



# VLADIMIR DEMCHENKO

Today I'm talking to Vladimir Demchenko, a well known figure & diorama modeler and owner of Bravo 6 company.

**AK.** Vladimir, how did you begin painting figures and then switched to sculpting them? I started modeling when I was a kid. Like other modelers in the 80s, my hobby started with 1/72 planes. By the way, I'm still interested in aircraft modeling to this day. In the 90s, when 1/35 figures & AFVs became available in Russia, I switched to dioramas, being impressed by foreign magazines and catalogs. Diorama building shaped my way approach to modeling. In addition to that my education and profession are closely related to this genre. As the time passed I came to the understanding that available figures are not enough for me and eventually I started sculpting my own figures.

**AK.** As far as I remember, you worked with MIG productions some 10-15 years ago. Can you tell more about this collaboration? Sure. For me it was a very interesting and important experience. The collaboration period was relatively short, but it left nice & nostalgic feelings. I remember my work with MIG team, discussing plans and my first figures. Some figures were sculpted according to his blueprints, other — mine. The collaboration



process was active & lively and I enjoyed it. It seems that now these figures are being re-issued. The most important thing that I learnt from the process is that I want to work as a totally independent artist and bring my ideas to life. And I also wanted to focus on my favourite theme.

**AK.** How are your figures being made? What are the steps from idea to the shelf in a hobby shop? Do you perform everything yourself, work with a team or outsourcers? Everything starts with an idea. Sometimes it takes time to fully develop it, sometimes it comes spontaneously. My approach is based on my diorama experience and that's why I'm aiming to tell a complete story, rather than making stand-alone figures. According to this story I plan how to make the figures. I try to make different stories: big and small. For



the smaller stories one or two kits would be enough. Others need entire series that are been constantly enhanced. For example, I constantly add figures to "Tet'68" and "Rumble in the Jungle" series. At the same time I try to make every kit self sufficient so that it can be finished independently as one or two figures with a base.

I do the creative part. All steps here include generating ideas, sculpting, painting for the box-art, package design and branding. Resin casting, printing decals and producing PE parts are outsourced. I don't have time for the production part itself. And it would be bad to waste my own creative resources on that.

**AK.** What are the main challenges that you face: technical issues, competitive market, piracy or something else? Technical challenges were and are always present. It is OK. Sometimes they cheer me up and make me think and find new solutions. Competitive market is a good thing and I think that sculptors, makers and customers benefit from that. As for piracy... everyone is aware of this, the problem has been discussed a million times and there's nothing to add here. ▶





► **AK.** Do you mostly target Russian or foreign markets? Are there countries with exceptionally high popularity of resin figurines?

I didn't consider this aspect so much when I started my company. I did what I enjoyed and I had no idea whether my figurines will become popular. Theoretically modelers focus mostly on their countries' military: WW2 soviet figures would be more popular in Russia, while Vietnam War subjects would be more popular in the USA.

Sometimes I receive messages from customers from places that are totally unexpected for me. For example, people from Brazil and Sweden are interested in Vietnam War subjects and ask me about my future plans regarding these series.

**AK.** Some manufacturers produce 3d printed figures and accessories. What do you think about the future of this approach? Do you consider switching from resin casting to 3d printing?

I am always interested in new technologies and trends. As for producing figures, I think that 3d printing today can't compete against traditional resin casting technology. One of the reasons is its price. You can't say what will happen in the future, but anyway there will be new things. For example, typographic and home-printer printing technologies exist

simultaneously. And each of them has its own use-cases. Maybe that's what will happen with figures.

**AK.** Model manufacturers have different approaches to interaction with modellers and customer service. How does it work at Bravo 6?

I seriously consider all feedbacks and wishes, check finished projects based on my figures on the Internet, analyze customer demand of separate figures and series. I've never conducted "What kind of figure do you want?" surveys. I think they do no good and only give a false hope to the modelers. Sometimes people suggest ideas that I find to be interesting or they coincide with my own plans. In general I must either suggest a compromise solution or provide something very special to target specific customers.

**AK.** Bravo-6 produces WW2 figures, but, I feel that that you really focus on the Vietnam War. How did you decide to target this topic: market analysis or personal reasons?

Yes, I do focus on the Vietnam era. For a reason unknown to me, I have a sentiment towards this topic since my childhood. It's a kind of irrational unexplainable interest! Moreover, when I built dioramas I dreamt of a comprehensive and diverse line of Vietnam era figures. At that time this topic was under-

represented by manufacturers. Now the situation looks better, but I don't have time for dioramas.

The topic is rather exotic in comparison with modelling mainstream, though even within the Vietnam topic itself there are its own mainstream and exotics. I try to keep the balance between them.

I also produce WW2 figures. You can't avoid that! Plenty of high quality WW2 figures are available and that is why I try to make something fresh and nontrivial. I always focus on telling a story, sometimes with some humour. For example when I made a German tanker playing a violin, for me it was the violin that was important, not the German tanker being a subject produced in quantities by others. Even working with single figures I try to avoid boring things, not wanting to make another dummy in uniform. I add a vivid detail, some dynamics hidden in a static pose, a character... I tell a tiny story behind a figure.

**AK.** How did Bravo-6 title appear?

I've always liked brand names containing a combination of a word and a number, e.g. Formula 1, Chanel № 5 or Levi's 501. It sounds cool and stylish and looks great as a logo. Naturally I took an association with my topic and that's how BRAVO-6 appeared. I think it sounds not bad at all!





**AK.** Figures of the tank crew from the Fury movie. Are they the most popular of your figures?

Let's say that these figures enjoy a stable sustainable interest. I decided to sculpt the crew as soon as I saw the first image of the movie preview on the Internet. I think I started sculpting on that very day. By the movie release, all figures were ready. However the movie itself didn't impress me so much and I didn't watch it for the 2nd time.

**AK.** In the world of 1/35 AFV Paper panzers and other What if subjects are gaining popularity in recent years. Do you plan to produce any figures for alternative history or reality?

Theoretically I know that there is such a topic; there are many works on the Internet, often very atmospherically looking. But I'm not in it. And if an artist does something that he doesn't like that much the result looks very schematic and simplistic. However, who knows what may happen in the future?

**AK.** What are your plans for the nearest future? Do you plan to release only figures or also expand the accessories line as well?

Usually I don't tell about my plans because somehow things that I plan eventually don't happen. And sometimes I don't know what idea will strike me tomorrow.

For sure, there will be expansion of the Vietnam topic (I'm working on the Sheridan crew) with some WW2 inclusions. I also consider other topics. I'd like to make something more comprehensive than two or three random figures. As for accessories, the weapon line will be expanded, but I'm not planning to focus specifically on diorama accessories.

**AK.** Many times I tried to learn painting figures. I read books, magazines, tried acrylics, oils, resin, plastic... Unfortunately my tanks still lack their crews. What's the secret of painting figures? Do you simply need more practice (no matter what colours) or is there something else that an armour modeller should learn?

I think that the main thing is to decide what the purpose of the figure is in the upcoming project. If we are talking about a crew member, the figure must fit the tank by its colour, tone, style to bring it to life. For example, you can take a perfectly painted figure and place it on an AFV model or diorama and it will look alien in that scenery. At the same time, a more humbly painted figure will look much more natural in the same scenery. Techniques of painting flesh and clothes must contrast with the finish of the armour subjects standing alongside with it. It will provide a needed contrast within the scene making it

much more interesting for perception. I think proficiency comes with practice.

**AK.** In recent years I started building bases for my models. For me it's always challenging to choose the proper size and placement of various elements. I read about general principles of diorama building, but doing it in real life is still a major problem for me. What is your advice in this regard?

While working with a base I follow the principle of necessity and sufficiency. It's applicable both for the general composition and placing details. When sketching I leave some "surplus" parameter values and then I start removing less important things until I'm left only with what is necessary to catch and implement the idea. Details must not be more important than the main idea. The size must also fit the idea. For example if a sufficient base size is 15 x 15 cm, I will not make it 16 x 16 cm. If three figures are enough, I will not add the forth figure. However every author has its own approach and a diorama may be stuffed with details to the very extreme, but still without excessive things and it will look great in total. You should use your own taste here.

Thank you for the interview and I'll be waiting for more cool kits!



