Finishing Brick & Stone Buildings

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Hi Everybody, I'm Kathy Renninger. I'm going to demonstrate the techniques used to finish brick & stone buildings, as shown in my article in the August 2004 Model Railroader.

The first thing I want to show you is how to make the tools I use to do this. You'll need:

1. a cosmetic sponge, about 1/8 inch thick or so
2. a piece of scrap lumber or extruded Styrofoam, (1 and 1/2'' square is good-----
   although you may want a variety of sizes)
3. scissors to cut the sponge to size
4. rubber cement for adhering the sponge to the handle.

Cut the sponge to roughly fit the handle, & apply rubber cement to both the handle & the sponge. Let this dry & then put them together. If the sponge doesn't fit the handle exactly, you want to at least line-up one corner so that you can easily position the applicator when you apply the paint.

That's our flat applicator, & it will be used for brick walls or stone walls with shallow mortar lines.
Now, I'll make the round one, for use on stone walls or any irregularly-surfaced walls. For this you need a round cosmetic sponge & a rubber band. This one's very easy; you just fold the edges of the sponge together & rubber band them tightly. If you have trouble doing this, soak the sponge in water first to make it more flexible. However, you will have to let it dry completely before you use it to apply paint---probably overnight.

Okay, the first step in doing your walls will be to coat them with Polly Scale Reefer White that has a few drops of Aged Concrete added----just enough to turn it a pale tan. You want to brush it on with a fairly wide artist's paintbrush. Cover the wall evenly, letting it go down into the mortar lines.
You'll have to set this aside to dry thoroughly before you add the brick colors to it. (A hairdryer turned on low will speed things up.)

Before I start adding the brick color, I'm going to set-out a piece of poster board and a piece of construction paper.
Now we'll put-on the first color: PRR Tuscan. I'm going to dip some of this out with a brush, & put it on the poster board. Now I'll dip the flat applicator into it, & then dab the applicator a couple of times on the construction paper to take off the excess; I'm trying to have the sponge more damp than wet. Now I'll start dabbing paint onto the wall that already has the mortar coat on it. What you're getting here is a dappled, uneven coverage---because of the texture of the sponge----- and that's what you want. Some of the open spaces will fill in with the next color. (One thing you don't want to do is to press harder to get more color on; you'll just end-up forcing it into the mortar lines, and you need to avoid that.)

The second color I'll use on this brick is Rust. I'm going to apply it the same way as the first.
Now you'll see that you're getting a little more coverage here. If it still looks too light, go

back & put another coat of Tuscan on. If you want, you can add some more Rust to finish it off. It's better to proceed slowly because you can always add, but you can't take it back off. (What you can do, however, if you get it too dark, is to add a light layer of Aged Concrete . That'll tone it down a bit.)

   Okay, that takes care of the brick; now for the stone. The process is pretty much the same; the only difference is the colors-----and the fact that if the wall surface is fairly rough, you'll do better with the round applicator.
   The first color I'll use on the stone walls is D&H Gray. On the smaller wall that I have here, I'm going to use a flat applicator, because this wall is molded uniformly---almost like brick. The large "demonstration wall" has deeper mortar lines and more texture on the stone, so I'm going to use a round applicator on it; that'll allow me to apply the paint from different angles and get some into the crevices. Again, I'm going for an uneven, mottled, look.
   The second color that goes on the stone is Rust. I'm using this because stones aren't just gray; they generally have some warmer tones like brown, tan or rust. I'm going to keep this layer light, since I just want to add "a little something" to the basic gray. Now, if I find that it looks too light, I can go back & add a little more Rust. If it comes out too dark, the same remedy we used for the brick---- a little Aged Concrete------ will tone it down.
   If your wall has decorative trim stones on it----- for example, around a window area----- you might want to make these stand out by brush-painting them a more solid, darker, color, like SP Lark Dark Gray.

   With both the brick & the stone, it's good to experiment on scrap pieces before doing the actual structure. Not only will you develop a "feel" for applying the paint, but you might find other combinations of colors that please you; for example, sometimes it looks good to add a second shade of gray----- like SP Lark Dark----- to the stone. Keep in mind, also, that brick comes in many shades. You might want to try substituting Depot Buff for PRR Tuscan, to get a yellowish brick. Be willing to try whatever comes to mind; this way, you can get a lot of variety in your structures.
   You'll note that I used a fresh applicator for each color. This gives a more distinct separation between them. If you use the same applicator, your colors will be a little softer and more blended. You might want to try it both ways.   An important note on taking care of these applicators: always clean them immediately when you've finished with them; if the paint dries in them, they're ruined. If you don't want to take the time while you're working, just plop them into a container of water, so that the paint starts to soak out .

   For the final touch on both brick and stone walls, I'll use a watery mix of Grimy Black and Dirt, to add some weathering. I'm going to put some streaking down my brick wall from each corner of the windowsills, by brushing-on a thin line of this mix. Now---- very quickly---- I'll draw a cotton swab down over it to blend it and subdue it a little bit. (10) Now I'm going to brush-on another line right below the edge of the roof, and once again, draw it downward with the cotton swab. You want to do this below horizontal trim pieces too, or anywhere that dirt would collect & be washed-down by rain. Now I'll do the same thing on the stone wall. Just remember to apply the weathering mix sparingly---- whether on brick or stone---- and blend it before it dries; that way you'll get a nice, subtle effect.

Materials & Tools

Polly Scale Paints:
Rust
Reefer White
Grimy Black
PRR Tuscan
D&H Gray
Dirt
Aged Concrete

SP Lark Dark Gray

Testor's Dullcote (spray Can)
Construction Paper
Artist's paintbrushes
Pieces of wood or extruded foam insulation
Rubber Cement
Rubber bands
PosterBoard
Masking Tape
Scissors
Cotton Swabs