Things From The Basement

Painting Stucco / Plaster

What is Stucco? Basically it is a plaster that can be added to the outside or inside walls and structures to hide the building materials below it. This gives the building a finished surface to paint or seal, and to cover less visually appealing construction materials, such as metal, concrete, cinder block, or clay brick and adobe. This process is used throughout the world and throughout human history. This instructional will hopefully help you recreate this painted look on your models with ease.

Materials: You will need some acrylic paints. I prefer the cheaper ones and in amounts that can handle my larger projects. The small modeling paints are very nice but, are very expensive and come in small amounts that would be used up quickly on larger projects. Colors I use are a Yellow Ochre, Sand (or some kind of Off-white color) and White. You will need water, cloth (to wipe up messes) and a paint brush big enough for the project. I like flat brushes over the round brushes for this project as we will be doing a lot of dry brushing. And, once again, you will need to do all this in a place that can get messy. Not your mom's dining room table, unless that's fine with her.

Dry Brushing: This is a very common painting technique used by all modelers at one point or another. The dry-brush technique can be achieved with water-based media such as inks, acrylic paints, tempera paints or watercolor paints. The brush should first be dry or squeezed dry of all water. The brush should then be loaded with paint that is highly viscous or thick. This is usually done by putting on some paint, and then wiping much of it off on a paper towel or cardboard. You then paint on the model with the brush loaded with the slightly dry paint on it. You can find many videos online if you need further instruction.

First Step: Make sure the surface is clean of any dust. I personally don't really see any issues just going in hog-wild but, most folks find it better to make sure the model is all dust free. Once you have a clean model (that's already been dried and sanded etc.) then it's ready for paint.

To Prime or Not to Prime?: Usually it's best to prime a model in one color. This gives the model a uniform color background to paint on. I personally have not needed to do this with the models I have worked on but, if you feel you want that extra step, this would be the time to do it. I tend to use white or a light grey, not black.

Colors: This can be a tricky part. For many modelers, the colors they wish to choose are really up to them. The ones I use here are the quickest and easiest colors for my projects. I paint the very first layer in Yellow Ochre. If you feel this looks too yellow, try mixing in some tan or a bit of brown and color to your tastes. Different places will have a different base color for the Stucco. Drier areas will have a much more sandy color to them while wet places might even have a slightly green-grey color to them. You can go look at actual photos to see what color you want your model to look like. The next few steps are just my quick and easy approach for the novice modeler.

Application:

1) I first cover the whole area in Yellow Ochre acrylic paint. This is the only time I will be applying paint uniformly to the whole area. Cover all of the model that will need this stucco application on it.

2) The second layer is a light tan or sand color. This will be added on using the dry Brush technique I mentioned above. You will not want to fill in every spot. You will not want too much yellow showing through but, you will want to cover most of it. Leave tiny bits of yellow to show through. this will give the model depth when the older parts of the plaster are breaking off and showing the layers below.

3) The third layer is white. I use the Dry Brushing technique once again . This time I am filling in even *less* of the model. The white layer is used to hit all the highlights and make the variations in the plaster "pop".
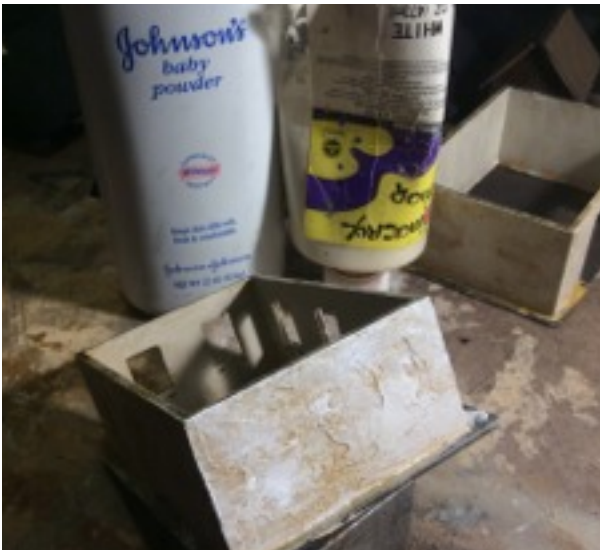
Tip : I often find with cheaper paints, the white does not "pop" like it should. I use a bit of white talcum powder to add some white pigment to this white paint. This also gives it a chalky effect which I feel only adds to the look I want. I have been known to use talc in other paints as well to give it a similar texture. Remember: Always do your paint mixing on a palette. Never pour the talc INTO your paint!


Detail shot of technique
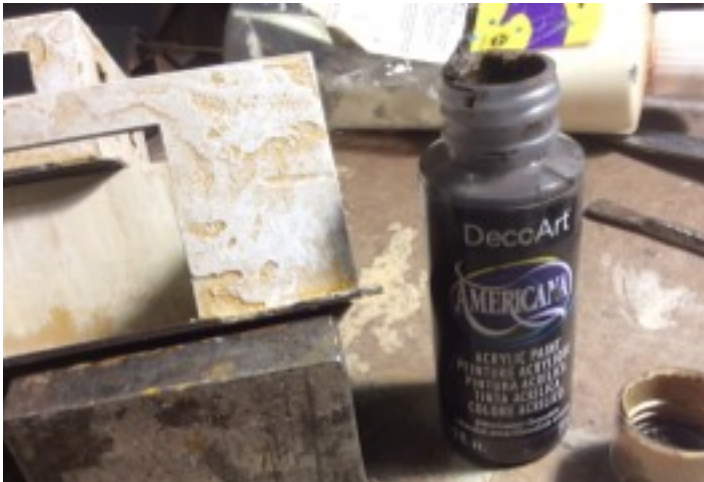
Muck / Age: The fourth step is up to you. I like my buildings to look like they have dirt, soil, moss, muck and grime on the very bottom. In more arid places like Italy, there might be very little of this effect, unless it has a more dry, dirt-like look to it which is the effect of the dust and sand collecting on the ground and lower parts of the building. My building sample is in Europe so, I will be making mine look like it has some mud or wet damage to it. I will be using a dark brown, thinned down with water so that it goes on thin. I place the "mud" color on the very bottom of the model to give it that drying muck look. You could use some dark greens for slime or the like as well or in place of it.
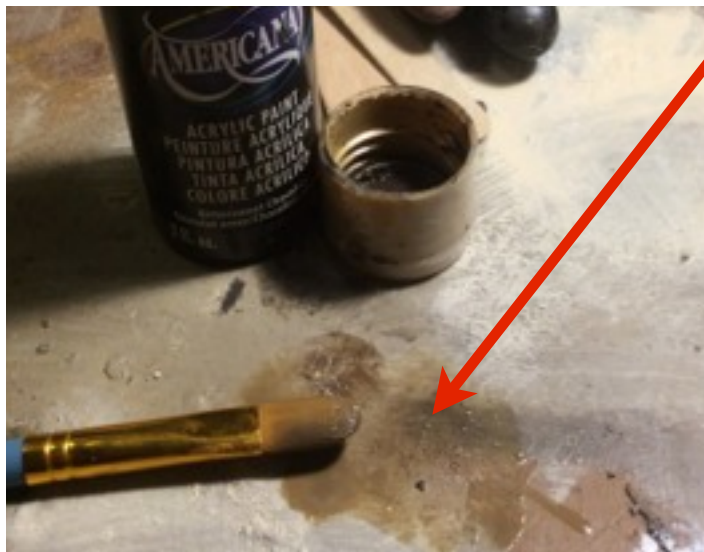
Both of my models have the effect painted on the bottom. Once they are dry, it's time to put my pre-painted details (windows and doors etc.) on the model.