

# How To: Tips and Tricks

## Mu-Clá Tips and Tricks

How to use Mu-Clá in your modeling or art projects

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### BASICS:

Start with an armature, of wood, paper, Styrofoam, gaterboard or wire wrapped with paper and masking tape. Some thinner woods should be primed with paint to prevent warping. Styrofoam should be cut or formed to a rough shape. Apply a thin layer of Mu-Clá to the surface using a small trowel. A one inch putty knife works well. Using your hands is also a good way to spread out the Mu-Clá. It can be a little messy but it washes off with water.

After the area is covered with Mu-Clá, I find using a clay carving knife a good tool to use. You can smooth out the surface or rough it up making irregularities in the project. Smaller pieces of foam, wood chips, or balls of paper or foil can be added to the surface. I cut away the Mu-Clá, add the piece of fill, and then recover the piece I added. This gives you a bump, lump or stone look. The idea is to use filler under or on top of the surface that's to be covered.

Working time is several hours. After that Mu-Clá begins to dry and scab over. Dip your cutting tool in water and avoid the problem of tearing or pulling up the surface. Wetting your hands will also give your project a smoother finish. Avoid using too much water. Thicker areas of Mu-Clá take longer to dry and may shrink up. Not a problem, just add a little Mu-Clá to fill in the space. Total drying time is 10 to 12 hours. This depends on how thick it was applied, temperature and humidity. Some of my projects took 24 hours to dry. Drying time can also be delayed. Projects can be placed in plastic garbage bags, sealed, and removed at a later time. You can also cover the area with plastic wrap. Mu-Clá air dries, so keeping the air off the project will delay it's drying time.

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### MASKS

The basics of making masks.

### MOUNTAINS:

Now, let's make some Mu-Clá mountains. All layouts have mountains, hills, and valleys. Using Mu-Clá to do this is fun and simple. Start with a basic form of Styrofoam, wood, paper taped up, screen or just about anything. This will serve as an armature for the project. Spread on Mu-Clá with a trowel and cover the armature. Details can be added after the area is covered. Cuts, cracks and crevices give the area realism. Sand and grass can be patted into the wet Mu-Clá and it will stick. You have time to work the project because of the longer drying time compared to other medias. When dry Mu-Clá is very lightweight and strong. Mu-Clá will bind stacked pieces of Styrofoam together. Glued pieces work better, but you can add things, cover and they will stay put. A major feature of Mu-Clá is that it dries with a stone like gray color. Depending on the project you may just have to dry brush on some light color paint. This brings out the highlights of the rocks. [Back to headings](#)

## CASTINGS:

Making rock mold castings is fun and easy using Mu-Clá. Start with a rubber rock mold; spray the inside of the mold with a releasing agent, Pam or some other vegetable spray. Rub it into the mold with your hands getting it into the details of the rock. Take some Mu-Clá in your hands and roll it into a snake. Lay the snake into the mold, now spread the Mu-Clá into the inside area of the mold. Coverage should be as thin as possible, yet covering the high points of the mold. Dip your fingers into some water and smooth out the back surface of the casting, filling in any areas of the casting as you go with some of the thicker layers. The idea is to make the casting as thin as you can, about ¼" inch thick. Take the filled casting and turn it over onto a piece of cardboard or your hand and slowly peel back the rubber. The casting should release from the mold. The casting may tear, no worry mending can be done with fingers or a spatula. Now take your new casting and place it on the area of the sub-terrain. Pressing in the edges as you go. Mu-Clá castings can be placed over open areas in the sub-terrain, around corners, inside curves and on top of other castings. At this point scenic materials may be added. The sticky nature of the Mu-Clá will hold grasses, sand, small gravel or other types of material. You may find you'll add more after the area has dried but it's one less step for now. The first application of scenic materials should be set with the end of a paintbrush. At this point you may even want to dry brush on some paint to give your casting some highlighted detail. Back to headings

## BRICKWORK & STRUCTURES:

Mu-Clá is a great sculpting media for making brick work. Railroad tunnel portholes, brick walls and stonewalls are easy too. Mastering the cutting in of cut stones, on a layer of

Mu-Clá, takes a little practice. Start by cutting out your template. I have used both pink foam and gator board. Either work well as a base for the portholes I've made for my layout. The reason I made tunnel portholes in the first place was the standard, store bought size wasn't wide enough. If the tracks pass thru at a right angle fine, clearance is good. Put the tracks on an angle to the porthole and the side clearance for rail cars is not enough. Try 70 or 80 ft. passenger cars on a 22inch curve, or worse 18in-curved track, too close. So, you cut out a porthole opening using the same clearances. Allow for the longer cars overhang, or the angle on straight track. The rail cars go thru without hitting, or coming too close to the entrance sidewalls.

Back to making the brick work. Start with a thin layer of Mu-Clá 1/6 to 1/8 inch thick smoothed out. Cover only front half of the porthole hold onto the other half. Don't cover the outside edges or inside opening walls. Now figure out how big the brick or cut stone is to be. Generally, about 2 x 3 ½ scale feet, decreasing slightly in height as you near the top. Taking your clay knife start cutting horizontal lines into the soft Mu-Clá. Use a slight sawing motion for best results. Keep the knife clean, I wipe it on the out side edge. After several cuts up the wall start cutting in vertical lines staggering your lines. I use a small steel clay knife; wood or plastic ones work also. I go over my cuts folding in fuzz, adding detail and crispness to the cuts. Both lines should be even and level. Cut in the arch stones and you're done for a while. Don't like the way it looks smooth it out and start over. Clean and save the edges and top cap stones for a later time. Take a small amount of Mu-Clá and spread it on the edges. Follow the cuts from the front around the corner. Now, cap off your porthole. Make a thin Mu-Clá snake rolling it in your hands. Lay it on the top front edge of your work. Form it into long over hanging stones, and woo-la!! A little more practice and you are a stonemason. Now, dry brush on some light color paint to bring out the highlights, you're done.

Let me say one thing about doing detailed brick work in HO scale. It takes time and a level eye, don't rush it, finish cut the joints. Stop at a finished area let it dry. Come back to the project later. That's a good feature of Mu-Clá, you can add to it later. Or simply keep it from air-drying and make your cuts tomorrow or next week. I also model G scale. The larger the scale the easier the details are to add. The portholes I've made for my G scale were simple. I was able to add much more detail to that stone work easier. It's not that the HO portholes have less detail they took more work. That said, "May God bless the N scale modeler".

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## WATERPROOFING:

Water proofing Mu-Clá can be done. Applying a waterproof paint, exterior varnishes or spray lacquers may be applied after the project is finished. Several coats may be needed to result in a true outdoor or waterproof piece. My experience was, in waterproofing a pond to use DRYLOK® basement paint. This worked quite well, and the water didn't leak out.

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