

Another Way to Color Polyspan

An Article by Mike Myers, Editor of the Southern California Ignition Flyers "Flight Plug," April 2003

Laurie Barr and Peter Michel in England have been working on a different approach to coloring Polyspan. I've been experimenting with it as well, and here's a synthesis of the approaches. The coloring ingredient is Daler-Rowney's FW Acrylic Artists Ink. It's available in a wide range of colors at most artists or graphic supply stores. I got mine at Swain's in Glendale. Aside from the ink, you need a sheet of glass or some clear plastic sheeting to tape on your building board.

You apply the ink directly to the rough side of the Polyspan (which will be on the inside of the model as covered). It's easiest if you first cut the Polyspan panels oversize (since you're going to hang them up to dry for half an hour or so after you put the ink on). You can either tape the top edge of the panel directly to the glass—or glue a 1/8" square balsa stick to the top to use as a "hanger" when you're done. You pour the ink out in a small tin or glass pan. You can use either a 3/4" brush or a small foam roller to put the ink on the Polyspan. It flows through the Polyspan and forms a meniscus on the glass or plastic sheet which helps pull more ink through when you lay the next piece down. After you've "inked" the piece of Polyspan, take it off the glass or plastic surface and hang it up to let it dry.

Once it's dry, you can apply it (rough side down) to your model using whatever adhesive process you normally use (dope and thinner—covering adhesive and thinner etc.). Peter Michel likes to use Balsaloc and a Monokote iron on the compound curved parts of his planes. I've used two different colors of ink in this process, a brilliant Process Yellow and Flame Scarlet. I found that the Scarlet would bleed easily when the solvent in either nitrate dope, nitrate thinners or Aerodyne Covering Adhesive hit it. The Process Yellow didn't seem to dissolve or bleed in anything. However, once the Scarlet was sealed with a coat of dope or two, the bleeding stopped on subsequent coats. So if you're going to do a color scheme with two adjacent colors, you might want to be careful with your initial coats of dope or adhesive to avoid the "bleeding" problem. These inks do give you a choice of some brilliant colors for Polyspan and the results are well worth the effort.