

Painting Gloss White Aircraft

I had decided to build 2 AFFTC aircraft one F-15B and 1 F-16B, both based at Edwards AFB. These aircraft are used in training new test pilots and in chase duties during test flights. They are painted in gloss white and High visibility orange. The dilemma was to get a convincing gloss white paint job without it looking toy like and being too glossy. I had considered using enamel paints but have previously had bad experiences with white paint oxidizing, and turning yellow over time. This combined with gloss enamel paints long drying time sent me looking at acrylics. Having little experience with painting whole aircraft in acrylics and none in gloss paint forced me in into doing many experiments to achieve the desired look. After many different combinations were tried, I came up with the method below.

Build the model as you normally would, if there are areas of dark filler over light gray plastic, you should spray these with gray paint to match the plastic color. This will reduce the number of coats of white paint needed.

The Bare metal parts were masked painted and gloss black. Allowed to dry, then sprayed with Alclad II in various shades to achieve the desired result. These areas were then masked with Tamiya rice tape prior to painting the main colors.

Take a New bottle of Tamiya Gloss white X-2 & Flat White XF-2
Top off each bottle with Tamiya Thinner. This is the Thinned Tamiya Gloss/Flat white.

Take 4 parts Tamiya Thinned Gloss, 1 part Tamiya Thinned Flat & 3 parts Tamiya Thinner
Mix. This is the Base coat

Spray at 10 to 15 psi, I used an Iwata HP-IB airbrush with medium tip

Apply several thin coats to build up density

Allow to dry/harden about 24 hours

Sand with fine sandpaper, or a sanding pad

Use tack cloth, compressed air or brush to remove dust.

Apply another thin coat of above mix then before it dries spray with this.

Take 1 part Thinned Tamiya Gloss white and mix with 4 parts Mister Color Thinner

Spray this as the final coat to give high gloss finish.

Allow to dry/harden for another 24 hours.

The paint should now be hard enough to mask with Tamyia rice tape, blue painters tape and parafilm.

All the orange sections were painted with Gunze H14, which was a close match to all available photographs; the recommended FS 12197 international orange was far too dark and red. This was thinned 1 to 1 with IPA 91%. The white number blocks, USAF and national insigne are in the middle of the orange tails and wings they were measured and masks cut out of rice tape were placed where the decals would eventually go, since I did not think that the white background of the decals would be sufficient to block the orange paint.

This was then allowed to dry for another 24 hours.

Finally the black anti-glare panel was painted on the F-15 and black anti-erosion strips were paint on the F-16.

Weather with artist oils in turpinoid. This was thinned to the consistency of water. Apply into panel lines and allow capillary action to draw wash along the panel lines. Allow to dry then wipe away the excess. A lint free rag with a small amount of turpinoid can be used to remove excess wash.

Decal, care must be taken with use of solvents and setting solutions, Micro-Sol tends to soften the paint with extend periods of contact.

Decals can be sealed in with a mix of 1 part thinned future and 1 part Mister Color thinner.

This method worked very nicely and produced a realistic gloss white paint finish. The same method could be adapted to other gloss paint aircraft with little difficulty. I have already used this method a black undercoat to application of Alclad II paints with great success. Now where is that Hasegawa F-8E Crusader