

Sooner or later every circus model builder reaches the point where his circus requires realistic animals and people. We all know there is a certain sameness and toy-like repetition when we use even the finest commercially available miniatures that are now abundant in almost every scale.

After all, the circus is really “people” – they are all doing something; performing, rehearsing, changing costume, eating, grooming, lifting, pushing, carrying, washing, cooking, sleeping, talking, etc. ... these tasks make the real interest and animation to what would otherwise be a cluster of static miniatures on a circus lot. Even spectators are active and busy. If you don't believe it, take notes on the thousands of activities around you and in the aisles the next time you go to a circus or a crowded sporting event.

To get around the lifelessness of “purchased people,” experienced modelers go to great effort, re-working , repositioning, and repainting. But, if you're going to all that trouble why not start from scratch and build each man around his activity? Too hard? Not really! Like all the arts there are “tricks of the trade” and a handful of techniques which are easily learned by model builders. The rewards are not only artistic, but they are also economical. Ten dollars worth of materials can keep you busy a year or more. The actual technique of making the little man is illustrated by the photographs and legends. Below are a few simple hints which should help.

Remember to keep your models simple. The magic of realism comes from simplicity. Don't bother with details which can't or shouldn't be seen. Shape only what you need to shape. Paint only those details that you need to emphasize. Don't bother making, painting, or shaping any features that you don't want to be eye-catchers. Examine some of the good paintings in an art gallery, and notice how crowds can be painted life-like without details on their faces. The exception is in the close foreground. Many of the French Impressionists painted life-like people scenes with

only blobs of color for faces and bodies. Not a single facial detail. A few crude brush strokes depict the action like “stick figures.” So, from the very beginning I plead: Simplicity in tools, materials, actions, and paints.

Before making your people, practice on simple props. Make little peas and cubes. Roll little tubes. Wet your fingers occasionally in the water to soften the clay. Save all these little bits. Later you can use them for fruit or foods for your cook house, hot dogs,

shoes, animal leavings, pop corn bags. These can be rolled, pinched, deformed, etc. Round toothpicks make good handles for brooms, shovels, etc., and you never have enough sacks, tools, piles of clothing or props. The smaller items will harden in a few hours. The larger ones will harden over night. In a few days they will be bone dry. Necessary details

can be scribed with toothpicks. Drying can be retarded with a wet kleenex or paper napkin draped over the forms. Let your imagination run wild, and build up a backlog of props. Save these scraps you've been practicing on.

Follow the illustrations for hints on how to model the men. Later on when you model the women, they require a few extra steps. Actual size drawings will help greatly at first. The obvious details of hair styles, breasts, wider hips, etc., will be immediately apparent. Their legs will be much thinner, even in slacks. If the skirts are long the model will be easier to make, because the lower part will be conic instead of rectangular. If you want legs to show, then the upper part of the body and the skirt are glued to the legs and feet with quick drying epoxy after the legs and feet are dried and mounted on the stand first.

Models may be dressed with masking tape or facial or toilet tissue applied with white glue.



Figure 1 - The basic materials: water, toothpicks, self-hardening clay and actual size drawing (diagrametric)

Scale People for Your Circus

DATE: None	SCALE: None	SCANNED & REVISED: 04/02/03	Pg 1 of 2
Circus Model Builders			
Drawn By Henry D. Magnin			DRAWING NUMBER #0203

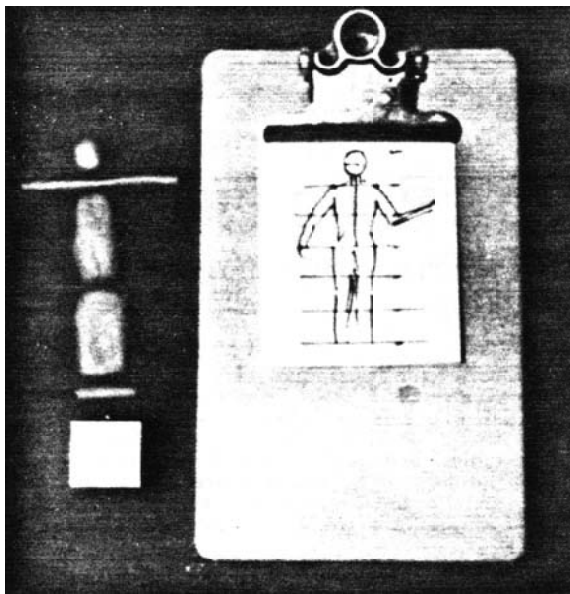


Figure 2 - Head, arms stock, thorax stock, hip-leg stock, foot-shoe stock, flat tin of cardboard stand.

Hair may be painted, or colored flocking can be glued, or blobs of quick drying glue can be applied then painted to look like hair.

All dry figures should be spray painted with an undercoat of flat white and allowed to dry before painting or adding any details.

All paints should be flat, non glossy. Only surfaces which you want to appear wet should be glossy. Inexpensive military flat paints can be bought in hobby stores. Personally I enjoy acrylic paints which mix with a matte medium so they dry flat very quickly.

Build up a collection of beads, spangles, bright colored glitter powders and bits of ribbons and feathers to glue on to finished and painted costumes for foreground details such as specs.

Any necessary details should be painted with a fine brush such as 00 or 000.

I cut little squares of tin shingle for stands which I glue the feet to, and build from the feet up. Later I paint the stands a flat dirt tan which is the color of my lot. These will keep the people from falling on their faces, and will give you a handle to hold on while you paint them.

Begin by making one model at a time. Later on you can make your

mini-people, factory style, with boxes of heads, torsos, skirts, shoes, right and left arms, etc. These can be assembled dry with fast drying epoxy or white glue.

Remember, don't get lost on details. The mind of the viewer will fill them in if the action is emphasized. Keep a notebook of activity details. Good luck, and happy people making!

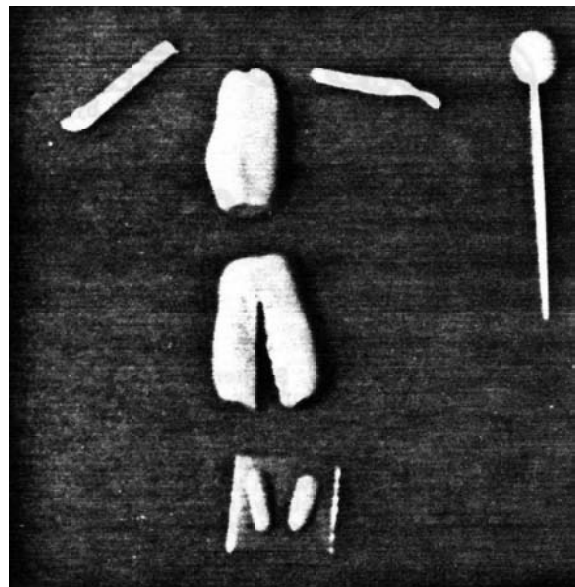


Figure 3 - Head on toothpick for handling, ends of arms pinched to form hands, thorax shaped, legs separated below feet on stand.



Figure 4 - Basic head and face. Detailed with toothpick if needed.



Figure 5 - Basic man pinched together while soft or parts glued with white glue when dried.



Figure 6 - Men at work, positioned while soft. Painted after figures are dry.

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