



Perspective / Opinion

Hot Lights, Cold Paint

By Paul Beinhoff – 3rd year medical student

Painting miniatures has been a part of my life since grade school. I wasn't someone who excelled in sports, academics, or socially. Regardless of my abilities, it allowed me to express myself creatively without having to reach someone else's standards. We often find ourselves with similar interests as our parents and I was no exception. My father grew up in the golden age of Dungeons and Dragons, Magic the Gathering, and Warhammer. While these pastimes often attracted followers due to lore, I was particularly drawn to the artistic representations of the fantasy world. I hope to eventually progress to reach a level worthy of competition, but I am gifted with a chance to make mistakes and try new techniques at my own pace. As medical students, we are often held to an unrealistic standard that we can't make mistakes and our merit is decided by others-sometimes within our control, often without.

The painting process itself is rather uncomplicated as compared to the scope of pursuable creativity. Acrylic or oil paints are selected from their most basic shades as tones can be easily adjusted. Airbrushes allow quick and smooth color transitions, but a sable brush allows for more control. Models are first assembled, sculpted as needed with epoxy, and cleaned. A base coat of primer is then necessary to adhere future coats of paint. This is often done with white, black, and grey in a "zenithal" fashion to build lighter tones from the light source. Base coats are then applied, with desirable alterations in highlights and shadows. Different shades of base coats can be adjusted with feathering, glazing, dry-brushing, or wet blending. Basing material is glued and painted to standard. A final varnish coat is then necessary, coating the entire model to preserve the paint and protect against trauma.

Since starting medical school, I've had to re-invent my own meaning of wellness, particularly during the pandemic. What often set my experience apart from others was an eventual realization that the pandemic was an opportunity to make positive changes for myself. With virtual lectures, I was able to paint while on call with my classmates for hours. I couldn't escape my academic obligations forever, but painting until the sun rose gave me hope that there was something more waiting for me outside of medicine. I had previously lived under the impression that medicine was a greater calling that should represent my identity. I've come to understand now that who I am as a painter is who I want to be as a physician instead-someone who is perceptive, patient, and willing to try new things.

Paul Beinhoff is in the MCW-Milwaukee Class of 2023. He is an avid painter of figurines. Some of his work is seen below:



