

Wood With Oils

by
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I have built quite a few W.W.I aircraft over the years and it is almost impossible to find a paint scheme that doesn't have some exposed wood somewhere. I tried different paints but couldn't find a combination that worked for me until I started using oils. It is my opinion that oils give the best results for realistic wood grain and color. Recently I decided to build a ship model to see how faithful the oils would replicate the wooden hull and deck. The technique I used on the ship is basically the same as for the aircraft except the wood grain is molded in on the ship. Also, due to the difference in scale I changed my choice of brushes which I will explain later.

I start by applying an undercoat of light tan acrylic paint to all of the surfaces that will be wood. This applies to ships and aircraft alike. I use acrylics because the oils do not cut through the acrylics when working oils onto the surface with repeated brush strokes. It is these brush strokes that will create the wood grain affect. I ships I use a 1/4" or 3/8" shader brush which lays down a pretty even layer of paint. On aircraft I use a 1/4" rake brush after I have laid down the base coat of wood color. The rake brush scrapes away some of the base coat to let the lighter tan color show through creating a pattern that resembles wood grain. After this is dry I go back over the area with the rake brush adding just the slightest amount of darker color (burnt Sienna) to give the affect of a darker "grain". I am careful not to overdo this because if you get it too heavy it will appear to darken the entire wood area.

The two primary colors I use are yellow ochre and burnt sienna. Depending on the ratio of burnt sienna to the yellow ochre the darkness of the wood can be varied. I normally start with the

yellow ochre and add the burnt sienna in very small amounts until I get the color of wood I am looking for. On the side of my mixing cup I have a small to moderate amount of Liquin Original by Winsor and Newton. This is a medium that does not affect the color but increases the drying time of the oils considerably, usually the next day. Without the Liquin the oils may take several days to dry.

One thing about the Liquin is that it will thin the oils, so be careful not to add too much. With a thin mixture it is more difficult to obtain the wood grain effect. This is particularly true on aircraft but is not as critical on ships because of the molded-in grain. Another technique is to let the base layer of paint start to set before going over it with the rake brush. It may take a little more effort but the results can be worth it.

On aircraft I immediately apply a good coat of Future after the oils have dried. This helps while handling the model because the oil, although dry to the touch, is still soft and not fully hardened. It is important to know that if you use mineral spirits or a thinner-based wash directly over the oils, it will remove the paint when you start



taking off the wash. Even with the Future, use caution in the event you missed a spot. I haven't tried acrylic washes yet, but I would feel more comfortable knowing that the base color was sealed.

This is a wood grain applied to a 1/48 Albatross DVa. It shows a subtle hint of the burnt sienna over the lighter blend of the base wood color.



This is another Albatross DIII showing the same wood technique as described above.



This is a 1/32 scale Albatross DIII with a tight grain representing the lighter varnished plywood veneer. Note the slightly darker panel on the top and to the right of the cross.

Keep in mind that all of these fuselage colors can be darkened by adding more burnt sienna to the yellow ochre.

Below is a Viking ship that I did to represent the darker weathered wood that might be found on a ship that had been around for a while.



I used the burnt sienna as my base color and added the yellow ochre in small amounts until I got the right affect. With a small brush I added an even darker color to the cross pieces

between the deck planking.

Side note: By adding a touch of red you can get a good looking mahogany finish.



After the Viking ship I wanted to try something else in oils so I found the Academy Roman War Ship. I used the same techniques as described above except I went for the lighter color and adding contrast by accenting some of the trim with varying shades of color. I did not use the rake brush on the ships as the grain was molded in and at these scales the painted grain would not look right.



On both ships I used a water color wash of raw umber to accent the planking. I found that the water color wash was easy to remove and I didn't

have to coat the entire ship with Future as the water colors have no effect on the oils.

With a little practice there is no reason why anyone can't master a good wood finish. It is really easier than one might think so give it a try, there are plenty of subjects from which to choose.