

# PAINTING BACKDROPS FOR MODEL RAILROADS

By Norman A. Logan

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

BLUE ACRYLIC WALL PAINT, WHITE FLAT CEILING PAINT, ACRYLIC TUBE PAINTS – MARS BLACK, CHROMIUM OXIDE GREEN, GREEN GOLD, HUNTER GREEN, KELLY GREEN, PAYNES GRAY, MATTE MEDIUM, A CAN OF WHITE SPRAY PAINT (ANY KIND) (2) PAINT TRAYS, PAINT ROLLER, 4" BRUSH, 1/2" BRUSH, 1" WATERCOLOR BRUSH, MEDIUM JAPANESE LETTERING BRUSH, LOTS OF LIGHT WEIGHT DROP CLOTHS, FAN, FACE MASK, SANDWICH BAGS OR PLASTIC GLOVES, AND A STEP STOOL.

## I PRE-PRODUCTION THINKING-

- A. Where would you like the horizon line to be?
- B. If possible – think of how the backdrop will connect to the physical foreground.
- C. Look outdoors from a five or seven story building level. This will give you some sense of how much detail there is on the horizon.
- D. Gather up books with pictures of the location and scenic detail you'd like in your layout.

## II READY TO PAINT?

- A. Wear appropriate clothes.
- B. Use of the Layered Painting approach

## III THE FAR AWAY HILLS

- A. Where is your Railroad located? Midwest, Out East, West coast?  
Recipe for the Midwest:

Mix 3 cups White, 1 cup Sky Blue, 6" Mars Black or Mix brown with your sky blue and add white for far hills. The use of Burnt Umber (Brown) will give you a warmer color for far away hills. (The use of your sky blue color will help to give an atmospheric look to the backdrop... a great scenic trick used in all museums.

- B. Use your 1/2" brush and Layer in the Far away hills.

## **IV THE NEAR DISTANT HILLS**

- A. Mix: 3 tablespoons Horizon Blue. ½ teaspoon matte medium
  - 1. 9” Chromium Oxide Green acrylic
- B. Use a 2” watercolor brush or ½ brush to layer in the near distant hills.

## **V TIME TO SPRAY – USE AEROSOL FLAT WHITE ENAMEL**

Use a respirator mask for yourself and sandwich bags on your hands for gloves or plastic gloves

## **VI THE NEAR HILLS**

Mix: 1 teaspoon Horizon Blue 1 teaspoon matte medium  
3” Chromium Oxide Green

## **VII THE DETAIL FOREGROUND**

- A. Mix Tree Yellow: 2” Green Gold. 2” Chromium Oxide Green & 1 teaspoon matte medium
- B. Mix: Tree Green:  
1 teaspoon Horizon Blue, 1 teaspoon matte medium,  
2” Chromium Oxide Green, & 2” Green Gold
- C. Mix: Tree Shadow color: 9” Chromium Oxide Green,  
6”Green Gold, 1” Mars Black, & 1 tablespoon matte medium

### **Reference:**

Mike Danneman: PAINTING BACKDROPS FOR YOUR MODEL RAILROAD

Andy Sperandeo: A BACKDROP FOR THE WASHITA & SANTA FE –

MR Nov 1982

Dave Frary: Realistic MODEL RAILROAD SCENERY – Kalmbach

Dave Fray: MODEL RAILROAD SCENERY 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. - Kalmbach