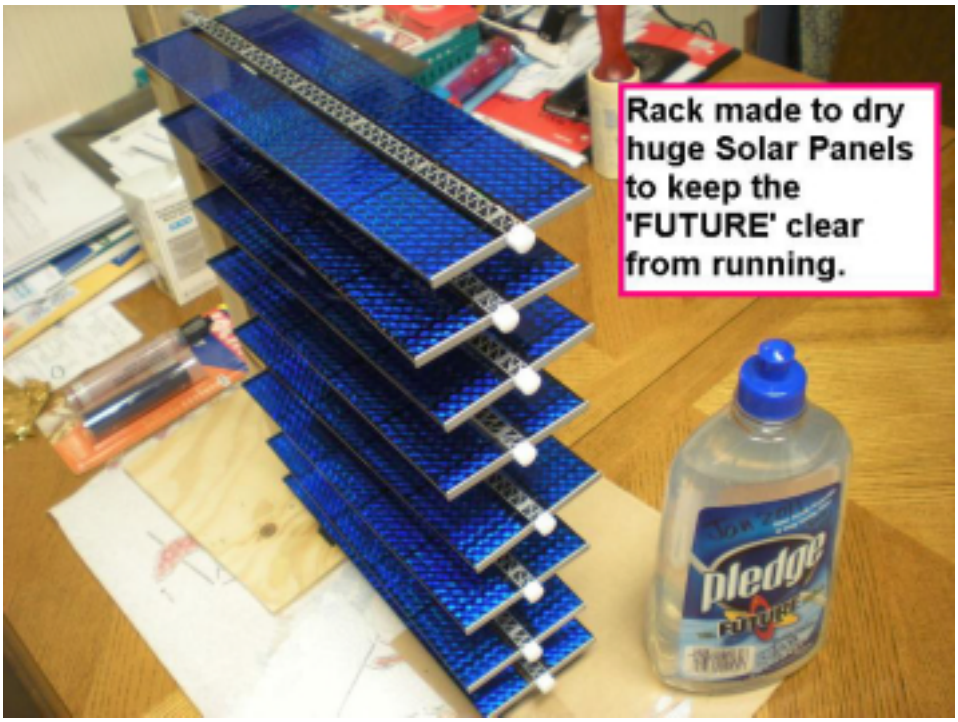
Solar Panels From Out of This World

by John DeRosia

I volunteered to build the International Space Station (ISS) for the Seattle Museum of Flight display beginning in February 2011. There will be 'tons' of real space models from many outstanding Northwest modelers contributing to this display.

The model by Revell (re-released) could not have come at a better time. It was a great model as is usual of their products. Somewhere in my basement- I already have one tucked away in one of the many boxes containing unbuilt models. Did I find it in time to start the ISS project last Thanks-giving? NO! It would have been to convenient to save another $100 for retirement…laugh, laugh.

In the ISS current configuration, there are the following main solar panels (and radiators): Eight huge power solar panels, two huge radiator panels that are split into three each, four smaller radiators, the smaller three Russian space ships each have two, and the last of the two permanent space ship modules have a total of two each. Somewhere in the math world, that adds up to 24 major solar panels to build and make believe they shine in the sun's reflection in orbit.

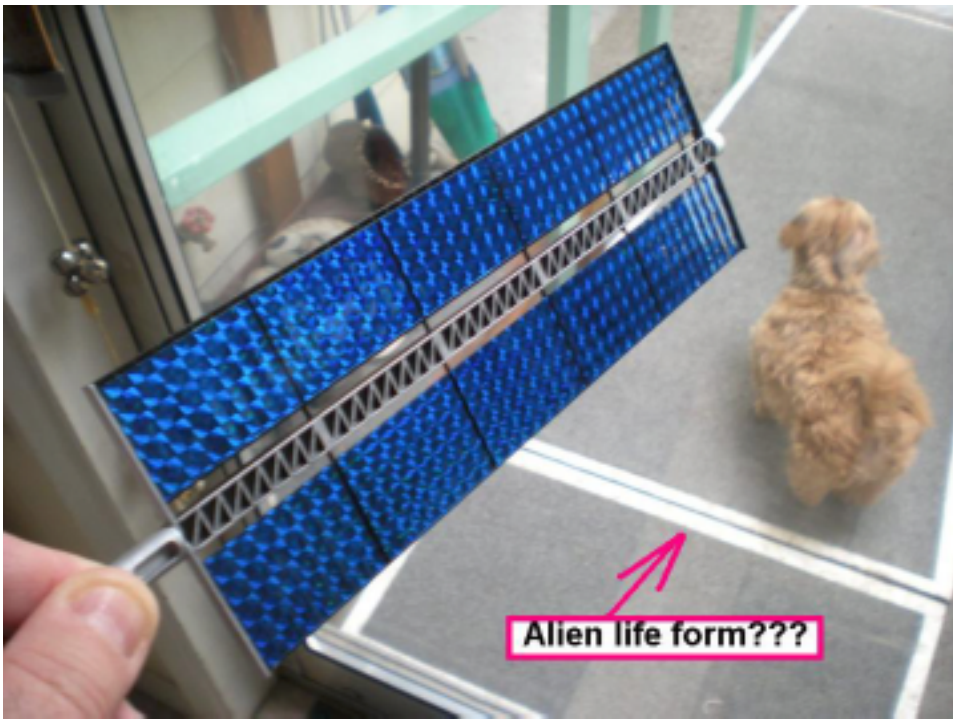


As this is a 1/144th scale ISS, it is nearly impossible to model most of the nuts and bolts that make up this vehicle. My focus was to help the mind 'think and see' that these panels are really reflective. With Christmas just around the corner- I was already salivating with the possibilities the shiny things that Christmas goodies would help me with on this project.

Was I ever wrong!

How to simulate the thousands of tiny real life squares/rectangles that makes up a solar panel? Why with silver and gold and blue Christmas ribbon, of course. Some I swear was made to actually simulate solar panels - but then the ribbon manufacturing marketing department decided to also test it in holiday markets. I tell you - some was made beyond perfect for what I needed. I bought at least 20 'reels' of ribbon. Enough to stretch from here to the moon if you unwound it from each reel. I figured the extra would be used for other space model projects in the future.

Bleed through. Ever used super-glue and forgot that it will bleed through anything? Of course not. Only Christmas ribbon I think. The first trial gluing to one of the major solar panels ended up in disaster.



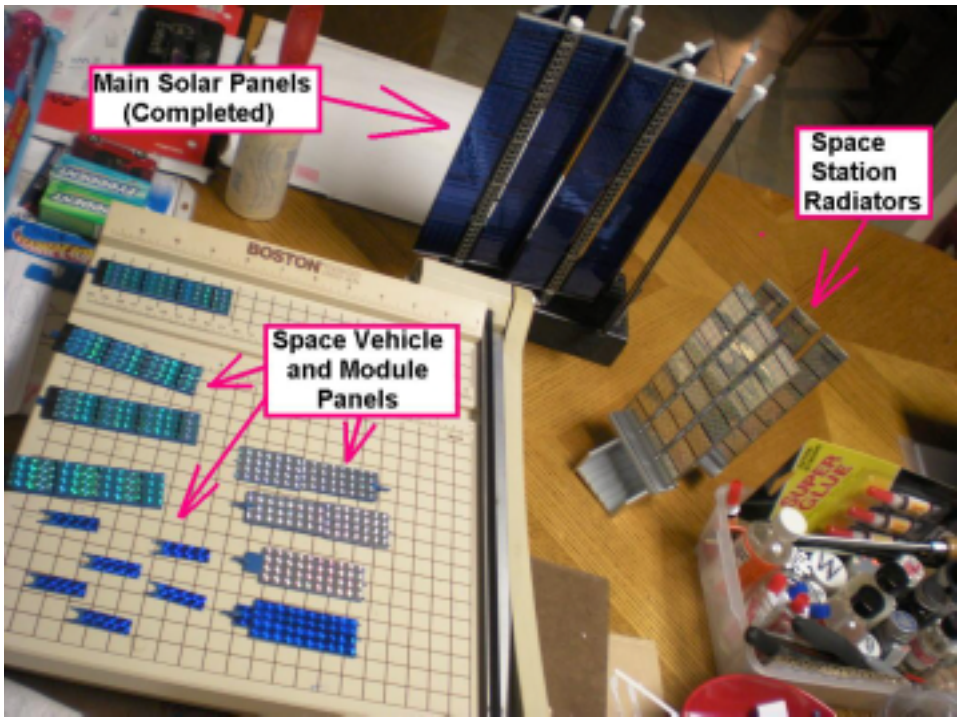
While the ribbon looks strong enough on the reel to tow a Patton Tank through the swamps - as you unwind it, it sort of distorts before your very eyes- that should have been clue #1. It got even worse when I tried gluing it down the 'accordion' molded solar panels. I tried to keep it in place with my fingers while coaxing it down onto the glue over the other accordion part of the panels.

Had I wanted to attach my hands with the glued on ribbons to simulate the panels, they would have looked the part. With all the dad blasted dern ribbon glued to my fingers, I had to wash off all the glue and ribbon with grade 45 lacquer thinner (industrial grade stuff used to dissolve titanium I think). Well, at least I have enough dern ribbon for the next 76 years worth of Christmas presents. Need some?...just ask...

Round 2. I went back trolling the stores for another suitable item that looks like space solar stuff. Well – eureka! I never knew they made so many different colors of Duct Tape. The really good looking chrome colored stuff had the pattern of the imbedded thread looking like small rectangular solar panel grids. But that stuff was expensive. But far under budget compared to each real Space Shuttle round trip. I should have known the first time I tried to accurately cut a section the precise dimensions for each solar panel. Let's see - the duct tape stuck to the scissors, then to me, and finally when I patted it down onto the panel – the tape had distorted enough to lose that solar panel look. Also - what's with the stringy stuff they imbed in duct tape? I could not get it to trim properly without fraying along several of the sides. Next…

Tried decals, tried printed paper panels off the web, tried paint. The look just wasn't right. Even tried self adhesive aluminum foil that plumbers/ducting people use? I did buy a roll (with a 15 year loan from the bank) and let me spare you the suspense - it failed. As you peel off a strip of this aluminum foil - it wrinkles to the moon and back.

Finally, in desperation, and of course 100% by accident - found this 8 ½ x 11 inch prismatic foil paper. You've seen it. It dazzles the eye ball with shininess. I bought some blue, aqua, and chrome color. The paper was easy to cut and glue to the panels. I found out after gluing two of the main solar panels with the blue prismatic papers - the dumb paper was self sticking. Read instructions? Who me? I didn't know you could peel off the prismatic paper to



stick right to the plastic. The danger now was, will the paper come off the two panels because of the 'waxy' backing paper they are attached to? I added a few drops of super glue to those sides in hopes the paper will be secure for at least two millennium.

The rest of all the panels went like clock-work - and I did superglue down all prismatic paper - even when I peeled if off the backing. Extra comfort power with glue. Superglue gave me that security I needed. Thank goodness none of the superglue bled through the huge panels, but on some of the smaller panels it did bleed through and mess up some of the prismatic effects. That's okay- the ISS will be suspended 68 feet above the crowd…What?...Only 68 inches?...

Well, if anyone asks - the damage was from asteroids streaking through space…

B-57 Canberra Units

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photographs, and here there's some great stuff. While nose art was not uncommon among USAF aircraft in Vietnam, I never thought the Canberra had much of that. This book shows otherwise, as many aircraft had personal names or artwork of some sort. The center section has the usual color profiles, which are done to the usual high quality.

This is a useful addition to my Vietnam library, as few titles have documented the B-57 in that war. With the recent release of several kits of the Canberra, this is also a timely release for modelers. My thanks to Osprey Publishing for the review copy.

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Government Issue 90mm Thermonuclear Rodeo

by Terry Moore

The first release from Government Issue, distributed by Squadron, is a new resin figure kit, called Thermonuclear Rodeo. It features one of the most iconic movie scenes ever, Major Kong (Slim Pickens) riding a nuclear bomb to the end of the world in the motion picture, *Dr Strangelove, Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. The kit is 90mm scale, consists of 10 resin and plastic parts, plus decals for the bomb and Major Kong's uniform.

It took a bit of work to remove the pour stubs but once the parts were cleaned up, the parts were assembled without difficulty, requiring minimal filling of the seams – I used Elmer's glue. I did remove resin pins that were provided in the kit to pin the arms, as they did not fit the molded holes. The only flaw in my sample of the figure was a hole in Major Kong's chin, which I filled with putty. The bomb required a bit more work. The major issue on my sample was that some of the holes on the forward casing were broken – the molding in the area is very thin. I was able to replace the damaged parts with thin styrene cut to shape.

I decided to paint it in black and white, as the movie was a black and white movie, and I had no idea what the real colors would be. The forward end of the bomb was painted with Model Master Interior Black and the aft end was painted with Model Master Neutral Gray, after which I applied the decals.

The figure itself was a bit more of a challenge. I sprayed it overall with Model Master Euro Gray. After that, I hand painted his skin neutral gray, then added a bit of white and painted his hat. For his parachute and harnesses I added a bit of black to the neutral gray to give a bit of contrast to his uniform color. After the paint dried I sprayed several coats of Testors gloss. When that dried I applied the decals to his uniform. Once they had set I overpainted the colorful patches with a mix of Grumbacher Payne's Gray and Grumbacher Titanium White to change them into gray tones as well.

I used a wash of the Grumbacher Payne's Gray in all the creases and folds to give