

PREPARATION OF WOOD FLOORS

Information in consultation with Linda Lefko, nationally acclaimed teacher of primitive art.

There are various floor surfaces offered for stenciling. First, we will discuss natural wood floors, then painted surfaces.

The two best situations you can have in a floor for stenciling, is a new floor being finished for the first time, or one that is in the process of being sanded back to bare wood. You will have to coordinate your stenciling with the floor finisher because after sanding, one coat of polyurethane must be applied as a sealer before you begin. Allow 24 hour's drying time, 48 on hardwood or if humidity is high. Sand with #400 or #600 sandpaper, vacuum, (optional) wipe with a damp cloth and then stencil. Apply four or five coats of clear gloss polyurethane over the stenciled floor. Sand and tack between the clear coats (not over the stenciling on the first coat and very lightly over the stenciling thereafter so as not to cut through). Apply the last coat (satin) with old nylon stockings wadded up as an applicator to avoid bubbles.

The third optimum situation to find yourself in, is working on a floor previously finished with polyurethane but never waxed. The finisher will sand and prepare; you vacuum and wipe with a damp cloth, stencil and finish as before.

The fourth situation is if wax has been used. There is no way you can guarantee adhesion of either your stenciled pattern or successive coats of polyurethane but if you are determined to try, use wax remover, then warm mineral spirits (set the container in warm water) and use 0000 steel wool. With it you can try other cleaning agents on the market in turn but NEVER TOGETHER AS COMBINATIONS CAN BE POISONOUS! Wet sand with #320 sandpaper, dry sand, vacuum and wipe with a tack cloth. Then proceed with no promises!

Old floor backgrounds and stenciled patterns often had a thin, transparent look, almost like a stain. Whether this was intentionally done or the result of wear is debatable; but if this is the look you desire, there are several ways to accomplish it. It is recommended for the background for wide floor boards in good condition and can be achieved by diluting latex paint, brushing on and wiping it off with soft rags. To achieve the look of a "pickled" floor on pine, dilute white latex paint half with water, and proceed as above.

If you wish to stencil on a painted background, which is especially recommended for mismatched floorboards or plywood, or outdoor-but-under-cover porches, deck paints have always been satisfactory if the colors suit you. Remember the little rule "fat over thin," which means that you can paint oil-base (fat) over water-base (thin) with success, but cannot reverse the procedure.

After marking your measurements, cover the floor with your drop cloth where you are not stenciling – to keep it clean.

STENCILING THE FLOOR

To create the transparent look of your stencil design, use Jo Sonja paints, which when mixed with the proper medium creates a transparent look. Or in the case of Japan paints, thin your paint to its most workable state without allowing it to seep under the stencil. Apply with stencil brush and wipe some off again with a soft cloth. Work it with a clean brush till you blend it to your liking. If you have a natural wood floor with a particularly lovely grain you will still see it.

FINISHING THE FLOOR

If you have used water-base throughout, you can finish with a water-base product, or seek the advice of a floor refinisher or paint store. Gloss is a more durable finish, but if you prefer a duller look, overcoat with satin. Apply the last coat with old nylon stockings wadded up as an applicator to avoid bubbles.



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