

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF  
**FLOORCLOTHS**

DESIGNS & TECHNIQUES  
FOR PAINTING  
GREAT-LOOKING  
CANVAS RUGS

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Top left: George Shinn, *Gold Dust*, 52" x 52" (1.3 x 1.3 m),  
stenciled mirror-image repeat acrylics  
Photograph: Photocraft Lab

Top right: Kiki Farish and Carol Massenbug, *Bee Balm &  
Butterflies*, 2' x 3' (61 x 91.5 cm), stenciled and glazed acrylics  
Photograph: J. W. Photo Labs

Bottom: Shari Cornish, *Recognize Anybody?*, 34" x 60"  
(9 x 1.5 m), silk-screened fabric pigment on industrial felt  
Photograph: B. Miller



## INTRODUCTION

TO CONTEMPORARY DECORATORS, the floorcloth is a fashionable alternative to area rugs, a way to splash color and design across a living space. Historians, on the other hand, are apt to view painted canvas as a poor man's carpet, used during this country's early years as an inexpensive yet practical floor covering.

Having evolved from a handcraft of the 1700s to a manufactured product of the 1800s, then abandoned in favor of linoleum at the turn of the century, today floorcloths have come full circle: Once again they're the province of individual artists, blending the best of their legacy of craftsmanship with the design, materials, and production techniques of contemporary society.

Most of today's floorcloth makers are self-taught. Some use methods similar to those employed in previous centuries, while others prefer modern materials that offer design options our predecessors did not enjoy. Many approaches produce satisfactory results, though the ease of application and resulting rug characteristics may vary.

All floorcloths—a word we use interchangeably with the term *rugs* throughout the book—are made by laying down on canvas coats of primer, paint, and sealer, one on top of the other. To be durable and age well, these layers must be compatible. For this reason, in this book we have designated the use of contemporary, water-based products. (We have, however, sought to explain the characteristics of these as well as alternative materials in order to provide as much insight as possible into the painting process.) Not only are water-based primers, paints, and



Carmon Slater, Napoli, 39' x 57'  
(1 x 1.4 m), applied pigments  
Photograph: Pete Kumbhart



larger panel. Your full canvas needs to be able to lie flat on the work surface with enough extra space around the canvas to make it convenient to handle.

A separate small table or shelf for paints and tools is also helpful if you're working above the floor.

Adequate ventilation is important, even for a home project made with acrylic paints. Choose a space that can be well ventilated; it's a good idea to keep a fan running to circulate the air, but don't let it blow directly on your work. For any technique that might create airborne particles or fumes, such as airbrushing or spray painting, move your work space into the open air and use a respirator.

With these few preparations in place, you're ready to begin making your own floorcloths.



Top: Shari Cornish, *Lulu's Day Off*, 39" x 42" (99 x 106.5 cm), silk-screened fabric pigment on industrial felt  
Photograph: B. Miller

Bottom: Hilary Law, *Untitled*, 60" x 62" (1.5 x 1.6 m), hand-painted acrylics and latex  
Photograph: David Coras

Right: Heather Allen, *23 Broomfield*, 47" x 72" (1.2 x 1.8 m), hand-painted and silk-screened acrylics, textile inks, and colored pencils  
Photograph: John Lucas



## ON AND OFF THE FLOOR

### OTHER USES

*In addition to floorcloths, painted canvas translates beautifully into such unique and practical "linens" as place mats, table runners, and dresser scarves. To make a mat or runner, follow the same steps outlined for a rug, but cut the canvas to fit the new application, making sure to allow extra length and width to accommodate shrinkage and hemming.*

*Painted canvas also can be sewn into pillows, chair covers, slings for director's chairs, beachboards, lamp shades, or upholstery. When sealed or protected with a commercial spray stain inhibitor, canvas is versatile and wipes clean with a damp sponge.*

### OTHER TREATMENTS

*Traditional floorcloths attain their beauty from painted designs. However, canvas also can be painted, cut into strips and woven, stitched and appliquéd to add visual and textural interest.*



Top: Rhonda Kaplan, *Double Border Tulip*, 5' x 7' (1.5 x 2.1 m), hand-painted latex  
Photograph: Shelley Noble

Bottom left: Fran Rubinstein, *Tazmania*, director's chair, 36" H x 25"W x 18"D (91.5 x 63.5 x 45.5 cm), hand-painted acrylics  
Photograph: Bill Lemke

Bottom right: Shari Cornish, *Xs and Os*, 34" x 38" (86.5 x 96.5 cm), silkscreened fabric pigment on industrial felt  
Photograph: B. Miller



This is particularly advantageous with runners and large rugs, where flipping could inadvertently lead to folding, which might crease or crack the rug.

Ship the rolled rug inside another tube or a box. The outer container should closely match the dimensions of the rolled piece in order to prevent unnecessary movement of the rug. Boxes from fluorescent light tubes and the corrugated tubes that are used as cement forms are both handy for shipping smaller rugs.

A very large canvas may need to be shipped by freight. For freight shipment, roll the floorcloth onto a tube and pack it within a larger plastic pipe. Tape the ends securely. The package is likely to be transported on a forklift, so take the time to pack it well.

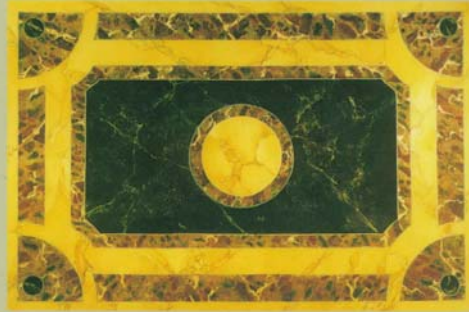


Top: Susan Kee, *Purple Vanity*, 5' x 6' (1.5 x 1.8 m), stenciled, drybrushed, ragged, and sponged latex and acrylics with textured overlays  
Photograph: Dale Roddick

Bottom: Shari Cornish, *Househeads #2*, 58" x 72" (1.5 x 1.8 m), silk-screened fabric pigment on industrial felt  
Photograph: B. Miller

With just a piece of canvas, some water-based paints, a sewing machine, and a few basic painting tools, you'll be well on your way to creating an exciting new floor covering for your home. In this book you will find

all the information and design inspiration you need to make your own beautiful floorcloths. Complete instructions—with illustrations and color photographs—will guide your progress, and works by 65 floorcloth artists will spark your imagination. You can explore the fascinating history of floorcloths and learn the experts' secrets for planning their designs. In addition to a wide variety of surface design techniques, you'll also find 10 floorcloth projects, each fully illustrated and described in step-by-step detail.



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