfect right out of the bottle, but the real advantage where inks are concerned is that you have the ability to create any color under the rainbow if you become familiar with a color wheel and you have access to a Cyan-Magenta-Yellow-black (CMYK) Color Code chart. I use a chart available on the internet. You can find it at www.december.com/html/spec/colorcmyk.html. There is an infinite number of colors on this website along with mixing percentages that will help you create the colors you desire. The colors you create can be lightened using white ink or darkened using black ink. Once you work with them a while you will start to get a feel for how color mixing works. Recently I was able to color match a WWII Navy scheme used on Grumman Wildcats at Guadalcanal in late 1942. The colors are kind of a washed out sea blue and light gray. I was also able to create a nice looking Chromium Yellow for a pre war paint scheme on a peanut I built. My Mr. Smoothie was colored using orange Doc Martin's India Ink sprayed over the dull side of red Esaki. The color is a beautiful reddish-orange. I have to say the possibilities are endless!

For those of you who do not like using Esaki tissue because it fades.... well guess what! If you back the tissue color up with a few light coats of ink, your tissue will not fade! In addition, your colors will be more brilliant and you have the ability to create color overlays that yield new Esaki colors such as I did with my Mr. Smoothie. Translucent camouflage schemes are also a reality when using inks. All you need to do is let your creative mind run wild!

Ink Application:

The best way to apply ink is with a dual action airbrush. A single action will work but I like the dual action because you are afforded more control. Inks are fairly thin right out of the bottle but if you want to thin them down further, use alcohol to do so. I recommend that you preshrink your tissue on a frame before applying the ink. Let the tissue shrink up and then begin to layer the ink on the dull side of the tissue using horizontal strokes across the entire sheet and then vertical strokes across the entire sheet. I typically lay down 3 to 4 layers of ink to achieve the color saturation I desire. One of the things I really like about ink is that it does not create an opaque finish. In my mind's eye there is nothing more beautiful than seeing sunlight penetrate the framed structure of my airplane as it flies overhead!

Once you have the tissue colored to your liking you can cut it away from the frame or keep it on the frame and begin covering your model. Whether you reside in the glue stick camp or in the dope camp where tissue application is concerned, know that the ink will release from the tissue if it comes in contact with alcohol or nitrate. This is not a problem if you are careful and can minimize tissue repositioning. The only time I really see the ink releasing from the tissue is when I am sealing it with a brush loaded with 50/50 dope and thinner. However, once the dope dries, the ink is locked in place for good. I would also recommend you go easy with the thinner when you begin tacking tissue to your framing. Dip and dry on a paper towel before "wicking" the nitrate thinner through the tissue. This will minimize ink release. I always have a fresh jar of thinner near by to clean my brushes between ink jobs. I don't want to mix colors by mistake and then have to remove and replace tissue because I was stupid. A little preparation and patience is necessary in order to have a good experience with inked tissue. But you will love the results produced by your efforts! That I can guarantee!

Don't be shy give ink a try !

Thermals,
OOS Mike

Ed Note: Mike commented that he has never tried the ink in dope/thinner, which he thought to be problematic due to the fact that ink is acrylic (water based). See the May-June issue of this rag for Bill Duke's formula for using ink with dope/thinner mix. Bill always pours the ink in first, followed by the thinner than the dope, and it stirs quite well.