

Book reviews

MODEL-MAKING MATERIALS AND METHODS

David Neat

Photographs by Astrid Bärndal

The Crowood Press 2008

Hardback £19.95

ISBN 978-84749-017-6

Intended for 'experienced students or beginner professionals', this is a comprehensive, informative and inspiring book for any maker of scale models. Although appropriate for 'any discipline in which accurate scale models are part of the job', its focus is on theatre and film, perhaps because this is where new materials and techniques are most likely to make an appearance. But it will also be useful for those working in other fields such as architecture, animation and interior design. It should be by the side of any design student; the serious maker of models as a hobby will also find it invaluable.

An excellent introduction clarifies the range of quality and uses of the model from the rough three-dimensional sketch or mock-up used to generate ideas, through the more detailed version providing information for the full scale creation of the design, to the precisely detailed realism required for special effects. This range is reflected in the illustrations, from a sketch model for *The Tempest* to Charlotte Hem's completely believable recreation of the entrance to

Grand Central Terminal in New York.

The chapter headings of 'Construction', 'Casting', 'Metals', 'Modelling', 'Creating Surfaces' and 'Painting', broadly reflect the chronology of model-making and the author, a practising sculptor, model maker and, most importantly, tutor, is generous with practical advice on the choice of appropriate materials and methods. He explains clearly the properties of a wide range of materials, from the most up to date to the mundane. He speaks of the 'forager's mentality' needed by the model maker, and emphasizes that simple solutions and basic equipment can often achieve the best result. Poppy seeds and the contents of used tea-bags have their place alongside Gelflex and Styrofoam. His use of step by step instructions on the making of specific examples are especially useful, being clearly described and illustrated. This reader wants to make an immediate start on a wire mesh tree!

Tips to help the model maker avoid common problems, such as meeting deadlines and maintaining health and safety, abound, while suggestions on documenting methods for future use and the keeping of personal templates will save makers time and frustration.

The many photographs, most by Astrid Bärndal, are a joy and add enormously to a clear understanding of the techniques described and the properties of various

materials. In the sections 'Creating Surfaces' and 'Painting', they allow detailed comparisons to be made.

The appendices include a clear and up to date directory of materials, some with helpful approximate costs and detailed suggestions for use, addresses of suppliers and a list of further reading.

The best teachers share their knowledge and instil confidence, and in this excellent book David Neat does both.

Janice Guy

MODEL-MAKING

Materials and Methods



DAVID NEAT