

Scenery Workshop With Foam Rubber

Carl Blum – “retold” by Jim Wanlass

Getting Started:

- 1) Finish your track work in the area and make sure it runs well. Fixing this later with scenery in place is a pain.
- 2) Mount any tunnel portals and build a ceiling for the tunnels. This keeps any scenery from blocking the trains later. It also keeps the tracks cleaner.
- 3) Cut forms from plywood or OSB board for your hills and mountains. Screw the forms to your table however you can. Look for places for access hatches.
- 4) For rolling hills, drape foam carpet pad over the forms and staple in place. Put the slick side down. Overlap pieces as it is easier to work with many small pieces than one huge piece. Push and pull until you have the shapes you wish. Add support blocks as needed.
- 5) For rugged cliffs tear up foam blocks and carve them into shapes you like. Liquid Nails is good for holding these in place.

Paint and Cement Gloop:

- 1) Get your tools ready for a mess.
- 2) Cover all your track with masking tape to keep it clean. A drop cloth on the floor is a good idea too.
- 3) Gloop goes on heavy and is thick. Take a paint brush and cut the bristles to half their length. This brush gets better each time you use it.
- 4) In your mixing bucket put a cup or two of cement. Start adding the latex paint, tan and grey colors are great; it is a pain to really hide white plaster once it dries. With the cement, Gloop isn't ever white anyway. Mix until it is thick like cake batter. Add junk for texture: wood shavings, floor sweeping, chunks left over from your last session.
- 5) With the short paint brush attack your foam mountains. You really need to bush this Gloop into the foam to make it spread, but remember you are not painting, you're building mountains. Rough is the point of the cement and junk.
- 6) Let it dry. The cement gives off a little ammonia when you mix it and if the latex paint is old it might smell too. This goes away once it all dries. Also it may crack as it dries adding more realism.

Ground Cover:

- 1) While it is still wet you can spread ground foam or other floor sweepings on it. Later you can use white glue mixed with water to make things stick.
- 2) Thin black or grey paint with water so it is very thin, like coffee. Spray this on and it will seek all the cracks and edges bringing out the detail of the rough land.
- 3) It is easy to plant trees, just poke a hole in the foam and push the trunk of the tree in. This may crack the Gloop cover, but it pulls itself back together anyway.
- 4) Let it all dry and come back another day and see what you think. Stand back and look for spots you missed. Take pictures, it is amazing what you see in a picture that you miss in person.
- 5) Have fun.
- 6)

Supply list:

- 1) Plywood or OSB board to build forms and supports (trash)
- 2) Foam rubber carpet padding (trash)
- 3) Foam rubber blocks (trash)
- 4) Staples, screws, Glue
- 5) Latex paint (trash)
- 6) Cement (plain, without aggregate. Lowes, Home Depot)
- 7) Wood shavings, chips, junk (trash)
- 8) Ground foam (many sources, or make your own, see below)
- 9) Rubber ballast (Bulk from Sparton Enterprises (330) 745-6088)

Keep your eyes open, most of these items can be found as trash.

Tool list:

- 1) Saber saw
- 2) Power screwdriver
- 3) Scissors
- 4) Stapler
- 5) Mixing bucket and mixing stick
- 6) Paint brushes
- 7) Putty knives

Making Ground Foam, Three Methods:

(I have only read about the first two, commercial ground foam uses the third.)

- 1) Put foam rubber chunks and thinned paint in a kitchen blender. Grind until you like the size. Spread the pieces out to dry.
- 2) Squeeze latex paint into foam and let it dry. Then use a power wire brush to shred it to bits. This must be really messy.
- 3) This is what I do: Use a large meat grinder to grind the foam rubber with thinned paint. Don't use the small plastic meat grinders, they are only good for one or two loads. Thin the paint 50/50 with water and keep the foam moist as you add the chunks to the grinder. Collect the grindings in a delicate dryer bag. Put the bag and ground foam in the clothes dryer on air only for hours. Put a nylon stocking over the output to collect the fines. The coarse will remain in the delicate bag. (Tip: Don't use your wife's delicate bag or the family clothes dryer, both end up stained green forever.) Different colors of foam and paint will give you great variety.

Good luck, Carl.