

BACK TO BOARDING SCHOOL

What's Next in Dorms?

The beanbag chair persists, but more stylishly than ever. Seems it's never too early to hire a decorator....

"WHEN I went off to Skidmore," says interior decorator **Alex Papachristidis**, "the first thing my mother did was send me fabric-covered boxes and artwork from our apartment. She told me, 'We're aesthetic people, and it's important.'" That's a sentiment shared by many parents this fall as they pack their children off to boarding school and college. As a result, hiring a professional decorator to feather the scholastic nest is a growing trend, bolstered by Papachristidis himself, who recently designed college residences for the son and daughter of a longtime client.

Designer **Barclay Butera** also helped dress up dorm rooms for two children of a client. "The elder daughter was heading to a boarding school in Montecito, California," says Butera. "She was young but already very stylish. We began with an antique iron bed, painted the walls pale pink and framed black-and-white photos from Getty Images." For her brother, who was headed to a college dorm in Boulder, Colorado, Butera customized a corkboard and turned the bed into the focus of the small room. Butera extols the practicality of plaid ("It doesn't show the dirt") and the usefulness of five pillows ("In dorms, you practically live in your bed—pillows come in handy").

Before Beth Rudin DeWoody's son, Carlton, headed off to his dorm at Tulane, she turned to **Richard Mishaan** for help. "Beth collects art, and my job was to cultivate Carlton's nascent aesthetic," Mishaan says. "We injected a little whimsy into the black-and-white theme with two Philippe Starck-designed gnomes, a bright desk chair and colorful Kartell lamps."

As they set about planning dorm rooms

Seats of higher learning: Philippe Starck for Kartell's Mademoiselle chair (right) and Eros chair (below). Lamp by Kartell.



for their own children, designers **Milly de Cabrol** and **Joanne de Guardiola** both relied on Target and Pottery Barn Teen. "It's amazing how popular beanbags are with the kids after all these years," says de Guardiola, referring to the shopping she did this past summer with her boarding school-bound twins. "But technology has changed everything. Your dorm room used to be filled with a massive stereo and typewriter and phone. Now that's all been reduced to an iPhone and laptop. It's liberated a lot of space." De Cabrol recalls her son's departure for the dorms at Dickinson. "He is currently begging for Pratesi sheets, but in his freshman year, he wanted a *Super Fly* theme, so we bought it all on the cheap: shiny black sheets, faux-leopard chairs, lava lamps. Part of me wanted to impose my own taste, but I realized how important it was to give him his independence."

Designer **Alexa Hampton**, whose father, Mark, was himself a celebrated decorator, was given a wide berth when it came to outfitting her college dorm room. "I never met an obelisk I didn't like," says the younger

Hampton. "But I admit that almost everything else I used to decorate my dorm room now makes me cringe. When you send your kids out into the world, even if you're doing them the great service of bankrolling their initial forays, it's important to allow them the chance to kiss a few aesthetic frogs as they work out their own personal style."

At age fourteen, when designer **Celerie Kemble** left Palm Beach for her Groton dorm, she and her mother, interior designer **Mimi McMakin**, were more concerned about staving off homesickness than about decorating. "To liven up my spartan barracks, I brought things that made my dorm feel like home. Then my mom arranged a Manhattan shopping expedition for me and my best friends, who were also headed to boarding school." Kemble describes buying Matisse posters at MoMA, an Indian tapestry in SoHo and a Rigaud candle whose cypress scent still conjures memories of her seven years at Groton and Harvard. "Designwise, it was very bare-bones. But now I'm occasionally homesick for my dorm."

KRISTINA STEWART WARD

IN THE COUNTRY

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