

ROC CITY

DECAL SILVERING? NO WAY!

MAKE THOSE DECALS LOOK
LIKE THEY'RE PAINTED ON



Armand Miale

WHY WORRY?

- Whether you build for fun or competition –
- One thing that can take away from the overall look of your finished model is silvering of the decal film
 - In other words, when the decal film is *clearly visible*
- Not only does it detract from your model, it is also one of the first reasons why judges detract points at competitions
- So what causes this nasty problem?

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BLAME FLAT PAINT

- Most military vehicles have been painted in flat (matte) paint to reduce glare and to maintain camouflage
- So we modelers often use flat model paints on our projects, and that's the cause of the silvering problem
- Under magnification, you can see that flat paint has a *very rough* surface
- When you put a decal over that rough surface, air gets trapped underneath resulting in silvering of the clear decal film

Decals or transfers? Either is OK,
but just don't call them stickers!



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CLASSIC DECAL SILVERING

- Here is a great example of decal silvering
- These decals were applied directly over flat paint
- In addition to the nasty silvering of the decal film, the adhesion is reduced making it susceptible to pulling off if you try to use masking tape over it
- Applying decals to a glossy surface improves adhesion significantly, but won't completely remove the possibility of the decal coming off with tape



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The photos in this tutorial are all from “mules” – bits of old model kits. I do much better work than this – really! Have a look at my Gallery.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

AND A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER

CAUTION

- Use setting solutions sparingly – a little goes a long way
- Micro Set and Micro Sol come in tall, skinny bottles that are VERY easy to tip over



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EVERY MODELER NEEDS THE GOOD STUFF

- Future Floor Finish (now called *Pledge Floor Care Multi Surface Finish* – you gotta love marketing!)
 - I'm not kidding – floor polish, just like Mom used to use!
- Alternately, other clear gloss varnishes (enamel, lacquer, or acrylic) can be used
- Setting solutions such as Micro Set and Micro Sol, Solvaset, Mr. Mark Softer, etc. Just about every brand of hobby paint also offers decal setting solutions
- Dedicated brushes for application



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MAKE THAT FLAT PAINT SHINY

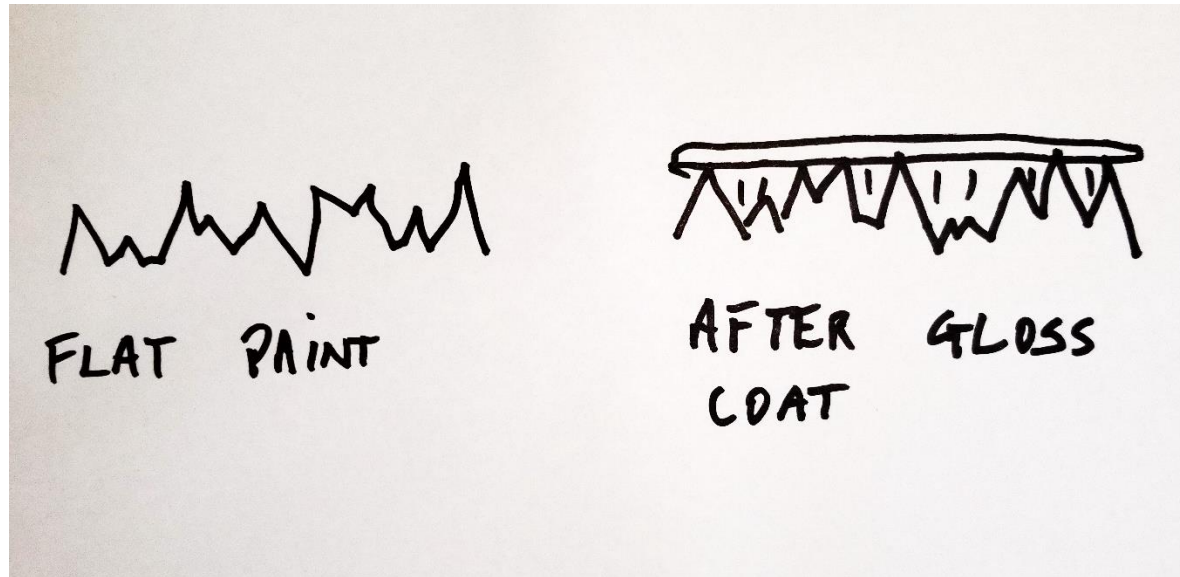
- The easy fix is to make the rough surface smooth
- You can gently rub a soft cloth over the surface and that *might* help, but to achieve the best result, put a clear gloss coat over the flat paint
- Everyone has a favorite clear gloss that they use – I prefer Future but any clear gloss finish will work
- Future can be airbrushed straight from the bottle or it can be thinned with water or rubbing alcohol – be sure to spray light coats so it doesn't pool or run
- Future can also be brushed – either way, be sure to apply it over the entire model, not just where the decals go or you could see a noticeable difference
- With all clear gloss finishes, especially with Future, it is very important to let it dry for 24 – 48 hours before you apply the decals

When your significant other asks what you're doing, just say "I'm using the floor polish, dear!"



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CLEAR GLOSS SMOOTHENS THE SURFACE



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HOW TO SNUGGLE YOUR DECALS

- Once your model is nice and shiny, you're ready to apply the decals
- Decal setting solutions help them look painted on (we'll use Microscale products in this demo)
- First, *Micro Set* (blue bottle)
 - Apply Micro Set where the decal will be placed using a dedicated brush
 - Position the decal in its final location making sure that the setting solution is underneath the decal
- You can carefully blot up any excess solution



It's so easy to tip these bottles over, that several manufacturers sell stands to hold them securely



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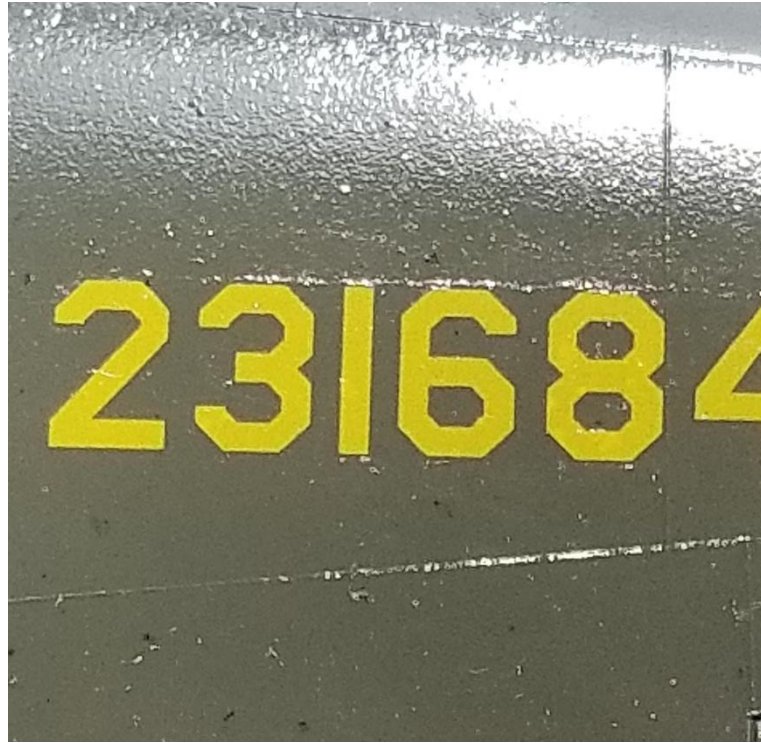
SNUGGLING PART DEUX

- Once the decal has dried a bit, brush on some *Micro Sol* (red bottle)
- Micro Sol helps the decal snuggle down into panel lines and over rivets etc.
- While it's working, the decal may wrinkle up a bit – this is normal so don't touch the decal at this time
- Micro Sol can be applied several times for difficult surfaces
- Try to keep the Micro Sol application as close to the decal as possible to avoid decal solution staining



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I THINK THIS MIGHT WORK



While you're doing all this, don't get discouraged about your model's appearance. Once it gets its final clear flat or semi-gloss coat, it will look great!



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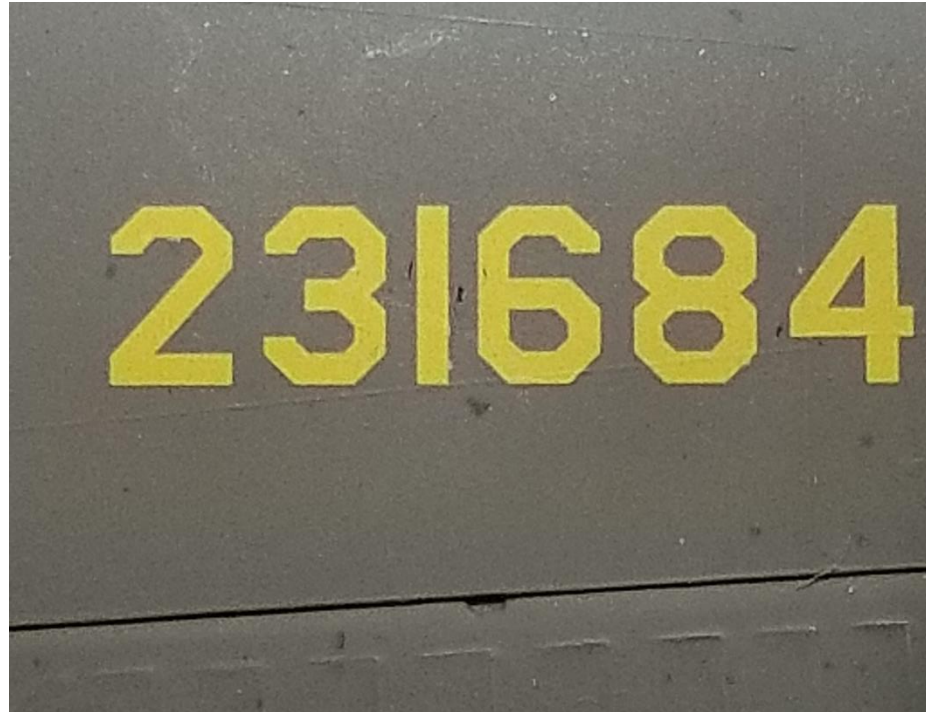
FINISHING UP

- When all your decals are applied, set, and dried, a careful wash with water and then a pat dry will take away any excess decal solution
- If any air bubbles remain under the decal, use the tip of a #11 blade to gently puncture the bubble and apply a small amount of Micro Sol to the spot
- When all is done, it's a good idea to gloss coat the entire model again to help seal everything
- Once the 2nd gloss coat is dry, and you're happy with all of your painting and decal work, apply your final finish (flat or semi-gloss)
- And then voilà – no silvering!



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NOW THAT'S BETTER!



Now just imagine you're doing an F-4 Phantom II, and you have to do repeat this process for hundreds of stencils!



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STEP BY STEP PROGRESSION



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SOME OTHER HELPFUL HINTS

- For small stencils, brush a little Future where the decal goes, position the decal, and then brush more Future over top of the decal – this will prevent silvering and you don't need the setting solutions
- To further eliminate the possibility of silvering, trim the decal as close as you can
- Apply washes after your second gloss coat
- Dry brushing and pastels should be done over a flat (matte) surface
- Some thick kit decals (like Tamiya, Hasegawa, and Fujimi) require hot water to work best
- Prior to applying very old or fragile decals, brush on some Micro Super Film
 - This will prevent the decals from falling apart once they hit the water – test a decal that you won't be using from the sheet first



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IF NONE OF THIS WORKS FOR YOU

Might I suggest some nice single malt – repeat as needed



It's always advisable to allow the effects of the single malt to wear off prior to recommencement of modelling!

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THANKS!

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