

CHAPTER 4

Preparation



The Medieval Dentist by Eric Talmart.

This is the first stage of working with any kind of model or figure. For us, prepare our flat figure for painting is a really simple and fast process. Always start by spending some time observing and studying the figure. Look at it from every direction, turn it upside down or observe it with different light direction. Make a mental note of what have to be done to clean it, where attention must be paid or even start mentally putting some preliminary colors. Having a good feeling of the figure and a plan of actions to be made can pay off eventually by avoiding mistakes, unfortunate accidents of removing that annoying piece of protruding metal that later was discovered to be the pommel of the sword and even save time from correcting mistakes later, if they are correctable of course... After we are aware of what is what onto our small person, we start by cleaning the flash metal residues from the figure's edge. Do this with gentle, controlled movements, always perpendicular to the edge by sliding the blade up or down. Start from a point and don't stop until you do a

complete circle of cleaning and be at the starting point again. Use fresh blades and discard them as soon as you feel they are not sharp enough. Pay extreme attention to small details, like weapons, sticks, noses, hair tufts, clothing or hat detail, anything that protrudes from the general shape, first not to remove it surgically and secondly to define all these edges. The more sharp and defined detail is, the better will get the paint and will be defined and visible in the finished figure. Special if not equal attention must be paid to the small metal base that the figure is standing upon. Never remove front or back of it for 2 simple reasons. If we observe it closely we will see some odd numbers and letters on it. They are not there accidental. These are the signatures of the designer, engraver or editor that allows us to accurately identify each flat figure. Another more practical reason is that if the figure is displayed upon some background framed, the back edge can be inserted into the background of the frame securing the figure with minimum glue needed. I am sure that all of us have cut these bases of our firsts figures thinking it was an unnecessary burden. I have done it. Next step is the bathing step. Quite a fun step actually. When figure is cleaned it needs a bath with a solution of warm water and vinegar, the plain, cooking form, usually overnight. This is needed mainly with old casts that contain high amount of zinc to prevent oxidation and clean all kind of oily residues from casting or from our fingers during cleaning stage. The next day, rinse with plenty of water and brush the figure with an old used toothbrush and set it aside standing straight. From this points touching the figure is not allowed anymore because the oil of the skin will react with the paints later and problems may arise. When figure is dried, it can be attached temporarily using some blue tack (material which is used to stick posters onto walls), either onto a simple base for holding it or onto a cardboard. Just a small note for each situation. If you choose the small base option, go for one that

is easily and comfortably held into the palm so the figure can be manipulated easily, precisely and for long time without tiring and making the handle tremble. If you choose the cardboard option , choose a rather hard one, a bit oversized so it can protect the edges of the figure. You may want also to paint it a dark, neutral color to allow contrast with the figure. Personally I paint it either black because I like the contrast of black with my colors and also because most of my flats are displayed against a black velvet background or the same color as my final framed background so I can have a better feeling for the end visual result. Preparation stage is nearly finished except the last final step of priming. Even the slowest working people finish this rather boring but very important stage in less than 1 hour (if you don't count the bath time of course) and proceed to priming of their figure.

On the left figure is primed and ready for painting. On the right figure is right after bath. Both figures from Moh's set of "Funeral of Gustavus Adolfus".



The reason for primer a figure is to seal metal and to make a friendly surface for the paints for good

covering by the different layers on the figure. Primer acts as a grip for

paints, not only allowing good and even coverage but also, when painting in oils, absorbs some of the oil component of the paint, making painted surfaces more mat than usual. I almost exclusively prefer to use white color as a primer but I know of other people who prefer gray or even black. I guess it's a matter of personal preference. All is needed is a couple of very thinned white paint coats, evenly and smoothly painted onto the figure allowing at least a day between coats so each coat is completely dried before the next is added. Spray cans, Humbrol enamels, acrylics, or airbrushing, all have been used by various people. I prefer the old trusted Humbrol enamel white, thinned to a ratio of 1:3 with thinner brushed evenly onto the figure. If you choose spray cans be careful not to clog the smallest details with more than enough paint. Acrylics can be used also but I feel they neither grip the metal surface nor the following oil layers strong enough.

Unidentified figure and artist, exceptionally painted. Observe how the careful placement of shadows and highlights make the figure three dimensional.

