

Warbirds – Figure Painting Guide

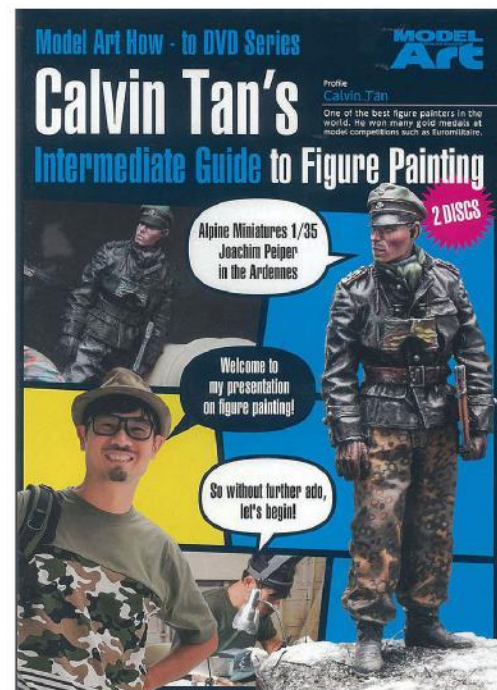
Introduction:

This guide is basically a snapshot of the Calvin Tan DVD guides on figure painting, condensed into an easy to read and useable format. Calvin Tan is a well known and respected figure painter who is better known as the painter behind the Alpine figure range.

<https://www.alpineminiatures.com/>

He also has his own blog page which is well worth a visit and to bookmark into your favorites:

<http://zyclyon.blogspot.com/>



These DVDs were purchased from:

Firestorm Models - <https://www.firestormmodels.com>

\$39.00AUD each

Thoughts:

The addition of figures provides a sense of scale to our models, so any skills picked up in this area can be of great benefit. The actual painting process can be a bit daunting but once you acquire a few basic skills the transformation will begin.

Having the right products and an understanding of what needs to be done, will really help to create a pleasing figure. There will also be some basic terminology used like:

- Shadow, 2nd shadow, 3rd shadow
- Highlight, 2nd highlight, 3rd highlight
- Wash, glaze
- Retarder
- Wet pallet
- Mapping, framing

The brushes you use which are mentioned in the next section, are very important in order to achieve the best results.

The scale of figure will determine how well you can apply each color to achieve the desired effects. I have started with a 120mm Verlinden Napoleon figure as it's a great size to practice on and you can easily see your results. A smaller scale (1/35 or 1/48) will be the same process but will become harder to see.

Practice and patience are needed but rest assured that with a few carefully applied shades, the results will appear very quickly.

Best of luck and have fun!

The Next Sections

You will see that the following text is a summary of the two DVDs, Basic Guide and the Intermediate Guide and will list the paints used in each of the figures, as well as any specific notes and tips along the way.

My thought process was to have a reference point without having to use the DVDs. This works for me but it is nice to have the DVD running in the background to reinforce some of the main points.

Calvin Tan – Basic Guide to Figure Painting

Brushes:

Riot Art - <http://riotstores.com.au/> - for all generic paint brushes

The Art Shop - <https://theartshop.com.au/> - huge range of specific paint brushes and artist supplies

- No. 00 Round brush
- No. 2 Round brush
- No. 2 Filbert brush – to diffuse the paint
- No. 6 Filbert brush – to apply to the body of the uniform – large areas

Priming the Figure:

BNA - <https://www.bnamodelworld.com/>

At the time of writing (late 2018) these products were hard to source anywhere in Australia, but were later found in early 2019

- Mr Finishing Surfacer 1500 – Black
- Mr Finishing Surfacer 1200 – White

Face Painting Colors:

- Vallejo Light Flesh - 6
- Vallejo Tan Yellow - 122
- Vallejo Bright Orange - 24
- Game Color Warlord Purple – 72.014
- Vallejo Flat Black - 169
- Vallejo Retarder Medium – 70.597
- Liquitex Quinacridone Crimson

Uniform Painting Colors:

- Tamiya Flat Base – X21 so that the base dries to a flat matt
- Vallejo German Cam Black Brown - 150
- Vallejo Leather Brown - 147
- Vallejo Deep Sky Blue - 66
- Game Color Dead White
- Vallejo US Field Drab - 142

Wet Pallet:

- Small plastic box
- Kitchen sponges
- Paper towel
- Baking paper

Because my plastic box was around 3-4" tall I had to use 8 kitchen sponges to raise the height of the pallet work surface

- Lay the sponges inside the box
- Fill with water until all the sponges are wet and it doesn't matter if there is excess water in the box
- Add a single layer of paper towel over the top of the sponges so that it absorbs water
- Add a final layer of the baking paper and this will absorb a small amount of water to remain moist

You can then add and mix your colors as needed

The working life of your paint will be from a few days to a week. You can store your wet pallet in the fridge until needed, and will also prolong the life of your paint

Basic Technique:

The following notes are highlights taken from the DVD

Face:

- The Filbert brush is the best brush to feather (blend) the edges of the paint. It is much harder and takes more time to use a pointed brush to get the same effect
- Use the Retarder Medium to slow the drying time of the paint, giving you time to clean up any mistakes
- Use very thin paint but not with too much water as it can pool in areas leaving water marks as it dries.
- Build up layers to reach the desired opacity like a wash applying across the surface
- The paint should be very thin to allow the white primer to show through and aiming for a uniform distribution of paint
- Paint across the surface
- Paint in the shadows using the round pointed brush and you don't have to be precise. Use the Filbert brush to soften the shadows
- Lightly and gently apply highlights to the high points of the uniform creases

Calvin Tan – Intermediate Guide to Figure Painting

Liquitex paints and various brushes are available at The Art Shop in Bayswater

- Unit 12/21 Power Road Bayswater
- Ph: 9758 3266
- www.theartshop.com.au

Painting the Face for cold conditions:

- Vallejo Light Flesh - 6
- Vallejo Tan Yellow - 122
- Vallejo Salmon Rose - 37
- Vallejo Black Red - 35
- Vallejo Flat Black - 169
- Game Color Dead White
- Liquitex Quinacridone Crimson
- Vallejo Retarded Medium – 70.597

Peaked Cap:

- No. 2 Round Brush
- Vallejo Carmine Red - 30
- Vallejo German Cam Black Brown - 150
- Vallejo Flat Black - 169
- Vallejo Retarded Medium – 70.597
- Vallejo Salmon Rose - 37
- Vallejo Flat Green - 83
- Vallejo Tan Yellow - 122
- Game Color Dead White
- Tamiya Flat Base – X21
- Insignia – mix of Deep Sky Blue and Dead White

U-Boat Jacket:

- Vallejo Flat Black - 169
- Vallejo German Cam Black Brown - 150
- Vallejo Deep Sky Blue - 66
- Vallejo Salmon Rose - 37
- Vallejo Retarder Medium – 70.597
- Vallejo Bright Orange - 24
- Vallejo Carmine Red - 30

plus the following colors that help to enhance the depth and provide a little sheen to the leather

- Liquitex - Prussian Blue
- Liquitex - Quinacridone Crimson
- Liquitex - Phthalo Green

Comments:

- Using NO. 2 Filbert brush Apply first thin black layer mixed with Retarder Medium using dabs (to diffuse the paint) and strokes
- Retarder Medium can be used to form a point to the tip of the brush
- Retarder Medium can assist is smooth paint flow

Shoulder Boards:

- Vallejo Tan Yellow - 122 – to replicate the gold color
- Vallejo Deeps Sky Blue / White for metal colors (including belt buckle) and buttons with small white highlights

Autumn Oak-Leaf Pattern:

- No. 4 Filbert Brush
- No. 00 Sable Brush
- Tamiya Flat Base X21 with each color below
- Vallejo Flat Black - 169
- Vallejo German Cam Black Brown - 150
- Vallejo Tan Yellow - 122
- Vallejo Black Red - 35
- Vallejo Retarder Medium – 70.597
- Vallejo Bright Orange - 24
- Vallejo Leather Brown - 147
- Vallejo Salmon Rose - 37

Comments:

- Focus the first layer of a mix of brown and salmon rose only to the highlight areas
- The base colors would appear too bright if used on their own. Colors need to be muted to allow them to easily integrate together.
- Start with dark patterns first using a No. 2 round brush

Other Figure Painting Options

The previous guides are based on using individual acrylic colors but you can of course use oils. Painting with oils follow's and entirely different process, with the added negative of long drying times. However, working with oils allows you to achieve some really nice blending / feathering options and dept of color.

My choice for oils are from the '502 Abteilung' range, and are formulated with modelers in mind.



Another option to using individual acrylic paints is to purchase them in sets. There are many on the market such as:

- AK
- Vallejo
- Andrea
- Scale 75
- Life Color

After much research I have landed on Scale 75 Flesh Paint Set which I purchased from BNA for \$46.00. These paints have a longer drying time as they contain a percentage of retarder in each bottle, and they also have a high pigment count to generate strong depth of color. They can also be thinned a lot without losing opacity and as

<https://scale75.com/>



References:

There are also many books and websites that offer great tutorials on the figure painting process, so too many to mention here. Infact many of the paint manufacturers provide video tutorials on how to use their products, not to mention the millions of YouTube videos that are available.