

# Beauty on a Budget

SPIFFED-UP HAND-ME-DOWNS AND A LITTLE INGENUITY BRING A WHOLE LOT OF PRETTY TO A YOUNG COUPLE'S FIRST NEST, IN BELMONT. BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ

**F**OR 10 YEARS, Bill Springer lived just around the corner from the Belmont home he would buy and share with his future wife, Caroline McCabe Springer. He could even see it out his window, though he never really took note of it. Turned out, despite its initial unremarkability, the house had serious potential. "We loved the amount of light that streamed in all day," says Caroline.

After ripping out a lot of mustard-colored carpet, the Springers hired architect Edrick van-Beuzekom of EvB Design in Somerville to turn a rickety front porch into usable interior space. The Springers themselves opened the kitchen to the family room. Bill and his dad, a carpenter, renovated the kitchen. Most recently, the couple hired Melrose-based interior designer Ana Donohue to pull together the decor. Donohue transformed the living room, family room, and master bedroom and helped create a nursery for the Springers' new baby, all on a relatively strict budget.

Luckily, the couple had solid starting points. Most of their furniture and artwork was handed down from Caroline's grandmothers. "My family has a tradition of passing along what my mother calls 'friendly brown furniture,'" she says. The two easy chairs came from Caroline's paternal grandmother's apartment on Sutton Place in New York City. In fact, Caroline rescued them from the sidewalk, where a relative had put them out as trash. "Other family members are in a different economic bracket than we are," she jokes.

Donohue embraced the pieces, using them as the cornerstones in the living room. "Caroline is very sentimental. These things mean a lot to her,



Caroline McCabe Springer and her young son read together in the living room, where reupholstered and new pieces blend beautifully.

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so it was really important to make sure they were not just included, but enhanced," Donohue says. The designer had the easy chairs reupholstered in a fabric with an Indian sensibility, chosen to reflect the couple's love of travel. For the sofa, also a hand-me-down, she picked a coordinating neutral with textural dots. On top she layered bright pillows trimmed in colors pulled from the oil painting over the mantel. The painting is the work of

B. Prabha, one of India's first widely known female contemporary artists. Caroline's father purchased the piece while a student in the country in the 1960s. "It has such a cool vibe," Donohue says, "and the scale is perfect."

On the other side of the room, Donohue created a cheerful dining nook in what was once the dilapidated porch. Old and new come together in pink stripes and a bohemian paisley on inherited armchairs and a custom banquette, respectively. As a nod to Bill's more contemporary tastes, Donohue paired two acrylic Louis Ghost chairs with the farm-style table and added a modern chrome floor lamp. The tableau perfectly captures the "unexpected" bent Caroline hoped Donohue could conjure amid the relics.

In the master bedroom, a Tibetan rug from InnerAsia in Hanover, New Hampshire, sets the blue-and-white color scheme. Navy grass-cloth paper on two walls adds drama and anchors the space. For curtains, Donohue saved on materials by using fabric measuring only one and a half times the width of a window for each panel, just enough to add a bit of softness. Trim ensured a custom look, but she used it only along the outer edge as another money-saving effort. That trick follows Donohue's philosophy: "If you make one aspect look good, the ones around it will look good, too."

The Springers are thrilled with the results, playing with their newborn in the family room and entertaining friends in front of the fireplace. Caroline says: "It has the feel of the Connecticut farmhouse I grew up in. It has the sunlight and warmth and really awesome bones." ■

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The master bedroom is a study in dark color done right; a former porch now serves as cheery dining space (below right) off the living room; a leopard-print ottoman and Tibetan rug (below left) brighten the family room.

