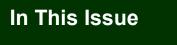


The Switchlist

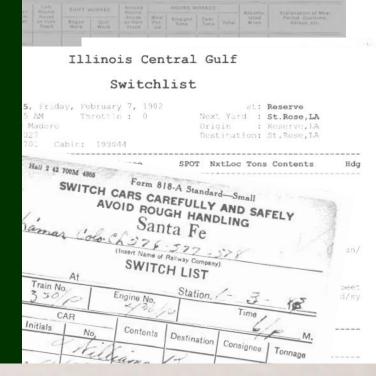
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TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING PLASTIC WINDOWS & DOORS:

Jeff Herrmann, 5th Division

Good scratch-built buildings and craftsman kits can leave you feeling flat if the plastic windows and doors look, well, plastic. So here are a few ideas and techniques that can improve those otherwise plastic-looking doors and windows and make them look more like wood.

Preparing the Plastic

- 1. Wash all the windows and doors with warm soapy water to get any of the mold release residue off the parts. Keep them on the sprue and let them dry thoroughly.
- 2. While still on the sprue, spray paint all the parts with a flat grey or white primer. I use inexpensive spray paint from Wal-Mart or Home Depot. Use just a light coat so additional coats and washes will stick better without obscuring the details.











3. Once the base coat is good and dry, spray or lightly brush the top color you want. Don't put it on too thick! Several light coats work best. Sometimes I use a sponge for the top coat to make it look like there is serious paint chipping going on. You can get a similar effect by spraying on the top coat, then after the paint is fully dry, use steel wool or a very fine sandpaper (600 grit or finer) to rub vertical lines. Typically, this will start to make the top layer of paint fade and expose the base layer paint.











4. After the top layer is fully dry and beginning to look like you want it, you can add some light washes of India ink and alcohol or washes of grimy black or rust-colored paint thinned with alcohol. Be sure not to make them too dark. The effect is to get it to look like worn wood in need of painting or cleaning. Experiment with weathering powders and Pan Pastels to get the effects you want. Do this before you install the "glass" or mount the window in the wall.

Adding the Glass

- 1. I usually glue the window into the wall before adding the transparent plastic glass. This way the viewer generally won't see any glue marks on the glass. Of course, you can cut the transparent plastic glass material to fit the window and carefully glue it in place, but it takes a real expert to not show glue marks!
- 2. If you don't want the glass to look clean or to be able to see through it, try spraying the back side with Testors Dullcote, but remember: "shiny side out!" A cheaper alternative to Testors Dullcote is Rust-Oleum 2X Ultra Cover Matte Clear. It is also

available at Home Depot. It sticks to plastic and is about \$4 for a 12 oz. spray can. You can also use your grimy black stain with a drybrush technique.



- 3. With a sharp blade, you can also add scratches that will have the effect of broken glass or completely cut out a corner to make it look like there is a hole in the window.
- 4. An alternative to using transparent plastic to make the glass is to use Formula 560 Canopy Glue. It dries completely clear and is used by model airplane builders on the cockpit canopies. Place the window frames face up on a piece of wax paper. Then, after shaking the bottle well, use the tip to place a small amount of the glue in each pane. It will start out looking like a milky liquid, but don't worry, it will dry clear. As it starts to dry, use a pin to pop any air bubbles you see. This is a great method for making older looking glass.









Mix it up a bit. Don't make all your windows and doors look the same:











- Have a few windows that are partially opened.
- Have some broken glass panes.
- Board up or brick up a window on an old building or warehouse.
- Add curtains using commercially available products or make your own with ribbon or tissue paper.
- Make window shades with colored paper.











• Have a window AC unit or Dust collector in a window opening or two. Try boarding up or bricking in a window here and there.



• Add interior lighting with just a hint of a scene behind some drapes.







• Add a door knob, hinge or small window to doors. Door knobs can be made using the head of a pin. Make door hinges out of small triangular cuts of paper.



















• Add driplines to the wall below windows.

Editor's note: The NMRA Pacific Northwest Region does not promote nor endorse any specific manufacturer or product. Those identified in this or other articles are presented as the author's preferences or as examples only.

Materials and Tools

- Scissors
- Tweezers
- #11 Blade
- Toothpicks
- Glues: Aleene's Original Tacky Glue, Titebond Wood Glue, Beacon 3-in-1Glue, Formula 560 Canopy Glue, CA adhesive
- Spray Paints: Grey or White Primer for base coat. Accent color: typically green, red brown, blue or tan
- Acrylic Paint, Pan Pastels and Weathering Chalks: Greys, Browns, Rust
- Alcohol and India Ink wash
- Colored Paper, card board, tissue paper for curtains and door hinges
- Straight pin for door knobs
- Window fans, dust collectors, or AC units.
- Detail parts:

walthers.com
rustystumps.com
barmillsmodel.com
railroadkits.com
scale-structures.com
tichytraingroup.com



NMRA Video Library

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