



**Nineties Nylon Returns**  
That black Prada bag has spawned descendents **D3**

# OFF DUTY

**My Non-Tech Essentials**  
Bob Costas—not exactly a fan of gadgets **D10**



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**COMFORT IS NO FAIRY TALE**  
If Cinderella were alive today, she wouldn't suffer in foot-pinching glass slippers. A thoughtful prince would outfit her in these comfy but crazy-looking Keen sandals.

RENE MILOT

## Enchantingly Weird Shoes

Comfy but ugly Crocs and Birkenstocks were only the beginning. Shoes keep getting more casual—and more unsightly. This unisex guide demystifies the bizarre kicks that grow more popular (and numerous) each season.

By JACOB GALLAGHER

**I**N THE SHOE market, weirdness has won. Take a spin through a department store's footwear floor and you'll find a buffet of bizarre high-fashion shoes like a Bottega Veneta women's \$1,250 blocky wedge heel with red, chicken pox-like specks or J.W. Anderson's unisex \$645 leather mule with a gigundo Mr. T-esque gold chain across the front.

It's not only high-end designers that have come down with a case of the weirds. Approachable retailer Zappos.com offers \$65 platform Crocs in a zesty zebra print and \$120 clementine-orange, hefty-soled Hoka One One running shoes. "There is a real appetite for color, pattern and interesting fabrication," said Catherine Newell-Hanson, the site's style director. Shoes, she continued, have become "a safe space for people to play around with a more outlandish expression of personal style than they might in the rest of [their] outfit."

There are precursors to this trend—like Margiela's cloven Tabi boots, which debuted in 1988—but the weird-is-good movement has truly erupted over the past half-decade. It's been gaining ground

in the pandemic, as WFH freedom to experiment away from co-workers' critical eyes has coincided with a drive toward comfort at any cost. In 2017, the launch of Balenciaga's bulbous, pre-weathered Triple S sneakers set a new standard for intentionally ugly designer shoes. Meanwhile, frumpy Crocs and Birkenstocks were being recontextualized as beloved, even covetable, shoes, a trend spurred by collaborations with stars like Justin Bieber and luxury brands like Jil Sander, respectively.

The forces of casualization have made office footwear like shiny dress shoes and chaste heels—once a crucial adult investment—increasingly irrelevant. It's now acceptable to wear startlingly informal shoes daily. "The more outrageous [the shoe], the better," said Jessica Pridgen, 37, a graphic designer in Raleigh, N.C. She owns a multitude of statement shoes including Bottega Veneta boots with a globular toe and stacked-sole Nike sneakers made in collaboration with Japanese label Sacai.

The pandemic accelerated the trend, said Ms. Newell-Hanson of Zappos. Free from the strictures of an office, work-from-homers began purchasing diverting shoes. It's hard not to smile (or smirk) at a pair of wacky tie-dye Crocs or furry

purple Marni mules. Who didn't need that his year? And when your only daily excursion is a brisk dog-walk or an efficient march through the grocery store, function trumps formality: All you really need is doughy gray New Balances or springy Keen mules.

Footwear fanatics also reach for anomalous shoes to differentiate themselves. "I don't like to wear what everybody wears," said Rashida Rogers, 28, a warehouse stocker in Wichita, Kansas. A recovering sneaker collector who hoarded Nikes as a teen, Ms. Rogers now wears niche shoes like lemony Kappa insulated slippers (imagine a sleeping bag for your feet) and blueberry-tinged Asics sneakers. Brands are rolling out exponentially more-extreme shoes to give cool-hunters like Ms. Rogers something new. Strange sole shapes. Garish color schemes. Brands are getting "more and more extreme," in an almost competitive manner, said Beth Goldstein, an industry analyst at the market-research firm NPD Group. From bulky pre-distressed sneakers to fuzzy mules, there's an outlandish shoe for everyone.

Turn to page D2 for appealingly ugly footwear.

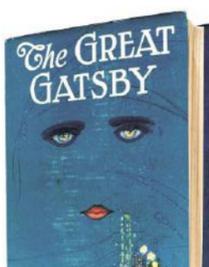
### Inside



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Some folks won't pay more than \$15. Others won't pay less. Ten bottles right on the money **D8**

**OH, JAY!**  
Why F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic is the ultimate summer read **D4**



#### COLLEGE NEEDN'T LOOK CRUMMY

Design pros on how to avoid the most common dorm-room decorating mistakes **D6**



#### FRESH OFF THE VINE...FOREVER?

A persuasive case for preserving summer tomatoes as frozen salsas, sauces and more **D9**

# DESIGN & DECORATING

By Rachel Wolfe

**YOU REMEMBER** the décor challenges your dorm room presented: particleboard furniture, bleak cinder-block walls and a roommate's unsavory decorating decisions. "The dormitory is decidedly unhomelike, yet it takes center stage for a substantial period of people's lives," said Carla Yanni, author of "Living on Campus: An Architectural History of the American Dormitory."

It's tempting to plaster the wan walls with little photos, but that "can overwhelm a small room, making it feel cluttered and hodgepodge," explained Abbe Fenimore, founder of Dallas's Studio Ten 25. Instead, she advises, look for thrift store frames with glass and matting, and swap in the best of your art using framer's tape. Create a gallery wall, using sticky-backed Command Strips to hang the art without poking holes you'll answer for at the end of the school year.

Here, the pros share five other common collegiate décor blunders, as well as tips for working within institutional limitations to make your dorm room the highlight of the residence hall.

## At-Odds Couples

While no 18-year-old wants to text a future roommate to coordinate the purchase of every last binder clip, "you also don't want to look like you're living in two completely separate spaces," said Christina Hart, founder of New York's StudioH. "A small dorm room really needs to maintain one vibe," said Karen B. Wolf, a designer in Short Hills, N.J., pointing out the cacophonous downsides of mismatching colors, different peel-and-stick wallpapers that meet halfway and beds set at varying heights. **Instead** When moving her two daughters into college, Ms. Hart steered them toward neutral, textured bed coverings that would dovetail with whatever their future roommates brought. Once they got settled, the young women went with their roomies to HomeGoods to select throw pillows, artwork and rugs that would bridge tastes. Before they share a room, gung-ho roommate duos can use a Pinterest board to select items and comment on each other's choices, suggested Ms. Wolf.

## Frigid Floors

No one wants to step out of bed onto cold, linoleum tiles or decades-old wall-to-wall, said Newark, N.J., designer KD Reid. And please don't use a bath mat as a stopgap, or rely on a crusty shag area rug lifted from your childhood bedroom.

**Instead** An affordable and durable jute or rattan mat that extends under both beds can hide your dorm's less-than-appealing flooring and help disparate bedspreads cohere, advised Mr. Reid. "You want the feeling of a wall-to-wall carpet." Layer a shag or shearling rug over the top to warm up the space, said Allison Spampinato, senior vice president of product development at Pottery Barn Teen.

## Beds in a Bag

While the temptation to buy one-and-done bedding is understandable, matchy matchy sets from big box retail stores will make your room look just like everyone else's, warned Stephanie Dixon, brand director of home décor company Society6. Monogrammed seersucker sets (especially when

**SQUABBLE-FREE DÉCOR** In shared quarters at Life Pacific University in San Dimas, Calif., junior Cassidy Boatright relied on neutral tones to help ensure visual harmony.



ERROR ERROR ON THE WALL

# Dorm-Room Dos

Design pros share the decorating missteps college students (and sometimes their parents) make, and what to do instead

they include coordinating nighties) particularly dismay New York designer Kammi Reiss. "I can sympathize with the Southern gal in all of us, but I will never go so far as to support the monogram lifestyle," she said. **Instead** "Your bed is your largest canvas—make it count," urged Ms. Hart, who for her daughters' rooms opted for neutral, dark colors to disguise Cheeto crumbs and errant highlighter marks. Ms. Hart believes "the more pillows the better," insisting on at least three: a large bolster, a medium-size standard pillow for sleeping and a fun-shaped statement pillow. For a sentimental touch, the designer pieced her daughter's favorite T-shirts into a quilt. Carly Cannell of New York's Weetu studio, meanwhile, finds wrinkle-resistant fabrics like jersey or antimicrobial bam-

boo bedding ideal "especially when the sheets don't get washed as often as one would like."

## Single-Use Furniture

When a 10-foot-by-10-foot box is expected to host studying, socializing and sleeping for two, "getting creative with organization is a must," said Ms. Fenimore, who too often sees students rely on separate seating and storage solutions when so many stylish two-in-one alternatives can be found.

**Instead** Ms. Fenimore likes to deploy a tidy, three-drawer dresser as both a night stand and extra space for clothing and other small items. Plus, "the larger surface on top offers space for infusing your personality through lamps and accessories." The desk-and-shelf combo many schools supply can often be an-

**EPIC FAILS / THE WORST DÉCOR DECISIONS DESIGNERS HAVE COME ACROSS ON CAMPUS**

▼ **"When installing a dorm room for one of our clients' kids, I noticed that a dad had built a bed to look like a princess castle for his daughter's room."**  
—Chris Goddard, designer, Springdale, Ark.

**"A family photo printed on the bed-spread...and pillow."**  
—Christina Nielsen, designer, New York City

**"I knew a college boy who had his dorm wall covered from floor to ceiling in beer bottles—quintessential college living."**  
—Michelle Nussbaumer, designer, Dallas

**"My daughter's roommate had a fully decked out, matching bed set, vanity, carpet, wall décor, hangers, the whole enchilada in hot, hot pink and zebra print. It was very tacky and strained both of our eyes."**  
—Kammi Reiss, designer, New York City

**"One senior covered a wall of his dorm room in long, brown faux fur, à la Russell Brand's character in 'Get Him to the Greek.'"**

—Schuyler Samperton, designer, Los Angeles



gled to act as a room divider for privacy, advised Ms. Hart, and a storage ottoman at the end of each bed will add an extra place to lounge as well as to store spare bedding.

## A September Christmas

Too often, dorm-bound freshmen raid parents' holiday storage bin for lights with which to festoon their digs. "LED string lights might seem like a cheap and convenient way to add a little brightness to a dark and dreary dorm room," said Allison Babcock, a designer in Sag Harbor, N.Y., "but the light they give off is so harsh...and they are rather unsightly when exposed." Brenna Morgan, a designer in Charlotte, N.C., cautioned, "Your bedroom shouldn't look like a disco."

**Instead** Conceal the string lights and bring in a proper light source. Find a dimmable reading lamp for the desk or bedside. The neck should be adjustable and use lights that are warm, yellow-toned and easy on the eyes, said Ms. Cannell. The string of LEDs can still provide mood lighting, said Ms. Babcock, but it should be threaded behind a bed or mirror, so the light will reflect off the wall and give an ambient glow. You don't want "to look at the bare bulbs all day."

GUY SHIELD (ILLUSTRATION), CASSIDY BOATRIGHT (DORM ROOM)



**FLIPPED TOP** A hinged game table is set against a wall in the Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass., residence of Lisa Mann, owner of Elizabeth Ives Home.

## Jack-of-All-Tables

The tiny piece of furniture that solves half a dozen design needs

**THE DEMAND** for flexibility in our living spaces has made the antique game table especially beloved by interior designers today. Pros, however, have long considered the morphable table a secret hero. "They are quiet pieces of furniture, but they do a job," said Emily Todhunter, an interior designer in London.

The vintage game—or card—table doubles its surface when its hinged top is unfolded: A rectangular model becomes square, a demi-lune a circle. Either the top spins and is held up by the piece's frame, or legs swing or pull out for support. Some harbor a bit of hidden storage; others, like the Queen Anne example below, a small drawer. Game tables that don't reveal felt or velvet when expanded can be set against a wall and decoratively opened to 90 degrees, as in the vignette at left.

Providence, R.I., interior designer Susan Loney has hauled her Chippendale-style game table through multiple moves. "I used it in an entry hall when I was living in an apartment," she said. Now it serves as an occasional table in her living room when not pulled out for extra dinner seating. A traditionalist, Ms. Loney loves the way the engraved heirloom on delicate legs fits in with her toiles. "I've used them for many clients in the dining room as a sideboard," she added.

The folding game table took off in the early 18th century when gambling surged in popularity, according to

Peter Lang, a senior vice president at Doyle Auction House. Initially designed simply in sturdy walnut, the tables later grew more ornate in more-carvable mahogany. Some were fancified with marquetry and brass detailing. While centuries-old tables in pristine condition can fetch high five-figure prices at auction, a 19th-century mahogany demi-lune game table sold in August for \$50 on Liveauctioneers.com.

Ms. Todhunter uses these rich brown tables, which she prizes for their patina, to warm more sterile, modern décor, layering them up with flowers, lamps and art books. Recently, she began considering game tables for workspaces. Many designers, she said, "are now being asked to decorate guest bedrooms with a little desk area for Zoom calls." There, the game table can also double as a night stand. A tip from Ms. Todhunter: Accessorize with a cordless lamp for easy removal when you want to unfold the top.

This past year, Ms. Loney's clients have been voicing a need for such tables to unfold for their original purpose: older clients for bridge, younger clients with families for other competitive diversions. "[People] don't always have space for that," she said, noting that you can just tuck away a game table when you're done. And then, it might become the prettiest place to throw your mail. —Rebecca Malinsky

**SHAPE SHIFTERS / THREE VINTAGE GAME TABLES TO PLAY WITH**



Queen Anne Style Vintage Card Table, \$375, chairish.com

Art Deco Demi-lune Card Table, about \$894, poirotartdecosport.co.uk



Mahogany Fold-Over Game Table, circa 1895, \$1,249, 1stdibs.com