

Mithril Modelling Guides

Tutorial 1

Getting Ready to Start

If you have survived the philosophy bit in the introduction it is reasonable to assume that you are well motivated and ready to start modelling and painting Mithril Miniatures. You can if you wish buy a figure or two some paint, brushes and have a go and there is nothing wrong with this approach, however if you feel that you want to go further you need to set yourself up with some basic tools and materials. This tutorial focuses on tools and equipment, however it is not meant to be an exhaustive assessment of what you 'must have' to make a reasonable job of your project but more in line with what you should aim for.

You don't need to buy everything in one go, build up your kit as your interest grows and don't go to the expense of buying best quality items and fancy power tools because you really don't need them..

Tools, Equipment and Materials:

A simple tool kit for these sorts of projects can be bought quite cheaply. Most of my tools collected over the years come from local market stalls. Most town markets have a stall that sells tools and hardware and you can pick up items such as needle files, craft knives, dental tools, tweezers, pliers etc for a few pounds. Your local art shop is another good source of supply. The other options are via mail order or the internet. The amount you spend on tools is of course down to your budget, but remember, you only pay for your tools once.

You will need:

A good craft knife and a selection of blades.

A set of needle files.

A pair of snipe nose pliers.

Tweezers.

A few cocktail sticks.

A pin vice and some fine drill bits.

A modeller's razor saw.

A small wire suede brush.

A few paper clips.

A set of plastic clay modelling tools.

Dental tools are very useful. Look for the spatula and fine pointed types.

You will also need some modelling materials such as glues, modelling clay, epoxy putties and some materials for your bases and figures. Scenic materials used by model railway enthusiasts are good for your ground work. All of these can be bought at your local model shop.

A good quality superglue.

White PVA glue.

Epoxy resin glue.

A small pack of Das cold cure modelling clay.
A pack of Miliput epoxy putty.
A small pack of Doro epoxy putty.
A bottle of Humbrol gloss cote and matt cote varnish.
A packet of Static Grass. (Model railway scenic material)
A packet of grass fibres. (Model railway scenic material)

Creating a work space

The very nature of figure modelling will at some point become a little difficult if you are just using the kitchen table or worse still a much loved dining room suite. When using modelling clay, paints, glue and solvents etc accidents will happen and depending on the mood of your dear lady, mum or partner you could find yourself in very big trouble. So unless you are well covered by your insurance policy it makes sense to take some precautions to avoid provoking an attack which could result in serious physical injury or even death by verbal abuse.

The easiest solution is to make a simple wooden 3 sided tray. A piece of MDF board of appropriate size fitted with strips of wood to form 3 sides that will stand proud of the board is all that is required. This will keep things under control and avoid the inevitable a rage as described above. See below

Lighting

The best light to work with is daylight. However most of us will need to invest in some form of lighting. Here again there is no need to spend valuable figure purchasing resources on lighting, a simple angle adjusting lamp available in most DIY stores is all that is required. I would however advise you to fit a 'daylight bulb'. These are special bulbs that have a blue filter which provide a light very close to that of daylight. Lamps can be bought that include a magnifying glass built in which can be an advantage to those of us (like me) who's eyes have been dimmed through age and the abuse of strong drink ... hic!

Brushes

Advice on painting techniques will be given in other tutorials but whilst we are discussing tools and equipment we will look at brushes now .

When considering what type of brushes to buy you will notice straight away that there is an enormous array to choose from, so where do I start. The kind of brushes you will need are soft hair artists quality brushes used by artists painting in watercolour medium. The types available are natural hair and synthetic the latter tending to be a little cheaper than natural hair brushes. I have to say that natural Kolinsky red sable hair brushes are without doubt the best there is and a joy to use unfortunately this is reflected in the price. The quality synthetic man made fiber hair brushes today are excellent and I would advise a beginner to try these first before going to the expense of buying top of the range products, you must however buy the best you can afford. The other type of natural hair brushes are squirrel hair, I find these brushes tend to be a bit too soft for our purposes but there is no harm in buying one to try out. Whatever type of brush you decide to purchase what you need to look for is the quality of the point by this I mean that the tip is nice and sharp and will spring back to a point when loaded with paint and after rinsing. If you buy your brushes from an artists materials supplier they usually give you a jar of water to try the point. To test a brush, dip it in

water and tap the ferrule (the metal part) against the edge of your hand. A well-made brush will form a perfect point every time. The ideal brush for miniature work has a natural point, fairly short bristles, and springs back to shape quickly. While it is sharply pointed, it should still be large enough to hold sufficient paint so that it flows easily onto the figure. You'll find that a well-pointed 0 can produce amazingly fine lines, while the 0000 hold so little paint they're practically worthless. A good assortment of sizes will include a 000, 00, 0, 1, and 2. There are a number of different makes on the market but I would recommend Winsor & Newton Series 7.

As we have discussed good brushes can be expensive so you need to take care of them. When you are using your brushes make sure they are rinsed well between colours in the appropriate thinner of your chosen paint medium. If you are using acrylic paint remember that it dries quickly, so if you stop for a while make sure your brush is clean and dry first, failure to do this will result in a brush only suitable as a point for one of Legolas's arrows. At the end of your painting session rinse in thinner then in warm soapy water, reshape the point and replace the clear plastic tube to protect the point. Store your brushes point up in a jar or flat in a shallow box. Finally, whilst good brushes will not automatically turn you into a great painter, poor-quality brushes will yield poor-quality work every time, even in skilled hands.

