

# EASY FREIGHT CAR WEATHERING 1-2-3

A clinic by Michael Gross    SFRH&MS 2016 Convention - Wichita

## THREE BASIC STEPS FOR REALISTIC WEATHERING

1. the matte finish
2. the contrasts
3. the highlights

**TAKE TIME** to avoid errors, plan your strategy, allow finishes to cure, and view the work with fresh eyes.

## THE SUBJECTS: Kadee PS1 Bx-57 Class boxcars – two approaches.

- make certain the car is in good working order and detail is complete.
- remove trucks and wheelsets; remove or mask couplers.
- wash the body and trucks, rinse with distilled water, let air dry, then handle only with gloves.
- examine model under bright light for lingering fingerprints, lint, dust, or other impurities, and remove with 70% isopropyl alcohol and cotton swabs.
- place parts in handles or painting jigs, and mask appropriately.

## STEP ONE: THE MATTE FINISH

- A. Spray a clear matte finish on the top, sides and ends of the car, to dull the factory shine, protect existing paint and lettering, and provide a surface for additional weathering. (Highly dilute flat color may be added to “fade” factory paint.)
- B. Paint underframe, wheelsets and truck sideframes an appropriate dirty color.

Allowing these finishes to cure completes Step One.

## STEP TWO: THE CONTRAST WASH

- A. typically, a darker “sympathetic” shade of the base color, adding shadows and depth; a greater proportion of thinner to paint, in harmony with the base color.
- B. choices of mediums include tube oils and mineral spirits; tube oils and turpentine; water soluble oils; Testors paint and thinner; tube gouache and water; powdered pastels and water; powdered pastels and mineral spirits; etc.

**VERY IMPORTANT!!!** *if you use one medium for your matte coat, choose a medium for your wash that will not attack or dissolve that initial finish. (I prefer an acrylic matte coat followed by an oil or enamel wash.)*

### C. The wash: the sequence

- mix your choice of color and thinner medium.
- apply it to the model, pushing it in and around details.
- remove, or “relieve” the excess with a brush, cotton swab or sponge.

Apply to car sides, ends, roof, underframe, truck sideframes, wheel faces; then relieve to the degree you wish.

Allowing the wash to cure completes Step Two. If you wish to stop here, protect your work with a *second* coat of clear flat finish.

### **STEP THREE: THE HIGHLIGHTS**

- A. Highlights mimic the sun, bringing details forward, and are typically lighter sympathetic shades of the base color.
- B. Highlights are applied with Prismacolor colored pencils, dragging the pencil side across raised details on the car body, trucks and underframe.

Pencils need no curing time. A coat of matte finish completes Step Three.

## **An alternative...**

### **Apply Steps Two and Three using pencil**

#### **“WASHING” LARGER AREAS WITH PENCILS**

- A. apply both lighter and darker “sympathetic” shades of the base color with pencil: not only to details, but to larger areas of the top, sides and ends.
- B. Using various shades of red/brown pencils, stroke harmonious darker and lighter tones onto panels, ribs and other large surfaces. These are then blended in place with a short bristled brush, taking care not to burnish the surface.
- C. Colors used on the black roof and mineral brown sides and ends were Prismacolor “warm” greys, and various earth colors, including pale vermillion, dark umber, light umber, dark brown, chestnut, yellow ochre, etc.

### **MATERIALS**

*Airbrushing* is the ideal way to apply finishes, but matte finishes are available in spray cans from Testors, Tamiya Model Master, Krylon and Rust-Oleum, among others.

*Colors* most useful for tube paints include white, black, raw sienna, burnt sienna, raw umber, burnt umber, yellow ochre. Reds, browns, yellows—“earth colors”—always come in handy.

*Pencil and dry pastel* colors are much the same: earth tones are particularly useful, as are an assortment of graduated grays. Use Prismacolor Premier soft core pencils.

### **GENERAL RULES:**

- Work in order from dark to light.
- Use varieties of colors, avoiding monotony.
- Work from photographs, not from memory.
- Do not use solvents that attack earlier work.
- Avoid “assembly lines,” where all cars look alike.
- Experiment on inexpensive “swap meet” models.
- Keep colors lighter than the prototype to compensate for the fact that layouts have no natural sunlight.
- Use colors that harmonize:  
Warm: gold, bronze, copper, brown, tan, yellow, red, orange, maroon, off-whites.  
Cool: black, pure white, silver, blues, greens, grays and some purples.