

The University of North Carolina
at Greensboro

JACKSON LIBRARY



CQ

no. 1338

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

LA MAR, DEBORAH DEAL. Floorcloths Made Using the Acrylic Polymer Medium. (1975) Directed by: Dr. Clara Ridder. Pp. 38.

A new alternative to routine wall to wall carpet is available in the painted canvas floorcloth. Originally made by eighteenth century craftsmen, the floorcloth and the process for making it had been almost forgotten in the passage of time. The uniqueness and versatility of these painted canvas carpets makes them a refreshing choice of floor covering material.

The purpose of this study was to create some fresh original patterns and to execute some contemporary floorcloths designed for use in modern interiors. Materials and finishes sturdy enough to work well in floorcloth form were selected and used in the execution of the floorcloths.

Literature was searched for information about methods of manufacture, materials, and patterns or designs used by the earlier craftsmen who made floorcloths. A visit was made to the only known source of floorcloths produced today and designs were seen but no information on the method of manufacture of these floorcloths was revealed.

The acrylic polymer paints and gesso were selected for their flexibility when dry and for their satisfactory appearance. Three floorcloths were created in original designs drawn for use in modern environments. The procedure for making floorcloths was explained. Color photographs were made to illustrate the individual discussion of each floorcloth.

M

FLOORCLOTHS MADE USING THE ACRYLIC

POLYMER MEDIUM

This thesis has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of
North Carolina at Greensboro.

by

Deborah Deal La Mar

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Home Economics

Greensboro
1975

Approved by

Clara Ridder
Thesis Adviser

July 27, 1975
Date of Oral Examination

7

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The assistance of the thesis adviser upon this work
an enjoyable journey. Thanks with much grati-
tude are extended to Dr. Clara Ridder.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of
North Carolina at Greensboro.

Special thanks to the author's husband for his con-
sistent and aid in accomplishing the travel necessary
to complete the research for this study.

Thesis
Adviser

Clara Ridder

Committee Members

Pauline E. Keene
W. Hugh Hagan

July 22, 1975
Date of Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The assistance of the thesis adviser made this work an enjoyable learning experience. Thanks with much gratitude are extended to Dr. Clara Ridder.

For their excellent suggestions, many thanks to the advisory committee members, Dr. Pauline Keeney and Dr. W. Hugh Hagan.

Special thanks to the author's husband for his encouragement and aid in accomplishing the travel necessary to complete the research for this study.

The Materials	15
The Procedure for Making Floorcloths	19
Preparation of the Canvas	17
Application of Design and Color	20
Finishing Steps	20
The Designer: Three Floorcloths	22
Floorcloth I: "Shadow Play"	23
Floorcloth II: "Tetrad"	24
Floorcloth III: "Aquet"	25
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	28
CONFERENCES	28
APPENDIX: SOURCES AND BRANDS OF MATERIALS USED IN THIS STUDY TO MAKE FLOORCLOTHS	29

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	3
III. PROCEDURE	14
IV. RESULTS: FLOORCLOTHS MADE USING ACRYLIC POLYMER PAINT AND SIZING	16
The Materials	16
The Procedure for Making Floorcloths.	19
Preparation of the Canvas.	19
Application of Design and Color.	20
Finishing Steps	20
The Designs: Three Floorcloths	22
Floorcloth I: "Shadow Play"	23
Floorcloth II: "Tetrad".	26
Floorcloth III: "Aspen"	29
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY	35
CORRESPONDENCE	36
APPENDIX: SOURCES AND BRANDS OF MATERIALS USED IN THIS STUDY TO MAKE FLOORCLOTHS.	37

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: "Shadow Play"	24
Figure 2: Detail of "Shadow Play"	25
Figure 3: "Tetrad"	27
Figure 4: Detail of "Tetrad"	28
Figure 5: "Aspen"	30
Figure 6: "Aspen": Recommended Viewing Angle.	31

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Pile carpeting has been popular for such a long time that it has become the staple floor covering, often used wall to wall, and a very predictable part of almost all interiors in this country. Designers are constantly seeking alternatives to any facet of the interior environment which becomes stale from over use. Since wall to wall use of carpeting is so common today, variations of pile height or even "stunning new colors" offered on a yearly basis do not constitute a major change. A fresh, innovative floor covering which could open new dimensions in carpets is one without any pile at all. It is a painted canvas rug called a floorcloth which had its origins in the eighteenth century, enjoyed wide popularity, and since then, has been almost forgotten.

On considering, it seemed to the author that the uniqueness of design and the potential versatility of the floorcloth offered a new design facet of floor coverings which should be exploited to the fullest.

The purpose of this study was to create some fresh original patterns designed for use in modern interiors and to execute some contemporary floorcloths. Materials and

finishes sturdy enough to work well in floorcloth form were selected and used in the execution of the floorcloths.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Painted floorcloths are preserved in the form of the original which illustrate the colors and patterns. The literature of the period, including the personal recollections of the artist, letters, notes, and sketches, notes the craftsmen, materials, and methods as well as additional literature.

Floorcloths are preserved in England in the form of the original which illustrate the colors and patterns. The literature of the period, including the personal recollections of the artist, letters, notes, and sketches, notes the craftsmen, materials, and methods as well as additional literature.

Floorcloths are preserved in England in the form of the original which illustrate the colors and patterns. The literature of the period, including the personal recollections of the artist, letters, notes, and sketches, notes the craftsmen, materials, and methods as well as additional literature.

All of the floorcloths known were made in the form of the original which illustrate the colors and patterns. The literature of the period, including the personal recollections of the artist, letters, notes, and sketches, notes the craftsmen, materials, and methods as well as additional literature.

The canvas being stretched on a frame give it a layer of size which is then covered with a pattern.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Earliest floorcloths are preserved in paintings of the era which illustrate the colors and patterns. The literature of the period--newspapers, business records, personal recollections in the form of letters, diaries, and autobiographies, notes the craftsmen, materials, and methods used as well as additional patterns.

Floorcloths for use underfoot originated in England and spread to the colonies. Methods from both sides of the Atlantic have been preserved. (10:11-12)

Amateurs as well as professional craftsmen made floorcloths. However, "Most of the floorcloths made in this country were the work of professionals who combined the business of carpet painting with that of coach, house, and sign painting and the sale of paints and supplies." (10:12) The remainder of floorcloths had creators in varied stations of life from indentured servant to housewife. (10:12)

All of the earliest floorcloths known were made in a manner similar to the basic directions given in a publication called The Golden Cabinet printed in Philadelphia in 1793:

The canvas being stretched on a frame give it a layer of size of paste water, then go over it with a pumice

stone to smoothe off the knots. By means of the size the little threads and hairs are all laid close on the cloth, and the little holes filled up, so that no colour can pass through. When the cloth is dry lay on okre in oil which may be mixed with white lead to make it dry sooner. When dry go over it again with pumice to make smoothe...on this first draw the picture with a coal then lay on the colours. The use of a little honey mixed with the size will prevent cracking, peeling and breaking out. (5:23)

The Braverter Gray account book contains a recipe for making floorcloths:

How to Make Oil Cloth--Take a drying oil, set it over the fire and then desolve Rison (sic) in it (or better gum Lac), there must be so much of either as will bring the consistence of a balsam. Then add any colour to it you choose. (4:76)

These directions seem to indicate that the one mixture was used as sizing, color and finishing material.

Among the more famous professional firms using the former method for making floorcloths was the Boston firm of Daniel Rea and Son and its predecessor, the partnership of Rea and Johnston. (10:13) The Reas and Johnston painted plain and figured floorcloths according to the firm's accounts and daybooks. As an example, entries on September 7, 1791 note an order for "Painting a Floor Cloath Plain Yellow" while that of August 5, 1794 calls for "Painting a Floor Cloath Olive Colour with Border and Center piece Corners and c." Even more elaborate patterns were done as is shown by the entry of September 3, 1771: "To Paintg. 4 yds of Canvas Turkey Fatchion--To do. yds. Stair Case & Entry." (10:13) Similar entries describe painting other patterns such as straw work, cubes,

yellow and black diamonds with border, and even "To Painting a Room and Entry Floor Cloath 35 yds. @2/8 with a Poosey-Cat on One Cloath and a Leetel Spannill on ye. Other Frenchman Like." (10:14)

The transactions of the Rea and Johnston families, very competent decorators of Boston, recorded in the firm's account books of 1773 through 1789 supply descriptions of "floor cloathes" painted to order. These notations record the patterns favored in the late eighteenth century. One carpet was to be painted plain with a border while another was painted in cubes. Diamonds were popular in contrasting colors as an order for a floorcloth in a yellow and black combination indicates. Others were painted in imitation of Turkey, Wilton, and Brussels carpeting. (5:21)

Other American artisans made floorcloths as a letter from Mr. T. Tenney of Exeter, New Hampshire to D. Gilman, Boston merchant shows:

Sir--I am much obliged by your attention in sending me so particularly the different prices of painted carpets...we...should prefer the yellowish ground & purple or black and white figures, to one with a plain ground--the figure I leave entirely to your discretion... (5:18)

The making of a homemade floorcloth from conception of the idea on is described in the Autobiography of Lyman Beecher - Volume I:

We had no carpets; there was not a carpet from end to end of the town...Your mother introduced the first carpet. Uncle Lot gave me some money, and I had an itch to spend it. Went to a vendue, and bought a bale

of cotton. She spun it, and had it woven; then she laid it down, sized it, and painted it in oils, with a border all around it, and bunches of roses and other flowers over the centre. The carpet was nailed down to the garret floor and she used to go up there and paint. (5:22)

The English also improved upon the slower freehand method of floorcloth painting by introducing stenciling which was faster and allowed increased variation in pattern and color. Equipment for this process consisted of "a cutting knife, color tub, trowel, and scraper for preparing the surface, several round brushes for applying paint, and tacks for securing the canvas to the straining frame." (5:17)

In 1825 Rufus Porter published simple directions for making floorcloths using the stencil method:

To paint in Figures For Carpets or Borders-- Take a sheet of pasteboard or strong paper, and paint thereon with a pencil any flower or figure that would be elegant for a border or carpet figure; then with small gouges and chisels, or a sharp penknife, cut out the figure completely, that it may be represented by apertures cut through the paper. Lay this pattern on the ground intended to receive the figure, whether a floor or painted cloth, and with a stiff smooth brush, paint with quick vibrative motion over the whole figure. Then take up the paper and you will have an entire figure on the ground. (5:76-77)

Block printing was the next process employed by floorcloth makers. It was initiated by Joseph Barnes of London between 1766 and 1773. (5:17) The firm of Smith and Baber of London stamped specially made canvas with a simple one color pattern of graduated wavy lines enclosed within sectioned off quarter squares. They used wooden

blocks with leather grips and transferred the design to the canvas by tapping the back of the block "smartly" with a wooden mallet. (5:17)

In the various old sets of directions for making floorcloths two steps are always emphasized for insuring success. They are to carefully smooth and size the surface before painting and to allow adequate time for the stretched fabric to dry and harden to prevent subsequent cracking. (5:23)

A New System of Domestic Cookery (Boston, 1807) adds other criteria to observe. It recommends the use of a fine fabric well covered with paint and a pattern which is kept close to the surface for durability. The floorcloths should be seasoned before using by hanging them in a dry barn or laying them down on the spare room floor. (5:23)

In addition to the directions, early patterns have been recorded in the literature of the era as well as the paintings of the time which give us the colors and illustrate the patterns graphically.

All over patterns of geometric shapes such as squares, octagons, and diamonds were eighteenth century favorites. (10:14) When color was added to these basic shapes additional patterns were possible: "checquered" patterns, cubes or pyramids.

Other allover designs imitated marble or tile floors. The patterned marble floors surviving from the eighteenth century indicate the appearance of the floorcloths which were painted to duplicate their graining and color exactly. (10:16-17)

An English book of designs for floors was another source of floorcloth patterns as indicated by the title page which is the only text of the book:

Various kinds of FLOOR DECORATIONS represented in both Plano and Perspective Being useful Designs for Ornamenting the Floors of Hall Rooms, Summer Houses, & c. whither in Pavements of Stone or Marble, or wth. Painted Floor Cloths, in Twenty four Copper Plates. Design'd and Engrav'd by John Carwitham, London. Printed for John Bowles at the Black Horse in Cornhill. (10:17)

The twenty-four designs illustrated in the Carwitham book range from simple patterns of squares to intricate compositions having a variety of shapes and textures. (1:49)

Other English craftsmen in the middle eighteenth century were painting canvases to represent woven carpets, tile pavements, or parquet floors. These canvas floor carpets were known for their utilitarian as well as their decorative merits. (5:16)

A letter from Mrs. John Adams to her sister dated September 5, 1784 describes the floor in her home in Auteuil near Paris and indicates a floorcloth pattern of her time: "...there was not a carpet belonging to the house. The floors I abhor, made of red tiles in the shape of Mrs. Quincy's floorcloth tiles." (10:18)

Carpet was imitated as the earlier reference to the floorcloth painted in "Turkey Fatchion" noted. Wilton carpeting also furnished a source for floorcloth patterning. The floor covering shown in the portrait Chief Justice and Mrs. Oliver Ellsworth painted in 1792 may be a woven or embroidered carpet or very possibly a painted floorcloth. The pattern of the floorcloth shown in the painting is stripes and medallions in black, red, orange, and white. "The alternating wide and narrow stripes on a black background are surrounded by a broad border of the same red circles that are dotted diagonally across the horizontal red lines of the wide stripes and between the medallions" which are white crossed with orange and enclose alternating rows of red and black circular centers. (10:19-20)

The Boy with Finch painting of about 1800 shows a child with a bird. The floor under the child's feet is covered with a painted canvas rug. The floorcloth pattern in this instance is a diaper design of blue, orange, and yellow on a brown background. (10:20)

There is an example of floral motifs used in an all-over design on the floorcloths shown in Joseph Steward's 1793 painting, Portrait of John Phillips. The floorcloth in the foreground of this work is done in simple stylized blossoms of four petals enclosed in rows of precise squares while the floorcloth in the background features "more complex conventionalized roses" also enclosed in squares. The

colors used in both carpets are olive green, yellow and russet for the motifs with a deep brown for the background color. (10:20)

Another floral floorcloth is shown in the 1801 watercolor portrait, Nathan Hawley and Family by William Wilkie:

The pattern is formed of large squares with leaf sprays at the crossing superimposed on flower filled diamonds. Colors are blue and brown on a cream ground. (10:21)

An 1809 inventory of the furnishings of the White House lists "a canvas floor cloth, painted Green in the small south front dining room". This was purchased by President Thomas Jefferson who explains the intended use of the carpet in a letter:

..."to Lay down on the floor of a dining room when the table is set and to be taken up when the table is removed, merely to secure a very handsome floor from grease and the scouring which that necessitates." (10:25)

Mrs. Abigail Adams outlines another use of floorcloths in a letter to her sister dated May 6, 1791:

I think my dear Sister that as it is coming Hot weather my oil cloth will do best for my parlour. I would wish to have it put down. (10:26)

Sizes of floorcloths varied from small to large area size or even to one "as square as the room" which appears to have been wall to wall. Floorcloths also covered stairs and entry ways. (10:24)

It was the first half of the nineteenth century in which American made floorcloths reached the highest level

of popularity. The tariff act made law in 1816 imposed a thirty percent duty on imported painted canvases and was one factor in promoting the popularity of domestic floorcloths. (5:22)

The patterns most used by American craftsmen for floorcloths were listed in the December 13, 1809 issue of the Connecticut Courant: Egyptian, Hieroglyphic, Rock, Bengal, Roman Pavement, and large Octagon pattern. (5:22) No matter if the design was a pattern or a plain color, all of the fine floorcloths were highly regarded for their convenience and durability. One announcement in the Hampshire Gazette (April 8, 1828) summarizes the attitude of the times concerning the painted canvases:

These carpets possess a decided advantage over all others, as they are more durable, and in warm weather much more comfortable, and easier to keep clean, and in hot climates the only kind that are not subject to injury from insects; in winter they may be covered with other carpeting without damage, and the room is kept warmer...Carpets cut to any size or shape...if with Border, several weeks will be required for drying. (5:24)

The next floorcloth known was made by Kenneth Wilson, curator of Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. It is presumed to be the first floorcloth produced in this country in almost a century. Wilson used modern materials and methods to create the reproduction floorcloth patterned after a painted carpet depicted in a portrait dated 1793. Wilson used number 6 cotton duck canvas. He recommended at least five coats of good, oil-base paint to

build up a satisfactory surface. Design was applied by the silk screen method using quick drying silk screen lacquer. A varnish which was flexible was used as the final coating. This varnish was not as subject to cracking as regular floor varnish. The type of varnish is termed "long" varnish, referring to its different chemical structure which permits greater flexibility. (5:24)

Wilson's reason for producing a floorcloth was to have an authentic eighteenth century floor covering to display in the dining room of the Salem Towne House in Old Sturbridge Village. He wanted an old-time effect and did not try to be innovative in design. (5:24)

Two other Wilsons were the next to work with developing floorcloths using more modern materials. John and Carol Wilson began marketing painted canvas carpets through their firm Floorcloth's, Incorporated in 1973. (7:131)

The Wilson's method was developed after five and a half years of research instigated by Leonard C. Crewe, Junior who wanted authentic floor coverings for his eighteenth century guest house. (7:131) The method itself, said to have reinvented floorcloths, is a highly secretive procedure. The only written reference to the process appears in a 1974 periodical:

The first stage involves preparing the canvas. Its weight and texture were determined after reading old books and studying the few floorcloths that survived. Next the Wilsons draw the designs on a flat

surface. They then take the canvas to the handmade loom where they paint the designs with oil paint. Last they add a coat of a clear protective material whose identity they keep a secret. (7:131)

The Wilsons' motivation is similar to that of Kenneth Wilson in that it was based on a desire to reproduce the original eighteenth century floor covering as exactly as possible for use in authentic residences and installations of the period.

The venture of John and Carol Wilson is different in two major respects. It is first a money-making enterprise, in fact, the livelihood of several people. Secondly, they have expanded their types of patterns to include some modern designs--almost totally floral in nature--offering these designs in custom colors of the purchaser's choice.

Floorcloth's, Incorporated is the last and only manufacturer of floorcloths today.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Artists or craftsmen tend to work intuitively and rather informally, often without keeping any written record of their progress or findings. In contrast to that tendency, an effort was made in this study to record how the floorcloths were designed and made so that other craftsmen could follow the same basic process if desired.

To find out how previous craftsmen had made floorcloths and what materials and patterns they had used, the literature was searched. The only firm known to be making floorcloths was visited.

Some literature on the properties of the acrylic polymer medium was studied and an assortment of acrylic polymer tube paints and a quantity of acrylic polymer gesso were selected. A source for heavy canvas was located. Canvas was selected. Vinyl varnish was chosen for its known properties of durability and flexibility.

Many designs were drawn. Several were selected as being suitable for use for floorcloths created especially for use in modern interiors.

Original floorcloths were made from the materials obtained using the designs selected. Each of these floorcloths was described in writing and color photographs were

taken of each completed floorcloth.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS: FLOORCLOTHS MADE USING ACRYLIC POLYMER PAINT AND SIZING

A number of contemporary designs suitable for floorcloths were created. From these, three designs particularly suited for floorcloths were selected. Acrylic polymer paints over glass were the selected medium used in the execution of the designs.

The Materials

Although all of the materials selected performed well, the acrylic polymer medium responded to handling exactly as the standard latex emulsion had predicted. The characteristics of acrylic emulsion in this literature were worth elaboration as these properties of the paint are the reasons the material performed so well in floorcloth form. It was found that the acrylic polymer or polymer emulsion has been widely used as a synthetic medium for several reasons:

1. The paints are water soluble when wet. Water is the element used both for thinning the paint and for clean-up of wet tools.
2. The paints can be thinned to the consistency of transparent water color or applied impasto-thick, drying rapidly in twenty minutes to two hours depending on

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS: FLOORCLOTHS MADE USING ACRYLIC
POLYMER PAINT AND SIZING

A number of contemporary designs suitable for floorcloths were created. From these, three designs particularly suited for floorcloths were selected. Acrylic polymer paints over gesso were the selected medium used in the execution of the designs.

The Materials

Although all of the materials selected performed well, the acrylic polymer medium responded to handling exactly as the standard texts consulted had predicted. The characteristics of acrylics noted in this literature were worth elaboration as these properties of the paint are the reasons the material performed so well in floorcloth form. It was found that the acrylic polymer or polymer tempera colors are the most widely used synthetic medium for several reasons:

1. The paints are water compatible when wet. Water is the element used both for thinning the paint and for clean-up of wet tools.
2. The paints can be thinned to the consistency of transparent water color or applied impasto-thick, drying rapidly in twenty minutes to two hours depending on

the thickness of the underpainting.

3. When using acrylic polymers it is not necessary to paint "fat over lean" as is the case with oils where each successive layer must contain a greater percentage of oil than the previous layer to avoid cracking. The polymer layers dry as a homogeneous mass, each layer when applied forms a chemical bond with those layers underneath.
4. Acrylic polymer colors are the same value wet or dry. This property makes it easy to mix fresh pigments to an exact match with dried colors.

In summary, artists generally have found acrylic polymer or polymer tempera paints to be resistant to the natural elements such as heat and light. (2:415-416)

It is noted in The Artist's Handbook by Mayer that the polymer colors are the first paints since oil colors to be flexible enough to use on canvas. These colors are a "boon to the painters to whom a high rate of production is important" due to their quick drying characteristic.

Mayer also comments on the flexibility of the acrylic polymers:

Polymer paint films have extraordinary flexibility, an almost rubbery elasticity which they retain without appreciable embrittlement for a long period of time during the same period of aging in which an oil-paint film would lose a measurable degree of its flexibility. (6:418-419)

A caution provided by Mayer is significant:

All brands of acrylic polymer colors are made from the same emulsion polymerized acrylic resin (Rhoplex A 34) but the variety of additives used to enhance working properties and stability (different ones from each manufacturer) could cause colors of different makes to curdle when intermixed. (6:419)

One may avoid this difficulty. Test colors by mixing the two thinned colors (cut 1:1 with water) on a piece of clear glass. Examine the mixture closely under a good light to detect curdling. More simply, one could use colors from one manufacturer only. (6:419)

The canvas used was a number four cotton duck canvas. This material was being used to produce products for industrial and outdoor uses. It was not ordinarily sold to the public.

The varnish was also noted generally for its durability, being made for use as a protective coating for wood used outside or any other material which was in need of a protective coating to guard against the natural elements such as sun and rain.

The Procedure for Making Floorcloths

Many potential floorcloth patterns were drawn and considered for use. Three designs were selected to be painted on the canvases and made into finished floorcloths.

Each design was titled. The section describing each floorcloth was headed by the title chosen for each work.

The steps followed in making each floorcloth were the same, so the basic procedure used in executing each of the three floorcloths is that which follows:

Preparation of the Canvas:

1. The canvas was stretched in the manner used by artists who ordinarily pull and tack canvas onto stretchers (a wooden frame made for this purpose). The difference in this instance was that the canvas was stretched flat by tacking it onto a sheet of plywood.
2. The stretched canvas then received two coats of thinned gesso. (Thin to the proportion five parts gesso: one part water) About two and a half cups of gesso were blended with one half cup of water to make the right consistency. The first coat was brushed with the cross-wise grain of the canvas. After that coat dried, the second coat was applied, brushing with the lengthwise grain of the canvas.
3. One coat of ground color was applied. Any color may be used. In this study, white was selected for all works.

Application of Design and Color:

1. The design was transferred to the prepared painted surface of the canvas by lightly sketching freehand with a soft lead pencil.
2. The design was painted on the canvas as sketched. Several sizes of camel's hair brushes were used to apply the various colors.
3. Some areas were repainted to obtain the desired effect.

Finishing Steps:

1. The canvas was removed from the plywood. The canvas could have been removed from the plywood any time after the gesso had dried. The time that it is removed is up to the individual craftsman's preference.
2. The canvas was trimmed inside the line of tack holes made when the canvas was nailed to the plywood for stretching. Care was taken to be sure the edges of the fabric were cleanly cut and straight. It was found that lightweight plastic-handled scissors worked very well for cutting the heavy canvas, being somewhat easier to handle than a mat knife on this tough material.
3. Two coats of vinyl varnish were applied. This material was applied over the edges of the canvas to seal them. For extra durability, additional coats of varnish may be applied.

4. The back of the dried floorcloth may be sprayed with an aerosol acrylic sealant. One coat was applied to each of the three floorcloths done for this study.

The designs were abstract. The lines were clean and formed well defined spaces. Colors for each design were nearly clean and bright.

The source that inspired each of the designs was different. Two were done from photographs, but one was of geometric and abstract objects while the other was a landscape. The third source was a natural occurrence observed and recorded by the author.

The materials for all three designs were the same: canvas, acrylic colors, gesso, and vinyl varnish.

The color schemes for the designs were selected to be different. The range of colors from pastel tones to the strong primary tones were represented in the three color combinations selected.

The floorcloths were titled. Each floorcloth is discussed separately under the title of the work in the following pages.

The Designs: Three Floorcloths

The designs selected from the many which were drawn have several characteristics in common. They were all abstract patterns. The lines were clean and formed well defined spaces. Colors for each design were mostly clear and bright.

The source that inspired each of the designs was different. Two were done from photographs, but one was of inanimate and animate objects while the other was a landscape. The third source was a natural occurrence observed and recorded by the author.

The materials for all three designs were the same: canvas, acrylic colors, gesso, and vinyl varnish.

The color schemes for the designs were selected to be different. The range of colors from pastel tones to the strong primary tones were represented in the three color combinations selected.

The floorcloths were titled. Each floorcloth is discussed separately under the title of the work in the following pages.

Floorcloth I: "Shadow Play":

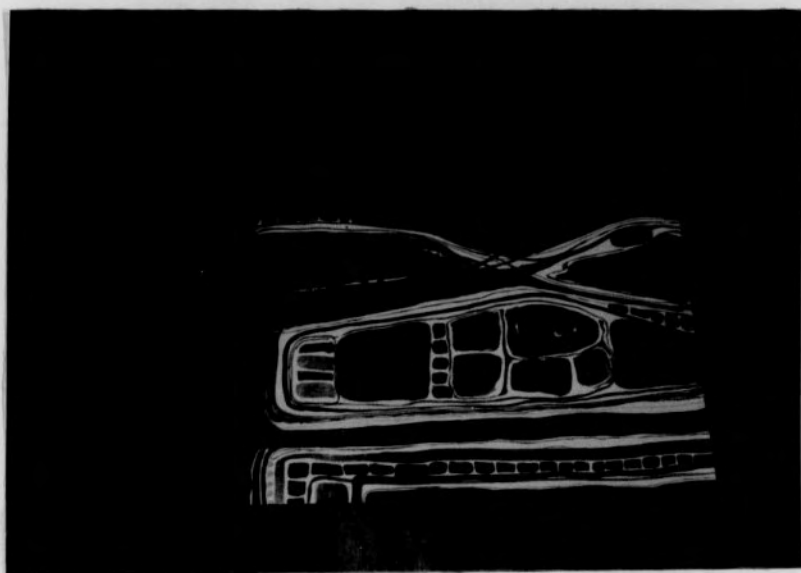
A cast shadow formed by light acting on a chair was observed falling across a portion of the stretched canvas. The chair and the canvas were adjusted to allow a pleasing composition of light and dark formed by the shadow to be centered on the canvas.

The outline of forms was sketched on the canvas with a soft pencil.

This basic outline was the framework used for applying the major areas of color, the blue and the white portions of the canvas. (See Figure 1) The red forms developed as the need for a balance for the strong areas of blue was evident. The outlines of brown, green, and less intense blue unite the isolated areas of red and brown forms on the white field.

The design formed does not portray the original composition of lights and darks "painted" on the canvas by the shadow but stands as an outgrowth of the original forms and a strong design in its own right.

The vibrant primary colors used in this composition and the dark background would make it especially attractive against a neutral background. It is easy to visualize this floorcloth used on a terra cotta tile floor in an entry of a modern residence or as an area rug on a natural finish wood floor.



"Shadow Play"

Figure 1

Distaloid, D. T. T. T. T. T.

The image of the white surface was registered by the shape of the white surface and the black surface in a 1955 study.

"Tectad"

surface of

surface of

surface of

black lines

of the surface

The

refers to the

line above

white surface

The

surface of

of a surface

area and in

your surface.

"Tectad"

elements of light

and dark

also be the focal point



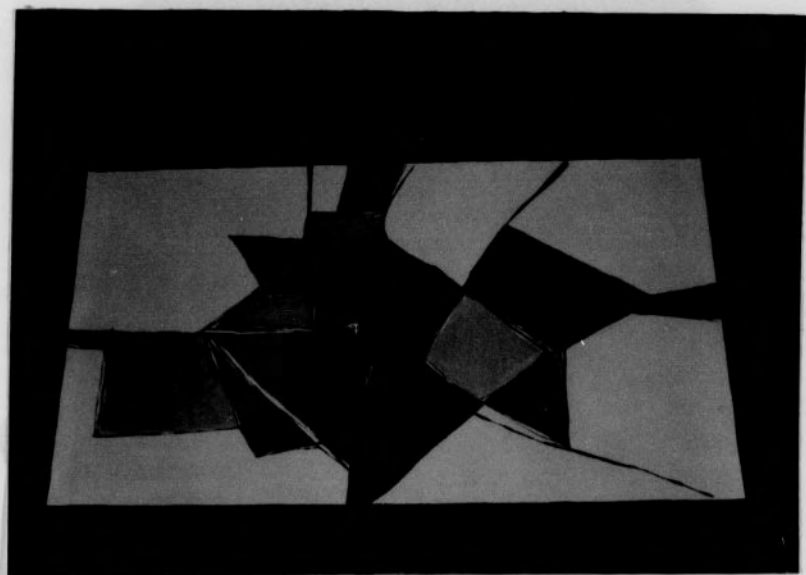
Detail of "Shadow Play"

Floorcloth II: "Tetrad":

The forms for this design were suggested by the shapes of the street features and the human figures in a 1953 photograph by Henre Cartier-Bresson called "Abruzzi". The photograph recorded the space and quiet movement in a street of a small town in the mountainous Abruzzi region of Italy. The floorcloth design is very flat and conveys its movement by the strong network of black lines connecting the forms and by the positioning of the colored spaces against the white field.

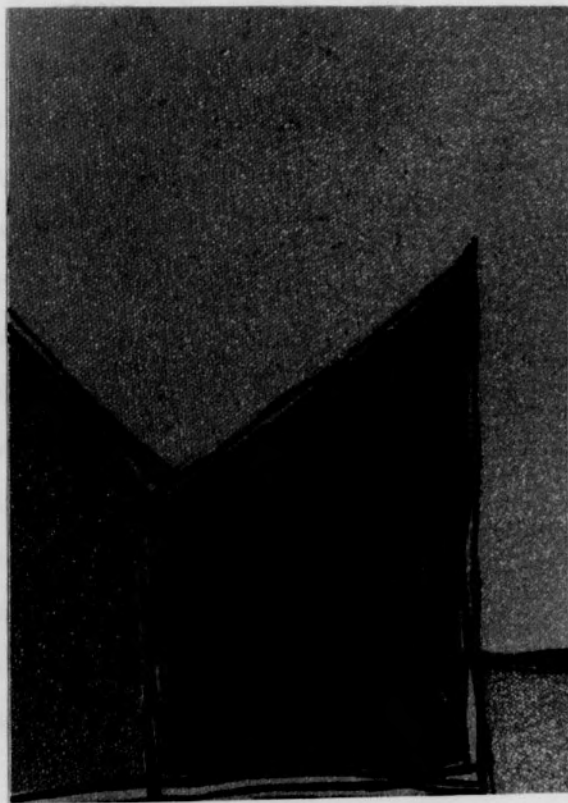
The title "Tetrad" chosen for this second work refers to the fact that the composition is rendered in five colors: rust, clear yellow, teal, and brass on a white ground. (See Figures 3 and 4)

"Tetrad" would be an effective introduction to a contemporary interior if it were used in the entry area of a business or residence. Another use might be that of area rug in a kitchen which was done in white with natural wood accents. The rich tones of the colors used in the "Tetrad" design would also work well with the natural elements of light and green plants which are found in garden rooms. This very versatile contemporary design could also be the focal point in a masculine study.



"Tetrad"

Figure 3



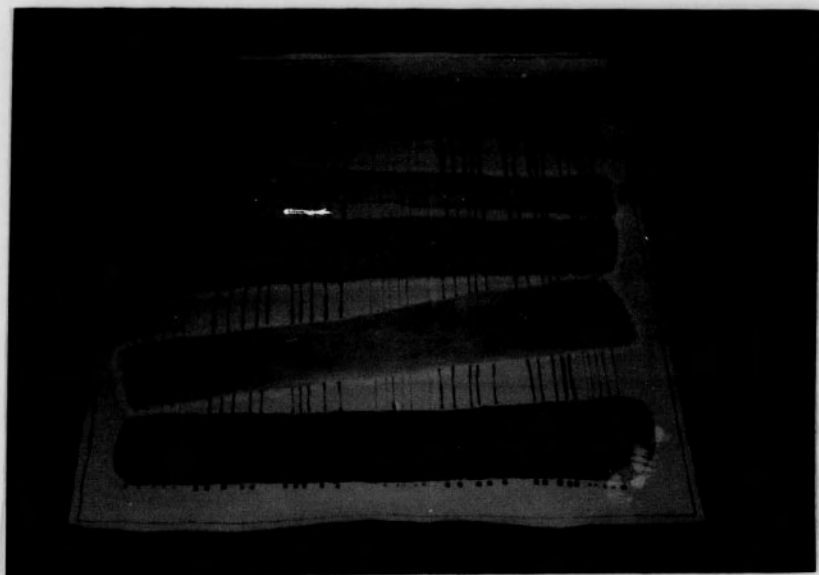
Detail of "Tetrad"

Floorcloth III: "Aspen":

The inspiration for this final floorcloth design was the Ansel Adams photograph entitled "Aspens near Santa Fe, New Mexico" (1958). The vertical forms in the design of the floorcloth were roughly translated from the formation of trees which appear in the photograph. These elongated rectangular forms are the dominant shapes of the composition. Subtle horizontal lines ending in dots connect the major forms. The secondary forms are done in more concentrated colors. (See Figure 5)

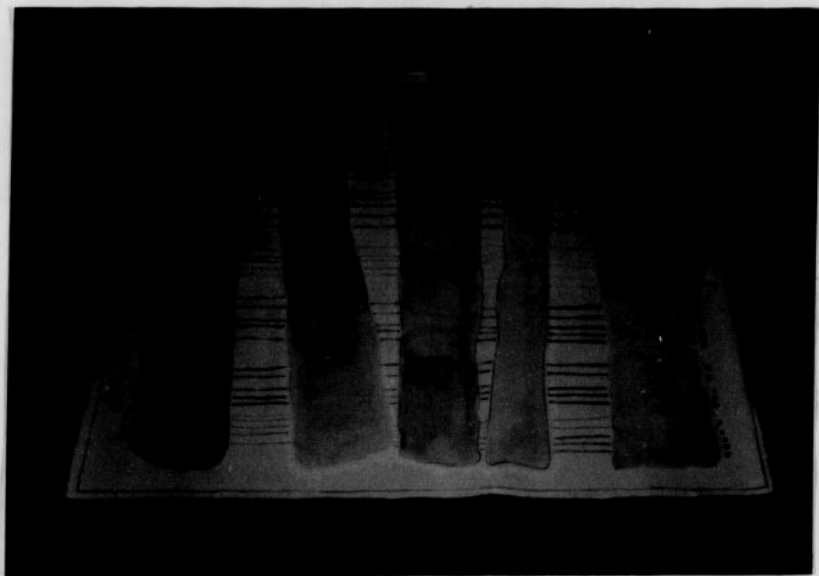
The square format of the floorcloth permitted viewing from a number of angles, each allowing a pleasing design to unfold for the viewer. The intended viewing angle is indicated in the photograph on page 31. (See Figure 6)

Being a square, this design could be used on a hard surface floor in the center of an intimate seating group composed of modern upholstered pieces. One can just as easily picture this painted canvas used in a garden room surrounded with wicker furniture cushioned in fabrics which echo the tones of the design. It could also be very effective used in a room with natural wood floors and stucco walls. The contrast between the irregular texture of the rough plaster and the hard gloss surface of the floorcloth could be very pleasing.



"Aspen"

Figure 5



"Aspen": Recommended Viewing Angle

Figure 6

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It appears that exciting new dimensions in floor coverings are possible through the revival of the eighteenth century favorite, the painted canvas rug called the floorcloth. This form of carpet is one of those fresh concepts that designers seek to replace any elements of the interior which are stale from over use or boring with a mass produced sort of familiarity.

The designs selected from the many drawn were modern with clean-lined forms. Three floorcloths were designed and made using acrylic polymer paints over gesso on heavy weight canvas finished with vinyl varnish.

The three designs selected for this study represented only the tiniest segment of the countless number of patterns which could have been used. A floorcloth can have any design which can be applied with paint. The design possibilities as a whole for floorcloths are limited only by the boundaries of the imagination of the craftsman who creates them. A creative designer would execute floorcloths customized for his client's particular tastes and spaces.

Original designs on canvas treated in the manner suggested for floorcloths could also be used as wall hangings. This opens a new application for artists, particu-

larly interior designers who may be seeking to create a special effect.

Expanding on the wall hanging usage possibility, it should be noted that collage of textured materials or natural objects would be possible in conjunction with the painted surface regularly associated with floorcloths as the properties of the acrylic medium and the sturdiness of the canvas certainly permit. Practically any fairly flat material would adhere well using the clear polymer liquid.

Another natural progression in thought leads one to consider floorcloths done with macrame inserts. It is entirely feasible. The heavy canvas would support the additional weight and the cords of the macrame would be laced into holes made in an appropriate area of the design. Of course, such finished cloths could not be used on the floor as well as they could be displayed on the wall as the surface of the macrame cords would not wear as well as the canvas.

It is known that floorcloths require a hard smooth surface underneath to support them and to prevent extensive cracking from occurring. With today's growing popularity of natural wood, parquet, tile and stone floorings which are all hard smooth surfaces, floorcloths in modern designs could be used to accent a portion of the already attractive floor.

The floorcloth can be a fresh, exciting and innovative element of the interior environment, providing a feeling of art underfoot.

1. Consterck, Helen. "Eighteenth Century Floorcloths". Antiques, January, 1933. Volume 27: Pp. 28-29.
2. Faulkner, Kay and Siegfried, Edith. Art Today. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969.
3. Guttenberg, Rita Susswals. The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1726-1776. New York: The New York Historical Society, 1938.
4. Little, Nina Fletcher. American Decorative Wall Papering 1700-1875. New York: Studio Publications, 1932.
5. Little, Nina Fletcher. Floor Coverings in New England Before 1850. Connecticut: Meriden Graphic Company, 1947.
6. Hayes, Ralph. The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques. New York: The Viking Press, 1912.
7. "Painted Canvas Floorcloths and the 18th Century House That Inspired Their Revival". House and Garden, April, 1974. Volume 143, Number 4, Pp. 72-77.
8. "Painted Patterns on Floorcloths and on Floors". House and Garden Decoration Guide. Fall, 1974. Pp. 118-136.
9. "Preserving the Past is a Gift for the Future". House and Garden. November, 1974. Volume 144, Number 5, Pp. 72-77.
10. Roth, Rosalie. Floorcoverings in 18th Century America. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1957.
11. Wingard, Isabel B. Textile Fabrics and Their Selection. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Comstock, Helen. "Eighteenth Century Floorcloths". Antiques, January, 1955. Volume 67: Pp.48-49.
2. Faulkner, Ray and Ziegfield, Edwin. Art Today. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969.
3. Gottesman, Rita Susswein. The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1726-1776. New York: The New York Historical Society, 1938.
4. Little, Nina Fletcher. American Decorative Wall Painting 1700-1776. New York: Studio Publications, 1952.
5. Little, Nina Fletcher. Floor Coverings in New England Before 1850. Connecticut: Mariden Gravure Company, 1967.
6. Mayer, Ralph. The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques. New York: The Viking Press, 1972.
7. "Painted Canvas Floorcloths and the 18th Century House That Inspired Their Revival". House and Garden, April, 1974. Volume 145, Number 4, Pp. 72-77.
8. "Painted Pattern on Floorcloths and on Floors". House and Garden Decorating Guide. Fall, 1974. Pp. 128-138.
9. "Preserving the Past is a Gift for the Future". House and Garden. November, 1974. Volume 146, Number 5, Pp. 72-77.
10. Roth, Rodris. Floorcoverings in 18th Century America. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1967.
11. Wingate, Isabel B. Textile Fabrics and Their Selection. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. James E. Dougherty, Director
Technical Services Division
Fieldcrest Mills, Incorporated
Eden
North Carolina 27288
2. Charles F. Hummel, Curator
Winterthur
Winterthur
Delaware 19735
3. Mary Kerr
Cooper Hewitt Museum of Design
9 East 90th Street
New York
New York 10028
4. Anne McKenrick, Vice President of Sales
Floorcloths, Incorporated
109 Main Street
Annapolis
Maryland 21401
5. Anndora Morginson, Research Assistant
Department of Textiles
The Art Institute of Chicago
Michigan Avenue at Adams Street
Chicago
Illinois 60603
6. The New York Historical Society
170 Central Park West
New York
New York 10024

APPENDIX: SOURCES AND BRANDS OF MATERIALS
USED IN THIS STUDY TO MAKE FLOORCLOTHS

The Paints

GRUMBACHER HYPLAR ACRYLIC POLYMER PLASTIC COLORS

M. Grumbacher, Inc.
New York
New York 10001

These colors are available at most large stores which supply art materials.

The Gesso

VANGUARD I ACRYLIC POLYMER GESSO

Hunt Manufacturing Co.
Statesville
North Carolina 28677

This material is also available at most large stores which supply art materials.

The Varnish

POLYURETHANE VARNISH/HIGH GLOSS

J.C. Penney Company, Inc.
New York
New York 10019

This product is available at most of the large J.C. Penney stores and through the catalog.

There is a velvet (matte) finish version of this same varnish. It provides a dull finish. This velvet finish type varnish was not intended for use outdoors as was the high gloss polyurethane varnish and may not be as durable. The high gloss varnish is recommended.

The Canvas

HEAVY WEIGHT COTTON DUCK CANVAS

Norvell Tent Manufacturing Company, Inc.
2210 High Point Road
Greensboro
North Carolina

This material is not ordinarily sold to the general public by this source. The author was given special permission in this case to obtain a quantity of the canvas.

Some specifications on the canvas which may be of help in locating a source for a similar type of canvas are below:

Thread Count: 36 X 30
Weight per Square Yard: 30 ounces
Fiber Content: 100% cotton