
Enhance your Layout's Story Telling

-

Practical Steps

FIRST DELIVERED AT RPM-EAST, GREENSBURG, PA
MARCH 23 2019

“Its my layout, I can do as I want”...

Well, *yes* and *no*...

Your layout tells a story... is it a coherent story?

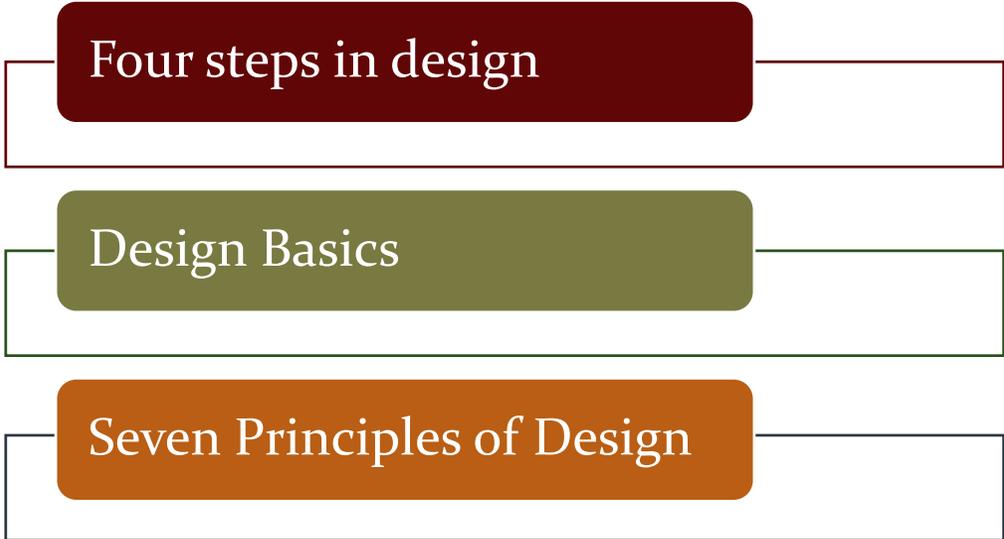
This clinic applies artistic concepts to improving the story our layouts tell.

Four steps in design

Design Basics

Seven Principles of Design

An artistic approach improves any model railroad
– *whether existing or yet-to-be built.*



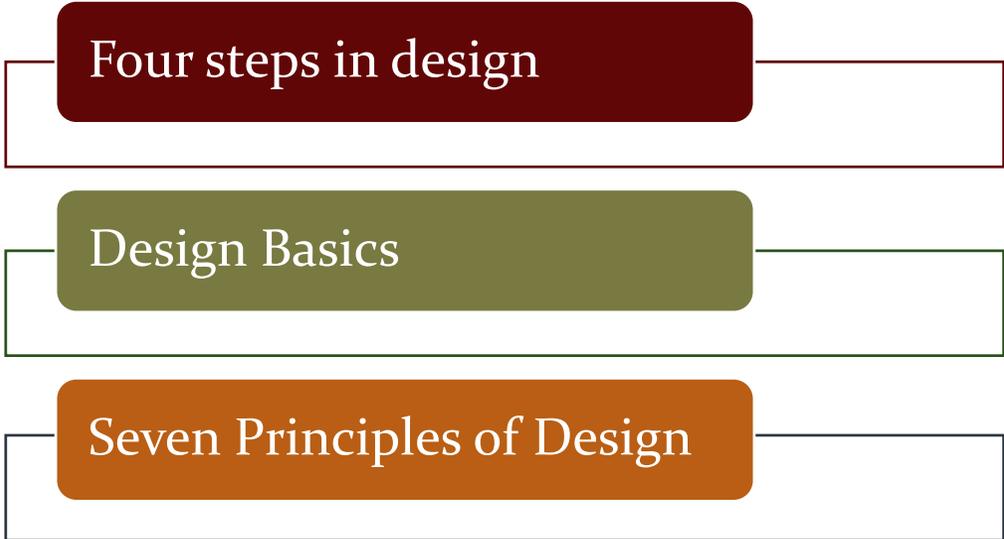
Four steps in design

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An artistic approach is quite compatible with prototype modeling -when there is a conflict between prototype modeling and artistry, prototype modeling should prevail.

There may be fewer conflicts than one would imagine – a prototype modeler must always make choices about what he models. Perhaps the artistic approach will help him make wiser choices of what he includes or leaves out



Four steps in design

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An **artistic approach** improves any model railroad – whether *existing* or *yet-to-be built*.

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Your model railroad . . .

- a work of representational art
- as do art works, can represent people, nature, or man-made structures

Throughout this presentation . . .

- **Action Items** are presented as one way but not the only way to do something

- Our audience will surely think of dozens more examples pertaining to their own layouts

Throughout this presentation . . .

- Includes a few



Three Approaches That will Improve your Layout

Four steps in design

Design Basics

- Four Tasks of design

Seven Principles of Design

- Help you deliver your message with optimum clarity and impact

First Approach



Process of Design

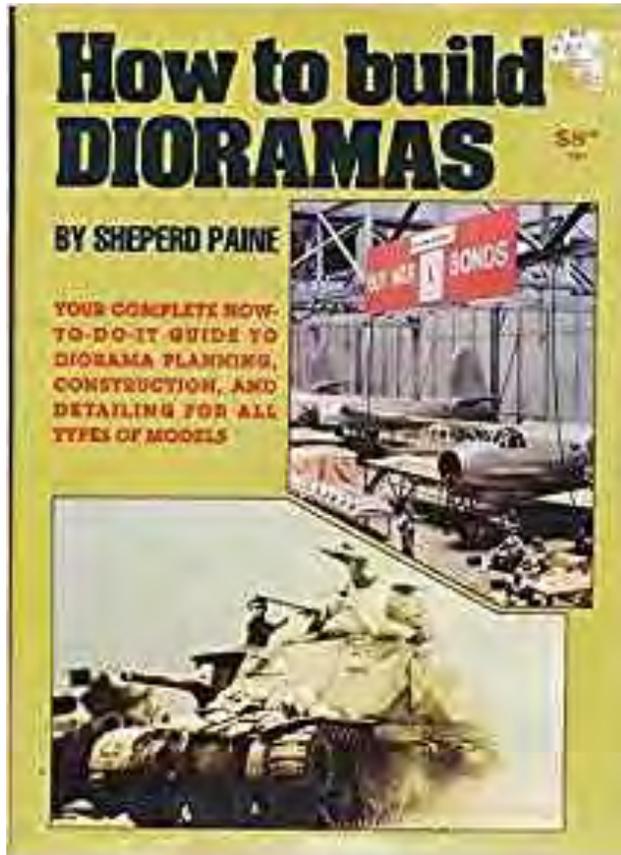
- Step 1 - **Pick the story** your layout and your scenes will tell
 - **Example**
- Step 2 - **Design your scenes**
 - What is your scene's focal point?
 - Make mock-ups
- Step 3 - **Select your scale** – you may have already decided about this at the outset, that is fine
- Step 4 - **Design as you build** – You can make changes as you go along if you keep your design hat on
- *Photograph captures a layout that tells the story of WWI trench warfare on the Western Front and railroads that served them*

First Approach



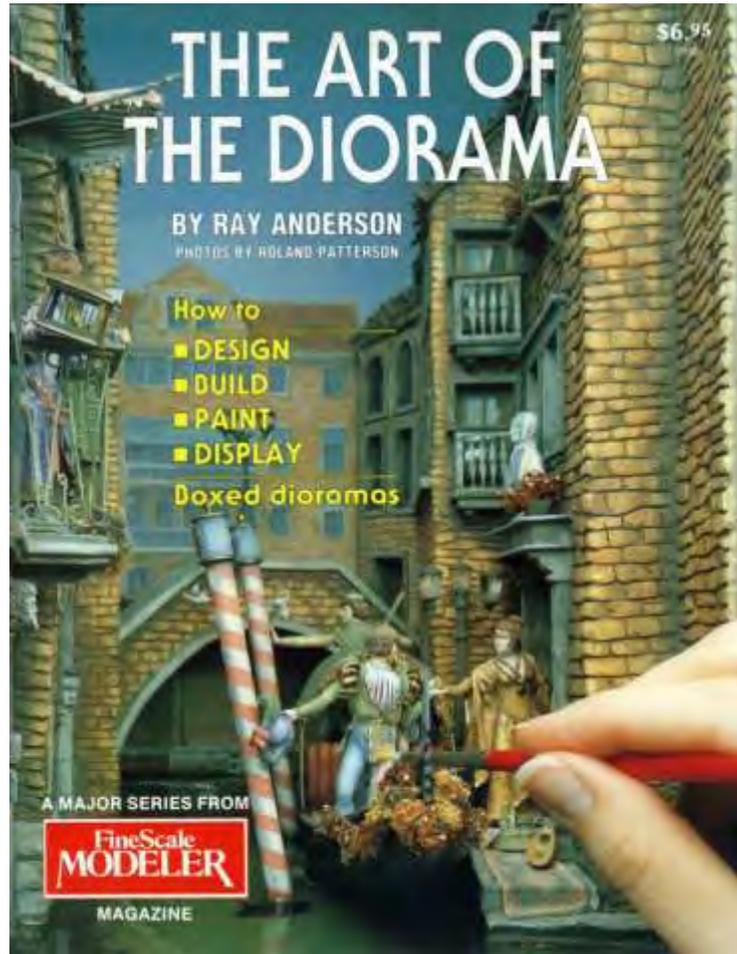
Process of Design

- **Step 1 - Pick the story your layout and your scenes will tell**
 - **Example** – *2017 Narrow Gauge Convention in Denver* - we visited Bill White's G scale indoor layout with scratch-built garage with auto with mechanic with cardboard box with new part
 - Bill White Littleton, Colorado
 - Photograph by Nicholas Kalis 2017



Process of Design

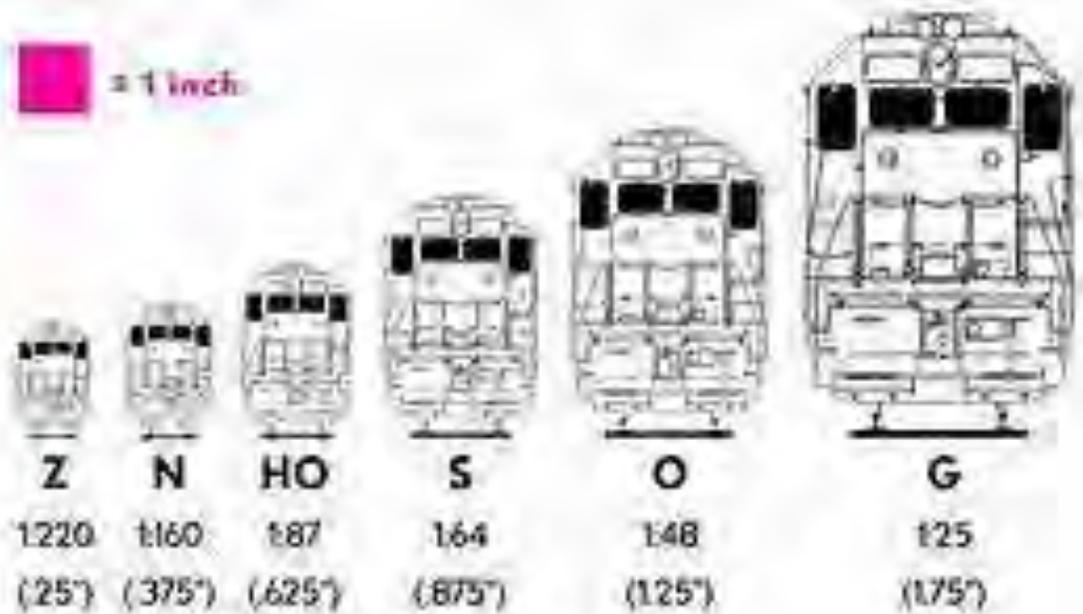
- **Action Item** – read everything you can by Sheperd Paine, dean of dioramas
- (Shep stressed your diorama must tell a story)



Process of Design

- **Action Item** – Buy Ray Anderson's *The Art of the Diorama* Out of Print, but found on Amazon
- *Anderson also stressed dioramas need to tell a story*

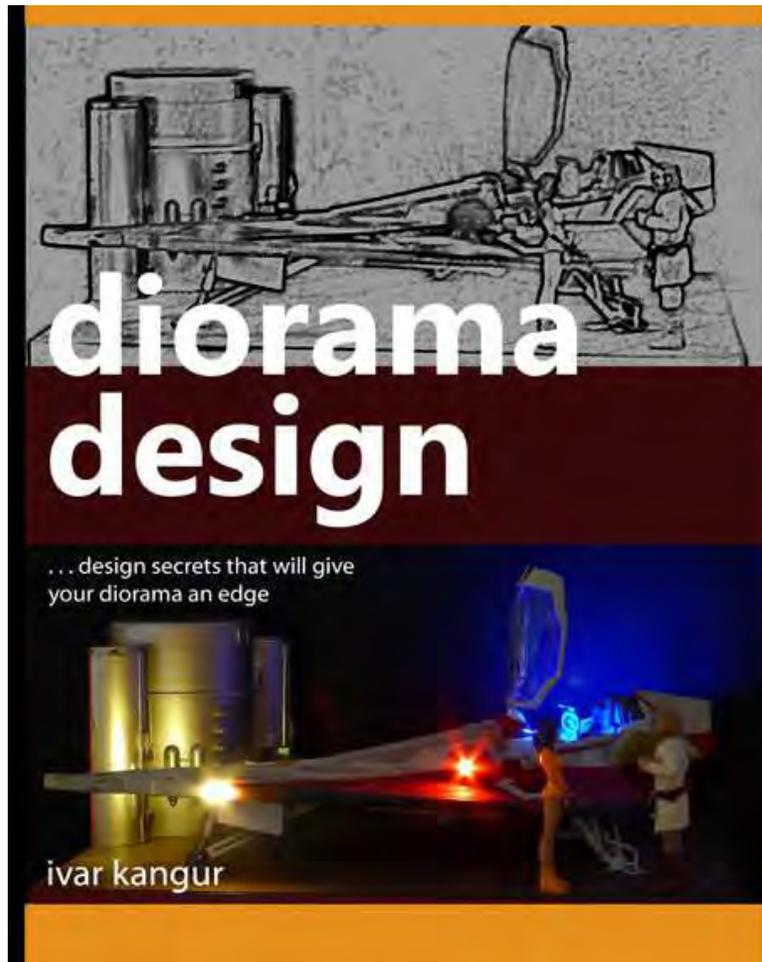
 = 1 inch



COMMON MODEL RAILROAD SCALES (AND GAUGES)

Process of Design

- **Action Item** -
Select your scale



1. Design Basics

- Geometry
- Topography
 - Your modeled scene's focal point is ... ?
 - Make mock-ups
- Space
- Color

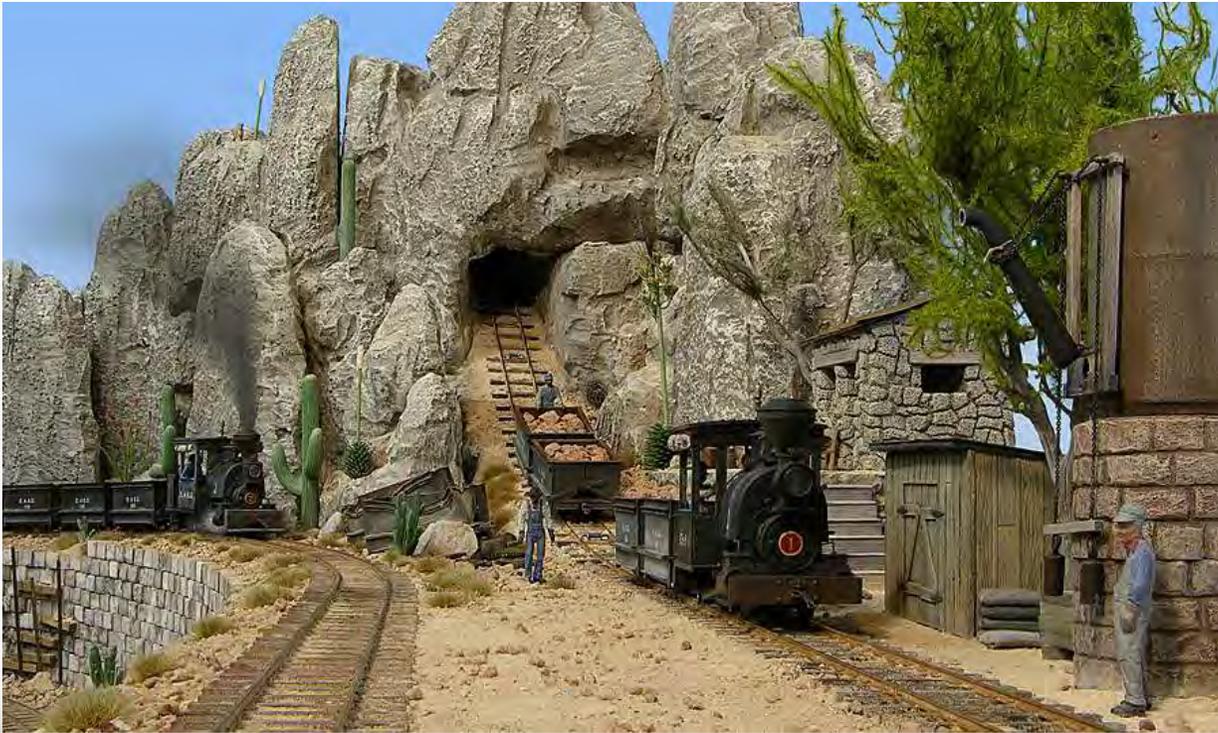


1. Design Basics

- **Geometry**

-  exclusively design tracks or roads parallel to your layout's fascia
- **Action Item** – Employ angles - they are more visually dynamic than parallel lines on your layout

1. Design Basics



- **Topography** A flat scene is a boring scene
- **Action Item** – Adding a mountain or valley, as appropriate, adds interest to a scene

1.Design Basics



- More on Topography
- Your scene must be flat?
- **Action Item** - Leverage three dimensions with model telephone poles
- *Photo at left shows telephone poles leveraging three dimensions where topography is flat*

1.Design Basics



- More on Topography

- What if your scene must be flat?
- **Action Item** -
- Leverage three dimensions with a model windsock on a tall pole (airport)
- Modelers should be able to come up with many more examples suitable to the era and place modeled

1. Design Basics



- Even more on Topography

- **Action Item** -
- If your scene must be flat, leverage three dimensions with a model Airport Control Tower

1.Design Basics



- **Action Item** -
- Leverage three dimensions with a model flagpole with correct American flag (48 stars versus 50 stars if you are modeling the era before Hawaii and Alaska joined the union as states)
- *Osborn sells kits for American flag poles*



1. Design Basics

- **Topography** A flat scene is a boring scene
- **Action Item** - Build mockups on your layout until you find the time to build permanent buildings

1.Design Basics



- Last word on Topography
- If your scene must be flat?
- **Action Item** -
- Leverage three dimensions with a model flagpole with company flag

1.Design Basics



- **Space** Visual clutter is the enemy of clarity.
- **Don't!** Common mistake – amateur artists believe all space must be filled up.

1.Design Basics



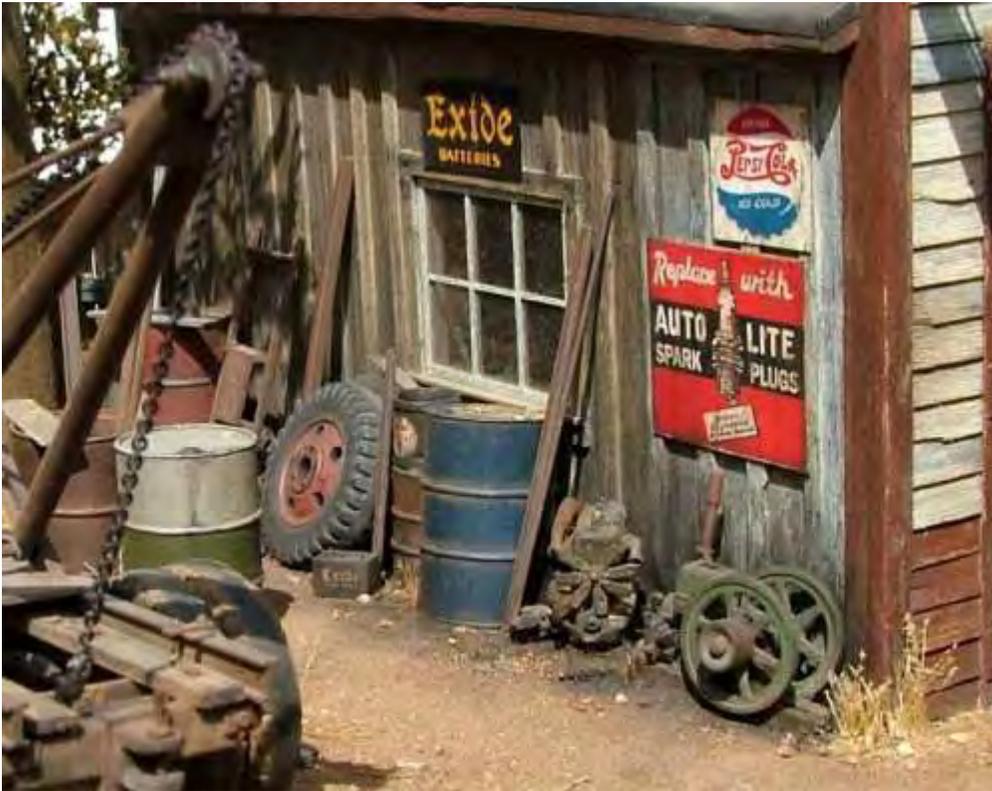
- **Space** Visual clutter is the enemy of clarity.
-
- **Action Item** - Even when modeling an urban setting, ask yourself: do additional people add anything relevant to my story?

1.Design Basics



- **Space** Visual clutter is the enemy of clarity.
-
- **Action Item** - Many model railroaders avoid figures altogether. One modeler claims that if you must have a figure in your scene place him with his back to the aisle.

1. Design Basics



- **Space** Visual clutter is the enemy of clarity.

-



- Confuse this basic to prohibit clutter at say the back of a gas station – such clutter often makes sense (unless you are trying to convey a very tidy business)

1. Design Basics



- **Space** Visual clutter is the enemy of clarity.
- HO scale *Franklin and South Manchester* of famed modeler and manufacturer **George Sellios** conveys seediness, not clutter

1.Design Basics



Don't!

overdo “seediness”

- **John Nehrich** recalls during the Great Depression, labor costs were low and employers strove to keep their workers employed.
- Dirty, unkempt scenes to depict the 1930s may just be flat wrong.

1. Design Basics



- **Space** Visual clutter is the enemy of clarity.
- A second example of George Sellios' modeling style making sense – again his efforts are not *visual clutter*.
- It's ok if Sellios' modeling style is not your cup of tea – this hobby is all about diversity

1.Design Basics



- **Color** better too few colors than too many
- **Action Item** – Keep colors on your layout to a minimum
- *Photo illustrates a scene where colors are kept to a minimum*

1. Design Basics



- **Color** better too few colors than too many



confuse this suggestion with principle that in nature solid colors rarely exist – Do paint rocks and trees with multiple shades of a single color

1. Seven Design Principles

- Balance
- Unity
- Contrast
- Emphasis
- Movement
- Repetition
- Rhythm
- *All seven are rarely used in an artwork so it is rare to require them in a single model railroad scene or perhaps even in an entire model railroad*



Scene to the left depicts which of seven design principles?

1. Seven Design Principles



- Scene to the left depicts which of seven design principles?

1. Seven Design Principles

- **1. Balance** “the spatial arrangement of elements in a work of art” can take the form of *symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial.*

Don't!

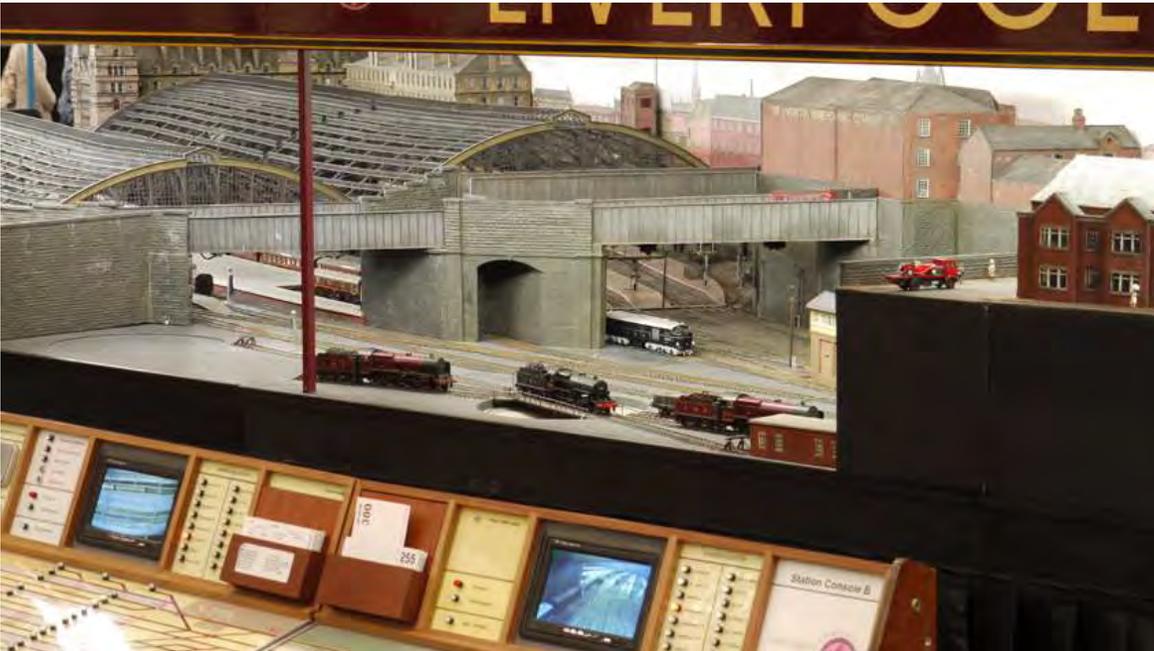
- use *symmetrically balanced* scenes in your layout; while easy to build, they appear formal and rigid

- *Photo demonstrates asymmetrically balanced scene – a rocky bed river crossed by a through truss bridge balanced by a number of clustered one-story buildings.*

- Source: Ivar Kangur



1. Seven Design Principles



- Careful placement of elements of different size, color or visual weight achieves **Asymmetrical Balance**
- **Action Item** - Balance a large building on scene's left by several smaller buildings on the right
- **Action Item** - Prototype modeling does not preclude **asymmetrical balance** - some picking and choosing of buildings to model always takes place no matter how prototypical the model builder's striving
- *Photo of large building on left - in this case, a glass roofed passenger station balanced by several brick buildings on the far right*

1. Seven Design Principles



- **2. Unity** “occurs when similar elements” in a model railroad scene “combine to make a cohesive harmonious whole.” Ivar Kangur
- **Action Item** – Model three trucks or other such vehicles travelling down a country road

1. Seven Design Principles

- **2. Unity** “occurs when similar elements” in a model railroad scene “combine to make a cohesive harmonious whole.” Ivar Kangur



- *Photo is a humorous illustration of three “similar” road grading equipment*



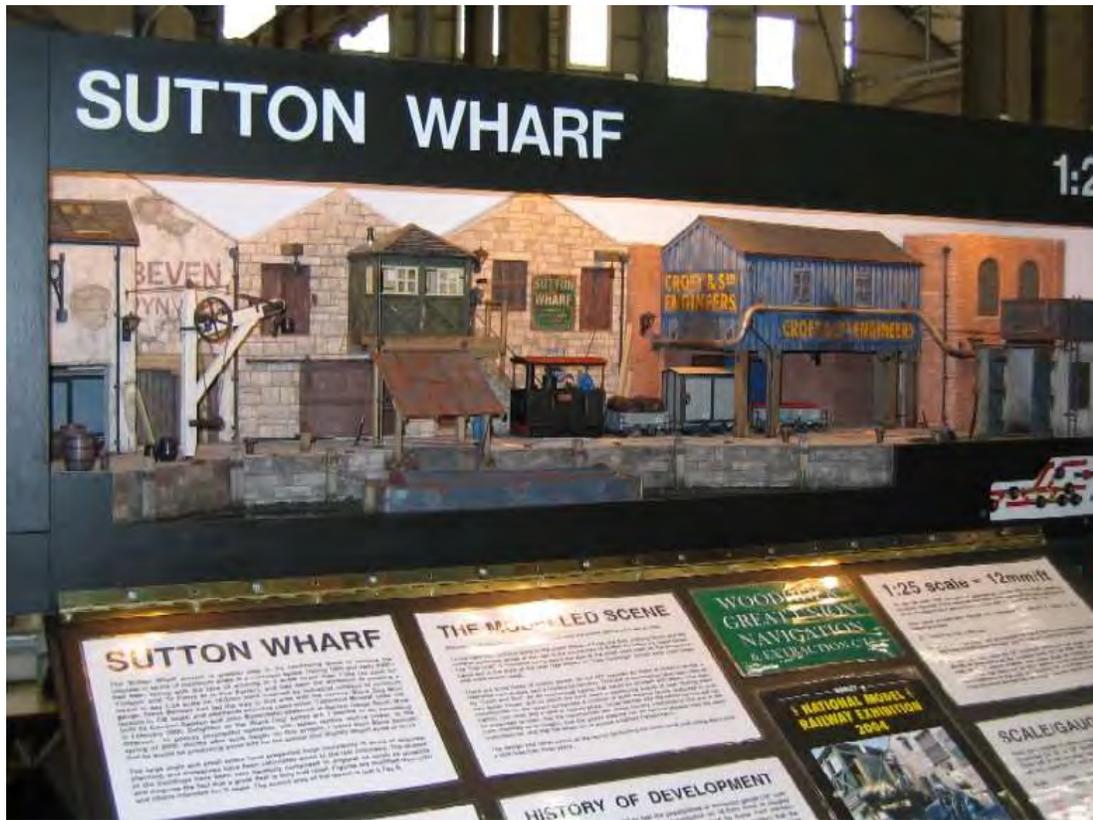
- *Ignore what has been written of John Armstrong – John grew to regret some of the humor he used in his famous O scale layout. This photo used because I could not find a better example*

1. Seven Design Principles



- *Ignore what has been written of John Armstrong – John grew to regret some of the humor he used in his famous O scale layout. This photo used because I could not find a better example*





1. Seven Design Principles

- **Unity** “occurs when similar elements” in a model railroad scene “combine to make a cohesive harmonious whole.”
Ivar Kanguur
- . . . achieved by *consistent* artistic technique

1. Seven Design Principles



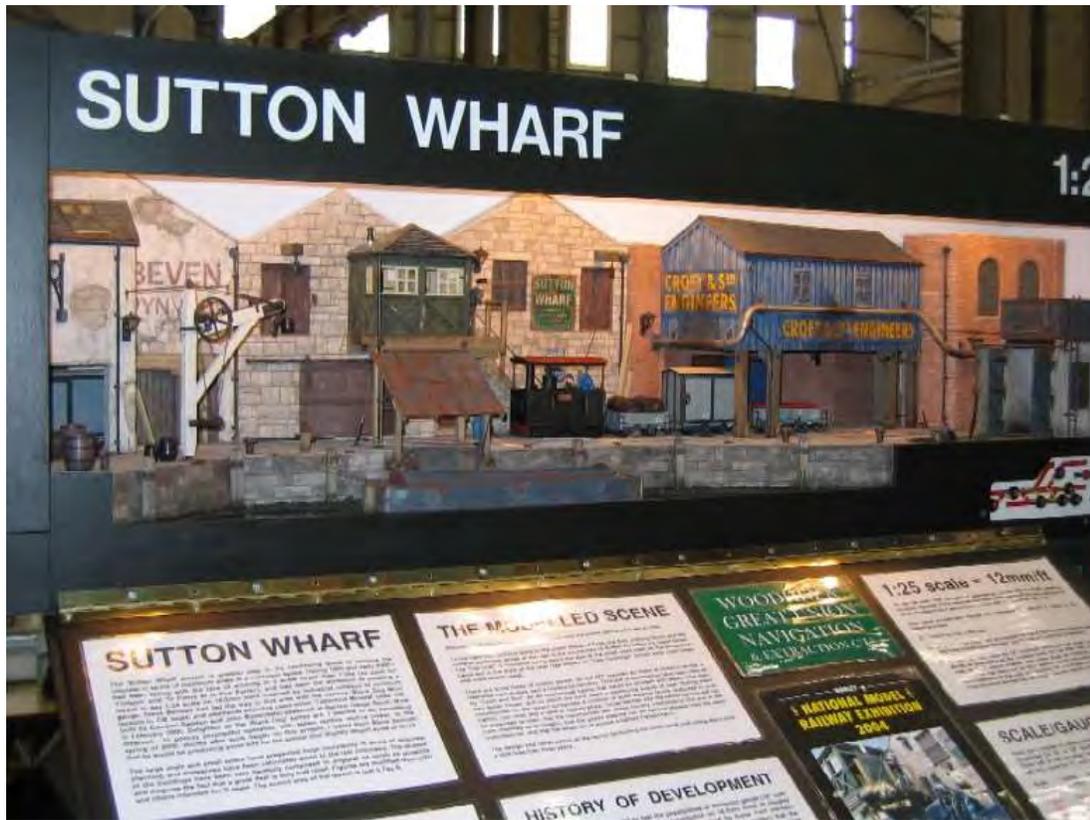
insert one highly detailed structure in a scene where your structures generally lack details

1. Seven Design Principles



- Unity
- **Action Item** - Model a path connecting a modeled residence with its detached garage or a shed. “Visual linking of dissimilar elements can also create unity.” Ivar Kangur
- *Photo depicts a path under a train track linking dissimilar elements*

1. Seven Design Principles



- **Unity** “occurs when similar elements” in a model railroad scene “combine to make a cohesive harmonious whole.” Ivar Kangur
- . . . achieved by *consistent* artistic technique
- **Action Item** – Model railroad structures of even height can achieve *unity* through **consistency**
- *Photo illustrates similar elements (buildings of similar height and built to similar high standards and level of detail)*

1. Seven Design Principles



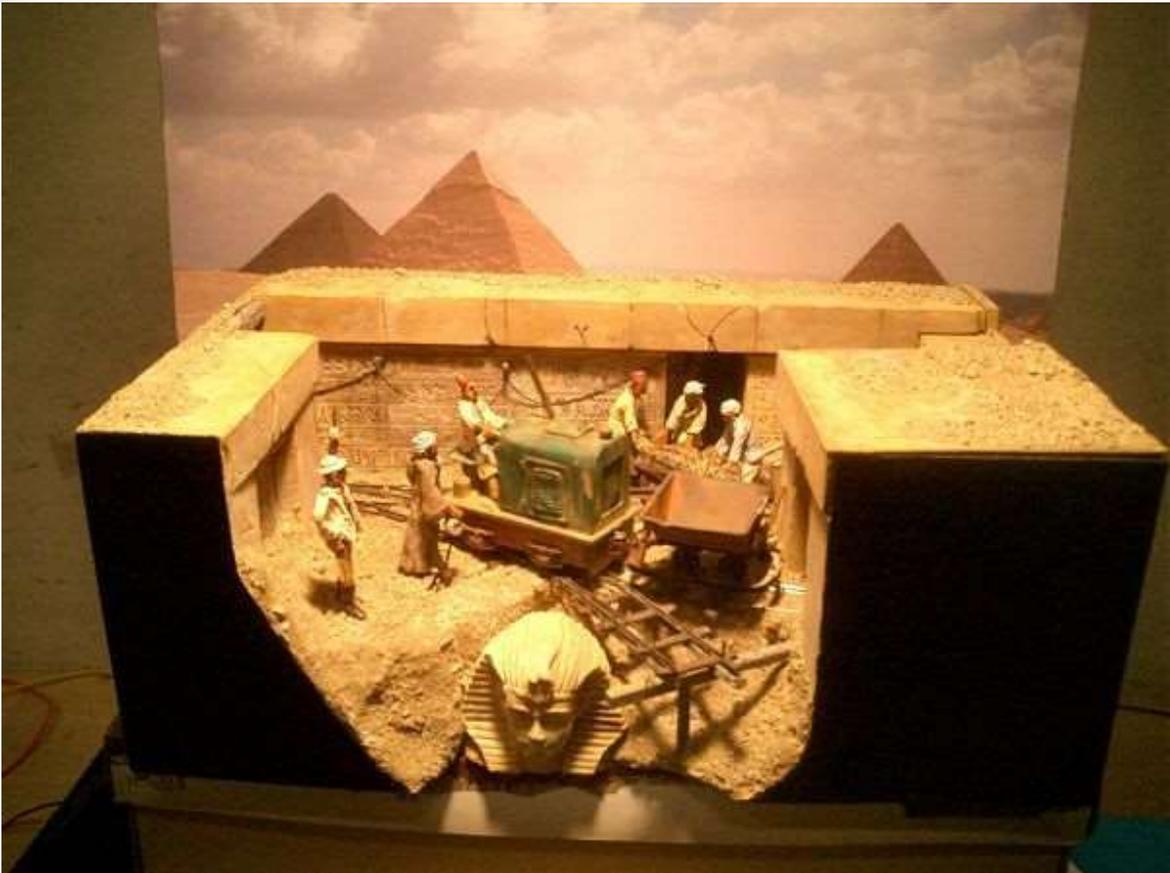
- **3. Contrast** where dissimilar or opposite elements are juxtaposed.
- Apologies to Kangur, **contrast** will add *visual interest* and *drama* to your layout.
- **Action Item** - Create **contrast** through scale... Place a model guard shack near a large factory

1. Seven Design Principles



- 4. Techniques for creating **Emphasis** can be the same as used to create contrast - light versus dark, contrasting colors, etc. but *emphasis* can also be created through *placement* and *motion*
- Er  by Placement –
- place your main subject exactly in the middle of your scene (it will look unnatural)

1. Seven Design Principles



- **Emphasis** – another example



- place main subject exactly in the middle of your scene (it will look unnatural)

1. Seven Design Principles



- **Emphasis** – another example
- *At first blush this main subject was placed exactly in the middle of its scene. A careful look reveals main subject is off center. While more diorama than layout, I included it to whet our audience's creative juices and give you "permission" to push the boundaries of model railroading*

1. Seven Design Principles



- **5. Movement** – Besides the obvious – our moving trains, movement can be *implied* or *actual*.
- *Implied Movement*
- **Action Item** – Model a waterfall on your layout

1. Seven Design Principles



- *Actual Movement*
- **Action Item** – Install operating crossing gates on your layout

I. Seven Design Principles

- *Actual Movement*
- **Action Item** – Install a gate operated at a modeled factory
- *Modeler Thomas Klimoski granted permission to reproduce Georgia Northeastern model railroad*
www.thomasklimoski.com



Photo and modeling by Thomas Klimoski

1. Seven Design Principles

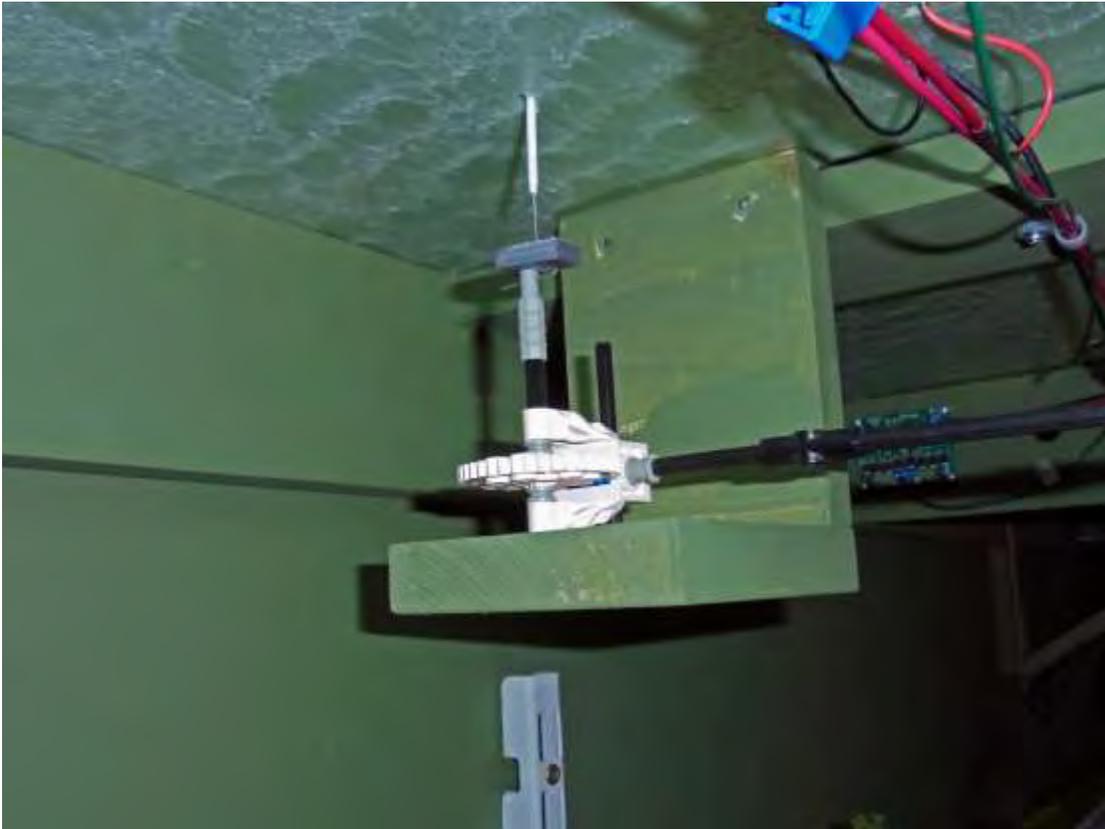


Photo by permission of Thomas Klimoski

- *More Information*
- Klimoski scratch built fence and gate using .020 music wire soldered together into separate assemblies. One gate leg was left long, inserted through styrene tubing installed in his foam base. His wire projects through layout bottom where it connects into his gear mechanism. Barbed wire is EZ-line glued with CA to each post. Fencing is tulle (finest bridal veil material he could find) glued to his wire fence framework and then spray painted silver. His operating fence replicates one on the prototype building materials facility. As on the prototype to prevent damaging the gate, Klimoski's crews must stop and open this gate before switching cars on the siding.

1. Seven Design Principles



- *Actual Movement*

- **Action Item** – Include an electrically-operated roll down gate in your layout such as built by Potomac Division's Bill Day

• Photo by permission of Bill Day



1. Seven Design Principles

- **6. “Repetition** strengthens a design by promoting unity”.
- Ivar Kangur
- **Action Item** – Using **repetition**, a model cornfield or other crop on your layout would strengthen your design by promoting unity

1. Seven Principles of Design



- 7. Repetition automatically creates **Rhythm**. “Rhythm works best when the repeated elements are roughly equal in visual weight.” Ivar Kangur
- **Action Item** – Install four passenger cars parked in front of a model diner on your layout

For More Information

Ivar Kangur *Diorama Design* Copyright 2017

Ray Anderson *The Art of the Diorama* Out of Print, but can be found on
Amazon

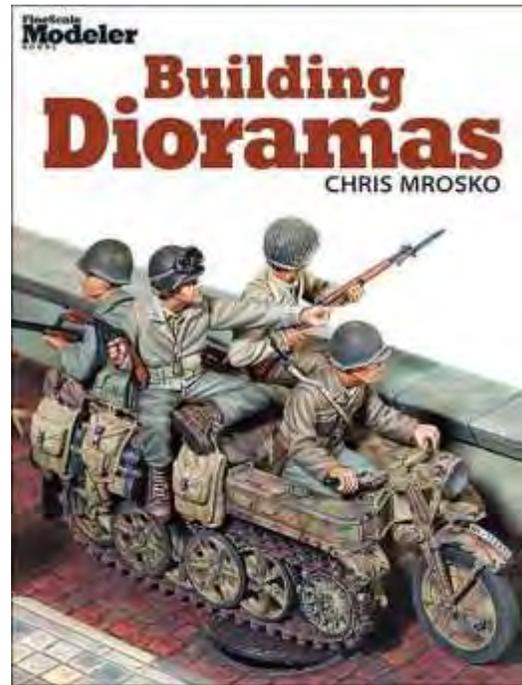
Per Olav Lund, *A World of Dioramas: Master's Collection Series: Volume 1*
Paperback – 2001

<https://nmra.org/edutrain/scenery-strategy-bill-neale>

www.creativedioramas.com

For More Information

Chris Mrosko *Building Dioramas*



Recap

- Select your story and focal point

- Tell your story

Understand your Geometry and Topography;



Clutter

- Apply design principles

balance, unity, contrast, emphasis, movement, repetition, rhythm

Thanks

to

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