



RESOURCES

Squadron-Signal Panther in Action (armor in action series)

Spielberger Panther and it's variants (Spielberger armor series)

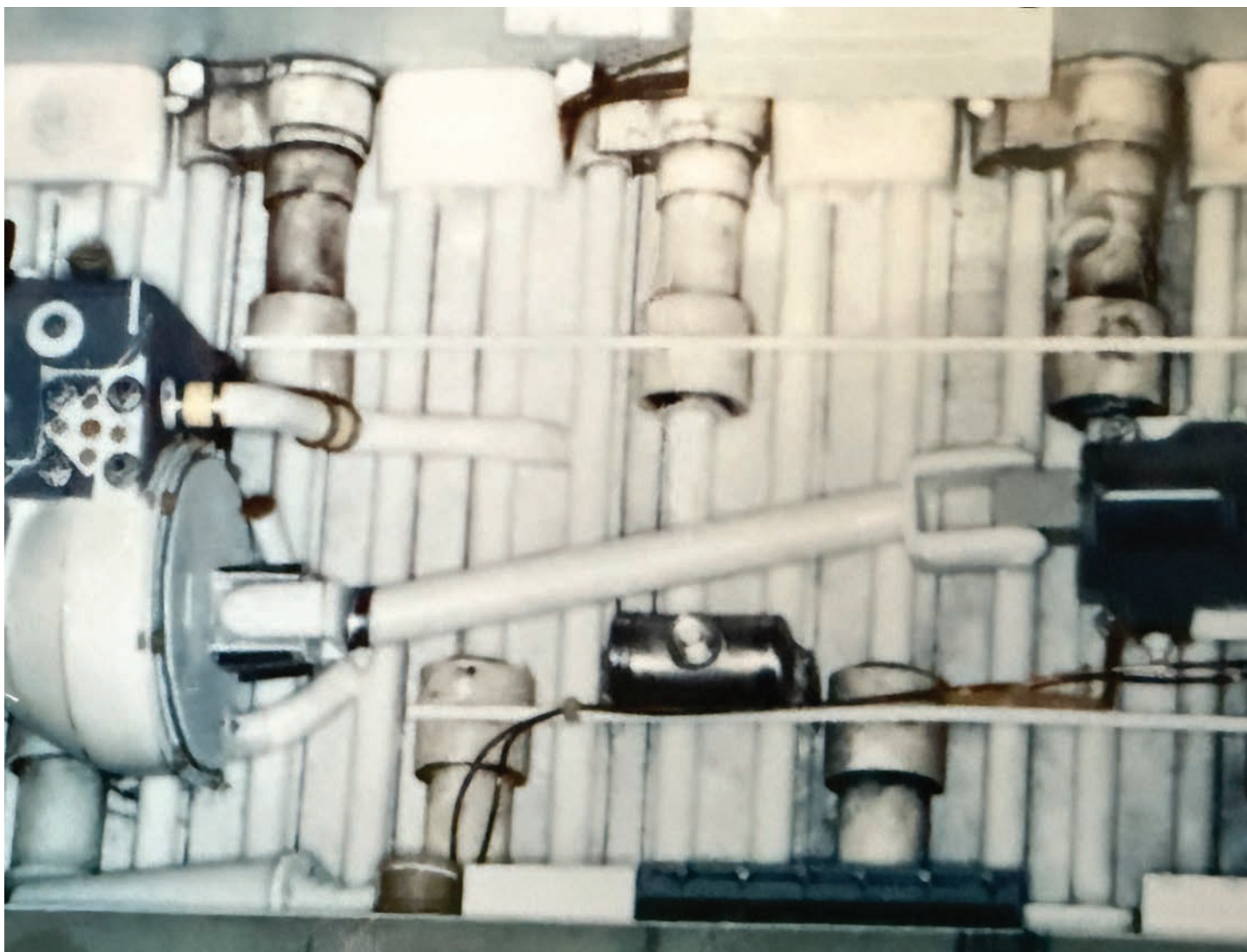
New Vanguard-Osprey Panther and it's Variants (Doyle, Jentz)



Over the years there have been three renaissance periods in large-scale armor modeling, starting with the original Tamiya 1:25 offerings from the 1970s, followed by VLS releases in 120mm in the 1990s. These resin vehicles and AFV kits were not called 1:16 scale at the time. The third period is now, with the ever-increasing number of highly detailed 1:16 injection-molded kits that seem to be growing in popularity every day.

It seems to me that all armor modelers either have already built a German Panzerkampfwagen V Panther at some point, or plan to build one soon. I was inspired by Dave Fisher from Tucson several years ago and his amazing 1:9 scale German StuG III. What struck me was the greater level of detail that can be put into these large-scale kits versus 1:35 scale, and as such I was excited to give it a try. Upon researching the Panther and its many variants, the Bergepanther really appealed to me, primarily for the huge amount of scratch-building that would be required in such a complex machine in this scale. Those who know me are familiar with my love of scratch-building.

The Bergepanzerwagen V (Sd.Kfz. 179), often referred to as the "Bergepanther," was an armored recovery vehicle used by the German Army in WWII and was a variant of the Panther medium battle tank. The idea of a Bergepanther



came about in 1943 because of problems the Germans encountered in recovering heavy and medium tanks off the battlefield.

The Bergepanther was similar to that of the Panther V in many ways, with the major difference being the large square wood and metal structure that replaced the turret. This housed a 40-ton winch in the hull which was capable of pulling a heavy tank. The machine was operated by a crew of five soldiers, two of whom operated the winch.

I should point out that these large-scale resin kits are heavy, with my Bergepanther weighing in at around 14-15 pounds!

What I didn't realize at first was that you can see all the way down to the running gear in this vehicle from the winch box, and that the torsion bar suspension system was going to require even more scratch-building. Be careful what you volunteer for!

The floor of the hull needed a lot of added detail. Mike used styrene rod and strip, wire and other bits to add the very visible components in the bottom of the Bergepanther.

I used the Verlinden Panther "A": as a starting point and the basis of the model. The basic kit is good and fairly accurate for its time. I was able to use the hull, running gear, tracks and engine deck from the kit. Unfortunately, there were no large-scale aftermarket products for me to utilize at the time.

In starting with the hull, I ground out most of the upper hull ahead of the engine deck to the driver's area/front. I backdated the hull from the early "A" model to the later "D" version.

As I mentioned earlier, the floor of the hull required a lot of scratch-building which included torsion bars, hydraulic pump, transfer case, battery, and drive shaft.

Once the lower hull was completed, I moved on to the section that I most looked forward to, which was the winch motor and its compartment. The siding supports/ boxes were done mainly with sheet styrene. The winch, being the most complex of all the assemblies, was done with any material I could find to get the job done, which included styrene, nylon washers and gears, steel washers and nylon twine. Large-scale white metal model railroad "G" scale bolts came in very handy throughout the build. I liked that the compartment's top sides and covers were made of wood in the real vehicle. This would allow me to use wood as well and show how different-colored stains would create various weathering effects.

There was no engine or engine compartment provided in the kit, so this would have to be scratch-built as well. The firewall was made to precise

dimensions. The engine was done with styrene, brass tubing, hardware store washers and putty. There were no aftermarket vent covers back then, so these were made from nylon window screens from my local hardware store.

Unlike the Panther V, the driver's compartment was fully open on top and that meant that the transmission, transfer case, radio, and driver's area would be fully visible and so that had to be scratch-built and detailed as well. A plethora of material was used for this including Plastruct, styrene, model railroad and VLS bolts, along with various sized brass wires.

An assortment of materials was employed to create the winch, a focal point of the model. The completed winch and its associated machinery were weathered heavily.





(Top:) the seat cushions were made from putty and were textured with window screen before they were completely set.

(Bottom) the radio sets were fashioned from styrene and detailed with photoetched parts and stainless steel rod switches.

The front of the transmission housing and final drive assembly were cast in resin using masters I carved in wood and styrene.

The open front drivers' compartment has many levels. At the lowest section, tread plate was added using Evergreen material. The seats were constructed using brass, stainless steel rod, Milliput cushions, and styrene pedals and gear handles. Most of the wiring was done with various widths of brass wire.

Adding textures on such a large-scale model is very important as they add a nice touch, and stand out prominently after painting and weathering. The front seats were crafted using Milliput and textured by pressing window screen into them before they set. The tarp that was used to cover the front open compartment is actual fabric hardened with white glue.

The radio sets are intricate and were very time-consuming. Thankfully, there are a lot of great photos available online and in books for reference. The base structure of the radios was constructed using Plastruct and styrene, and the dials and dial covers were from Waldron. Most of the switches were made using stainless steel rods.



The spade on the rear of the vehicle is huge! It was constructed using very thick-diameter Plastruct that had to be built up in sections to achieve the right shape. The weld seams are an important visible feature; they which were added for additional detail and texture using a Rapidograph pen and clear bathtub caulking.

Thankfully, Verlinden at that time produced lots of 120mm stowage items and equipment that was used to clutter up the interior. VLS also produced a beautifully sculpted MG34 machine gun, which was mounted at the front.

The anti-mine Zimmeritt paste commonly found on German armored vehicles at this time was done using Milliput and was applied using a custom-made tool. The model was painted using Tamiya acrylics, followed later with washes using artists' oils. Dirt and mud were built up using drywall repair putty.

This was an ambitious project, and it went along its own timeline. For me, this counts as one of my favorite scratch-build projects, for I learned a lot of skills and techniques that I have applied to many other modeling projects over the years. This model has since traveled across the United States several times and has been to Asia and Europe as well. It is scheduled to be displayed in an armor museum in Germany sometime in the future. 🇩🇪

- By Mike McFadden

The spade was made from thick styrene, and Mike took extra care to replicate the prominent weld beads, made from bathtub caulking!

