



# BRIGHT IDEAS

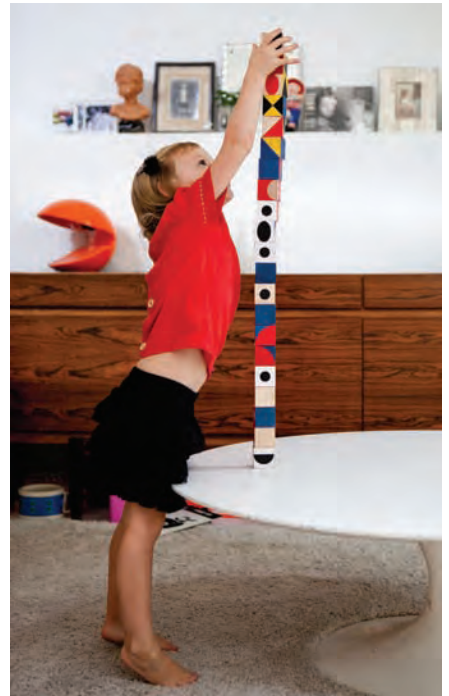
In a suburb of Paris, a French family shows its true colors—threading a sense of playfulness throughout its home

*Text by ANNE STARK DITMEYER Photographs by CLAIRE CURT*



## Outdoor Living

When Fifi and Jean-Marie purchased their home five years ago, the outdoor space was a major selling point. “We spend as much time in the garden as possible,” she says. It’s the site of both work (laptop sessions en plein air) and play (gatherings with friends and neighbors).



**FRENCH DESIGNER AND STYLIST** Fifi Mandirac has a mantra: “*Je fais qui me faire plaisir*” (“I do what makes me happy”). One look at her eponymous product line ([fifimandirac.com](http://fifimandirac.com)) and it’s evident what makes her happy: color and playful prints. Both are common traits of not only her wares—from her greeting cards and notebooks to votive holders and paper fans—but also her home.

Fifi, her husband Jean-Marie (a graphic designer she met while in school), four-and-a-half-year-old daughter Susie, and one-year-old son Charlie reside in the Saint-Denis neighborhood just north of Paris. In a culture known to stick to a more muted palette—for example, the wardrobes typically don’t venture too far from basic black—Fifi is not afraid to exhibit her own style. When it comes to her penchant for bold color she says, “I don’t know how to do it any other way. It’s like cooking in the kitchen: I just need to add that last bit of flavor.”





## Well-Loved Belongings

The home's furnishings hold memories as hand-me-downs, gifts from family, or flea market pieces with their own stories to tell. Fifi recommends the *brocantes* elsewhere in France, namely the south, over the pricey Parisian markets. The giant storage cabinet—which came from a *mercerie*, or notions shop, in Brittany—was a present from her parents.







### *Counter Culture*

The kitchen countertop has become a place to show off some of the family's favorite pieces from various trips. "I love to travel anywhere there is a lot to bring back," Fifi says, pointing out the gold tray from Morocco.

### *Family Ties*

Fifi has her grandparents to thank for the Danish dining table, which is surrounded by Eames chairs. The sweet garland gracing the wall is left over from Charlie's garden birthday party.

## *Déco Rapide*

When Charlie was born, decorating his room was an exercise in speed and thrift. Fifi incorporated things she already had, like the small plush dogs she collected long before she had children—just because they were beautiful.



## *Art Collective*

For Fifi, the first thing you see when you enter a room shouldn't be a white wall. Hence, she created a collage of inspiration—including some of her own work—in a corner of Susie's bedroom.







### *Like Mother, Like Daughter*

Susie insists on arranging things, just like her stylist mother does. The four-and-a-half-year-old's "installations" are found in various spots. Fifi jokes, "She has to make sure everything looks just right, turning the object so the angle is perfect." The creativity must be genetic; Fifi's mother made the bedspread in Susie's room.







### *A Passion for Pattern*

Some things never go out of style: the old patterned sheets from the bed that Fifi slept in as a baby have been recycled into pillows on her current bed. The wallpaper, with a lily of the valley motif, is Sandberg's Liljekonvalj.



### *A Stylist's Corner*

When Fifi's mother-in-law closed her boutique, she gifted Fifi with a dress form, an ideal way to keep large necklaces. Patterns, courtesy of curtains designed by a friend and a collection of suitcases, enliven the space.

### *Elvis Lives*

For a touch of fun, Fifi placed a kitsch Elvis hood ornament that she found during a trip to Los Angeles under a bell jar. "Too many people are too serious," she says. "The fun is in not taking everything too seriously."