

USING AIRBRUSHED TISSUE FOR MARKINGS

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Last summer I built the Diels kit of the Ki-43-1 Oscar. The pictures in the Osprey book "Japanese Army Air Force Aces" had many attractive schemes, and I decided to go for Kato's markings (page 41).

The problem was how to make the arrows on the rudder and the white bands on the fuselage and wings. The model had been painted with Tamiya acrylic Japanese Army topside green and undersurface light gray. The paint worked well on tissue, so I decided to try airbrushing colors for the markings on a sheet of tissue that had been taped to a frame, shrunk and doped. The plan was to cut the markings out of the pre-painted tissue and glue them on with a glue stick rather than trying to mask and paint them directly on the model. The outer surface of the plane and the markings would then have a unified look, all being made from airbrushed tissue.

I sprayed Tamiya acrylic white on the stretched tissue, using several thin coats. Since the piece of tissue was large I was also able to spray a section with Testors blue from one of the classic small jars. This color seemed a pretty good match for the blue stripes in the Osprey book.

Then I placed tracing paper over the plan of the rudder and by trial and error drew arrows of the proper size and shape. The next step was to carefully tape a strip of the white tissue to a piece of illustration board, and then tape the tracing paper with the arrows over the white. A small metal ruler and a hobby knife with a new # 11 blade did a nifty job of cutting out the arrows.

My first impulse was to glue the white arrows to the tail and then try to put thin blue stripes around them, but this seemed tricky and complicated. Since the painted white tissue was opaque, I decided to just glue the white arrows on a larger strip of blue tissue. Then it was simple to use the straight edge to cut a narrow blue border around the arrows. The arrows with their blue borders were then glued in place on the two sides of the rudder.

For the wide vertical stripe just behind the canopy, it seemed best to first glue the background blue to the plane, and then glue on the inner white stripe. I was afraid a double thickness of tissue would be more difficult to fit down snugly because of the curving surface of the fuselage and fillet. Also, it simplified alignment to cut the stripe into two parts, one for each side of the fuselage. With some careful coaxing and gluing the stripes snuggled down surprisingly well, with few wrinkles, even when making the tricky curve over the fillet.

Another white stripe without a blue border was glued on just forward of the rudder. Wider white identification bands were glued on the wings, and the sprayed white tissue, put on with a permanent glue stick, was nice and opaque over the green wings.

There is no way that I could have masked and sprayed all of those stripes and arrows directly on the model, although I'm sure that many modelers could have done so. I'm also certain that a lot of modelers have used painted tissue for markings, and I don't claim to have invented the technique. But I can testify that it works.

In a short time it was possible to get a pretty neat set of markings without any masking and the process was very positive and straightforward. And the plane looks a lot better than with just the national markings supplied in the kit decals. I'm going to use the same technique to make German markings and national insignia for my Comet Me 109 dime scaler.