



# Earthen Floors: A Modern Approach to an Ancient Practice

By Sukita Reay Crimmel

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For most of human history, people have lived in durable, comfortable buildings made from natural materials such as soil, sand, rocks, and fiber. All over the globe, these ancient traditions persist; a quarter to a third of the world's population today lives in houses built partially or entirely of earth. Conventional Western building techniques using industrial materials may save time and create efficiencies, but these perceived savings come at considerable financial and environmental cost.

As well as boasting a unique and beautiful aesthetic, natural building techniques are accessible, affordable, and non-toxic. *Earthen Floors: A Modern Approach to an Ancient Practice* is the first comprehensive, fully illustrated manual covering the history, use, and maintenance of this attractive, practical flooring option. This detailed, fully illustrated guide explains every part of the process, including:

- Sourcing and harvesting materials
- Preparing the subfloor
- Pouring, finishing, and sealing the floor
- Living with and maintaining your earthen floor

Because information on creating quality earthen floors was not previously widely available, there have been some negative experiences. Drawing on the combined knowledge of the most qualified earthen floor practitioners, as well their own substantial experience, the authors deliver the definitive resource for this exciting technique, perfect for everyone from the novice to veteran builder.

**Sukita Reay Crimmel** has installed over twenty thousand square feet of earthen flooring, and is one of the preeminent experts in the emerging field of earthen floors.

**James Thomson** is part of House Alive, one of the leading natural building training organizations in the country.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"At last! The mystery is removed from most wonderful floors in the world. First thing you do: go find an earthen floor, pull off your shoes and socks, have a little walkabout, and discover great surprise and tactile delight. Next thing you do: buy this book, learn everything you need, and go make one yourself. Thank you Sukita and James for making this ancient treasure accessible to all."

---Bruce King, PE, Director, Ecological Building Network

"Earthen floors have long been shrouded in mystery... Natural building enthusiasts have known about them and lusted after them, but despite the vast amount of natural building information produced in the past two decades, a tested and true treatise on earthen floors has been missing. No longer! This book is full of information, hard-won lessons learned and the real heart and spirit of natural building. The authors successfully de-mystify the process of mixing, installing, finishing and maintaining an earthen floor in a way that will help novices and seasoned builders alike to produce floors that are the most beautiful, sensual and eco-friendly option available. Thanks Sukita and James!"

---Chris Magwood

"With *Earthen Floors: A Modern Approach to an Ancient Practice*, Sukita and James have come up with the ideal mix of inspiration, experience, technique, and instruction. This book will be of use and benefit to both experienced practitioners and those just dipping their toes into the subject of earthen floors for the first time. It is always a delight to find a well-written, clear and practical guide to natural building practice, and a special treat when fun and informative personal stories are interwoven with good graphics to bring the whole process to life. This book makes a great contribution to the field on every level. "

---David Eisenberg, Director, Development Center for Appropriate Technology

"*Earthen Floors* fills a long-standing gap in the catalog of natural building publications in providing reliable and thorough instruction in earthen floor construction. With a style that is both comfortable and authoritative, this book offers the detailed instruction necessary for executing a quality earthen floor in a variety of different contexts. Crimmel and Thomson have drawn upon their extensive and direct experience in their craft and share valuable lessons learned with their readers. From the exploration of the historical roots of earthen floors to a look at the future of how we can improve upon this practice, *Earthen Floors* is the most comprehensive and thorough resource on earthen floor technology available today. With *Earthen Floors*, Crimmel and Thomson offer a gift to the natural building community that makes this technology more accessible to DIYers and professionals alike."

---Jacob Deva Racusin, Author, *The Natural Building Companion*, Co-Owner, New Frameworks Natural Building, LLC

"This book is a welcome treasure, a long awaited and generous sharing of the detailed knowledge gained by the authors through years of testing and teaching and designing and installing earthen floors. In a thoughtfully presented text, we are now gifted with a compendium of information in one place, rather than the myriad conversations, tips, trials and experiments common in the last years of rediscovering and refining this valuable and timely technology. My clients and I will be indebted to Sukita and James for years to come."

---Laura Bartels, Green Weaver Inc.

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From the Back Cover

**A complete step-by-step guide to making, installing and living with beautiful, all-natural earthen floors**

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Earthen floors are a beautiful, affordable, durable flooring option suitable for nearly any home. *Earthen Floors: A Modern Approach to an Ancient Practice* is a comprehensive, fully illustrated guide to this natural building technique, explaining every part of the process, including:

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**James Thomson** has spent a decade introducing students to the joys of building with earth with House Alive, one of the leading natural building training organizations in North America.

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About the Author

**Sukita Reay Crimmel** has installed over 20,000 sq ft of earthen flooring in the past decade. As well as presenting extensively on this exciting technique, she founded From These Hands, a green and natural building company located in Portland Oregon which specializes in earthen construction. Sukita is also the developer of Claylin — the first commercially available ready-made earthen floor product in North America. She holds a Bachelor of Science in environmental studies and architecture from the University of Oregon. She is considered one of the preeminent experts in the emerging field of earthen floors.

**James Thomson** is a workshop facilitator with House Alive, one of the leading natural building training organizations in the country. His early experiences with alternative, mainly owner-built natural building projects grew into his current interest in integrating these practices into more conventional, urban homes. Since beginning to include earthen features, including floors, in sustainable renovations, James has become passionate about this satisfying, practical technique. He has lived on (or near) earthen floors for most of the past 10 years.

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**Lois Reyna:**

Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to



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