

## Demonstration: Painting 1:35 Scale Faces

Mike Petty

A few meetings ago, Mike Petty gave us a demonstration on how he paints 1:35 scale figure faces. Here are the notes I captured from that demonstration.

One of the first things to consider is your figure face itself. If it doesn't have good, crisp detail then you will have to know more about where to put the colors to help define the face. If a face is well sculpted then it is like a roadmap that directs you where to apply the different shades. Hornet is widely accepted as one of the best out there, but there are others like Alpine Miniatures, Tank and Evolution that are notable. The good thing about Hornet is they offer heads that can be swapped in for heads that don't have enough detail. The heads from styrene manufacturers like Dragon, Tamiya Tristar are not bad, but still a bit softer than the resin heads mentioned above.

A long time ago, Mike learned that it's best not to attempt eyes in 1:35 scale. Due to size and relative-scale issues, a normal view of a 1:35 scale figure would not see pupils and iris color. If you try to do this, you may end up with the "fried egg syndrome." Mike prefers to apply just a slit of color and let it go at that.

Mike uses a combination of acrylic paint and artists' oil paints. The acrylics are primarily for the base coat and the tiny details. Mike uses a variety of artists' oils: Grumbacher, Winsor & Newton and Rembrandt. Brand is not so important, the shade is what matters. Do try to stay away from the cheapest oils that are aimed at grade-school students. These do not have fine pigments and are not suited for this kind of detail.



When using artists' oils, Mike squirts out the colors he needs onto paper card before he starts. In a few minutes, the excess oil has wicked away into the paper and is easier to work with.

Mike uses brushes that he gets from craft stores. He cleans them with brush cleaner to extend their life and replaces them when due. The ultra-expensive brushes are nice but Mike gets good results with lesser expensive ones and replaces them more often.

Clean and prime the face. Use soapy water and a toothbrush to clean the face of any residual grease or mold release. Prime with Tamiya White primer. This is an enamel primer that will really bite the face and be impervious to the paint applied later. The Tamiya primer goes on very wet, but shrinks when dry to a tough finish. Drill a hole in the neck and insert paper clip wire with CA glue to hold the figure without touching it. Clamp this in forceps or some other clamping tool.

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The base color is Liquitex Deep Portrait Pink. This is an acrylic formula that you can either airbrush or hand brush. If Mike wants a cold climate figure he may change to Liquitex Light Portrait Pink.

The first shading layer used is Burnt Sienna. Mike uses a flat brush that has been unloaded on a towel before touching the face. This brush is used to “paint” a thin film of Burnt Sienna onto the base coat of Deep Portrait Pink. It’s really more of a stain, where you should not see brush marks. This accomplishes two things. First, it “stains” the base coat to a more natural-looking flesh color. Second, it starts to deposit a darker color in the creases of the face. Let the face dry a day before continuing.

Now the first deep shadow of Burnt Umber is applied with a 10/0 brush. Apply the paint in tiny specks to areas that are in shadow when lit from above. If in doubt, hold the face under a light and note where the darkest areas are. Next, feather out the specks along the lines of shadows. You will find out immediately if you have applied too much paint! Keep the amounts small because you can add more but when you get too much it is difficult to recover from.

The first highlight is done using a mixture of Grumbacher Flesh and Windsor & Newton Titanium White. This is mixed by eye and has flexibility regarding the ratio. Again, tiny specks of this color are applied to high points of the face and feathered out. These are areas that would catch the sunlight the most.

The secondary highlight is pure Rembrandt Naples Yellow Deep Extra. It may sound like a weird color to paint a face with, but Mike says it provides the final “pop” that pulls everything together. Apply this in specks and it feather out like the colors before.

As a final touch, add a little color to the cheeks and lips using Cadmium Red and White. Use the same speck/feather technique as before.

The eye slits are painted using Vallejo Light Pink. Mike does not bother with eyebrow lines. Just below the eyeballs, Mars Orange is applied to define them a bit.

Let everything dry for a few days and you may notice that over time the colors mellow out. This is something to get the feel for as you do this more. Mike likes to paint several heads at the same time, working in assembly-line fashion. Then you have them ready when you finish your next model.

