SLIMTRACKS NARROW GAUGE WORKSHOPS PRESENTS

"LAURIE'S STRUCTURES"

PART 2

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So, you're back for the next part heh? OK, have you got the "Wheat's" ready for us? That's good!

Well, we left off talking about styrene & some of the jigs I made & use to make the square edges & cuts in part 1. We also talked about the detail which I also say is to a degree the "texture" we can add to our structures. This tiny detail, & sometimes larger detail, is what makes a good realistic structure in my opinion & these little extra bits which have been included are the texture I talk about. You know talking about things brings on an awful dry throat & seeming I'm the one doing most of the talking you better get me a DW so I can keep going because there is a lot more we need to discuss if you're going to pick my brains & make some sense out of all this?

THE DETAIL

As I said, the detail or as some say "super detailing" is what draws our eyes to wonder all over & around a nice model. Finding these details parts & looking at them in their small packets hanging in our hobby shop makes us think how we can use & apply these. When I look at these packets I think about "kit-bashing" them & how I can modify them or mix & match them. I know its easy to just glue a detail part down around a structure such as a barrel & leave it – not me, I want the barrel to be doing something or have some materials on top or coming out from them. This is how I like to do things & when a photo is taken it looks like nothing you buy off-the-shelf from the shop.

FIG.1

Here we go – a bunch of my moulds made from silicone. In my hand is a tiny work bench, no silly not the workbench's in Madam Lash's establishment, one for a tradesman with tools on it like a hacksaw & hammer, screwdrivers & bits of small machinery parts. Where the hell did he get the tiny tools you ask? Well you can find these, Scale Structures makes them & so does a few other manufacturers. Have a bo-peep in the Walther's cattle-dog.
The workbench is styrene with draws & the tiny white metal detail parts were glued onto the bench & then I cast it. I made lots of mini tool holding tables & shelves. I also mixed different detail parts together, boxes with barrels on a wood pallet & so on. Its just a matter of looking at the details & playing with them to combine them into an interesting configuration & casting the mould around them. Hey, nobody else has these on their layout we get our very own detail parts!
The silicone material is a 2 part mix, you must get all the bubbles out or they will spoil the detail casting. Vibration works well to get the tiny bubbles to rise to the surface, jump on your horse & race down to the pub & pick us up some more beers & on you're way carry the mould while the silicone goes off, that should do it!

We also mentioned the special jig to sand the edges of our sheet material to square the edge so we get a perfect join. We can see this in the next 2 figures.

FIG.2

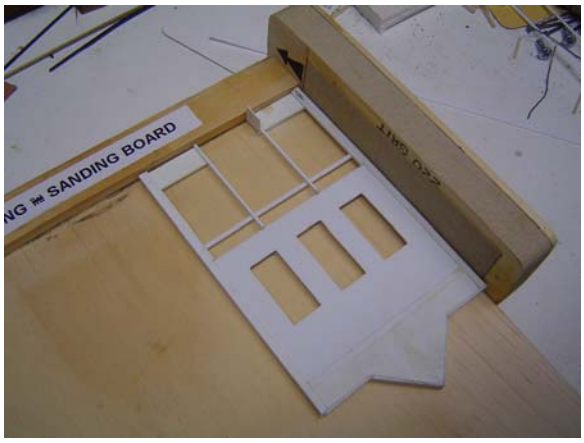
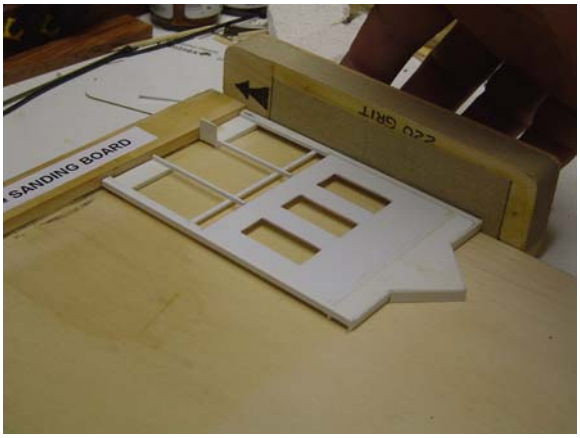
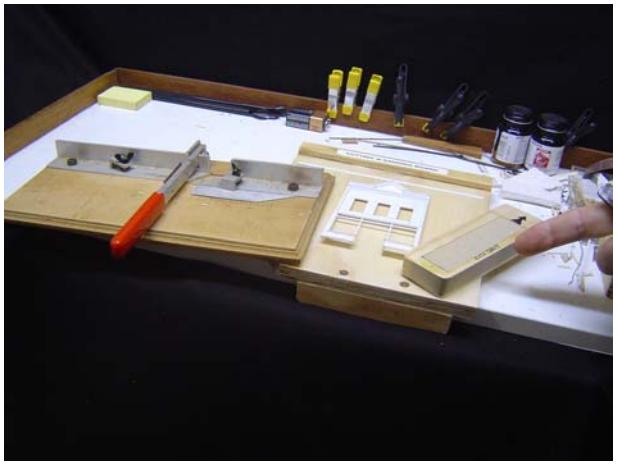


FIG.3



These photos show my sanding block of wood which has 220 grit glass paper glued to it. The wood stop (cleat) at the back is 6mm higher than the base (plywood) & you can see the styrene store front I am sanding to square it up. The glass paper is level with the top of the base so it doesn't cut into the side. Notice the top of the 2x1 block – it has a strip of glass paper too & it wraps around the curved ends of the block for doing radius work. (A two for one jig.)

FIG.4



This shows things a bit better; you can now see the cleat that acts as a stop on my portable work table. You can also see the sanding block & how I purpose cut the piece of glass paper to fit allowing it to be just under the plywood base yet not cut into the side when sanding a sheet of styrene or wood etc.
Also you can see my chopper, its an Australian version of the NWSL & for doing repetitive cuts the same length / size it is a must to have if you plan on learning to be proficient in scratchbuilding.

A mini vacuum cleaner like the rechargeable types will pick up the dust from sanding if you're doing this inside at the kitchen table. Dust, - you know how it can dry the throat don't you? Hmmm let's make lots of dust. Now, ask the "Lady of the Kitchen" to reach into the fridge for a "coldie" for you. "Sweetie, I can't get up dear as this dust is all over me – grab me a beer so I can wash out my dry throat please sweetie".
See, you've now got another jig to help you model! I just keep coming up with the ideas that work!

OK, back to reality.

The next photos show my stuff I have been mentioning – the detail parts. I have been collecting these for many, many years & some are now not available as the manufactures have gone.

FIG.5

These are the tiny tools on my fingers. The little kit box contains woodworking tools & metal workers tools. I also have the electric lamp deflectors which will soon see the SML's fitted & hanging inside the Durango Roundhouse.
There are electrical switch boxes, small electrical machines & alike.
These are the "super detailing components" that we can place on our structures to make them come alive & be seen by inquisitive wondering eyes of our friends we invite to play.

FIG.6

This is another of many boxes I have containing detail parts.
I have 4 more of the white metal ones & 6 of the plastic which are mostly Grandt detail parts.
Thank heaven for our manufacturers who make these tiny details they really do make a huge difference to how or models look on our layouts.

Some of these are British, American & Australian.

FIG.7

In Fig.7 you see one of my cabinets draws with just detail parts yet to be used.

Plastic storage boxes with stuff I picked up at train club auctions or purchased at hobby shops.

These days its getting harder to find these items especially down-under in Australia.

So, if you are going to build structures you also need to think about the details. Grandt Line NBW castings are great in lots more places than one thinks of. Look at the older buildings & see down the sides & backs how steel plates with NBW hold the walls from collapsing. See the old steel electrical conduit & boxes that we don't see these days – the little things start adding up that we need to place on our outside walls & roofs.

Well now we have covered a bit more on the styrene & wood & how we work it into models.

WOOD

The material most commonly used in model structures was wood. This has been covered by many others so I'm not going to redo the basic things you should already know but I do want to explain a few things that may get you thinking more about how you go about making wood structures.

With the plastics industry coming out with kits of very good detail quality, this has had an effect on wood kits. However it is still nice to dabble in wood.

One of the things I don't get is the scale lumber for trestles. I look at 12x12 inch & for my little narrow gauge Hon3 ***it's too big***. A train running over 12 x 12 trestle bents does not, in my opinion, look nearly as realistic as using 10x10 inch wood.
This is where I differ from most others. If it looks right it is right & to me many modelers use the exact size materials per drawing plans & their models do not look dimensionally correct to my eyes. I don't think I'm alone in saying this. In our layout room we are standing just a couple of feet away from most of our models & under artificial lighting. I've said it many times before, we need to modify our techniques to match our layouts & all of our layouts differ from one & others, especially the lighting. The lights provide what our eyes see & any dimness or shadows detract from our models to make them unrealistic. Light plays a massive role in out train rooms.
My painted backdrop is too green when standing & looking at it to study it in one place, but it doesn't look too green when I step back & take in a wider view – its deceptive under artificial lighting & we need to make adjustments to compensate – me thinks anyway!

That said I will get off the soapbox & take a 5 minute break & have myself a DW, join me?

With wood the hardest thing I find is gluing the bloody stuff! It takes forever to dry & the glue soak into the grain. ACC is what I use but I have just started to use "Weld Bond" but this still takes time.

Another thing I have found from my backdrop painting is the use of tubes of acrylic paints. The best thing I discovered was to always add white to the colour or colours I was mixing.
This matter of adding white can now be refined somewhat more. I now have several tones of white. Yes, 3 types of white to be exact. Titanium White is a brilliant white & you can get a medium & a WARM White. This warm white I discovered is perfect for weathering wood when mixed with other colours in washes onto timber. I have done some experimenting with very pleasing results using the acrylic washes. These are the same washes I mentioned in my previous articles on staing plaster rocks & retaining walls etc.

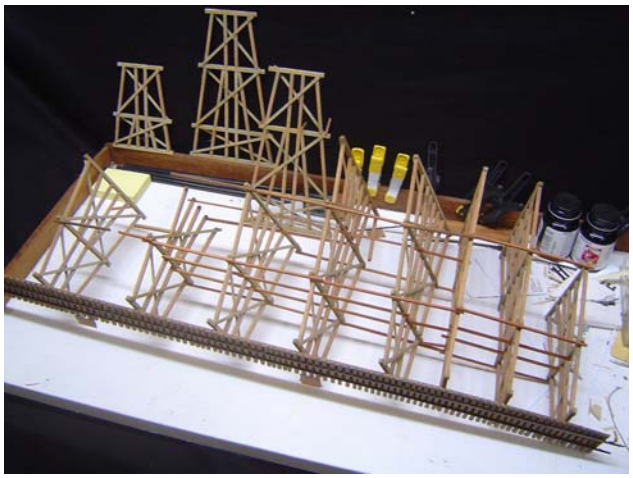
They work out very nicely thank you & I will be using these for the foreseeable future on my wood structures. I do the process in 3 steps.

For instance, a timber platform deck with 10 inch wide boards on it. I cut the boards like you see on a large floor area with staggered gaps & nail holes then stain each board individually with a light wash.
The next night I return & place another wash over some of the boards so different tones are left.
The third night I dry brush warm white from the tube onto the boards to weather them in various stages & provide the high-light needed under layout lighting.

Give it a go, it's heaps better than dyes & shoe stains.

Now, below is a trestle I have built to show what I mean……

FIG.8



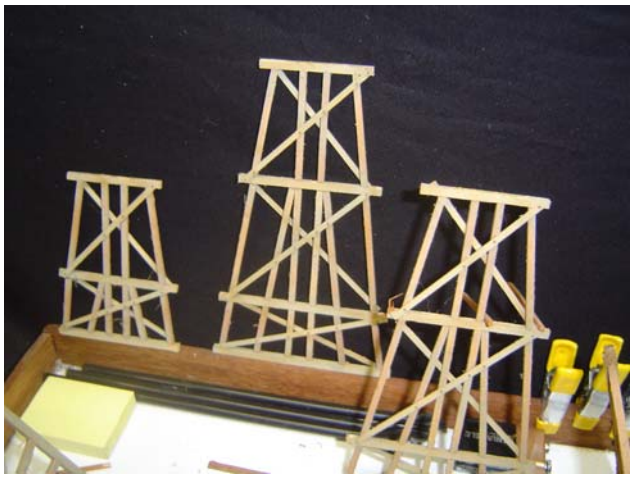
I managed to drop the poor thing & need to make some repairs – sorry, blame it on the DW's!

The bents are all 10 x 10 inches ***NOT*** 12x12!

This what I mean about some sizes in our modeling look wrong to me – this for narrow gauge looks right & it's staying this way.

Next is a close-up of the bents –

FIG.9



The light stain to me is much better than a darkish stain – I don't like dark it detracts from the models on the layout & again I mention the lighting matter – it definitely does please the eye when it is not dark & the texture & fine detail of the wood grain can be picked up by the eye.

If its not your cup of tea than darken it later but firstly leave it light-ish for a time until all the scenery is in place then judge its colour tone.

FIG.10

In fig.10 you can see my attempt at my first mine. Got the plan out of the head & wanted something that was vertical looking. See, all the NBW's have been placed in the appropriate places to give it detail & texture. I'll be building a stone retaining wall under it & placing it near my new wye tracks at "Hatch Jct".

I plan on building a similar size boiler house to go with it from stone (plaster) with big doors so you can see the things inside.

She isn't weathered yet & I used Floquil stains which didn't work out as well as I desired. Oh well, back to the tube paints to get it right I guess.

One other point I wish to share with you whom I believe important. Angles need to be included to form a good model that is attractive. Like the Madam's girls in Silverton, pleasing to the eye, a model that grabs your immediate attention over other models is an obvious observation.

The roof angles & pitch, broken side & rear walls – all things that say it is not just a square shaped model. Just like our layouts where we try & make them appear bigger than they actually are we can make the physical shape of our structures more interesting. Even slight modifications to the prototype can make a model look much better.

On my sawmill for instance, have a look at how high I have made it from the floor to the roof. You can see everything inside easily. This was a design factor in building it because I had seen so many models of sawmills that were too low to be able to see the beautiful details castings inside & the light could not get in there because the roof was too low & covered too much of the model.

FIG.11

FIG.12

FIG.13

These 3 shots show what I mean, see fig.13 & you can see all the way to the back wall & this photo was taken 4 feet away. In fig.11 you can see the overhead shot showing a section of the roof removed. This lets the light in yet you can't see the missing roof from the front – a clever cheat? Yes, I like to think so, we can "show-off" our models better if we allow for room lighting & play with actual HO size materials.

Thirsty work & I need to let this keyboard cool down…….
I hope you enjoyed my little article & that something here filled a little gap in how you do your next structure.

My friend we need to toast with a big DW & say hoo-roo until next time we cross paths. Just remember to keep that fridge full or the Sherriff will be a callin' to take you down the end of Banister Street for a lashing…… no, you might enjoy that, we'll think of something else as punishment.

Your friend down-under……Laurie