

An inherited Chinoiserie coffee table inspired the relaxed beauty of Dominique and Billy Sauer's three-season porch, furnished with a rattan daybed and a Moroccan-style sisal rug, both from Anthropologie, and vintage pillows from Massachusetts's Brimfield flea market.

FRENCH CONNECTION

A worldly decorator helps a Falmouth mother rebuild her family's lost collection of French antiques, one gilded chair at a time.

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With its columned porches, wide dentil molding, and circular drive edged in great swaths of lawn, Dominique and Billy Sauer's 1915 Colonial Revival on Falmouth Foreside has the air of a grand estate. "When I first saw it, I thought it was so elegant," says Dominique, a seamstress and stay-at-home mom. "I could walk through the house and envision what I could put in it." But committing to pieces was another matter. The couple moved here from a tiny apartment in San Francisco in 2016, after Billy, an anesthesiologist, took a job nearby. Right away, "I was overwhelmed because we had pretty much no furniture and I had to fill the whole house," Dominique says.

Growing up in New Jersey, she'd been surrounded by the lavish late-19th- and early-20th-century furniture her father brought from southern France, where he was raised. She remembers a bed with a headboard of tufted red velvet and purple satin; a steel-blue velvet sofa; golden chandeliers. "He was particular about preserving everything," Dominique says. "I think he thought it was up to him to keep his family's things and eventually pass them along."

But when Dominique was nine, her parents divorced and her father moved to Mexico, where he died three years later. To pay his debts, her mother was forced to auction some of his heirlooms. Others were damaged in transit back to the United States, or simply disappeared. In the end, a Pleyel piano, a crystal chandelier, a gold side table, a Chinoiserie cabinet and coffee table, and Baccarat crystal are all that remain of his antiques. "It felt like I lost part of my identity," Dominique says.

To help her reclaim it, she enlisted Portland designer Ariana



TIP
TO TELL IF ANTIQUE FURNITURE IS AUTHENTIC, PICK IT UP: PERIOD PIECES TEND TO BE HEAVIER (AND HAVE CHIPPED PAINT).

In the Sauer's eldest daughter Josephine's room, an antique Florentine nightstand from Pillars in Freeport and a brass Kate Spade lamp feel sophisticated and sweet; the walls are Dakota Shadow by Benjamin Moore. **OPPOSITE FROM TOP** An antique Gustavian chaise longue from Pillars is a favorite snuggling spot in youngest daughter Greta's room. Louis XVI style reigns in the sitting room, in the form of a replica settee from eBay and an antique armchair from Thomaston Place Auction Galleries.



OPPOSITE In the living room, an oil by French painter Frédéric Deshayes from Pillars and a self portrait by Dominique's uncle crown a Jayson Home sofa upholstered in rich green-black velvet; the walls are Classic Burgundy by Benjamin Moore. **THIS PAGE FROM TOP** A Philippe Starck Louis Ghost chair adds wispy dimension to the living room, which also features a 1950s-era Italian rosewood desk from 1stDibs and an antique Louis XV armchair. In the sewing room, Josephine relaxes on a Ballard Designs daybed with custom pillows and a wool blanket bought at Blanche + Mimi in Portland. A photograph by Portland's Winky Lewis hangs above.



TIP

USE LAVISHLY DRAPED AND SWAGGED CURTAINS TO SET OFF AN ALCOVE AND LEND DRAMA TO THE SMALLER SPACE.



Fischer, who has traveled extensively in France and shares an affinity for its aesthetic traditions. "But rarely do I get to indulge that style in New England," she says. "And Dominique's personal motivation with her father makes what I do a thousand times more fun. I feel a little bit like a fairy godmother." The pair started with the living and sitting rooms, selecting a romantic palette of wine red, peach, lavender, and green so dark it sometimes looks black, and abundant fabrics in velvet, silk, and Belgian linen. They filled the rooms with gilded Louis XV or Louis XVI furniture (or mid-century reproductions thereof); contemporary accents, such as a rosewood mid-century desk paired with Philippe Starck's iconic polycarbonate Louis Ghost chair, provide youthful counterpoints. On the three-season porch, Fischer's love of contrasting texture is on full display, with sheer linen drapery, rattan furniture, and a sheepskin rug combining in what the designer calls "a friction that is actually harmonious."

The rest of the house will come together in time. Fischer remains on retainer with the Sauer, keeping an eye out for pieces that are "so Dominique" — preferably golden and from the era of "any one of the Louises" — and buying them as the couple's budget allows. When her client, now her good friend, becomes impatient with the meandering decorating pace, Fischer tells her, "Versailles wasn't built in a day."

On a recent morning in her living room, Dominique settles into a striped Louis XV armchair near her father's jade-inlaid Chinoiserie cabinet. In the adjacent sitting room, her three-year-old, Greta, plays on a reproduction Louis XVI settee that Dominique hopes she'll inherit one day. She says she feels her father in the house now. Sometimes, she can almost see him cooking in the kitchen, almost smell his NOW cigarettes in the air. "I feel different when I'm around these things," she says. "It feels good. I guess I'm very attached to this stuff, even though it's just stuff." □



A 1920s-era English Regency chair from Pillars, topped with a John Robshaw pillow, anchors a porch corner. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP** In the primary bedroom, blush-pink silk curtains blend with walls in Cream Froth by Benjamin Moore, and pick up tones in an antique rug. A marble-topped Louis XV semainier from Thomaston Place Auction Galleries graces Josephine's room. "I don't like the idea of buying kiddie furniture," Dominique says. "I like buying real things that they might want as adults."