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SWISS EXPRESS SCENERY CLINIC MAKING ROCKS - PART 2



In this scene the edges of the rocky outcrop have been hidden under static grass and various scenery materials by Heki and Noch. The SBB Cargo Am 843 is by Piko.

Photos: Peter Marriot

Peter Marriot continues his exploration of the huge variety of products available to reproduce rocks in miniature.

Last time we looked at using DIY plaster and the Woodland Scenics Hydrocal method of making rocks. This time we look at the hard foam pieces by Noch.

Using Noch products

Noch produce pieces of rock to represent granite, sandstone and slate. These three types of rock pieces are made from hard foam that is light in weight and easy to use, although the technique is somewhat different to the Woodland Scenics rocks as they are in effect ready-made shapes and pre-coloured.

The stage-by-stage approach is as follows:

● The rock pieces need to be cut off the backing sheet over a cutting board with a sharp craft knife. This is very easy to do.



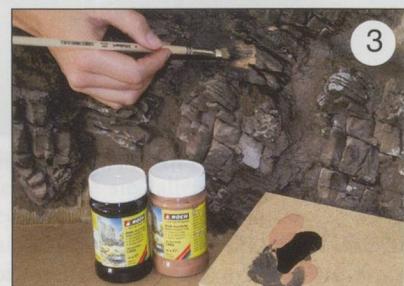
● There are 4 or 5 rock pieces in each pack. The rocks can be reduced in size to make more rocks by dividing (cutting) the rock pieces using a fret-saw or sharp blade.

● The rock sections can then be glued to the scenery using PVA or hot glue. Leave overnight to allow PVA glue to dry fully, hot glue will of course dry more quickly.

● The rock pieces can be moulded into the landscape by using Noch rock modelling compound, or similar material by Busch, Heki & Faller (or Woodland Scenics Hydrocal as described last time), around the edges of the rock pieces. Leave this to dry overnight.

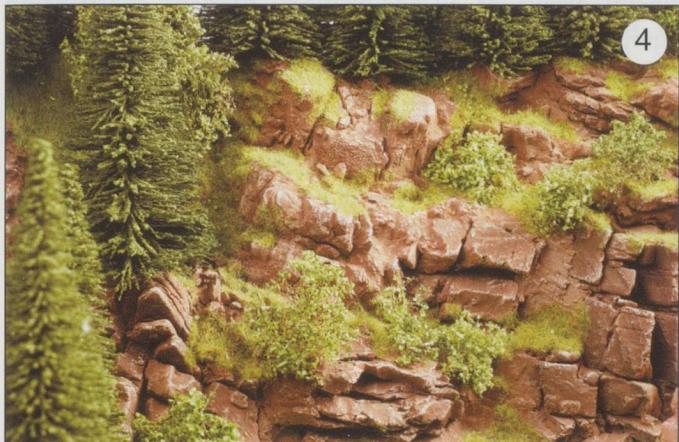
● Once the rocks are fully set they can be weathered with acrylic paints and stains. Alternatively they can be left in their natural colour.

● Hide the edges of the rocks with foliage.



Noch Rock Compound needs to be mixed with a little water until it forms a creamy compound. This is then spread onto the area to be treated with an old kitchen knife, or wooden stick, pushing it into the landscape so it has a firm fix. As the mixture begins to dry (within 15 minutes) sculpt the rock face with the tool you were using. Once the mixture is fully dry the surface can be painted using acrylics. Use several thin washes rather than one thick coat. The

horizontal sections of the rock faces can be treated with scatter materials and/or static grass to represent grass and weeds.



The finished result using all Noch materials. Static grass and foliage has been used to represent the grass and weeds.

Photos: 1 – 4 supplied courtesy of Noch



Heki retails flexible rock foil in a number of colours and rock types. It is easy to work with and light in weight.

Just a small selection of the numerous products on the market to represent rocks. The Woodland Scenics Rock Faces Learning Kit is a good way to make your first rocky scene.



Finishing tips

At the bottom of a rock face or cliff it's worth sprinkling a few small stones called Talus (these are available from the usual manufacturers) to represent debris and fallen rocks. Alternatively see what is available in your garden. Fix these with PVA adhesive. Where rock faces and grass banks join introduce undergrowth and weeds to add to the visual appearance. Taller grasses (available from Woodlands Scenics, Noch, miniNatur and others), placed near the base of a rock face and finished with dabs of scatter material give the scenery a little more texture. Human hair or old brush bristles may be useful as tall grasses and brambles.

Making rock faces - a few general tips

The appearance, colour and structure of real rocks vary tremendously. Study photographs of real rocks of the area you want to model and work to these photographs as you make the rocks for your layout. Where rock faces or outcrops of

rock occur in your model landscape use lichen, poly fibre or foliage pieces or similar to hide the join, to ensure that the rock does not sit un-naturally in the landscape.

Making rock faces needs to be done over several days - the rock material, the adhesive and the paint all need drying time. A hot glue gun can be used to fix pieces of rock to the landscape to speed up the scenery-making process. Another method is to use some of the rock compound to fix the rocks to the landscape, or use PVA glue, but both of these methods will need several hours to dry. Colour the rock pieces in several stages. Use thin washes of different shades of colour so that a 3D effect results. Allow a little darker wash to trickle through the crevasses. Use similar colours and types of rocks on a layout. It is very rare to see different types of rock within a small area. Add foliage, static grass and scatter material to the horizontal areas of the rock faces to represent weeds, wild flowers and grass. In real life pieces of a rock face break off and fall to the base of the rock face. Model this in miniature using Talus or small broken pieces off the main rocks. Colour them the same as the main rocks and "plant" a few weeds in them.

More information can be found in the following publications:

NOCH Model Landscaping Guidebook.

This 132-page A4 publication with English text covers all levels of expertise of layout building. Its 12 chapters include layout planning, baseboard construction, tunnels and bridges, rocks, water, landscape, vegetation, roads and detailing. The techniques described are arranged in order around the building of a compact European layout. Lots of stage by stage illustrations are included. Available from www.gaugemaster.co.uk and www.ontracks.co.uk .

Scenic Modelling.

This is my 98-page book published by Warners that covers most aspects of making scenery. Its contents include water, rocks, landscaping, trees, detailing and much more. Available from www.model-railways-live.com .

Mountain to Desert: building the HO scale Daneville & Donner River.

A 98-page US book published by Kalmbach with over 180 colour photographs and diagrams. The author Pele K. Søeborg covers planning the layout, track laying, roads, building the landscape, water, trees, rocks, backscenes and the weathering of locomotives and rolling stock. Available from www.modeljunction.info .

The Scenery Manual.

A small format 144-page Woodland Scenics book that is ideal inspirational reading for beginners to the hobby, but also for experienced modellers wanting to improve their scenery construction skills. The book is promoted "like a home study course in scenic realism". The book covers layout basics, terrain, water effects, landscapes and buildings. Available from www.bachmann.co.uk .

Next time we shall look at weathering wagons and buildings.