

Water

By Johan Leeftang

Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink! (*famous words quoted*).

Like rocks, water is an essential component of any layout. It gives new life to an otherwise dead scenic area.

Water in real life is colourless. Painting water blue makes it very artificial and fairy like. In nature water takes on the colour of its surroundings i.e. the colour of the sky and light that falls on it.

Real water has been used on layouts but does not appear to scale. It also gets stagnant, attracts mosquitoes, evaporates and is difficult to keep confined.

We have to decide what we want to emulate, a stream, rapids, ponds, lakes, waterfalls, harbour or beachfront. These all indicate different moods of water. Is it static, fast moving, forming gentle waves or depicting rough seas etc.?

Materials available in South Africa are glass, mirrors, Perspex, gloss varnishes, polymer coatings, resins and textured gel. These materials have different advantages and disadvantages.

In the past glass and mirrors was used extensively to create "water" but it is costly, heavy and fragile.

Perspex can be used with great effect on large areas. I used it on my harbour scene by cutting it to fit the ships hull and the wharf. I painted the base, underneath the Perspex, a sea green to match the background of the photo. Darker shades were used for the illusion of depth and lighter colours towards the shoreline. Perspex untouched can be used to emulate clear calm water.

Invariable the wind blows across the water making wavelets. This effect can be created by the stippling the Perspex with "Decorative Paste" manufactured by Deco Art and is available from Art Stores. Another product available is "Crystal Clear" by Heritage. These pastes ultimately dry (after about one full day) so patience is needed. Bow waves and wakes in front and behind boats and ships to emulate movement can be created by using these pastes. Also to emulate waves crashing up on the beach or creating rapids down a fast flowing river. Unsightly joints in the Perspex can also be camouflaged by using paste. On my harbour scene I made use of small boats and floating objects to hide the joints.

Faller sells ripple acetate sheets, looks great, but it is rather pricey.

"Realistic Water #C1211" and "Water Effects" available from Noch / Woodland Scenics packed in plastic bottles are used to create a feeling of transparency. It dries similar to silicone. Overcoat it with white acrylic paint in thin streaks with a brush to create the foam effect.

I created the waterfall by gluing on a piece of clear plastic (soft, flexible bag will do), cut out to the required shape. When dry, streak on the "Water Effect" in a vertical direction, from the top pouring it downwards. Together it creates a 3 dimensional effect.

Several layers of high gloss varnish can be applied over a surface already painted with lighter shades to depict shallow water and darker shades in the deeper end, is another method of creating water. For the deep end, use colours like dark green or sea green and brownish to yellowish colours at the shallow end. It is a good idea to collect photos or pictures of the sea you want to depict, using it as reference in choosing colour and simulating the mood.

Lakes in Switzerland seem to be turquoise in certain areas whereas in Sedgfield in the Cape the water looks like "tea".

"E-Z Water" from Woodland Scenics is non-toxic plastic pellets. Using a heat gun, melt it and pour a 3mm layer at a time. The area where this is poured must be waterproofed otherwise it flows through cracks, joints, etc. and makes a huge mess. Articles can be "dumped" in the water as long as they can withstand the heat of the melted plastic. (Plastic objects will obviously deform).

Water covers more than 70% of the earth surface, so surely we should consider having some water shown on our layouts.

Books on water and scenery worth obtaining:

- "Railroading along the Waterfront" – published by Walthers (excellent book with plenty colour photos)
- "Miniature Scenic Modeling" – by Jack Hine ISBN 085242776X
- "The model makers handbook" – by Albert Jackson and David Day
- "The Scenery Manual" – by Woodland Scenics.



Using clear plastic coated with "Water Effect" to create the waterfall



Johan used Perspex to simulate water in his harbour

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