

In these articles I set out to try to show some fairly simple modelling techniques that can be put to good use in a number of different ways. This article gives some practical help to people wanting to model thinner objects such as ships sails and dragon's wings. I first came across this problem after having been given a white metal dragon to put together. although the model itself was superb I was not happy with the wings. These were very detailed and looked fantastic but were modelled in white metal. There were two problems with this. Firstly the wings were very heavy. Even with drilling and pinning with wire I was not convinced that the join between the body and the wing would be very robust. Secondly, although the bone structure looked great the thickness of the castings didn't give the right look for the thin "skin" parts of the wing.

So what is the solution? To make new wings out of resin! The first step is to create a armature of the bone structure for the wing. Note that the shape of this will show through the wing slightly so make the bone structure as detailed as possible. For example use thicker wire (wire coat hanger) for the main bones of the wing and thinner florists wire for the thinner parts. I also beefed up the joints using epoxy putty. Use the original model wing as a guide for the shape, size and pose. Don't forget to allow enough wire at the base of the wing to fit into a drilled hole in the dragon's body

Once the bone structure is complete it's time to put the skin layer on. I use crepe paper for this. Crepe paper is much stronger than tissue but is still flexible. The paper is soaked in white glue and draped over the wires, one piece each side. Don't worry too much at this stage about overlapping the wire - it can be trimmed later. Whilst still wet use a stiff brush to gently push the paper in between bones to give the impression of the wind pushing the skin. Alternately if the wings are folded you may want to put some folds in to show the skin folded. Allow to dry and then trim any excess paper from the model.

Now it is time to put the resin. I used fibre glass resin sold for doing car bodywork repairs. The fumes from this stuff are very strong so I would only do this outside. Mix up the resin as per the instructions and simply paint onto the wing making sure you have a good even coverage. This stuff is evil from a cleaning point of view so I tend to use cheap disposable paint brushes, do several projects at once and then throw the brushes away at the end. What you end up with is a fairly tough but still slightly flexible wing which is both light weight and thin.

Other uses of this technique include sails for model ships (I have a soft spot for Viking long boats and medieval cogs in 25mm!). Often the plastic sails that come with these models are not very durable. Attach wire to the yard for the sail this represents the reinforcing ropes running down the sail and allow the crepe paper to "billow" in between. The basic technique is the same. In fact this can be used for reinforcing any thin sheet of fabric on a model for example encampment tents.

Hopefully this article has shown how another technique can have many different applications!

