

Featured Alumna: Kathleen “Beetle” HILLERY Antonatos, Class of 2007



Kathleen “Beetle” HILLERY Antonatos ’07 took her first high school art class as a Duchesne junior. In 2011, she graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with a degree in Graphic Design. In 2016, she launched Palm Orleans Fabrics & Wallcoverings. It became her full-time job the following year.

The collection of whimsical textiles is inspired by Kathleen’s two favorite cities: Palm Beach and New Orleans. The latter is the company’s headquarters and Kathleen’s hometown. Her family relocated to Houston following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and Kathleen, a Rosary student since the second grade, matriculated at Duchesne.

Kathleen recalls an early passion for design and a precocious business acumen: as a middle schooler, she flexed her entrepreneurial skills selling soaps and lip balms. In her teenage years, she drew constantly, designing entire clothing collections without any formal training. Finally, in the summer of 2005, she enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago’s high school summer program, but when she returned home to New Orleans and the Rosary that fall, art classes did not fit into her school schedule.

In Houston, the stability of a shared Sacred Heart culture was key for her to not only survive the impact of Katrina but also succeed in school and beyond. “Everyone was so encouraging and nice; the people I met at Duchesne have the biggest open hearts.” At Duchesne, her talent was recognized and championed. She is “forever indebted” to her Sacred Heart educators, without whom she insists art school, and her ensuing success as a textile entrepreneur, would have remained a pipe dream. “Duchesne has a special thing going. The school wants kids to be successful in whatever way God has given them gifts.”

Kathleen’s gifts led her to Lilly Pulitzer, where she began her design career while still a student at RISD. She quickly discovered a common theme among her projects: pattern.

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Following graduation, she pursued her craft in New York City, honing the skills that would later serve her as Founder and Creative Director of her own company. She worked first in custom rug design and later supplied mass bedding to big-box stores like Bed Bath & Beyond and Southern Tide. Her last role taught her that impersonal, large-scale production clashed with her values as a Sacred Heart girl. Kathleen relocated to her hometown and began working at founder-led Julie Neill Lighting; she set out on her own venture shortly thereafter.

All of Palm Orleans’ patterns are hand-painted and screen printed in America: the wallpaper is produced in New Jersey and the fabrics are produced in Rhode Island, a nod to the ethics and strong sense of community born of Kathleen’s Sacred Heart upbringing. “Quality and ethics are important. You can feel good about the whole purchase.”

For Kathleen, the joy of Palm Orleans comes from the people with whom she collaborates, from the East Coast craftsmen who transform her drawings into fabric, to the interior designers nationwide who use the fabric in their projects. “It’s so fun designing the 2D textiles, but once it’s in a project, it becomes more; it takes on a life of its own. Bespoke fabrics are so special, and I love seeing them included in rooms where the details are so thoughtfully made.”

The design world agrees: *Southern Living* featured Palm Orleans prominently in its Mardi Gras story earlier this year—the brand’s greatest exposure to date. *Veranda*, *Modern Luxury*, and *House Beautiful* have included brand highlights as well. Last month, Palm Orleans textiles were showcased in Houston’s La Petite Maison Gala & Tour, a collection of dollhouses staged by local interior designers, benefiting A Shelter for Cancer Families (ASCF).

Kathleen lives in her native New Orleans with her husband, Craig, their infant daughter (and future Sacred Heart girl!) Hillery, and the family’s two pups: Butter and Eva. You can view her work at palmorleans.com, or on Instagram [@palmorleans](https://www.instagram.com/palmorleans).