Right On Replicas, LLC Step-by-Step Review 20140708*
WW2 German Elite Infantryman Figure 1:16 Scale Tamiya Kit #3 (36303) Review

Review and Photos by Frank MacKay

Strangely, this figure is referred to by Tamiya only as an ‘Elite German Infantryman’ but a close inspection of the box art reveals that he’s a Waffen SS Panzergrenadier. He’s wearing M1944 pea pattern or dot camouflage which was only issued to the SS, and the distinctive belt buckle insignia confirms his affiliation. The Waffen SS were probably the most ruthless and fanatical soldiers in the history of warfare and even today they are spoken of with dread. While their exploits were not always honourable or admirable, it cannot be denied that they were at least extremely interesting.

For the Modeler: This is the third addition to Tamiya’s line of about 12 plastic figure kits in 1/16 scale (120mm), mostly on German WW2 subjects. It is comprised of ~30 pieces molded in medium gray. For the price, these kits offer extreme value and build up into excellent figures which are suitable for finishing by a novice right up to the professional. Their only close rivals in the market are similar WW2 kits made by Dragon or Kirin, which offer comparable quality and subject matter at a slightly higher price Regardless of your political opinions, this figure is an emblematic representation of that time in history and as such, deserves a place in every model soldier collection. The modeling of the figure and his equipment is extremely accurate and well done, the pose very realistic and obviously sculpted from real life by a modeler intimately familiar with this subject. It is an easy build apart from some correction tweaks and a complicated paint job, all of which will be examined in minute detail in this article.

Covered in this article: Basic construction, glue, multimedia paint and material selections; reference materials; preparation, filing and filling of a figure; adding metal locating pins to improve stability; application of primer; masking large areas for camouflage painting by aerosol and airbrush, using latex masking fluid; highlighting and shadow of creases using ink washes and dry brushing with oil paint; drilling out areas to accept straps made from lead foil; casting additional insignia; suggestions for increasing accuracy and detail; making your own figure base with plaster cast groundwork; creating scale spent casings; making your own title plaque, are all fully examined in this 25 page, full colour, comprehensive guide by an expert figure painter.

000a The kit's contents. I must confess, I was delighted to have drawn this assignment because although I'm a general modeler, figures are my first love. They're a fairly recent offshoot of the toy soldier hobby which has been around for centuries. 'Connoisseur painters' demanded more detail than was available by repainting the standard 54mm toy soldier, and figures have been growing regularly in size and detail ever since. 120mm is now common in plastic and resin model figure kits but many are under the mistaken impression that painting a large scale figure is easier. Quite the opposite, smaller scale is much more forgiving. The larger the scale the more detail is visible and every minute feature, texture and shadow requires more skill to portray. I've built a number of these excellent Tamiya figure kits and this one ranks among their best. If you've never built one, you're in for a lot of fun and I hope that my observations will provide you with some useful guidance.

NOTE The first thing to do is secure the best reference materials you can get. We'll be depicting a subject which is intimately familiar to many modelers and history buffs, so it has to be as authentic as possible. My first choice would be 'Fighting Men of WW2: Axis Forces Uniforms, Equipment and Weapons' by David Miller (Chartwell Books). This comprehensive work has detailed photos of the actual articles of equipment we'll be working on and unless you're an expert on WW2 Nazi militaria, it's practically indispensable. There is a companion volume on Allied Forces which is equally comprehensive and will give you a lifetime of use.

SS1 & SS2 If you're really uneasy about painting camouflage patterns, I might also recommend 'Modeling Waffen SS Figures' by Calvin Tan (Osprey Publishing). He's one of the top painters and sculptors in the world and discusses the difficult pea pattern we'll be dealing with specifically. The figure on the box art although beautifully painted, is way too yellow, as if a yellow filter has been applied to the whole painting. Using it as a reference photo would be a big mistake; this will become apparent when you see photos of the actual uniform which is much more brown and greenish-tinged. Your figure will only be as accurate and lifelike as the references you use, and there's no substitute for basing it on the genuine article. Figure painting in larger scales is all about the detail and authenticity, so you can never have enough. I think you'll find it a much different experience from detailing any other type of model, and hopefully my attention to micro detail will not scare you off!

000b Our figure comes on two cleanly molded sprues in dark gray styrene. The authenticity of the figure and his equipment is very impressive. Note the difference in the stance of the figure on the box art painting versus the completed figure on the rear. As anyone who has had the honour of military service knows, the best way to create a jam in a weapon is to hold it by the magazine. The figure's pose shows much more expertise thankfully: he grips the weapon properly around the magazine housing, right leg braced slightly behind him in anticipation of light recoil, his left knee bent forward in anticipation of muzzle climb. And he fires aimed bursts from his MP40 with the stock extended and using the sights, not spraying away with it folded like some frenzied movie extra. This guy knows what he's doing and it is convincingly shown in the design of the figure.

***NOTE** Strangely, Tamiya has not included a base of any kind although similar kits from rival companies do. There are no instructions, but the placement of equipment is clearly illustrated on the back of the box and will present no difficulty. There are colour callouts for Tamiya paints but apart from using the right basic colour, I wouldn't worry about subtle hues. You have to remember that all equipment, particularly cloth, is subject to wear and weathering: how new or old is the equipment? How often has it been washed? How much has the original colour faded and been battered under combat conditions? With these variable factors in mind, we'll address the painting and assembly of his equipment as subassemblies and then assemble everything at the end.

(Fig. 1A) For the sake of argument, let's start at the top with his helmet and work downward. He's wearing an M44 helmet, a simpler and cheaper model in that the edges are plain edged stampings, not rolled under the rim as in earlier models. It's very well modeled and even includes the inner suspension, which will not be visible but might be useful if you were converting this figure to another pose. Exercise extreme caution when removing it from the sprue and never bend any part off. If you do, you'll likely have a divot in the side of the helmet which will be very difficult to repair. Use a chisel X-Acto blade and sort of shave it off following the angle of the helmet sides. A little fine sandpaper will remove all traces of the attachment. Most German helmets (stahlhelms) were painted field gray and the iconic decals on either the side of the helmet had been abandoned by mid-war. The SS favoured a lighter silver gray and continued to use their side decals, although none are provided with this kit. I had a can of NAPA 9003 gray enamel spray paint available and intended to use it only as a primer, but it looked so good on the helmet I just left it as is after one coat.

(Fig. 1B) One area which absolutely must be corrected on the helmet is the lack of the flat headband suspension bolts at either temple and in the rear. They did not have a liner and stahlhems had them, so I don't know why Tamiya left out this important detail which would have been very easy to include. To correct this, I used three tiny lumps of plumber's epoxy putty rolled into tiny balls. As a rule, take as much as you estimate you'll need and then cut that in half. Press them onto the location and when dry, sand the tops flat. As shown above in Fig. 1B, mine may even be a bit too large. At either temple, there is also a small ventilation hole about two scale inches above and to the rear of the side bolts. Check some reference photos to confirm the locations. I drilled these out with a .05 wire gage drill bit. Make sure they're symmetrical on both sides and that's the helmet done, aside from some wear applied on the edges with a silver conte crayon. They're available in all art shops and are invaluable. Little details like this are what will set your figure apart.

(Fig 2) The head and bare arms will require separate painting techniques to represent flesh. To make them easier to handle and attach them more securely to the figure, I always drill a hole into the base and epoxy in a copper wire stem, making sure to drill a corresponding hole in the area where it will be attached and test fitting. Copper offers you a little leeway to bend in tiny adjustments as opposed to harder metal wire. They're shown here clamped in a jeweler's hand vise (very handy gadget, you should get one.) I decided to put a little variation into my figure so I closed his left eye with putty to make it appear that he was squinting down the sights of his weapon. I prefer Testors Contour Putty for jobs like this because it can be feathered smooth very easily with an alcohol-soaked cotton swab.

(Fig. 3) I filled small gaps in the hands where separately molded fingers need to be assembled in order to give a rounded, realistic grip on the weapon (no, the caption here is not 'pull my finger.') It's a good idea to glue the fingers on while they're actually gripping the weapon in order to get the tightest fit, then easing the weapon out later. You need to file and sand the skin very smooth because while a faint seam in some other material may be forgivable, it will ruin the natural appearance of flesh. Before priming, I washed the parts with liquid soap using an old battery powered toothbrush that I keep just for this purpose. I then gave it a swab down with alcohol on a wide brush and let it dry before priming everything with Gunze Sangyo Mr. Surfacer 1000 model primer. This is an excellent primer which can even fill small gaps but it evaporates and sets rapidly, so it needs to be brushed on quickly and smoothly. All other parts of this kit were prepared in the same way. Also, I've used Tamiya liquid cement throughout this build unless otherwise noted. You might get away with not priming other parts of a model but flesh areas are going to be poked and prodded, drybrushed and washed so much that the surface really does need some extra tooth to help the paint adhere. If using acrylic paints, you must remember that acrylics will not adhere to anything oily or waxy, so the parts washing step is essential. A fellow modeler I know swears that the best way to clean plastic parts is to soak them overnight in vinegar which will not only degrease them but put micro etching in the plastic which will aid paint adhesion. I tried it on this kit, but apart from giving me a craving for french fries, it made no appreciable difference.

(Fig. 4) I always paint flesh tones with traditional oil paint because it's the only thing that gives skin a lifelike glow. Some of the younger painters nowadays may consider this a little old school because acrylics are all the rage, but on flesh they look flat and lifeless in my opinion. The thing to remember about oil paints is that they're transparent and will only enhance the colours beneath. With that in mind, we're basically painting the flesh twice, once with a basic undercoat of acrylic and then a topcoat of oil. For base coats I use thin coats of craft store acrylic paint in flesh, medium flesh and light flesh shades. DecoArt, FolkArt, Apple Barrel, Craftsmart, etc., are all common brands available at big box craft stores. Many modelers dismiss these paints as too thick, but diluted with water and layered on thinly, they're ideal and can provide an excellent, deep and rich finish. Best of all, a bottle of this paint will last for years and is much cheaper than other model paints currently on the market.

(Fig. 5) Paint the right eyeball white, then coat everything with acrylic flesh colour including the closed left eye. No need to worry about the iris just yet or the rolled up sleeves. A black wash may aid you in determining which areas are in shadow and it will not do any harm to the subsequent layers of paint. Making sure to visualize the angle at which the arms will appear on the finished figure, we can then layer on areas of highlight and shadow with medium flesh and light flesh. A dab of white or umber can be used to darken or lighten these areas if necessary and the demarcation can be quite stark as it's only an undercoat.

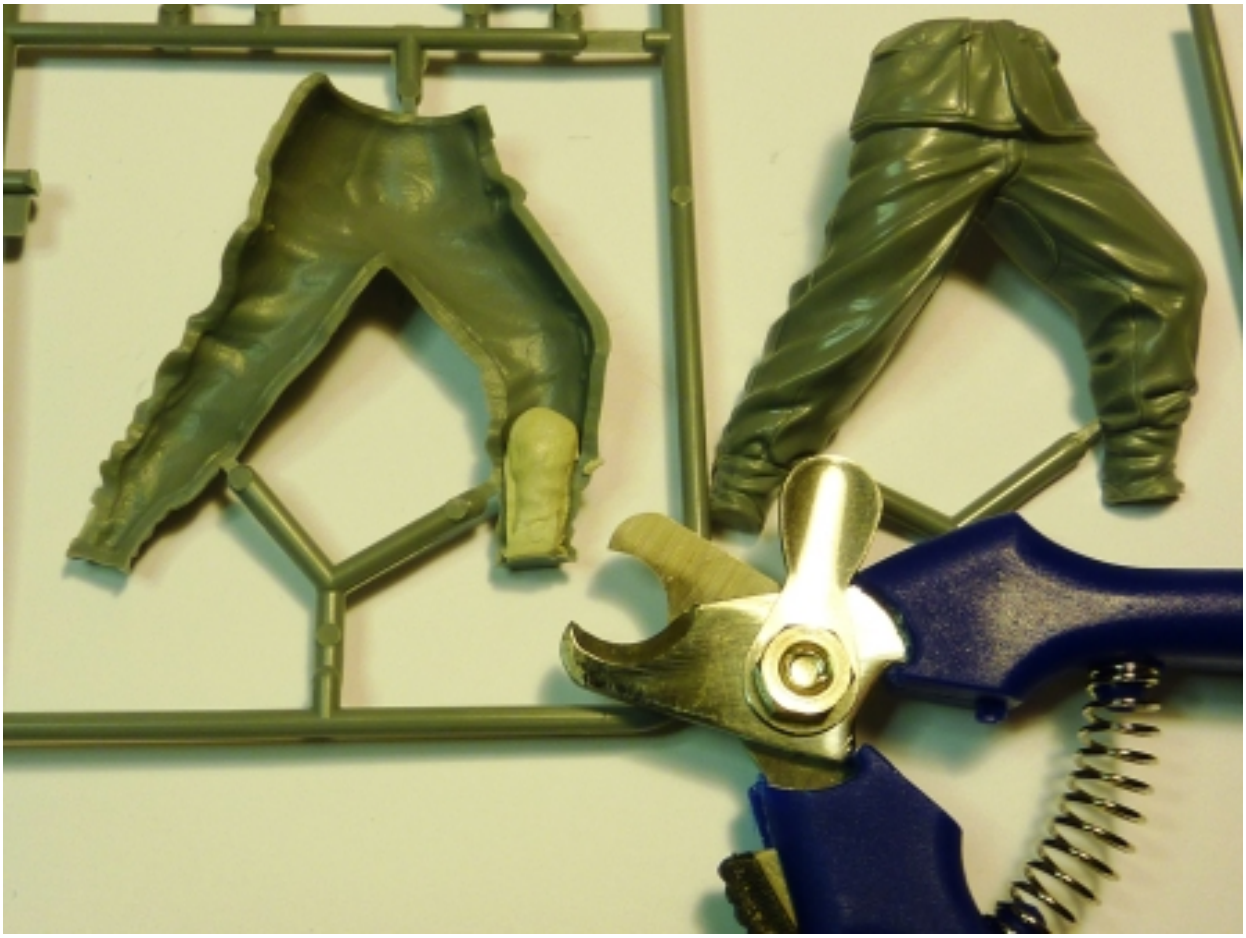
(Fig. 5A) Once that's done we can repaint the whole thing again with flesh coloured oil paint. I lay on a very thin coat of Winsor & Newton flesh overall and then blend in areas of light and shadow with white, burnt umber or ochre as required. It dulls down the original flesh which is much too pink right out of the tube. If it feels like you're painting with butter, the paint is way too thick; it should barely be there. These areas can be feathered in with a clean, very soft brush. Women's makeup blush brushes are useful for this. Be sure the hollows of the cheeks, eye sockets, under the nose and chin are all in shadow. Normally the forehead and tops of the ears would be in highlight, but in this case they will be under the helmet, so put them in shadow as well. Be sure the bridge of the nose, cheeks, jaw line, ear lobes and the tops of the arms and fingers are all highlighted. This blending process will end up dulling down the stark whiteness of the open eye automatically; if anything, you may need to go in with a solvent-dampened brush and selectively lighten it up a bit. You may wish to add a tiny dot of red to each cheek to give the face a slight suggestion of exertion, but be very sparing and blend it in well.

(Fig. 5B) The hardest concept to master is that "less is more". With oil paint, it's better to be very subtle with your colour gradations rather than harsh. When it's dry it will look totally different and you can always come back and dry brush in more colour if need be but you can't take it off. Oil paint will remain wet and workable for about a week, so don't rush. The fingernails are a final touch after assembly, no need to worry about them right now.

(Fig. 5C) When you're satisfied with the tones of the face and it has dried, you can paint the tapered haircut and eyebrows with a fine brush and oil paint straight from the tube, but don't make the eyebrows too bushy. Matte medium can be used with oil paint but it will cut your working time down to only a few hours. When this in turn has dried, give the hair a delicate black wash and then highlight with a lighter shade. All my

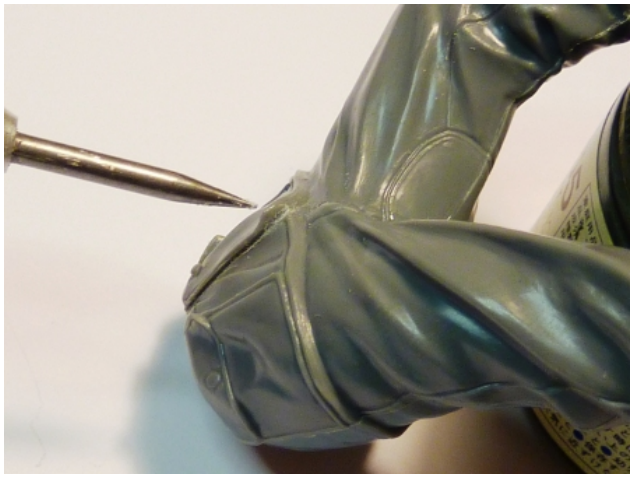
figures seem to have brown hair and green eyes for some reason. We can suggest eyelashes on the closed left eye. This is best done with Payne's gray oil paint applied very sparingly with a sharpened toothpick, not a brush, and only on the lower ridge of what would have been the open eye. Remember that I had filled the eye itself with putty and painted it closed. The iris of the right eye was also painted with a toothpick, the end then chopped off and used to stamp in a tiny dot of black in the center. I always paint lips thinly with a pale shade of coral rose acrylic paint. Never use red, you don't want your figure to look like a hooker.

(Fig. 5D) The final touch on the face is to carefully paint in the chinstrap. They were almost always made of black or very dark brown leather and the buckles were aluminum. I prefer very dark brown acrylic paint, covered with a very thin coat of black oil paint, which imparts a nice leather-look. The same technique will be used on his webbing straps later.



(Fig. 6) Assembling the torso and legs is fairly straightforward, they're just two halves which fit together. I use a pair of cheap pet nail nippers to get a flush cut. I filled the ankles of both legs with a little bit of putty in order to stabilize copper wire pins which were inserted after the halves are glued together. Not only does this make handling much easier, it's essential to secure your completed figure to the base. The mantra of one of my old painting mentors was, "If you don't pin a figure to your base, it's not a question of if it will fall off, but when." Holes were then drilled into the bottoms of the legs, through the heels of the shoes as well, and copper wire installed with epoxy. At this point the torso and legs can be glued together.

(Fig. 6A) Another mystery is why Tamiya did not use the existing seam on the clothing as the mold separation line. They would have saved us some trouble as these seam lines all have to be sanded absolutely smooth, filled and primed.



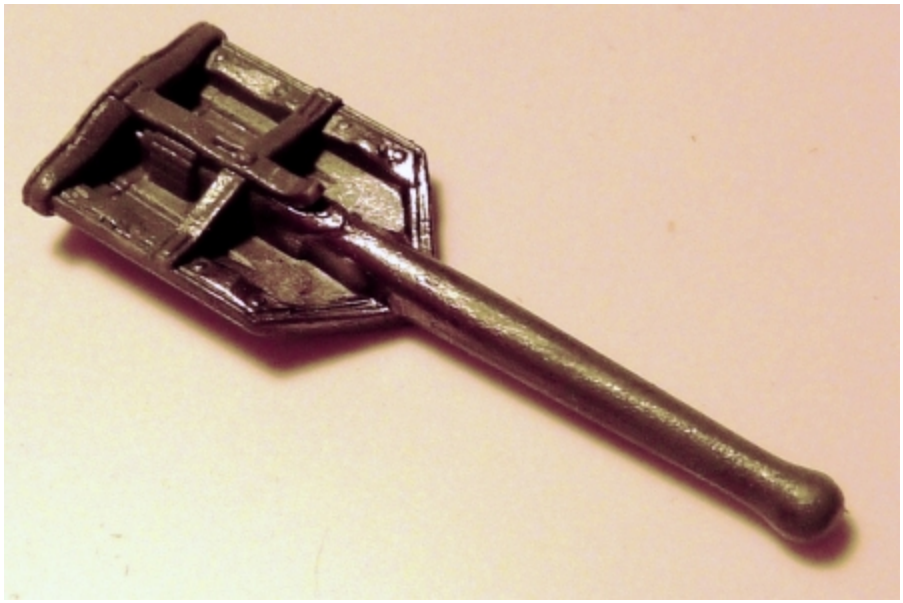
(Fig. 6B) Something you may wish to do to improve authentics is to undercut all the pocket flaps with a razor saw to make them thinner and more fabric-like (Fig. 6B). The skirt of the tunic will also benefit from this as it will add more depth and provide more purchase for shading washes during painting.

(Fig. 7) With the body assembled, we can get the individual accoutrements out of the way. The pair of MP40 stick magazine pouches at his waist are very well done. These started off as black leather but as wartime shortages took their toll on the Reich, they began to be made from a tough tan canvas with black or brown leather securing tabs over aluminum studs. I painted mine with tan acrylic, washed with brown, then carefully painted black oil paint over the dark brown leather tabs, as shown above on the lower set. A dot of silver will suffice for the aluminum studs. The whole thing was then given a thin wash of Winsor & Newton nut brown ink—calligraphy ink makes a good wash and will yield surprisingly subtle results. The highlights were then drybrushed with the original tan.

The distinctive SS belt buckle was finished with Amaco Rub 'n' Buff silver, a waxy paste product which goes on quickly and buffs up to a brilliant metallic shine. The flange at the right side of the belt should be painted the same colour as the belt and lightly edged with white stitching. Tamiya was just trying to be helpful in including this tab, but I couldn't get mine to seat flat on the belt. You may wish to smooth out the join with putty. As it's covered by the right magazine pouch, it's not really a big issue. Check your references to see what I mean.

The bread bag (Brotbeutel) was an essential part of every soldier's gear and was a practical way of carrying rations and personal sundries. The US equivalent was called the Musette Bag, while the British called theirs a Valise. The Canadians simply referred to their version as a Loot Bag. The canvas Brotbeutel was most often a light cinnamon brown shade of canvas but could vary to dark gray or even purplish. Unlike the ones you see in the war movies, they were never white. Those are simply sewn up from bed sheets by the wardrobe department, so don't make that mistake. Again, references are essential. The fittings and buttons were made from stamped aluminum and allowed various items to be securely attached. The two top D-rings will be used and covered on our figure. The two black leather patches beneath those served the same function but will not be used on our figure although they'll remain visible. Two black leather straps sewn at either end with tough linen stitching. This sewing method is also used on several locations on his webbing, basically anywhere that leather was used. I suggested the stitching with a sharpened toothpick and white acrylic, then washed the whole thing with the nut brown ink to dull it down. A wash of Winsor & Newton black ink helps create shadows in the seams, but be careful you don't overdo it with black. The original cinnamon brown was used to dry brush highlights and then the whole thing blasted with Testors Dullcote to give it a flat appearance.

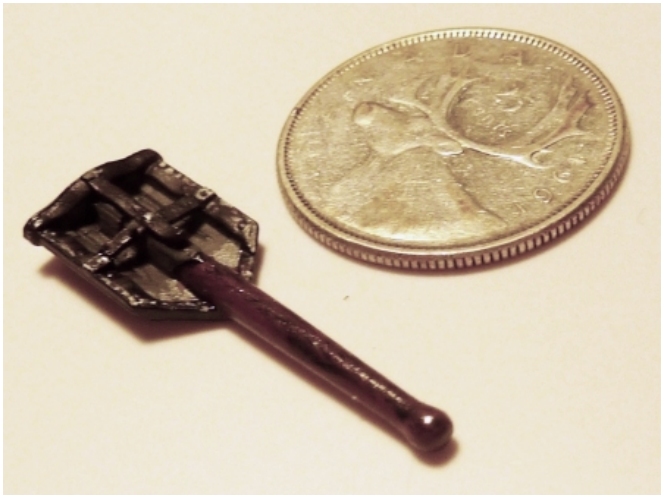
(Fig. 8) Moving on to his bayonet, it may seem strange that he carries one of these because he's using an MP40 which has no bayonet lug. The K98 rifle bayonet was issued universally however, and could hold a very sharp edge. It was basically used as a combat knife, machete, mine probe, etc. Leather frogs and gunmetal scabbards were the norm with brown-stained wood scales early in the war, but canvas scabbards with red bakelite handles were more common by 1944. I painted the leather black and handles dark red simply because I happen to own one that looks like that. The scabbard was painted with Testors Modelmaster Gunmetal and then the whole thing washed with black ink. Some wear to edges was suggested with a silver conte crayon.



(Fig. 9) The entrenching tool is also very well depicted but you'll notice that the horizontal cross straps which hold the shovel blade into its sheath are molded solid and connect down onto the blade. This is easily remedied by carving out these straps carefully and laying two small pieces of card stock over top to create new straps. For someone scrutinizing your figure for detail, this will really impress, especially someone who is familiar with the genuine article.

The shovel blade was invariably green and I used the hairspray method to add some metallic wear on the front of the blade. Basically, just paint the lower edge of the blade with metallic steel. Then, give it a blast of common hairspray. When dried, paint the whole blade green and then wet it down. The water will dissolve the hairspray between the coats of paint and allow you to pick and scrape away a nice worn-looking area of bare metal underneath. There are other ways to do this of course, but for depicting worn and chipped paint, this is the best because the paint actually is being chipped and worn away and it looks very realistic. I urge you to try this technique, it's very easy and any cheap hairspray will do.

Fig. 9A) The wooden handle was painted with brown acrylic and then streaked with a thin coat of vertically applied black paint to simulate wood grain. Satin varnish then sealed it in. Painted handles were not uncommon but I preferred the wood effect. The sheath itself was made of black or dark brown leather, sewn together with tough linen thread. I painted it in the usual way, again lightly suggesting the white thread with a sharpened toothpick. An aluminum stud secured the cross straps at the center (. By 1944, new sheaths had been issued which had the bayonet secured on top of the shovel, thus giving more room on the belt. This is an older model shovel, so our boy has probably been in for a while.



(Fig. 10) The canteen and gas mask canister are very realistically modeled and offer us an opportunity to use the hairspray method to apply some wear and chipping to the field gray paint. Metallic steel was applied to the canister and the canteen cup, hair sprayed, over-painted and then chipped and scratched to expose the bare metal beneath. The metal canteen was carried in a felt insulating cover which was usually brown or gray, with metallic snaps on the side toward the top. This in turn was secured to a black leather retaining strap which was sewn onto the cover and ended in a metal clip in the rear for securing it to the webbing. In our case, it will attach to the upper right D-ring on the bread bag, or appear as if it attaches there, at any rate.

(Fig. 10A) The gas mask canister was carried by all German troops throughout the war, even when it became clear that no side intended to bring back the horror of gas warfare. Adolf Hitler had been gassed in WW1 and issued direct orders that all his soldiers would carry them in combat on pain of strict penalty. Eventually it just became a waterproof container to help keep cigarettes and socks dry and to preserve that bratwurst you'd been saving for dinner. Field gray was the usual overall colour, but the Waffen SS seems to have had a preference for dark green, so I went with that. The hairspray method was applied and a small canvas pull tab for the spring-loaded lid closure was added with a little swatch of tan painted foil. The shoulder strap was tan canvas and is molded onto the back and left shoulder of the figure. I'm not a fan of molded-on detail, but rather than scrape it off and make a new one, I carefully painted it tan after the entire uniform had been completed.

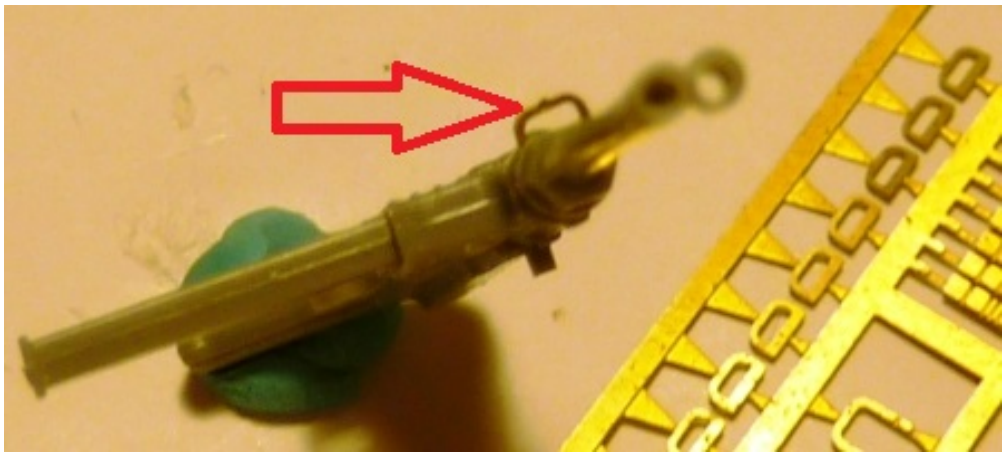
(Fig. 11) Our figure carries one of the iconic M43 'potato masher' hand grenades (Stielhandgrenate) stuffed into the front of his belt ready for use, a typical Waffen SS thing to do. You'd think that something that was meant to blow up would be shoddily made but strangely, the long wooden handles were always beautifully stained, sanded and varnished so as not to cause splinters to the thrower. It can be painted wood grain much like the handle of the entrenching tool. The explosive warhead and the safety cap were painted with Testors gunmetal and worn along the edges with the silver conte crayon.

Perhaps I could bend your ear about potato mashers for a second--with figures it's a big hobbyhorse of mine. Most modelers do not realize that this type of hand grenade was primed for detonation by unscrewing a metal pop bottle-style screw cap at the base of the handle. A string with a little white ceramic bead on the end then fell out and was sharply pulled to start the explosive timer. How many times have you seen a beautiful figure winding up to throw a potato masher…with the safety cap still on? Every time I see that, I just have to laugh. Did he take the time to screw the cap back on with five seconds ticking away? I wouldn't. What could have been a beautiful figure is often turned into a joke by lack of research on the modeler's part. I hope you won't make that all too common mistake. Emphasize that the screw cap is metallic and if it is being thrown, simply cut it off and drill out the inside of the handle. German soldiers were taught to pull it so sharply that the entire string ripped out, so there is no need to represent that.

(Fig. 12) Just before we get to the weapon, it's time to glue the arms into position so that they can be adjusted around the MP40 for a realistic grip. I used half cured Lepage's 5 Minute Epoxy for its strength and permanence and was able to adjust a very tight and realistic grip on the weapon. When cured, the weapon was wrestled out again. A note which may or may not be of value to you: I left the collapsible stock off the weapon when I did this adjustment, intending to install it after painting (the parts are very delicate and I didn't want to risk breaking them). I ran into this while building the Dragon Otto Skorzeny figure and the rods of the stock are almost impossible to repair. I ended up having to make new ones out of wire which was a huge pain. After final assembly, I noticed that the butt of the stock does not quite sit flat into the shoulder as it should. It's not a big thing but if I had adjusted the arms with the stock on, this might have

been avoided. Your call. Getting back to the arms, they've already been completely painted of course, so we need to mask them to prevent damage from the uniform painting to come. My favourite material for masking large areas is supermarket plastic cling film, the cheaper and flimsier the better. Wrap around the arms a few times and then secure the ends with tape around the rolled up sleeves, which will be a different colour than the uniform. The film will protect the flesh painting and not damage the paint even if left on for weeks. In Fig. 12 above, note that some filling needed to be done on the right shoulder. Even if the fit is perfect, you almost always have to do some filling or the arms will look unnatural, like they've just been plugged in.

(Fig. 13A) Moving on to the last item in our pile of accoutrements, it's time to address the MP40 submachine gun. This famous weapon was a brilliant design, cheap to produce, and was a favourite with German troops. It is often erroneously called a "Schmeisser" although weapons designer Hugo Schmeisser had nothing to do with it. It is gun metal with either black plastic or dark red bakelite scales on the pistol grip. One thing you really should do with all your figures as a bare minimum is drill out the gun barrels. I've been a figure judge many times and it's the first thing I look for. If it hasn't been done, I usually don't waste time looking for further detail because they're likely won't be any. As shown in Fig. 13A, I drilled out the barrel with a .05 wire gage drill bit in a pin vise, as well as the hooded front sight above it. It's ticklish, but it's really worth doing.



(Fig. 13B) Unfortunately the loops for the sling at the rear and on the right side have been molded closed. The rear can be opened up with the wire gage drill bit as shown in Fig 13C. If you mess it up (done that before) the cavity can be carved out and a very thin piece of card glued over top to complete the closure. The sling retaining bar on the right side is molded as a square block which can just be cut off. Or, you could try to hollow it out with a drill bit. Fortunately I had a sheet of brass etch tank fittings which provided a perfect replacement. A slot was cut in with a razor saw and a brass D-ring superglued in (Fig. 13B).

(Fig. 13C) Painting gun metal is a problem for many painters but I've evolved a method which provides a pretty convincing result. First it's painted overall with Testors Gunmetal, then with a thinner coat of Folk Art acrylic Gunmetal which is lighter. When dry, the whole thing is washed with a coat of Winsor & Newton black ink mixed into a drop of Folk Art Floating Medium. This is a thick alcohol gel product which has the body to keep washes where they're put while the carrier evaporates. When dry, the edges are then highlighted with a graphite pencil, the silver conte crayon used for areas of heavy wear. Done. We'll come back to install a sling after final assembly.

Finally, we're ready to begin painting the complex "Pea" or "SS Dot 44" camouflage pattern on the uniform (Erbsenmuster). The SS literally invented camouflage uniforms as early as the 1920's and embraced them until the end of the war. This was the final attempt to provide an all season uniform pattern which did not need to be seasonally reversed. It was not popular with the troops, who continued to prefer their beloved camouflage smocks as they provided extra pockets and some extra protection from the elements.

(Fig. 14) In order to paint any realistic camouflage pattern, it's necessary to dissect it and understand it. All

camouflage patterns are composed of blobs of colour which are silk screen printed onto cloth on one side, one colour process at a time, like a T shirt. I've seen many figures in dot 44 painted with just dots of paint laid over a brown base, which is not correct. By studying this picture of the genuine article (from Wikipedia), we can see that the dots are laid over large base areas of five different colours: Chocolate brown, black, light green, olive and tan. Again, due to weathering conditions, it's not necessary to worry about exact colour hues, as long as the basics are correct. It's important that the blobs are irregular with no straight edges, yet the perimeters of the blobs are sharply defined. We don't have to worry about following an exact standardized pattern—this cloth was made in dozens of factories each with unique stencils that only needed to conform to the basic specifications of the design.

(Fig. 15) The base colours could be painted by hand but I decided to use spray paint with a barrier of masking solution in between layers. To begin with, I sprayed the entire body with Krylon Fusion black spray paint from a can. I like this paint for jobs like this because it bonds to plastic and there is no danger of lifting by subsequent masking, plus it also serves as a primer. Next, I decided where I wanted blobs of black to be and painted on Humbrol masking fluid straight from the jar to cover them. This is a latex rubber solution which will protect the paint underneath and reveal it when removed. Rubber cement is a cheap alternative in a pinch. (Note: since the areas under folds and wrinkles in the cloth will have to be shaded anyway, it would be helpful if they were already black. I realised this only after I was finished and it could have saved me some shading work.) Next I sprayed on a coat of Krylon Fusion Fern Green and masked off irregular blobs of that. Then came a coat of Tamiya flat brown acrylic sprayed from an airbrush followed by more blob masking; then a coat of Tamiya Field Gray and more masking. Finally a coat of Floquil US Sand sprayed from an airbrush.

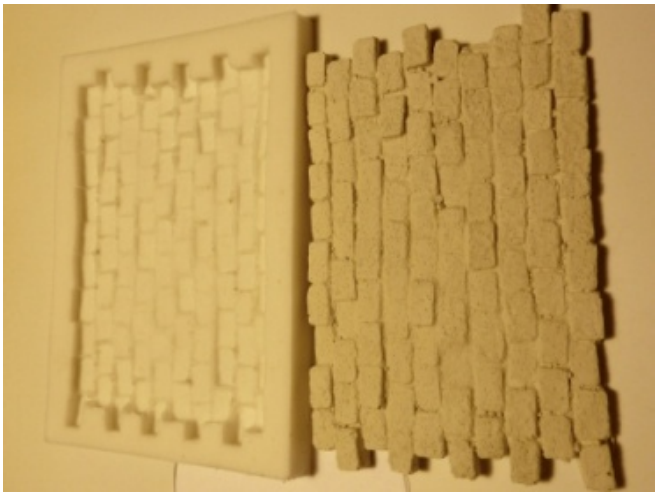
(Fig. 16) By the end, your figure has quite a lot of rubber on it but you'll be surprised when it's peeled off for the big reveal. The blobs will have overlapped creating effects which you could probably not replicate by hand painting. If you've scratched or damaged an area, don't worry—those peas will cover a multitude of sins. Note: be sure you get all the rubber masking off. It's almost a certainty you'll be in the final stages of assembly and find another patch that needs to come off and be filled with peas, which can be a little frustrating.

(Fig. 17) From here, we can just start shoveling on the peas. They're hand painted with a fine brush and are no bigger than a half inch to an inch in diameter. They're irregularly oblong shaped, don't fall asleep and start making them perfectly round. Basically, put dots of the five base colours onto each blob, obviously omitting the base colour, and pack them in quite closely. I think you'll be surprised that such a complex pattern can be painted so quickly and with relatively little effort. As shown above, the cling film has done its work and protected the left arm during all that spray painting.

I've seen some of these figures with the rolled up sleeves painted as camouflage as well and this is simply not correct. The colors on the genuine article are only printed on one side, so the inside of the rolled up sleeves should have a sort of oatmeal colour. Examine any item of camouflage cloth you may have and you'll see what I mean. I painted the sleeve rolls with a coat of Floquil Buff, then gave them a light wash of Winsor & Newton Burnt Sienna ink in floating medium, then highlighted with thin layers of Craftsmart Suede acrylic. Once the shading was all done, the whole figure was blasted with Testor's Dullcote to give it a flat finish.

(Fig, 18) At this point, we need to start thinking about a base of some kind as Tamiya has not provided one. It's essential not only for displaying a figure in a lifelike context but simply to hold it upright and preserve it from damage. I've always been partial to wooden bases and always keep some in supply. The one I selected is red oak; I think it was part of a bathroom dispenser finial or something, and I was able to grab a big bag of these from a thrift store for only a buck. I liked the original oak stain, so it only needed to be varnished.

(Fig, 18A) The conventional wisdom is to build a natural looking base of dirt and vegetation onto the base with putty, but I wanted a more urban setting for this figure such as a cobblestone street as might be seen in small town Normandy. I happen to own a silicone mold which churns these out beautifully from plaster of Paris, one of the neatest modeling gadgets I ever bought. It's made by a company called "J's Work" out of South Korea (look them up on Ebay).

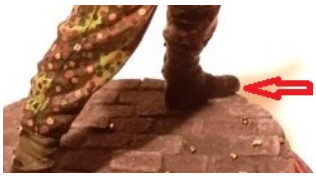


(Fig, 18B) Once the plaster was dry, I marked out a circumference to fit onto the base with a compass, cut out the circle and then painted the cobblestones.

(Fig, 18C) The gaps in between are painted black and then individual stones painted slightly different shades of gray, making sure that no two are exactly alike. Washes of black, brown, even orange, etc., give it a natural look which is then dry brushed with white and Payne's gray. Voilá, your very own piece of la belle France.

(Fig, 18D) The plaster was then glued onto the base with 5 minute epoxy, holes drilled right down into the wood to accommodate the copper wires in the figure, and the figure glued on, also with epoxy.

NOTE It's purely a personal preference, but give some thought to the 'flow' of the scene when you use linear ground work like cobblestones: i.e., place the figure at an angle so he doesn't look like he's being swept off the base by a raging river. He should be at an angle so he immediately dominates the scene. I even placed mine with a few inches of the toe of his boot off the edge of the cobblestones to suggest that he's about to spring off the pedestal itself and take off running. It's all about trying to breathe life into the scene.



(Fig. 19 & 19B) Now that our figure is upright, we can begin attaching his equipment. I used half cured 5 minute epoxy for its permanence and also a dot of gelled superglue for an instant grab. Hollows are molded into the clothing which lets the equipment hang naturally in the places prescribed on the back of the box. See what I mean about that flange on the side of the belt buckle? It's not quite right but will be hidden by the magazine pouches. The cavity beneath the grenade was painted flat black to suggest shadow and is quite convincing, although there's just a bit too much room left at the bottom. Buttons on this uniform were the usual pressed aluminum ones with a pebbled surface.

(Fig. 19B) At this point the MP40 weapon can be eased into the hands after the delicate extended buttstock has been attached. The best material for adding slings is lead foil which has been rolled flat. It is very malleable but holds its shape and is unfortunately becoming rare nowadays. Cut it carefully to length using a sharp blade and a straightedge and insert one end into the loop at the back end of the weapon. Note that the MP40 sling is the same one used for the K98 rifle, so that end can be glued together and secured with a dot of silver paint to represent an aluminum stud. The sling is shown simply hanging off the side but I wanted to show a bit more animation and tightly looped it over his shoulder as if he had just snatched it up. Loop the other end through the side retaining bar and don't cut off any surplus strap until you're satisfied with the appearance and tension of the sling. An adjustable steel clip regulated the length of the sling at this end, it can be represented with a small square of plastic. The box art illustrates this if you have no other reference pictures.

(Fig. 19C) ***NOTE*** I've given our figure a wristwatch (red arrow). It's a basic personal item which could easily have been included; just as well Tamiya left it out as it would have complicated the painting. It's just a lead strap with a plastic disk on top, but details like this set your figure apart and add immeasurable interest. I've also applied an SS sleeve eagle (yellow circle) to his left arm. No insignia was officially authorized for this uniform but the soldiers usually sewed on at least their rank insignia, the SS collar tabs and the sleeve eagle. Their fearsome reputation was a psychological weapon in itself, so many units did this. To make this insignia, I made a putty impression of a well rendered eagle from another figure, then push molded more putty into the cavity which was then trimmed to size and attached, a simple technique for copying small items.

To finish off, the painting ends at his feet. The SS always preferred their beloved jackboots but as wartime shortages took their toll, lace-up ankle boots were issued, topped by canvas gaiters which had been directly copied from the Canadian Army. Done up tightly, they were supposed to provide maximum ankle support but they were no more popular with the troops than they were in Canada. The gaiters were made of a heavy canvas material and were usually greenish field gray, brown or even purplish. I painted these with Vallejo German field gray 102, washed with black and highlighted with the original colour. Four black leather straps secured them at the sides, fed through aluminum buckles (two per leg). The boots were undercoated in black acrylic, then given a thin coat of black oil paint and dry brushed with Payne's gray oil paint.

(Fig. 20, 20A) While the street pavement is quite effective as groundwork, I still felt it lacked something and decided to add some scale spent shell casings. (Don't look at me like that, I warned you it was all about the details). I've had the pleasure of firing an MP40 on the range before and I confirm that you can quickly ventilate anything you want in a most gemutlich manner. But the weapon spits out spent casings like they're going out of style—you can empty a 32 round magazine in a matter of seconds. If there has been any shooting going on, the ground should be littered with brass but how often do you see that in military modeling? We'll do whatever we can to put our figure a cut above.

Micro-fine hollow brass wire would be ideal for this but I've never been able to find anything this small. You can make tubes this tiny by stretching the hollow plastic shafts of generic cotton swabs above a candle flame. Paint the stretched tube gold and the inside flat black, cut them to size with a sharp knife and install them randomly on the base with a dot of gelled superglue. I must emphasize that these casings need to be really tiny and as uniform as possible. The dummy 9mm bullet above shows what you're trying to replicate, without the bullet. My casings are probably closer to .45 cal, a little larger than they should be but I think you'll agree it's a nice touch. You may wish to put them only on the right side as the Schmiesser ejects spent casing to the right and about two feet away. You may also wish to spackle a few of them up with paint in case some weirdo pulls out a magnifying glass trying to catch you with hollow spent casings. Some competition judges will go to any lengths, I've seen that happen.

And that's it, eh.

(Fig. 21) I don't know if anyone would be interested in one final suggestion, but here at ROR we strive to provide you with as many good ideas as possible. Many modelers finish off their figure with an engraved nameplate or a paper label around the base. I've always considered that a bit crass, myself. It takes attention away from the figure itself which should dominate the scene, and people end up viewing it more as a trinket than the work of art it is. Never-the-less, you want the title and information displayed with it somehow. With wooden bases, I always carve out a slight depression in the base with a 2" spade bit in a power drill. There's a bit of a ding in mine, shown above—that's what happens when you have a drill press but are too lazy to use it. Then, print up a customized label on your computer: title of the figure, manufacturer, the year you painted it and the artist's name of course. Sign it if you like. Pop the label in and encapsulate it with clear casting resin. White glue will serve the same function but may get cloudy over time. Be sure to use a good quality bond paper or the resin may drench it and dull the printing. The information will be recorded forever and will not detract from the beauty of the figure.

Final Observations: This kit and the others in this series are immensely enjoyable to build. The authenticity of the pose and the fit of the parts are superb. The paint job is challenging to be sure, but is well within the capabilities of any modeler. The helmet looks a little stark against the camouflage and I considered making a helmet cover out of tissue paper soaked in white glue, which could be easily done. Research showed however that the one thing they did not do with pea dot camouflage cloth was make headdress or helmet covers from it. No pictures or examples survive. One can only hope that tank, airplane, ship and car modelers can be lured into trying something different for a change because they'll quickly be hooked on figures. This kit is fun in a box and highly recommended.

PREMIUM MODEL REVIEWS

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