

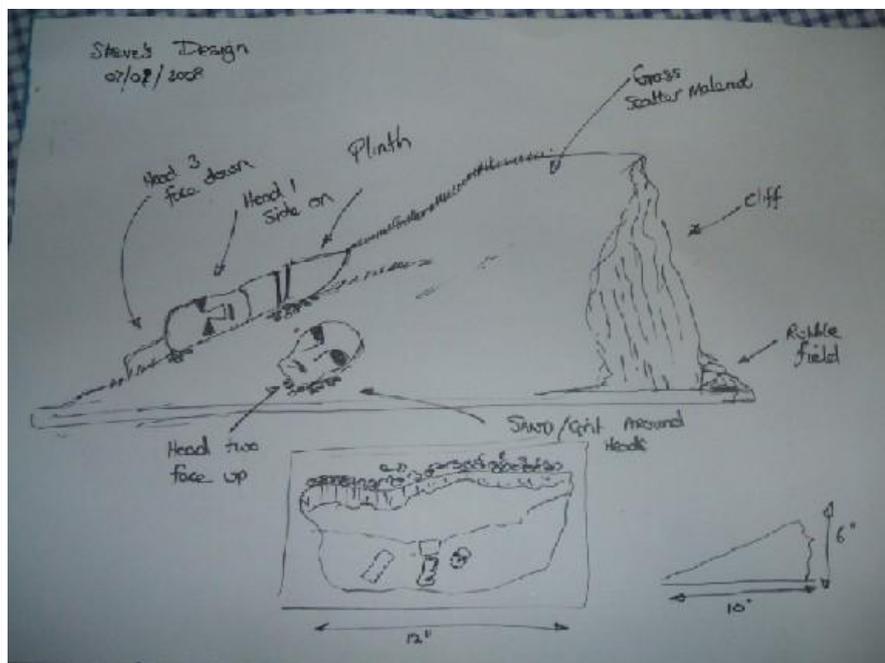
Making a Themed Hill

Basically making a themed hill is very similar to making an ordinary one. I wanted to make my hill a little different for a pulp game. I wanted it to have cover to save the heroes from fire fights and the odd roving dinosaur. I was having a think of where the hill could be set, we were in a distant land so it could be almost anywhere and then it struck me... Easter Island with the enigmatic heads. So first of all it was off to a model makers best friend ... the internet.



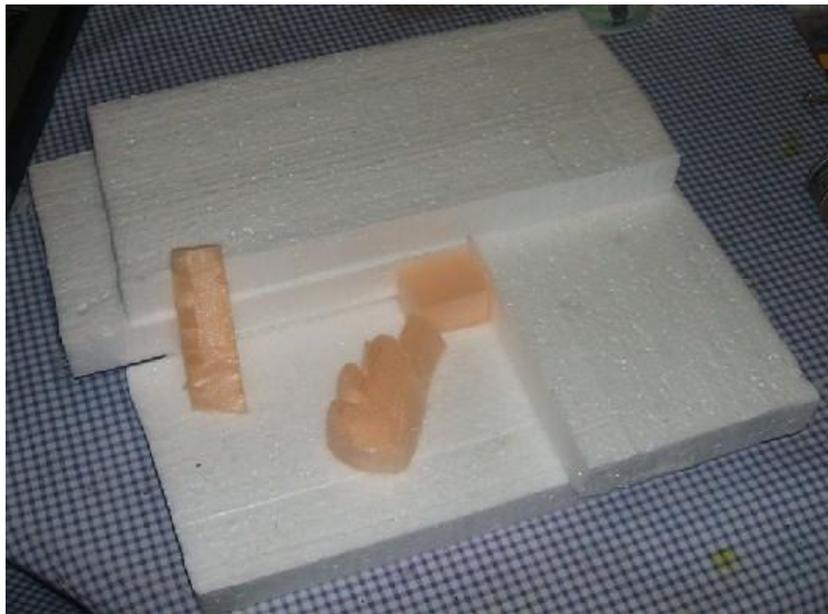
I then set to thinking about how I would build a) the hill and b) the heads. I had a rummage out in the shed and came across a pile of white polystyrene. I had also splashed out on some extruded polystyrene (the pink stuff) so I knew I would have the materials to make what I needed.

I first of all made a plan—something I don't always do! This really helped me get my ideas down, to focus me on where I was going.



I then set about sorting out all the stuff I would need for the start. Luckily some of the white polystyrene was in long thin strips ideal for what I needed to make the basis of the hill.

Being a bit impetuous at times I set to carving some of the pink foam using a modelling knife and my hot wire cutter. To be honest they were a pain to do, but I was quite happy with the end result



I started by laying the blocks out on the table looking for ideas of how best to form the shape I wanted.

This gave me the opportunity to play around with ideas and place the heads on it.

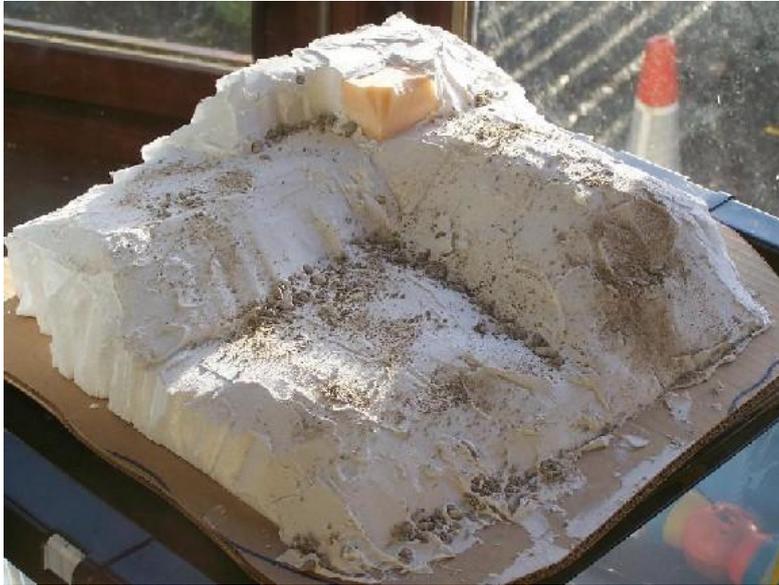
When I was happy with the basic design I set about cutting the polystyrene to make the basic hill shape. I would point out that the white polystyrene is better cut with a hot wire cutter otherwise it tends to crumble when using a knife and trust me those polystyrene balls can get everywhere.

Remember polystyrene gives off a harmful gas when heated so do this in a well ventilated room!



This is the hill after the carving. I also glued it to some 7 mm corrugated cardboard to make a sturdy base. The card has had the edge chamfered to avoid a raised edge.

I used high strength wood glue to fasten both the polystyrene blocks together and the hill to the cardboard base. You may have noticed that there is a third layer added to the hill which was not present on the plan or the initial block placement. When I had made the hill and sculpted it, it just looked wrong... so I added the third layer and embedded the plinth into the upper layer and that made it look more aesthetically pleasing.



Once the hill was dry (I left it overnight) I set about covering the hill in wall filler (Spackle). This was applied using a scrap bit of card. I also added texture at this point in the shape of sand and kitty litter. The cliff face caused me problems due to the many

small cuts and gaps that I couldn't use the filler on. I decided to try my own textured paint concoction on the cliff faces.

For the painting I used a paint tester pot into which I poured a large amount of pva glue and then a handful of sand. This gave me an interesting red colour. Basically I bought the pot cheap which made it ideal. The advantage is that the pot comes with its own brush so you don't have to ruin any of your own.



I then took the opportunity to add some more filler and embed the heads in situ. Adding more sand and litter.

After this had dried I set about painting the hill with some cheap poster paints. I mixed up a green brown to cover the grass area and black for the rock. As the rocky areas had been painted in the texture paint earlier they were ready for dry brushing, which is what I did when the black paint was dry. Basically dry brushing is adding lighter and lighter shades of paint until the desired colour is achieved. You load your brush with paint then wipe most of it off on a tissue before gently painting over the raised detail. You can see the effect on this one.



Once all of the paint was dry I covered the grass Areas with diluted pva glue and while still wet covered the whole area with flock. I left this to dry thoroughly then shook the hill until all of the loose flock was removed.. I then checked for gaps and repeated the process until a solid covering was achieved.

It was at this point I glanced at the plan again and realised that I would not be able to add the boulders below the cliff face due to having already flocked and painted that area. Instead of missing them out I made them separate to the main hill. I used a pile of off-cuts of polystyrene and glued them to a thin piece of card from a cereal box. I then filled some gaps with kitty litter to make smaller rocks. I coated them with the red paint mix and left them to dry. When dry I painted the rocks. I added PVA glue and sprinkled the glue with flock; then some clump foliage material to act as small bushes etc.

The glue was still wet when I took this photograph.



I then went around adding small bits of broom bristles to act as long grass and clump vegetation for bushes. I checked the piece to make sure it didn't have any glaring white bits showing, any that were, were touched up to hide them.

Here we have a collection of photographs showing the finished hill.



Figures used are from my collection and are from Artisan designs and Copplestone castings.

A note on costs... This hill was really cheap to make as nearly all of the stuff I used was either free or very cheap.

To buy I suppose the most expensive item used was the flock at nearly £5 a tub, but upon saying that it does go a long way. I did use a hot wire cutter but I have had it for nearly 7 years now so it has paid for itself many times over.

The pink foam was bought on ebay and cost quite a lot of money, but in this instance I used only a small amount. Any offcuts were kept safe to become rocks and rubble in future projects.

Another themed hill I made is below...



As you can see this has a cave within. I will write this tutorial up at a later date.

Signing off for now.
Beardy Steve