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Wanted: Rooms With Personality

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Margaret Ralston suggests decorating ideas for bringing the feminine touch to fraternity rooms

HAVING turned their dormitory rooms over to army and navy trainees, Iowa State women are faced this fall with bringing the feminine touch to fraternity houses.

But the problem of decorating rooms is basically the same, whether in fraternity row or dormitory court. At first glimpse the rooms present a discouraging picture, rows of them along a hall, each one much like the others.

Then, as each college girl moves in with her various belongings, the rooms begin to take on the personalities of their occupants. Their bleak sameness disappears.

One pair of roommates may dress up their beds with a slip cover spread and tailored pillows to make them resemble studio couches. Another group might brighten the wall with a vivid red bathmat serving as a bulletin board.

Gay curtains soften the harsh lines of windows, and bookcases with pottery figurines help break empty wall spaces. Pictures bring vast expanses of neutral, drab walls back to normal size.

Probably the most important single factor in individualizing the college room is the utilization of color. It's needed to defeat the walls and give warmth and sparkle to the room.

A successful use of color can be obtained by the ever-present bulletin board. Effective rooms tie draperies, bedspread and bulletin board together with one central color. An old favorite trick to cover the uninteresting stretch of window shades at night is to draw draperies hung on large white rings.

Primary colors or deep wines and greens are the most striking as well as the most practical colors to use. Frilly pastels either awe friends into avoiding the room where bed-sprawling isn't permitted or present constant laundry problems. The point is to keep the room looking as much like a living room and as little like a bed room as possible.

A gaily colored standing screen used as a bulletin board is an attractive feature of a room as well as an effective method of concealing unsightly files or shelves.

Another method of introducing color is to use the versatile and perennial orange crate. Covered inside and out with thumb-tacked plain or printed material it provides good looking book shelves. Skirted with a gingham plaid it makes a colorful dressing table or catch-all storage shelves.

There are numerous ideas for covering the orange crates. The top covers may be quilted and a pad may be decorated in contrasting, alternating color combinations. The dressing table mirror may be edged with a pleated frill to match the pleats on the dressing table. Chenille tufting is a smart-looking trim.

Pictures, of course, are essential to every room. In hanging flower prints or Godey's Lady prints, it's a good idea to conceal the straight hanging wires with a length of grosgrain and a flat-tied bow just above the frame.

One of the most delightful highlights in the college room is the window garden. This takes daily watering and transportation away from the window each winter night, but its fresh greenness is a focal point. Another use of growing plants that makes a charming picture is an arrangement of white pots of ivy hung in wall brackets on either side of the mirror.

Gaudy posters, wall hangings designed in art classes, Indian rugs or Mexican sombreros add dash to the plain walls of many college rooms.

After basic decorating problems are solved the personal touches give a special individuality. New ideas such as autographed lamp shades have been developed.