

Model Making - White Card

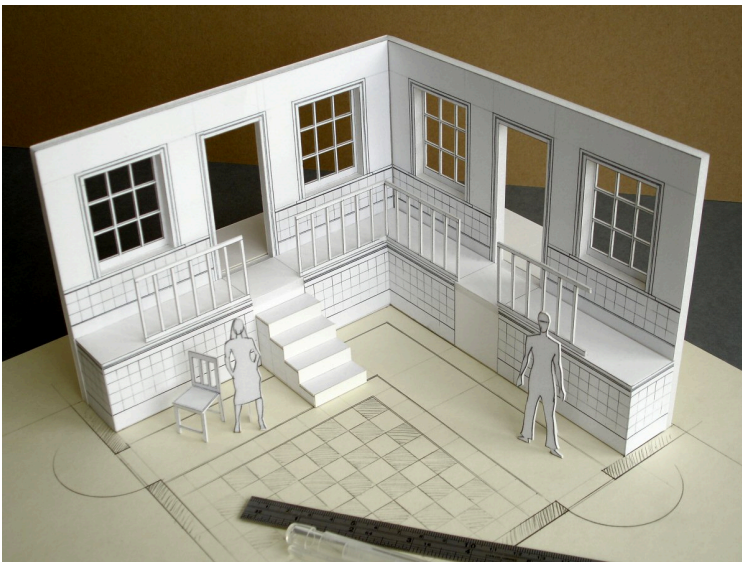
The 'white card model' produced for the final stages conforms to very specific requirements. It is usually made once the design has been finalised, most often incorporating the detailed technical drawings created for the construction of the set. It is therefore a three-dimensional 'blueprint' of the intended design.

It is usually not a realistic, atmospheric rendition of what the set will look like, let alone how it will appear in the film. It may offer no information on colour, little on texture and materials, but all the most essential information on space, structure, movable elements and their practical implications. The designer may build a version earlier in the design process, *often called a Sketch model*, to test the design's three-dimensionality (to check general proportions, to better visualise filming possibilities etc.) but these things have usually all been worked out by the final stage.

It serves as a communication to the whole film crew. It tells the director and the cinematographer exactly how much space there is for whatever action is required for a scene but also gives a summary idea of what will be seen behind it (this supports the value of creating technical drawings/model with some graphic indication of surface textures etc.). In addition it tells the cinematographer, and camera, sound or lighting crews, how much space there will be for equipment and whether any obstacles such as pillars, steps or levels need to be planned for. It gives an overview for the technical crew responsible for building and furnishing a set. It also helps work out cost and budgeting requirements.

White cards are often made at 1:50 scale, this is due to the fact that many sets are very large scale and it is not practical to create the model in a larger scale such as 1:25 which can become

unmanageable. 1:25 is sometimes used when very small sets are created that it is not practical to create in 1:50 scale.



Due to the fact that the white card is created AFTER the technical drawing, it can be created using Mount board, with the technical drawing spray mounted on, cut and transformed into a 3D shape. The 'rule' is that anything which has a significant physical bearing on the set space (such as a pillar, steps, changes in floor level, opening doors,

railings etc.) needs to be represented in 3D whereas anything which can be ignored from the point of view of space (such as shallow decoration or panelling, light curtains etc.) can be left flat as drawing. Anything protruding 5cm or more should be given that physical thickness in the model! For example a thin modern radiator could be just drawn whereas an older, more 'bulky' type really needs to be represented more physically in 3D.

A common example is bookshelves, which also really do need to be shown in their proper depth however 'fiddly' this might seem. This is to ensure that there can be no misunderstandings about the exact spatial limitations of the set, which is of vital importance considering the amount of money in filming-time which such misunderstandings might cost.

There is always room in technical drawings to add your own personal touch or aesthetic, especially if it enhances the communicative clarity of them, and the same can apply to a white card model. White card model's can still be stylish as well as functional and, dependant on personal style, it can be embellished with graphic detail, structural finesse or effects designed to 'sell' the visual concept. Although colour is not necessarily 'banned', it is important it does not become a distraction or upset the overall balance.



Part of a white card model made by Edwina Camm for 'An Instance of the Fingerpost' an MA Production Design film project at Kingston. Edwina drew her original technical drawings this way, little needed to be added to create this rich, convincing effect when used for the white card model.

- The **base** on which the model is mounted should be flat and stable i.e. secure enough to be a good support, not only when transporting the model but also for resting it down even where there are no totally free table-tops available. Mountboard on its own is never enough! Generally 5mm foamboard will suffice for an A2 size model and 10mm foamboard for A1. The information that is shown on your ground plan should be attached to the corner of the model base in the same way it would appear on your technical drawing.

- **Practicals** (i.e. working or moving elements) such as doors, shutters or removable parts need to work in the model, or at least be clearly indicated as movable. In the case of practical doors it may be better just to glue them ajar to show that they're practical. It is often necessary to make parts of the model **removable** so that, especially, interiors can be better seen and to take better photos of these parts. This may directly reflect how the set will be built for filming in which case the so-called 'floating' walls will be indicated on the ground plan.

- **Ceilings** are a bit of a 'grey area' (i.e. often misunderstood) when it comes to the white card model. Strictly speaking if the walls of a studio set are going to be built to a certain height, even if that extends beyond what the camera will see, they should be built to that height in the model. Similarly if a ceiling exists in a used location it should be included, to make it clear where it is, even if the camera

is going to avoid it. This would then need to be made detachable. When the ceiling becomes a feature of the design it should definitely be included, but again detachable.

- **Windows** which are meant to be seen through (or any transparent surfaces) need to allow just that in the model, and need to be cut out, and also surfaced on the back with thin acetate to make it clear if they are going to be glazed

Beyond **openings in the set**, often it is forgotten that you will see beyond windows and through open doorways. It is important to consider what we will see beyond them, this can be a painted/



printed
Cyclorama or
Digital insertion
via green/blue
screen but
should be
planned early in
the design
process to
ensure space is
allowed beyond
the set.

Another example of the illustrative quality of white card models from Edwina Camm, also showing the importance of including the ceiling in this context.

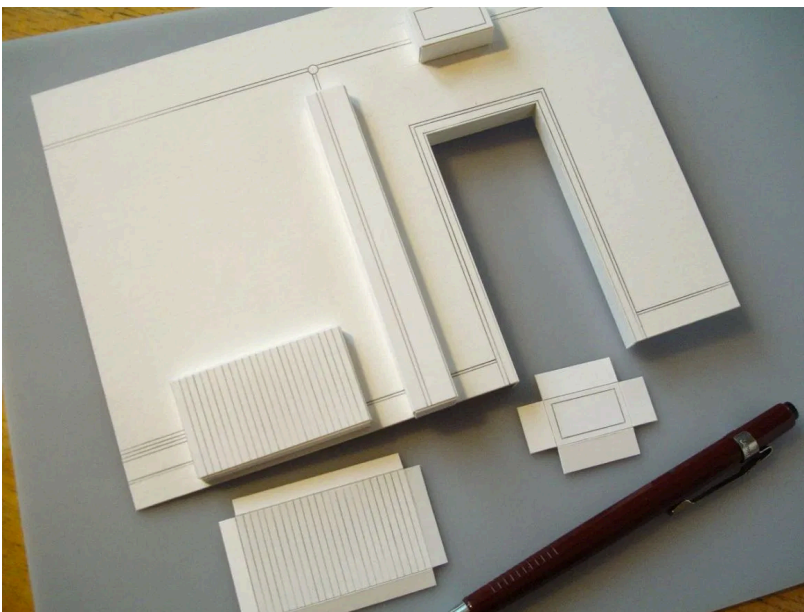
Working with Scales

You may be creating a model at 1:50, but have already drawn some, or all, of your technical drawings at 1:25 scale to be able to input a greater amount of detail. Reducing your technical drawing does not necessarily mean you have to re draw it. Copying your drawing at 'half size' or '50% reduction' will reduce a 1:25 drawing to 1:50.

Another misunderstanding often arises when confusing dimension and surface area. For example, when asked to double the size of an A4 drawing many might think 'A4 to A3' but this, although doubling the surface area, is not doubling the dimensions. To double the dimensions you need to choose the next size up, i.e. A4 to A2.



This model was created by Patrick Scalise while a student at Wimbledon College of Art.



Large fixtures and details being created using thin card (200-300gsm). Wall fixtures which need to be given their true depth, such as the radiator or the exit light above the door can be simplified as boxes, which can be scored and bent into shape. The doorframe, skirting board and power conduits can be left as drawings since they are well below the 5cm rule.

The 1/4 inch (1:48) scale white card model for 'Boardwalk Empire' not only fully clarified the space but also communicated much of the 'look' due to the inclusion of the signage. Courtesy HBO 'Boardwalk Empire: Designing an Empire'.

