

Academy 1/700 Scale Titanic



By Bryant Dunbar

Ever get that great idea for a modeling project? Then you get an even better idea based on the original only to be followed by another great idea to finish out the project? Well I had about 5 or 6 great ideas come together for my 1/700 Scale Titanic project.

While I'm mostly an aircraft builder I can't deny I love to try new and innovative products in modeling. In the case of small-scale water line ships the new teak wood decking that is now available is one of those products. Art Wox Models has been making laser cut decking for military ships for a few years now but when I heard they were coming out with a set for Academy's 1/700 scale Titanic I had to have it. In fact I happened to be the fortunate recipient of the first one shipped to a retailer, Freetime Hobby in Blue Ridge Georgia. Because of advance knowledge of this product I purchased the Academy kit but did not start it until the decking became available.

The Academy Titanic kit presents well in the box. In some areas fit is exceedingly good while there are a couple problematic areas such as the roof of the bridge that proved to be a bit of a challenge. Also the railing on the kit around the bow and stern is completely out of scale and not matched correctly to the level of the deck itself. This would prove to be a relatively easy fix as I intended to use the Tom's Model Works photo etch sets for railing and other details on the deck. So the rail was simply removed. As for the step between the deck and the outer side of the haul that was addressed with milliput and some sanding. Lastly the kit is a full haul kit and I intended to make her a water line project. My intention was to

make her as elegant as possible and show her off in all her glory as a sea going ship.

So I have the kit, decking, photo etch and am in the process of chopping the bottom of the haul to mount her on a base. At that point I asked myself, what more can I do? That's when the thought hit me, what if she was lit up! The portholes in the haul are representative and not real, so out comes my pin vice and a corresponding drill bit. Once the portholes were all drilled out I started to test out the idea of putting lights in the haul. To make a long story short I used LED "warm" white lights in the haul and upper decks of the ship. In an effort to maintain an even light and avoid bright spots I used parchment paper as a curtain of sorts to defuse the light appropriately. A very simple and easy trick actually. The LED bulbs are only warm to the touch so I don't foresee a heat issue with the lights on for a long period of time in a show environment



The haul lights were a relatively simple affair while the upper decks were much more challenging. Not only did I have to have enough bulbs to ensure good lighting in all areas, I also had to line each deck with metal foil tape to ensure no bleed through of light through the white plastic. This process took time as I also had to ensure I could fit the LED lights between the decks without being too thick once the decks were sandwiched together. Also I realized if the ship were to be lit, it would also be necessary to light the funnels as well. In order to do this I rigged fiber optics through the haul and up to the base of each funnel.

After many dry fits and testing the actual process of gluing the decks into place was a very fast procedure and miraculously everything fit without a wire, fiber optic or a bulb getting out of place and compromising anything.



During the process of lighting the ship I realized much of the actual lighting effect would be lost if I were to make this a normal water line model. I decided to create an evening scene by building up one side of the display and represent a distant water line and night sky. As a result only one side of the ship would be seen but the evening effect could still be preserved. With the ship mounted along with the backdrop built up it made it a bit more challenging to add the various details on the decks. Through patience and time things slowly came together. In some ways it felt like I was building a ship in a bottle with the limited ways to approach the model.

As for the water effect on the base I used a combination of dental stone, provided by Norris Graser, and epoxy. Prior to adding the lights I mounted the hull on the base and used the dental stone to create a texture and basic composition of the wake created by the ship. I essentially grooved the dental stone as it began to set up and dry. Once completely dry I came back with a combination of blue and green paint to apply to various places until all the dental stone was covered. After the ship's hull was mounted I addressed the dental stone again by applying epoxy over it. I worked it up in some places to create the wake at the bow of the ship. At the stern I kept tacking it with a damp cloth to make it rough from the churning of the ships propellers. The rest of the surface proved enough depth and character for the epoxy to fill in and yet still have a realistic ocean effect. Looking down at it from above gives a really great result.

Ultimately I felt the backdrop would provide good protection to the model but I also realized I had some space inside to work with. The next great idea came into play. It turned out I had available to me two CDs of White Star Line approved music from the Titanic Exposition which has toured the United States. With her not only lit, why not have the band play on into the night? So next came the sourcing of small speakers to be mounted. The Music on the CDs was easily transferred over to an MP3 player.



Progressively I painted and applied the photo etch bits to include rails, staircases and cranes. The last step, so I thought, would be the rigging. Using stretched sprue I started with the funnel rigging. I thought this would be more challenging but it actually worked out nicely with minor difficulties along the way. The fore and aft rigging wasn't too difficult either. What was challenging were the wires for the Marconi radio stretching from fore to aft mast. The key was to match equally long wires. I built a ledge over the top of the ship so I could apply the wires over the funnels without risking damage to previously mounted rigging. In the end they drooped too much and I had to use the heat of an extinguished match to tension them slightly.

The final step to the model itself was the three plumes of smoke out of the funnels. The fourth funnel was false and used only for ventilation. Using cotton balls I pulled tufts until I got the right amount for each funnel. I airbrushed some Floquil soot black and sprayed them with hair spray so they would hold their shape before applying them to the model.



Ok, lights, check,,,,Music,,,check, smoke effect,,,,check, night time effect,,,,mmmmm not quite. While the base looked great, the ship looked great

and the sound sounded great, the nighttime effect still was not there. Plus I still had my concerns of the ship representing well under bright lights in a show environment. So my solution came in the form of a trunk.



I decided a shroud needed to go over the entire project and what better way than to make it look like an old steamer trunk. Using foam board I created the outer shell. I also used some brown construction paper with some texture to it to represent the side panels of the trunk. Along the edges I used a different thicker construction paper to represent leather reinforcement straps. I attempted to make my own corner protectors out of cardboard as well but failed miserably. In the end I went on line and found some nice brass corner protectors that look right for the part. Lastly I printed various White Star documents such as baggage tags, tickets and menus to mount in various places. I think the overall effect is great and couldn't be happier with the result.

This project was a departure from most of my model builds but I find it to have been a very rewarding experience. I have yet to display it at a show with the lights on and the music playing. I think it represents the Titanic in all the glory. So should you get to see it in an upcoming show,,,please, no "Where's the iceberg?!?" jokes. Feel free to dance to the music though.

