

BRAD DE LA TORRE

How To Paint a Fallen Soldier Memorial Statue and Scenery The Memorial Bike By: Brad De La Torre

When this bike first came into my shop, I knew a huge challenge stood before me. The Memorial Bike commemorates our Fallen Soldiers, our Heroes, and all of our lost Loved Ones-it is a mobile reminder to Never Forget. Relying on my skills alone would not have been enough; I had to rely on my heart and soul to guide me.

Supplies: Sticker paper and Gloss Photo Paper Stencils, Fine detail paintbrush, Fan paintbrush, Polyester Filter Fiber Fill, Transparent white, Transparent black, Transparent blue, Transparent yellow, Transparent brown, X-acto blade, Airbrush, Masking Tape, Original Frisket Film.



Preparing and Using the Stencils

To start with, I print two copies of the image using sticker paper (High Gloss Photo paper also works great as well). Using an X-acto blade, I cut specific pieces from one copy but with the second copy I only cut out those parts, which remained on the first copy of the image. I have found this to be the easiest and most accurate

way to paint such a detailed subject.

In order to prepare the stencil for the mountains, I create multiple "flips" and "flaps" by tracing the thin outlines of the mountains with an X-acto blade but make sure not to completely cut out the whole image.



Creating the Silhouette of the Mountains

Now that my stencils are prepared for use I can begin the process of painting the ice-capped mountains. Placing the stencil in the proper

location, I spray the Transparent White, utilizing the "flips" and "flaps" I have created in order to prevent too much overspray. The result is a rough silhouette of the ice-capped mountains.



Adding Detail to the Mountains

Since I have the silhouette of the mountains, I am now able to go over the mountains with my Transparent Blue in order to shape them further. Using the Transparent White, I create the curves and peaks of the mountains and lightly shade them with Transparent Blue. Always be aware of which direction your light source is coming from, once you have established that you can begin adding the highlights and shadows. Don't get too involved with the Transparent Blue, otherwise you end up with a bunch of mountains that look more like glaciers or ocean waves.

With the Transparent White, I add several more highlights and tighten my lines. I also take this opportunity to sharpen my details, like the snow, for example.

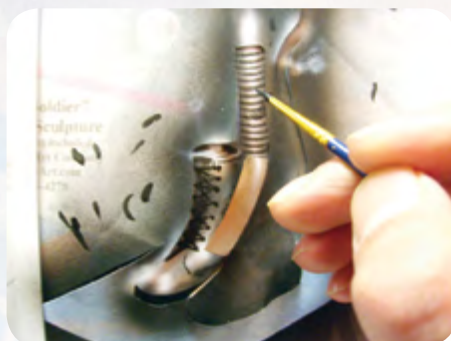
Using a Fine Detail Paintbrush, I strategically paint a few more fine details and blend it together with the airbrush as well. This gives the mountains more of a three-dimensional feel. Once I am able to distinguish the valleys from the peaks, I know these mountains are completed and it's time to move on to the next portion of the bike: Clouds.



Achieving Realistic Clouds

Through trial and error, I have discovered that the best technique for creating realistic, fluffy clouds is by using Polyester Filter Fiber Fill. You can purchase this material at any Arts and Crafts store, or you can just rip open your pillow and take it from there, whichever works for you. Before starting this process, I sprayed a few wisps of Transparent White for a basic layout of the clouds over a Transparent Blue sky. To add the shape, I slightly stretch the fiber, creating tiny openings of various shapes and sizes. Still holding the fiber in place, I lightly spray my white over those openings. The texture of the fiber creates the "fluffiness" of the clouds and really gives it that realistic look that many artists strive so hard for but achieve so easily using this technique. Once I am satisfied with the number of clouds, I lift the fiber carefully away from the paint. Now I just add a few more wisps of Transparent White to make the clouds really "pop" out at the viewer.





Beginning the Fallen Soldier Memorial Statue

My stencils are prepared, my airbrush is ready, and it's time to start perhaps the most difficult part of this project. I lay a thick layer of Transparent Black over the entire stencil for my base. I go in with my Transparent White to add a few select highlights. A light layer of Transparent Brown is laid over the entire image. Note that the highlights are still visible through the brown. Using my white again, I mold the image to appear more three-dimensional. I utilize this time also to lay the foundation for where the details will appear. Because the details such as the shoelaces are so minute, I have to switch to my paintbrush. Using my reference picture, I begin painting the shoelaces and

other fine details. To create the shadows, I start off with black paint, overlaying that with white paint. You might have noticed in the reference pictures that the boots look worn, so I strategically place a few spots of black and white to give it that worn and weary appearance. The entire area is then sprayed with Transparent Brown to match the rest of the image. I carefully lift the stencil to ensure the color of the area I just worked on matches perfectly to the opposite side of the image I had already completed. Since the colors match on both sides of the image, I go back in with my Transparent White and sharpen my lines so all details are clean and crisp.

Adding Fine Details

I completed the right side of the image and then the left side. I use a fine paintbrush to add the miniscule lines and details that are nearly impossible to create with an airbrush. With the stencil still in place, I place a few specks and lines of white to emphasize the shape of the dents in the helmet. The black paint is used to add to the shadows already in place and to accentuate the dents in the helmet. Remove the stencil once the details on the helmet have been achieved and accent the rest of the image by using a paintbrush to add more details, dents, and lines.





Adding the Grass

Before I start adding the grass, I mix a little blue paint with yellow and a tad of white until I mix the perfect green for my grass. Using a fan brush, I lightly add strokes of green from the top to the bottom-this ensures that the top of the grass is a tad thicker than the bottom, making it easier to blend into the ground. Once I have the amount of grass I'm satisfied with, I add specks of green for the grass in the background. Next I place a pa-

per (or some kind of straight edge) over the base of the statue and paint strokes of grass emerging from the bottom of the base, after all the statue is set on grass. More specks of green are added that extend from the foreground to the background. Switching to a fine paintbrush, I add light strokes of black to the underside of the taller grasses in the foreground for the shadows. Now the various grasses have dimension and you have a beautiful, green field.



Painting the Flag

Before I begin work on the American Flag, I cut a piece of Original Frisket Film big enough to cover my bike part. This film has a low adhesive and because my surface is curved, I must tape the film to the part so it stays in place. With pink and blue sharpie markers, I draw the flag on the film as a guideline for the placement of the flag. I am not copying the flag from my reference picture, however I do use it for inspiration. Because the film is extremely delicate, I basically let the weight of the X-acto blade do the cutting for me. Only parts of the flag, which will be visible in the sky, are to be cut out. I mixed some Auto-Air Transparent Base, Transparent White, and Medium Reducer and lightly, evenly spray the two areas. It will appear almost like a haze. The film from the right side of the flag contains a fold, which needs to be cut. Once the fold has been cut away from that piece of film, I place that film in its original spot. I spray the extremely transparent white I mixed, in the blank area where the fold "pops" out at me. I need this piece of film in order to achieve the effect of the flag wrapping towards itself. Mixing Auto-Air Transparent Base, Transparent Blue, and Medium Reducer together, I lightly layer this extremely transparent blue in the area that contains the blue and stars of the flag.



The Final Touches

Although this piece is essentially finished, I like to go back in and add a few more minor details such as a few more clouds. In my opinion, the most beautiful mountains are surrounded by fluffy, white clouds at the highest peaks. So what I'm going to do is stretch my filter fiber and lay it over the peaks of the mountains, that I covered with Friskit Film, spraying the area with Transparent White. It's an easy, quick technique to use but looks as if you've spent hours working on it. Now, I am going to add a little more dimension to the base of the statue.



First the top edges of the base are masked off. Then, using transparent white and black, I build my base, and add a thin layer of transparent brown over the area. As you can see, once the tape is removed, the base now appears glossy and smooth; the transparent brown really gives it a three-dimensional aspect. Like most artists, I find a discreet location to place my signature. Using a thumbtack dipped in white paint, I sign my name in the bottom, right-hand corner, completing this project.



Forever Remembered, Never Forgotten

Being asked to paint such a meaningful and significant scene, honored and humbled me. This bike was well worth the countless hours and sleepless nights and I would easily do it all over again. My customer, a veteran himself, wanted this paint job to commemorate all those who have selflessly given their lives for their country. They made the ultimate sacrifice so that we may



live in freedom. It was my honor to paint this bike, for it's more than a simple paint job- it's a silent promise to our soldiers, veterans, our heroes that they will Forever be Remembered, it's a silent promise that they Never will be Forgotten.

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