



Happy New Year, gang!

I don't know about all of you, but I think that 2013 was a great modeling year. We got a ton of new releases that were very welcome and which also filled a lot of holes in the available subjects.

Our club ran a great show in conjunction with our Sumter IPMS friends. This was our biggest show yet, and hosting the AMPS show along with the IPMS R-12 convention, really put our AMPS chapter on the map.

We've welcomed several new members into our little band of armor modeling brothers and sisters. It's been nice to see our membership rolls grow, and the new members have added their own personalities and work to the group, making our club better and more vibrant.

Several of our members have advanced in the ranks in regard to their AMPS skill-levels, and this not only reflects their own hard work and talent, but I think it's also a reflection of how all of our members help each other out with improving their modeling and sharing information and techniques.

Finally, you guys have made an enormous commitment to bid for and host the 2016 AMPS International Convention and Show in Columbia, SC. We've organized a very competent convention committee, and these club members are dedicated to bringing the convention to SC and then hosting the best show ever. The response from the AMPS community has been uniformly positive and encouraging.

I'm really looking forward to the new modeling year, 2014! We have some nice club events scheduled, and I know I have a couple of modeling projects in the works that I'm pretty excited about.

I hope you do too!

Last Meeting's Minutes:

Our last meeting was held at 6:00 pm, December 11, 2013. We had 21 members and guests in attendance, and those members brought in a number of models to show and tell. Because of our Christmas "white elephant" gift exchange, we did not hold a club raffle.

During the meeting: 1) We voted to bid for the AMPS 2016 International Convention. The vote in favor of bidding was unanimous. 2) Seven members volunteered to form our convention committee: Tim Darrah; Tony Abbott; Rebecca Hettmansperger; Ralph Nardone; Jeff Nelson; Dave Varettoni; and Scott Amey; with Mike Roof as a non-voting committee member. The committee will select its own chair (see report below). 3) We distributed the name tags that club members ordered in

November. Each tag was paid for with a \$9 reimbursement to the treasury. 4) We held our Christmas buffet and gift exchange. The buffet was bountiful, to say the least, and no one went home hungry! The gift exchange was great fun with a surprise thrown in with a \$25 HobbyTown USA gift card donated by Ryan.

Next Meeting's Agenda:

Our next regular meeting will be at 6:00 pm, Wednesday, 08 January, 2014 at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road, Columbia.

6:00 pm (1800): Meeting starts / Admin Business – 1) Report on the 2016 convention bid by the convention committee. 2) Discuss any mutual travel and hotel arrangements for the Atlanta AMPS Regional Show, 14-16 February, 2014. 3) Reminder that our first intra-club contest will be held during the March, 2014 meeting. The theme is “Anything American” (AMPS qualifying entries, natch...) 4) Reminder that club dues for 2014 are due. There’s no change in the amount – still just \$12 for the year. See Scott to pay.

REMINDER: The HobbyTown USA store will close at 7:00 pm (1900). This means that all purchases at the store must be made before then so that the cash registers can be closed.

6:15 pm (1810): Show & Tell: Builds and WIPs.

6:50 pm (1850): Break: Shopping & Social Mixer. Cash registers close at 7:00 pm.

7:10 pm (1910): Reconvene: Continue Show & Tell: Builds and WIPs

8:00 pm (2000): Meeting ends (officially – but we’ll carry-on as long as the store will stay open)

Regular meetings are held on 2nd Wednesdays of each month at 6:00 pm (1800) at the HobbyTown USA store, 10120 Two Notch Road, Suite 5, Columbia, SC 29223, (803) 736-0959.

Up-coming Events of Interest:

Jan 08, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Feb 12, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Feb 14-16, 2014: AMPS Atlanta show in cooperation with the Atlanta Military Figure Society. The 2014 show theme is "People Movers" (combat troop carriers, wheeled or tracked, any era). The Atlanta Marriott Century Center, Atlanta, GA.

Mar 12, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. **Our first Intra-Club Contest / Group Build!** Theme – Any US Subject (AMPS eligible, of course).

Apr 3-5, 2014: AMPS International Convention, Fredericksburg Hospitality House (Convention Center), Fredericksburg, VA. Convention theme: "Hollywood Tanks."

Apr 09, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

May 14, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Jun 11, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Jul 09, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. **Intra-club contest / group build.** Theme – Any T-44 to T-62 Family AFV (T-44, 54, 55, and 62 and vehicles built on that chassis).

Aug 13, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Sep 10, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Oct 08, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Nov 12, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. **Intra-club contest / group-build.** Theme – Any Light Tank 20 tons and under (any era, nationality, or scale).

Dec 10, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS Christmas Party at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

An Open Letter to AMPS – All Members and Local Chapters

Dear fellow "AMPS'ers,"

I'd like to take this opportunity to inform you about a decision that was made by our chapter's members at our December 2013 general meeting.

In a full-house meeting with near 100% attendance, our members unanimously voted to present a bid to host the 2016 AMPS International Convention and Show in Columbia, SC.

We had discussed the possibility of doing this some months ago, and back in May we formed an "exploratory committee" to review tentative convention venues and possible tour destinations. This committee determined that there are suitable venues considering likely budget, square footage needs, and convenient accommodation access. They also reviewed several tour destinations and also determined that those would be suitably interesting and logistically viable.

During the week in June when we hosted our last regional show, we took our AMPS Regional 2VP and National Head Judge, Mike Petty, to visit our first choice for a venue and two of the tour destinations. We solicited his opinions and suggestions on these, and we were happy to have him agree that these were all very suitable.

Since that time, we have held several discussions during our general meetings, and, in anticipation of possibly bidding to host the 2016 convention, we made the decision to stand-down in 2014 from our annual regional contest. Our members felt that if we were to host the international convention, that a one-year break from contest preparations to recharge and build motivation was desirable. We will ramp-up again and host a regional show in early-summer 2015 in order to gain momentum for a 2016 international convention.

Also at our December meeting, we formed our "2016 Convention Bid Committee" which at present has 7 members. These are: Tim Darrah; Tony Abbott; Ralph Nardone; Jeff Nelson; Dave Varettoni;

Scott Amey; and Rebecca Hettmansperger. In addition, our chapter contact (presently me), is a consulting member of the committee. The committee members will select their own committee and convention chair.

Our membership has delegated authority to this committee to make all decisions regarding the planning and preparation for our proposed 2016 convention without the need to bring those matters before the general membership for votes. Committee membership remains open to additional members, and, in the event of an even number of members resulting in any tie-votes on matters, the chapter contact will cast the deciding vote.

AMPS Central SC would like to extend an invitation to the other AMPS chapters in SC, the *Coastal Carolina Modeler's Association* and the *AMPS Piedmont Panzergruppen Upstate*, and other chapters in the AMPS South Region to join us in the effort to bring the AMPS International Convention and Show to our state. If you, your clubs, or any of your members would like to take an active role in the planning, preparation, or execution of the convention, please contact me. We value and welcome your ideas, suggestions and support.

Our membership is very excited and totally committed to bringing the 2016 AMPS International Convention and Show to Columbia, SC. We all know that this will be a lot of hard work and long hours, but we believe that we have all of the ingredients to make the 2016 convention a great event. We're all looking forward to making that happen.

Have a Happy Modeling New Year!

Mike Roof
Chapter Contact
AMPS Central SC "Wildcats"

First Report by the 2016 Convention Committee

During the last month, our convention bid committee has taken the following actions:

- 1) Tim Darrah was unanimously elected by the committee members to be the chairman.
- 2) The committee received an offer by Glen Martin to be the 2016 convention's vendor and corporate show / awards coordinator. This is a position that Glen has filled admirably for several years, and the committee and our club were very happy to accept Glen's offer. Glen Martin is therefore, a non-voting, but *de facto* member of our committee.
- 3) The committee members have organized along these functional areas:
 - a. Tim Darrah – Committee Chair
 - b. Mike Roof – Assistant Chair
 - c. Dave Varetonni – Seminar Coordinator
 - d. Jeff Nelson – Tours Coordinator
 - e. Rebecca Hettmansperger – Registration and Scoring (local) (Rod Bell – national)
 - f. Tony Abbott – Ram Rod Coordinator (local) (John Charvat – national)
 - g. Ralph Nardone – Assisting
 - h. Scott Amey – Assisting
 - i. Glen Martin – Vendors and Corporate Show and Awards Coordinator (national)
 - j. Mike Petty – Chief Judge (national)

- 4) The committee has contacted and requested information and lessons learned from the Atlanta AMPS chapter about their 2013 convention experience. Committee members will meet with Atlanta AMPS members in February at the Atlanta AMPS Regional to discuss.
- 5) The committee is awaiting a reply on the newly established national convention bid format and content requirements.

Any member who has suggestions or ideas (especially about tours or seminars) should contact the committee member with the area or responsibility concerned. Alternatively, you can always contact either Tim or Mike to discuss any aspect of our proposed bid.

What is a Vignette and How Should We Judge It?

The following article is reprinted from a proposed rules change submitted to Mike Petty, AMPS Chief Judge by Mike Roof and Jeff Nelson. Chief Judge Petty is still considering the proposal, but we've printed it here as "food for thought" for everyone else. If any of the builders whose works we've used as examples would like us to remove their models, please let us know.

The authors are happy to enter into correspondence with other interested modelers about this subject. We may be reached at our chapter's official email address. (See chapter our website.)

Finally, please note that what follows is a proposed rules change and has not be adopted as of the date of this newsletter.

Everyone generally understands what a diorama is. **"A diorama is a storyline based display... on a landscaped base."** In fact, this is exactly how our rules define it. (AMPS Rules for Competition and Judging, Revised 1 February 2013)

We might have some differences of opinion about what constitutes a story – usually a judgment on what is a "good" story and what is not – but we still have a consensus understanding that the diorama builder is trying to communicate (i.e. "tell") a specific story to the viewer. If "a diorama is a storyline based display," then the builder's intent and purpose for the diorama is to "tell" that story. The purpose of the models is as the medium that the builder uses to tell the story.

Judging dioramas is weighted heavily in assessing the composition and storyline, i.e. how well has the diorama builder satisfied the intended purpose of the diorama. How well did he "tell" his story? Composition is driven by the intended storyline, first and foremost. If the composition doesn't arrange the diorama's elements to "tell" the story, then no matter how pleasing it is to the eye, its builder has failed in his main purpose.

This understanding also explains and justifies the scoring emphasis placed on composition and storyline in diorama judging. The intended story drives the composition, and if the composition doesn't "work," then the story cannot be told well. These two elements, story and composition, work hand in hand on the diorama to communicate its builder's message to his viewers.

However, our understanding of what is a vignette is more problematical. If we merely say that a vignette is a diorama without a story (as our rules presently suggest), then we still leave ourselves wondering what then is the purpose of a vignette, how is that purpose different from the diorama, and how do we, as judges, assess whether that purpose has been satisfied and how well?

To resolve this uncertainty, we propose the following definition: "***A vignette is a model-subject based display on a landscaped base.***"

The "key difference" between a vignette and a diorama is not "*that vignettes do NOT have to tell a story*" (AMPS Rules, 2013). Although this is what our rules presently say, this wording leaves open the option for vignettes **TO tell a story**, thus rendering the difference between the diorama and the vignette irrelevant and posing a confusing situation to the judge. After all, if a vignette is not REQUIRED to tell a story, then it is ok (perhaps even desirable?) that it DOES tell a story. However, if that's the case, then why the difference? And if a story is "optional" in a vignette, then is a vignette with a story better than one without? And if that's truly the case, then how do we score the "value added" by the vignette's story?

We submit that the "key difference" between the diorama and the vignette is that the **purpose** of a diorama is to tell story, and the **purpose** of vignette is to display the model(s). A vignette is not a diorama with an optional storyline – some sort of diorama-light.

A vignette is a type of landscaped display that is built specifically to show off its subject model(s) in their historical and/or environmental context and which makes that context part of the modeled subject(s). Displaying the aesthetic qualities of the model subject(s) is the vignette's reason and purpose.

The purpose and intent of a vignette is for the model-builder to show off the aesthetic characteristics of its subject model(s), either AFV's, figures or both. The vignette is model-centric and not story-centric. ***The models themselves are the most important part of the vignette. Any story that can be divined by the viewer in the vignette is irrelevant to the vignette's purpose and also should be irrelevant to the judges' assessments and scoring.***

How do we know this to be the purpose of a vignette? Consider the following:

1) A single model display (figure or AFV) which focuses on the single model-subject is the simplest composition of a vignette. For single model displays on landscaped bases, we allow the builder to choose whether he wants to display the work in a single model-subject category (vehicle, ordnance, or figure) or as a vignette. Our existing rules-set, which gives the builder this option, is the first step in understanding the vignette's purpose, and this option is most easily illustrated by using figures as examples.

2) Imagine a single figure display – what is the subject of that display? The single figure that is on it is clearly the subject. What is the purpose and intent of the single figure display? To show off the aesthetic characteristics of the single figure on the display. The modeler may choose to pose the figure on an unadorned display base, or he may choose a landscaped base in order to emphasize the context or other characteristics of the figure, but either way, the model figure is the subject and main focus. We assess and judge the figure first and foremost.

3) Now, consider expanding the single figure display to include two figures. If we are not attempting to tell a story with those two figures, what is the subject of the display? It is the two figures themselves. The display's purpose and intent is to show off the aesthetic and technical or historic details of the subjects, here the two figures. Since it would be somewhat illogical and would insult the viewer's senses, in this case the modeler would most likely choose to display the figures on a landscaped base in order to illustrate the context of the figures, connecting them with each other in time and place, and to visually explain how their aesthetic and/or technical characteristics relate to their environment.

4) For example, figures dressed in heavy winter uniforms might be shown on a snowy landscaped base, but the intent and purpose of the display is to show off the aesthetic characteristics of the heavy uniforms. Posing the figures in a landscaped context enables the modeler to make those uniform items logical and intuitively understandable to the viewer. But the purpose of the display remains showing off those characteristics. There is still no "storyline" and the composition is driven by the intent to show off the interesting aspects of the subject figures.

Note also the difference in how composition is used in the vignette versus how it is used in the diorama. In the diorama, the intended story depends on composition to tell it, but in the vignette showing off the aesthetic characteristics of the models drives the composition. In a vignette, the elements of the display are arranged, i.e. composed, to show off the subjects to their best advantage. Good composition still holds the viewer's interest and leads the viewer around the display. The principles, rules, and characteristics of good composition are still in effect with the vignette, but the modeler's intended purpose determines how those are used. Simply put, a vignette is created to display the model, while in a diorama a model is just one of the components used to "display" the story.

5) In these examples, the single-figure or the multi-figure displays on landscaped bases, the modeler could chose, at his option, to enter either in the figure category or the vignette category. Only if his figure display was intended to tell a story would he be restricted to the diorama category.

6) Now consider these same examples but with vehicles instead of figures. What has changed in the purpose of the vignette? We submit that nothing has changed. A single-vehicle display on a landscaped base could be entered at the modeler's discretion in either the appropriate AFV category or the vignette category. However, just as with the figure examples, the intent and purpose of the vehicle displays are to show off the aesthetic characteristics of the subject vehicles. There is still no story, and composition is used to arrange the elements of the display to show off the aesthetic characteristics of the subject AFV model.

Let's look at some examples to follow the understanding of the builder's intent.



LVT-4 by Dave Manter

Here we have a stand-alone model. What is the builder's intent with this display? Obviously, he intends to show off the technical and aesthetic characteristics of the subject vehicle – no more and no less. Judging is focused on the modeler's skill in construction and finishing the subject model.

However, if the builder desires to provide more technical, historical and/or environmental context for

the subject, he must move on to adding a landscaped base with or without figures. By placing this

model on a landscaped base, the builder can show us the size (relative to other more familiar items), the intended operating environment (water and implied amphibious operation), the history of its use (signage, unique vegetation or seasonal clues to time and place), etc.



BTR-80 by Ken Guntin

In this example, the builder has displayed the subject model on a landscaped base. What is the builder's intent with this display? Here he is showing off the subject model's technical and aesthetic characteristics in the context of an environmental setting (which in this particular case also suggests the historical setting). Now, the camouflaged finish and weathering take on added meaning by showing the

viewer the environment that this vehicle operated in.

Why does the vehicle have sand-colored camouflage and why is it dusty? The answers are because it was operated in this type of environment. Judging is still focused first and foremost on the skill in construction and finish. However, this display could be entered into the vignette category, in which case the judges would also consider the modeling of the terrain.

It is important to note here that there is clearly no intent by the builder to "tell" any sort of story.

Skoda Radschlepper Ost by Tony Zadro



So, what is different between this display and the previous one? We submit that besides the subject nothing has changed. The builder still intends to display the technical and aesthetic characteristics of the subject models. Here a figure has been added, but there is obviously no story intended. The figure provides additional technical and historical interest. He's holding bread and rations emphasizing the

purpose of the vehicle subject, and his uniform and equipment have their own interesting technical and aesthetic characteristics. The figure gives the viewer something familiar to judge the size of the vehicle against. The ground work places the vehicle and figure into an environmental context.

Remove the figure and some of the details from the base, and little has changed. The builder's intent still focuses on the modeled subject. However, by changing the composition and perhaps adding another figure or two, the builder could have created a scene that tells a story about messing, rations, mealtimes and their significance to the physical and social life of the soldier. Yet these hypothetical elements are not present, which leaves us with the builder's intended focus on the technical and aesthetic characteristics of the displayed models.

According to our current rules, and exactly like the previous example, this display could be entered into either the appropriate single vehicle category or the vignette category. It is not simply a diorama without a story, though, and the judges should focus their attention on the modeled subjects (the vehicle and, if entered into the vignette category, the figure and the base and groundwork).

"Burden of Sorrow" by Rick Lawler

Now let's turn our attention to this example. Is this a diorama or a vignette? There is only one vehicle and a single figure, exactly like the last example. What is the builder's intention, though? Is it different from the builder's intention in the last example?

Clearly, in this example the builder primarily intends to convey a story and a message (an emotional one in this case) to the viewer, and the modeled elements

(the vehicle, figure and groundwork) are the tools that the builder uses to communicate his story to the viewer. The models have been constructed and finished in order to use them to tell the builder's story in the same way that an author uses words to write a story or a poem. Each component (the train car on the tracks, the camp fence, the litter of clothing and personal items, and the laborer pushing the loaded cart away) all work together to tell the story and communicate with the viewer. Take one item away, and an observer may not understand what the story is that the modeler has attempted to portray. In the vignette, the building and finishing of the models is the purpose; in the diorama, telling the story is the purpose and the models are the medium used.

Could this work be entered into the appropriate vehicle category? Yes, however, if that were done, just like the previous examples, only the vehicle would be judged. The real question is, could this display be entered into the vignette category? ***We submit that since the builder's intent is clearly to convey a message that incidentally uses models as its medium, then, no, this work should not be entered into the vignette category.***



Displays that clearly intend to tell a story are dioramas, and because of the emotional connection made between the builder and the viewers (i.e. judges), they have an unfair advantage over the vignette in comparative judging situations.

There is one more display situation that we should also consider here – multiple-vehicle displays, with or without landscaped bases. Multi-vehicle displays are judged either: as vignettes (which then include the base); as multiple single-vehicle entries, each judged and scored separately; or, if the builder intends to tell a story, as a diorama. Once the intent of the builder is understood, the issue here is really one of logistics in the judging and not one of deciding which rules should be applied.

Of course, a multiple-vehicle display, with or without figures, on a landscaped base, which is intended to tell a story should be entered and judged as a diorama. The inclusion of figures is incidental to how the multiple-vehicle display is judged. What is important is the builder's intent or the Ram Rod's interpretation of an obvious story. (The Ram Rod plays an important role in ensuring that displays constructed as dioramas are not entered unfairly into other categories.)

Now that we have a clear understanding of the purpose of the vignette, and a definition that states that purpose, we can appreciate that vignette judging should focus on assessing this purpose. A vignette is not just a "diorama without a story," but is something quite different and unique. It is a display that is intended to show off to the best advantage the aesthetic, technical and historic characteristics of its model subject(s), those aesthetic, technical and historic characteristics are its focus, and these characteristics should also be the focus of the judges' attention.

Judging and scoring vignettes should be more like judging and scoring the single-model categories and less like judging and scoring dioramas. The emphasis should be on assessing the craftsmanship of the construction and finish of the aesthetic and technical characteristics of the model-subjects and the base. Composition is relative to the display of these elements and is important only in so far as it contributes to or distracts from their display. Difficulty addresses the model-subjects themselves and how their characteristics are displayed (vis-à-vis the base, groundwork, and composition each of which can also be more or less difficult to construct and finish).

To this end, we propose the following changes to the scoring of vignettes:

- 1) Construction Group = Total value = 5 pts
 - a. Vehicles / Ordnance = max 2 pts
 - b. Figures = max 2 pts
 - c. Groundwork = max 1 pt
- 2) Finish and Weathering Group: Total value = 3 pts [No change]
- 3) Composition / Difficulty Group: Total value = 2 pts
 - a. Combined Composition and Attention to Detail = max 1.0 pt
 - b. Degree of Difficulty = max 1.0 pt [No change]

4) The Research Bonus 0.5 [No change]

5) In the Construction Group, if there are no vehicles or no figures, the 2 points for the absent element are split and added to the other two elements present (same rule as now).

6) Total individual judge's score remains 10 pts, and total maximum score for the team remains 30.5 points.

These changes would shift the emphasis of the judging to the model-subjects while still allowing all elements of the entire presentation to be judged. The purpose of the vignette, displaying the model-subjects, is reinforced. The craftsmanship exhibited on the aesthetic and technical characteristics of the model-subjects becomes the focus of the judges' attention and assessment.

Assessing craftsmanship in constructing and finishing the groundwork remains unchanged, while the judges' job of assessing composition is greatly simplified. Assessing composition is now focused on how it contributes to showing off the model-subjects without confusing it with "storyline". The groundwork along with the vehicle on it should certainly appear natural and complimentary to each other. An armored vehicle normally sinks into the ground due to its weight, and a model of one would look unnatural if it rests on top of similar groundwork such as grass, mud or sand. Vehicles that travel through dry, dusty terrain quickly become coated with dust, so a model on similar groundwork should appear the same.

The end result is judging feedback to the model builder that is matched to his intended purpose and which can help him improve his craft.

(Note that many vignette judges at the 2013 convention had difficulty in determining how composition should be assessed if it wasn't supporting a story. The combined 30% scoring weight of the composition and attention to detail gave these judges a false impression of the relative importance of these elements compared to construction and finishing. This led many judges to look for and to find "stories" where none should have been sought, and then to use those "discovered storylines" as discriminators between vignettes.)

Vignette judges should be instructed to assess craftsmanship of the vehicle and figure construction, finish and weathering using the same general criteria as for the single-subject categories. (Assessment of finish and weathering would also still include groundwork.) The higher point values for vehicle and figure construction would, however, allow for greater discretion in scoring these model-subject elements (the main purpose of the vignette) and recognizing higher degrees of craftsmanship between various pieces of work.

Some additional emphasis on assessing figure construction and finishing should be included in vignette judges' training since many judges are unfamiliar with these aspects. Figure construction work (posing, anatomy, fit to the base or vehicles, etc) should also be assessed as part of construction and degree of difficulty. Assessments of figure finishing should address the precision of brushwork and subtlety and natural appearance of uniform and flesh tone shading. Degree of difficulty should also assess the difficulty of such tasks as painting and shading camouflage versus single color uniforms and other increasingly difficult finishing tasks, such as faces and facial expressions. These figure assessments are included in the overall scoring of the construction, finish and weathering, and degree of difficulty groups.

Degree of difficulty is shifted back to the model-subjects and groundwork and away from composition. That is, the same considerations for degree of difficulty for the regular single-model categories are the main focus of the DoD scoring in vignettes, i.e how hard were the model-subjects to build and finish. However, in vignettes, DoD also includes how hard the groundwork was to build and finish. Composition and attention to detail may have some influence on DoD, but they should take a backseat to construction and finish of the models and groundwork.

Note how this approach contrasts to the assessment of DoD in dioramas which is heavily weighted towards "how hard the story" is to tell. That is, in dioramas composition is a significant part of the

overall DoD assessment. This was another point of confusion with vignette judges in 2013: trying to assess the DoD of the vignette's composition as they tried to relate that composition to any perceived or "untold story." Some judges wanted to award higher DoD scores to vignettes where they could find stories and give lower DoD scores to vignettes without stories.

Finally, vignette judges should be instructed to ignore any story that they may be able to divine or imagine in the vignette's composition. Any perceived story should also be excluded by the judges from any comparative assessments between one vignette and another. That is, the judges on the "best of" panels should understand the rules for dioramas and vignettes as well or better than the diorama and vignette field judges and ACJ's and not fall into the same traps.

Vignettes are not just "dioramas without storylines," but rather they are subject-model centric displays with their own special intent and purpose. Our rules defining them and their purpose, as well as how we assess, judge and score them should be changed to reflect this understanding. By doing so, we can make our judging more consistent, make the judges' job more straightforward and easier, and provide the proper recognition and clearer feedback to our fellow modelers. A clearer understanding of what a vignette is will also help our Ram Rods and model show entrants in deciding in which categories various works should be placed, and make those optional choices between single-subject categories and vignettes more rational and uniformly fair.

Mike Roof
AMPS #1632

AMPS 2013 ACJ - Dioramas and Vignettes

Jeff Nelson
AMPS #2102

Certified TC and Field Judge

"The Day Room"

In the US military, most company-level units have a "day room" in the barracks where the troops hang-out, relax, and BS. When you want to learn the latest in "rumor control," you swing by the day room and chat-up the Joes and Janes hanging out there. They might not always get it right, but they're always willing to tell ya just what they think! So, welcome to "the Day Room..."

Alright folks, that about wraps it up for this month. Before I close, though, I wanted to share with you my thoughts on modeling style. Recently, I was following a build blog by one of my very old modeling friends. This is a guy I've known since the mid-80s – an excellent modeler with a keen sense of realism and a good eye for the "truth" when it comes to depicting figures and military action.

On his blog, several people had commented about a vehicle he had placed on a diorama, saying that it didn't "look weathered enough." Now, while these critics were certainly free to voice their opinions, I believe they crossed the line with some of their statements and absolute pronouncements. That is, they expressed their opinions as matters of fact and technical accuracy. These comments got me to thinking about how often I had heard contest judges making the same kinds of pronouncements.

I believe that at a certain level (clearly the level that my friend Jerry is working at), many kinds of finishing and weathering decisions become a matter of the builder's personal style and are no longer straight forward matters of correctness or accuracy.

That is, a critic might be able to make a good case on historical or technical grounds about the accuracy of some mechanical feature (the suspension is out of alignment) or display anachronism (the Afrika Korps didn't use any Japanese tanks), but when it comes to finish and weathering, modelers should have broad latitude to follow their own style. A critic might not like that style, but his room to criticize should be constrained by the critic's acknowledgement of his own personal preferences and style, i.e. the critic's own personal tastes.

The critic might make a valid observation that the finish and weathering are not consistent. For example, the outside surfaces of the wheels are weathered but the inside surfaces are still clean. However, I don't believe that most comments about how much wear and tear should or must be portrayed are necessarily valid and are based on observations of consistency and unity.

As long as the builder has achieved unity of his display elements and those elements complement each other, ***most matters of degree become choices of style*** - neither "correct" nor "incorrect." How much weathering is "necessary" to be "correct" or how too little weathering becomes "incorrect" are usually not based on anything more than the critic's own personal tastes.

The critic might not find the result aesthetically appealing and to his taste, but he has little to no room to stand on criticisms of "correctness."

Now, some of you might think this is all too esoteric or "wonky," but it's an issue that cuts close to my heart. I've seen and heard a lot of judges ripping apart some modeler's work with criticisms that are really expressions of those judges' own personal tastes and style preferences.

These kinds of style and tastes criticisms are often made over other things, not just weathering. Judges opine and criticize about "correct" colors, the decision to use or not use PE, the decision to use the kit solid headlights instead of clear lenses, the "wrong" color of paint on periscopes, whether the modeler should have used or replaced the kit tracks, and many other reasons. The list could go on and on.

The judges making these criticisms should have been looking at how well the paint was applied and not whether it is (IN THEIR OPINION) the right shade. They should look at how well the modeler constructed the PE that he used (clean sharp folds and bends, clean joints, no dents and bends from mishandling, no glue blobs or smudges) and not (IN THEIR OPINION) whether the PE that was used is correctly thin or too thin. The judges should look at how well the paint was applied to the periscopes (clean, sharp paint lines, no brush strokes, smooth finish) and not whether the periscope color is the judge's favorite (PERSONAL PREFERENCE) shade of blue or black or whatever. Rather than criticize the modeler for not replacing the kit tracks with the judge's favorite (PERSONAL PREFERENCE) AM tracks, the judge should be looking at the tracks used and noting if they are floating over the return rollers and rubbing on the bottom of the fenders.

Good judges, in my opinion, are aware of their own personal likes and dislikes and are able to recognize how those biases can affect their assessments of others' works.

None of this is to say, "There are no real standards and anything goes," but I am saying that good judges have the ability to separate matters of their own personal taste and style from matters of craft, workmanship, skill, and technical and historical accuracy. Of course, we recognize that we can't be experts in every detail of technical and historical accuracy, so as judges we should focus on those matters that of craft, workmanship and skill that we can objectify. Good judges should always avoid making judgments and assessments (especially negative ones) about matters of taste and style.

The modeler will get much more out of an observation that the paint lines around the edges of his periscopes are not neat and cross over onto the edges of the periscope guards than he will from some comment that he used the “wrong” color to paint them.

See ya Wednesday and Happy New Year!

Mike Roof

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