

The Painted Floor Cloth:

An alternative to
traditional flooring
materials.



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Start from the ground up, whether meant figuratively or literally, is good advice for anyone starting any project. In regards to medieval architecture it is especially relevant. What better way to plant your feet in medieval times than by standing on a medieval floor? Floors give the overall background to the setting. Even though nobody may be able to put a finger on it at first, floors add the kind of detail that can determine if the whole “aura,” whether the setting “feels” right.

Period floors: We have several options: wood—could be from any period, stone—too cumbersome, mosaics—too expensive, inlaid marble—too heavy, parquetry—too tedious, Persian rugs—too hard to clean. As you can see, many of these period floors enjoy and share these multiple setbacks. For those who would settle for a “**period looking**” floor options, I believe I have an answer—the floor cloth, which is basically a painted canvas rug. No matter what space you’re creating, you are starting with a blank canvas that allows you to create the atmosphere you desire.

Hints:

1. Research the floor type for your structure. Do not be surprised if you find many patterns used in contemporary quilts. This will be an advantage since often templates and stencils for these are

available at local craft stores.

You may also find many period floor panels still being reproduced as tiles and linoleum at your local hardware store. By purchasing a sample tile or a sample scrap of linoleum and cutting along the lines, you have just bought a pattern template for your floor.

2. The life span of your floor cloth will depend largely on its life style. A light coat of liquid wax will help extend life.

3. Persons making platforms or sectioned floors for buildings may want to consider mounting the canvas right to the surface, stretching it as if you were stretching a canvas.

4. If sectioning, pick or adjust the pattern so that seams in the painted pattern match the seams or cracks in the real pattern. This should also be done if you have to piece canvasses together to create a certain size.

5. Stick to medium colors: they show dirt and cracks less.

6. Use flat or semi-gloss finish polyurethanes for the final coat. Even if you want a polished marble floor, using high gloss may leave you with a linoleum-looking effect.

7. Marbleizing works great. Kits are available at stores. Make sure you practice first.

8. You may buy either plain or primed canvas. Plain canvas can be primed with cheap white water based paint. Professional canvas primer is expensive. When you consider time and money, you may decide that professionally pre-primed canvas is the better deal. My sources indicate that pre-primed canvas costs \$1.50-\$2.00 more per yard.

9. Floor cloths will crack, and this is probably their biggest drawback. Try not to roll your floor cloth. Touch-ups can be done by painting over areas of missing paint and applying polyurethane to the area. It is a good idea to apply another coat of polyurethane every year.

Materials:

1. Figure the amount of canvas needed, plus a 1 1/2" border all around it.

2. If canvas is unprimed, paint and large brushes to prime it.

3. Water based interior paint in the background color you desire.

4. A wide variety of paint brushes from large to small.

5. Pencil.

6. Measuring tape/ruler.

7. Masking tape helps keep edges neat, BUT ONLY IF you apply the masking tape in straight lines and when the paint it's being applied over is dry!

8. Acrylic artist paints in the necessary colors, (or marbleizing kits).

9. Polyurethane (flat or semi-gloss)

10. White glue.



Making your floor cloth:

1. Cut your canvas (piece together if necessary), remembering the 1 1/2" border.

2. Lay the canvas out on a clean floor. Prime if necessary. If priming, you may need two coats, and make sure the paint is thoroughly dry before you start.

3. Mark off the 1 1/2" border. All steps will now refer to the shape at the center of this border. It will be called "the rug".

4. Paint the rug with your background color, and let dry thoroughly. You may need more than one coat.

5. Transfer your pattern to the rug.

6. Paint your design starting with the predominant color. Make sure you mix enough of each color if you're not using a straight tube color.

7. Let dry thoroughly, as undisturbed as possible.

8. Apply 2-3 coats of polyurethane, let dry thoroughly.

9. Flip the entire piece over and use white glue to glue down the border, and let it dry.

10. Touch up as in the upkeep process described above.