

Painting your stage floor to mesh with your scenic design:

Floor preparation is required to assure adhesion of your painting technique.

Existing floor finishes need to be tested for compatibility because older varieties of lacquer, shellac and certain varnishes could cause reactions with new water based paints. During the test if wrinkling, bubbling or lifting occurs, you will need to remove the finish before you apply fresh paint.

Make repairs to an older floor before repainting it. There could be pieces of boards missing or defects to plug. You may want to use a light weight patching compound, like Durham's wood putty filler and a putty knife for application to fill any voids. I usually mix in a small amount of our "Sculpt or Coat" product for better adhesion in a proportion of 1 part Sculpt or Coat to 7 or 8 parts of wood filler. This ensures that the material will bond well to the wood and help prevent cracking over time. You will also need a wide blade scraper for cleaning loose paint chips from previously painted floors plus some sandpaper with a medium and fine grit for light sanding if needed.

After repairs are made you should vacuum the floor to pick up loose paint chips and sanding dust.

Damp sponge mopping is recommended to be sure that the floor is cleaned well after repairs or sanding.

Once the floor prep is done the surface is ready to be painted.

How the stage is painted depends on the set design for the environment of the play.

Productions of "Cloud Nine" and "Searching for Eden" often have the stage floors painted to look like jungle foliage. For other shows, simulated painted brown earth, or concrete, brick, cobblestones, wood floors or other visual 2 D textures require scenic art techniques.

In all of these cases, usually base coats need to be applied to lay in a beginning color, then the floors are stamped or painted with brushes, or lined then painted with graining techniques for wood floors, or wet scumbled and then cartooned for stone and brick.

Tough'N White primers can be used over some slick floor materials to create a paintable surface. It dries to a nice white finish that won't dull your top coat colors.

Artist's Choice Saturated Scenic Paints are water based low V.O.C. environmentally friendly vibrant colors that dry to a matte finish. All of the colors mix easily for scenic art techniques.

Sealing of a scene painted technique is recommended so it holds up well during the run of a show. We recommend Sculptural Arts' Plastic Varnish Flat or Gloss depending upon the final desired result. Usually a flat finish is desirable to prevent lighting angle sheen but for some wood floors or marble tile finishes a gloss is desired.

Maintaining your painted floor:

Damp mopping is required to maintain a floor during a run of a show, but if some scarring happens due to a dragging caster or other dragged scenic unit, it may be necessary to do a touch up of the area and then reseal with a Plastic Varnish Flat and water mixture.

After the show is done, the floor is simply painted over with Artist's Choice Masking Black again and sealed with Plastic Varnish Flat making the space ready for the next event.

Texturing your stage floor to mesh with your scenic design:

If actual 3 D textures are desired, and you don't want to have to strip the floor after the run of a show, a ground cloth of muslin may be used and the textures are applied to the fabric. This can be created in a space off site and then brought in and attached to the stage floor once the scenery is in place.

For a production of "Dancing at Lughnasa", a cut back drop was heavily textured with Artist's Choice Paints, mixed with Plastic Varnish, Sculpt or Coat, joint compound and mulch. Leaves were added to the mix, it was stirred up with a drill and large blending bit, and then the whole surface was smeared and spattered with this concoction that was mixed in large garbage cans.

The muslin was painted in the scene shop on a paint deck, left to dry, then removed from the paint deck floor, rolled up, transported to the stage where it was stapled and taped down along the edges. The taped edges were then painted to match. At strike, the tape was removed and the textured floor was rolled up and removed from the space without any adverse effects for the stage floor.

Sheet materials such as lauan, fiberboard or Masonite may also be used as a base but need to be attached to the stage floor first and then the textures applied to the sheet materials.

If the floor has heavy texture that is worn off during the run of a show, more texture can be added as needed to complete the desired look for performances.

Sculpt or Coat is a versatile texturing and construction material that can be used as an adhesive to create 3 D floor textures; to hold organics in place or mixed with wood putty fillers to extend their durability in floor repairs.