

Vostroyan Firstborn Command Squad tutorial

Part 1 – Preparing for battle painting... oh and nomenclature and tools!

The victims and my tools of the trade

First, I'd like to introduce you to the victims for this series of tutorials, before I go loose on them with files, sandpaper, drill bits and paint.



This is what the Vostroyan Command Squad looked like out of the box. The commissar was ordered at the same time as the Vossies, so I could paint them all as one big huggy bunch. Or so I thought.

Now, before you slap on undercoat and later paint, you need to clean these guys up. And with that, I mean the removal of flashing, vents, mold lines and other non-descript balls-ups that happen during the casting process. I am also going to show photos of other miniatures in my possession which are, in short, miscasting nightmares.

But first, the tools I use to clean up the minis with.



The stuff in the upper row is, left to right: metal sandpaper (fine), clippers, modelling knife and jewelry files of various shapes and forms.

Lower row is, left to right: Vossies in the packaging and scrubbers to clean away any dirt or filth that might gather in the recesses of the minis. I'll get to this in a while.

Now, what types of crap can happen during the molding process, especially industrial level metal molding? Let me take you through the various annoyances and nightmares, if you please.

Firstly, our ever-present "friend"; the mold-line!



You see it don't you? That will show up under the paint that comes on top of it like a broken rib sticking out of someone's chest! It has to go. To make my life a little bit more aggravating, it is located where simply filing the buggger down and be happy is not an option. This will require skill...

Secondly, we have so-called vents:



Vents are these long thin strips of metal, located all over the minis. Some are larger, some really small. Some vents have bent and/or are so small or close to the miniature's "body" that you can miss them by mistake during the clean up process. So, go over your minis carefully.

Anyway, these annoying blighters are removed with a modelling knife or cutters, the residue left filed down smooth. Though, you needn't pay that much attention on the basing tab, like this vent here. On boots, coat hems and weapons on the other hand, patience and perseverance is key.

Thirdly, we have something called "Flashing" and it has nothing to do with showing your genitalia to people you don't know. It's a term for when there's too much hot liquid metal in the tightly pressed together mould. Something gotta give, and it is usually the mould.

So the metal splashes outside the actual mould and in between the mould halves.

It looks something like this:



Just to totally overstate the humongous-ness of this flash, it is in the form of the worst mould line I've EVER seen during my 12 years of mini-painting, as well as incorporating a huge vent!

Funny thing is, this does not count as a miscast. This is not the worst I have seen. Okay, worst mould line, but not worst cast.

No, the prize for worst cast goes to the body of my Confrontation Wolfen Rune Guardian:



I don't even know where to begin. This cast is just plain bad. It comes from a mould on its last legs. I find it astounding that Rackham let this one slip through their quality controls.

I guess some are asking why the heck I didn't return it when I found out? I would, if I hadn't bought it at a games convention in another part of the country altogether and had held on to the receipt. I fail at life from time to time.

There's only one way to fix this, but it is not the issue of this tutorial.

So, using knives, files and sand paper, we cut loose on the minis and remove all traces of these horrible blemishes on them. The result should be something like this:



File down and then sand-paper the mould lines, cut and file down vents. Easy, eh?

I circled a pretty typical mould line on the colonel here.

Oh, yeah, why sandpaper? Well, it's there to roughen the metal up a bit, as some of the finest files have a tendency of completely rubbing out all base texture on the metal. Base texture is important, as it helps paint stick to the model once the undercoat goes on.

Now, we move on to a slightly trickier part of the tutorial:



Pinning!

This is actually over-course, but the thing is, the colonel's arm was in no way going to survive the trip these lads were going to make with that weak joint that GW's sculptor provided us with.

Pinning the arm into place is a fairly simple way of creating a rock-hard joint between arm and hand.

Tools used for this are: Manual pin vice, drill bits, a paper clip and pliers, to crack off the paper clip into the right length. You can use clippers instead of pliers, but my clippers were no good for this job, for some reason.

Anyway, you start off with drilling a hole into the arm on the main body, using a drill bit into which the pin will fit snugly. For me, that's the second largest drill bit. For you, it might be different. Who knows?

The whole should be about 2-3 mm deep, not more. That's overkill. Now, insert the pin into the whole and cut it off about 2-3 mm away from the body. This is the bit where things get complicated: glue the pin into the arm-hole using super glue. Once this is dry, "dry fit" the hand against the pin after dabbing a wad of paint onto the pin. This will leave a dot on the hand-join, indicating where you need to drill. It takes some practice and a good eye to get this right, but if you do things correctly and use your brain, you should have something that looks like this:



Yes, I have skipped a bit ahead here, and show the entire lot super glued to their bases and ready for undercoat.

The green stuff on their bases is Green Stuff; a type of epoxy modelling putty. I used it to fill in gaps in the bases of the minis prior to undercoat, as well as adding some texture to the bases.

Now for the fun part: undercoat!

The tools I use for the undercoating process (Pay no attention to the bottle of amber liquid, please):



I use a latex glove to prevent me from getting paint all over the hand holding the tongs. The undercoat paint is Games Workshop's own spray paint. Yes, it is expensive, but amongst all the brands I've tried in my years, they get the best results, at least for me.

Why tongs? Well, when I spray my minis, I grab hold of the mini-bases with the tongs (I grip around the "lip" of the base as it were, not around the base as you'd think. It isn't very stable with round bases, see.) so I can get at all angles with the spray paint.

The old cardboard lid is for placing my miniatures in whilst they dry, obviously. I spray my minis out-doors... in winter... in Sweden. I say: try to find a day with a temperature above freezing and with practically no humidity. Mission: Impossible where I live more or less, but I do manage. Most of the time. There's always the garage with the door half-way open.

Just, spray paint out-doors in clement weather and you'll be fine.

And here's what they look like after undercoating has been done:



Snazzy! Now, we're ready for the next part of this series, more or less. But to spare you the rant over what paint I use there, I have decided to include it here, for your inconvenience.

First, I show you my most cherished possessions as far as painting is concerned. My brushes:



They're all red sable brushes. The highest quality there is. They come from a variety of brands, but the two blue ones are my pride and joy: *Windsor and Newton Kolinsky Sable*. Expensive as hell, but worth it.

Brushes need somewhere to be stored. I store them, tips up, in the same jar I use to store water in, just to save space. I'm also very careful with rinsing them clear of paint after every painting session. Why? Dunno, apart from common sense and OCD. If you're just a casual painter (think: casual gamer) you don't need extremely expensive brushes. But good quality still, like sable brushes or synthetics mixed with sable. There are tutorials for this around on the net.

For these brushes to come to their rights, we need paint. And do I love to hoard paint! Let me show you ma paints!



(Don't mind the unpainted Ork Nob... Have to store him somewhere.)

So, I have a lot of paint. Do I use it all? More or less. It is good to have a large selection of shades, if you find yourself painting something unusual. For example: the Imperial Fist Terminator was the first completely yellow mini I had painted in the history of ever. It worked out well, but I would never had done it if I didn't already have yellow in my collection. I rarely to never use yellow otherwise, see.

All in all, you see I favour Vallejo Game and Model Color as well as Citadel Foundation and Washes.

So, that's the paint. What more do you need?

Well, something to clean your brushes on, maybe? Tissues!



Thank you IKEA for good and cheap tissues! 100 tissues for a low price and one lasts really long. Even if you take paint mixing into the question.

Paint mixing? Yes. I do that quite a bit, and the Vostroyans are no exception. So, for mixing, we need a palette and some water.



That's a cheap-o plastic mixing palette and a cleaned out old Vallejo Model Paint bottle, which now houses water.

As mentioned, I live in Sweden, which means that half the year, I am very likely to sit in complete darkness if it weren't for this wonderful invention called daylight-bulbs. See, ordinary light-bulbs have an orangey tinge to them and warp the colours. Try it yourselves. Paint a mini at night, using an ordinary light-bulb and view it the next day in daylight. The results are usually very depressing. So maybe you shouldn't.

Daylight-bulbs are colour corrected, produce a correct spectrum (won't go science-y on you though) and can be found at DIY-stores. I found mine at the local Bauhaus-store. Just another reason I love Germany, as even our hobby stores here don't stock daylight-bulbs.