

VINYL TODAY and TOMORROW

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04 Back to Vinyl: A Kitchen Odyssey

Not too long ago, homemakers expected their modern kitchen floors to be durable, easy to clean, and impervious to water, tracked-in dirt, and various cooking disasters.

One popular option was vinyl flooring. But then, some designers and home-builders introduced wood floors for kitchens—a style that also introduced a number of cleaning headaches. The solution? Custom-painted vinyl floor mats.

Graphic designer Kathleen Nelson of Santa Rosa, Calif., first created a whimsical “rug” for her kitchen six years ago, using a remnant of vinyl flooring. Now, in fashioning floor mats for clients, she uses commercial rolls. So long as there is no grid- or design-embossed pattern, it doesn’t matter what the vinyl looks like, she explains, because she uses the underside.

“The felt backing, which is a little porous, is a great painting surface,” Nelson says.

She draws and enlarges her design, then traces it onto the vinyl with graphite paper. She then fills in her design with acrylic paints and applies eight coats of polyurethane. On the unpainted vinyl side, Nelson sticks under-mats to keep her product stationary, add a soft feel under-foot, and ensure that her mats will not adhere to or discolor the floor.

The vinyl can be cut into any shape needed for the job, whether to catch splashes around a sink, fill an awkwardly shaped nook or—elsewhere in the house—to protect the area under and around the dining room table.

“Floor mats are functional art,” Nelson says. “They can echo the fabric and style of the room. I love the idea of color from the ground up, of pulling the décor into the floor.”

You don’t have to be a professional artist to create beautiful floor mats, Nelson says. Her popular classes at local community colleges are filled with enthusiastic amateurs who use faux finishes like sponging and rag-rolling to create their



Hand-painted vinyl floor mats can fit anywhere.

own unique vinyl mats. Visit Kathleen’s K Studios website:

www.kstudios-mats.com ■

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