

# Art Fans Are Floored by Her Practical Paintings

WHO SAYS artwork is only for the walls? Talented folk painter Lisa Curry Mair pulls the rug out from under that notion by furnishing a downright different point of view.

"I design, craft and paint canvas floorcloths reminiscent of a bygone era," Lisa relates from her 200-year-old home in Perkinsville, Vermont. "People love the idea of having fun and functional art underfoot.

"About 14 years ago, I saw a floorcloth at an art show and decided to try my hand at painting one to hide a worn spot in my kitchen. When friends saw it, I started getting orders to make more." Lisa's been building her business from the ground up ever since.

"In colonial America, canvas from old boat sails was recycled into floorcloths for use at home," Lisa notes. "Today, people appreciate them as a durable decorative way to protect floors, as well as a reminder of the past."

Indeed, Lisa's customers are walking on art ranging from small kitchen mats to room-filling rugs measuring 10 by 30 feet. Using soothing colors from nature, she paints everything from geometric designs and patterns from her hand-cut stamps and stencils...to landscapes and farm scenes inspired by each glance out her window.

"I begin by shrinking a piece of canvas in hot water, cutting it to size and sewing a hem," Lisa explains. "Next, I press the canvas to make sure I have a

smooth, flat painting surface.

"After applying a basecoat of latex house paint, I use acrylics to create my design, working from the inside out to the border. Finally, several coats of a polyurethane finish are brushed on so the floorcloth will be easy to clean and able to withstand tough foot traffic."

Depending on its size, a floorcloth can take between 1 and 8 weeks to complete, Lisa adds. "I have a roomy painting studio my husband, Bart, helped me set up in what once was an attached carriage house. I work on larger pieces in the loft of the barn where daughter Lauren, 12, and I keep our horses."

You can see Lisa's "floor show" under tables, at doorsteps, in hallways and hanging on walls.

For do-it-yourselfers, she's authored *Floorcloth Magic*, a how-to book on floorcloth painting that she sells along with canvas fabric.

"Customers can see my floorcloths on my Web site or by visiting my studio and gallery," she says. "I encourage them to step up and look at this art form that is as pretty as it is practical."

**Editor's Note:** For details on Lisa's floorcloths, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Canvasworks, 326 Henry Gould Rd., Perkinsville VT 05151. You can call 1-802/263-5410 or see her Web site at [www.canvasworksfloorcloths.com](http://www.canvasworksfloorcloths.com). Her studio and gallery are open by appointment Monday through Saturday.



**MAGIC CARPETS** Lisa Curry Mair hand-paints fly out of her home-based art studio. Eager customers look down admiringly on canvas mats she decks with stenciled colonial motifs and country scenes.



Photo: Margie Smith

