

ARTISANS of France

# The Domino Effect

Photos & text by Ruth Ribeaucourt

Inspired by 18<sup>th</sup>-century textiles and production techniques, Antoinette Poisson creates exquisitely printed domino papers, ceramics and fabrics out of its atelier in the 11<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris.





The design house is aptly named after Louis XV's favorite mistress, the Marquise de Pompadour, born Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson. A renowned doyenne of decorative arts, she was considered the era's first interior decorator, famously applying her talents on the interiors of the Château de Versailles.

Antoinette Poisson, the brand, came to life in 2012, when three paper conservators — Julie Stordiau, Jean-Baptiste Martin and Vincent Farelly — discovered their first domino paper during a restoration in Auvergne.



Before wallpaper could be produced in continuous rolls, singular sheets called domino papers, or “dominos,” were printed and then hand-painted with ornate patterns. Considered one of the first wallpapers ever invented, a domino can be distinguished by its unusual size (42 x 32 cm) and unique motifs. The process of creating these papers would go on to become an art form that experienced a golden age during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when *dominotiers* formed their own guild. As they rose in popularity, dominos could be found decorating small nooks and crannies and lining closets, corridors, hat-boxes and the insides of books.

#### AN EYE FOR DESIGN

1. Antoinette Poisson founders Jean-Baptiste Martin (L) and Vincent Farelly (R).

2. The Paris boutique, where shelves are lined with a new perfume collection created in collaboration with perfumer Lyn Harris.





Each sheet is individually printed in black acrylic on a cut block and then hand-painted.

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*Original techniques  
employed in the 1700s*  
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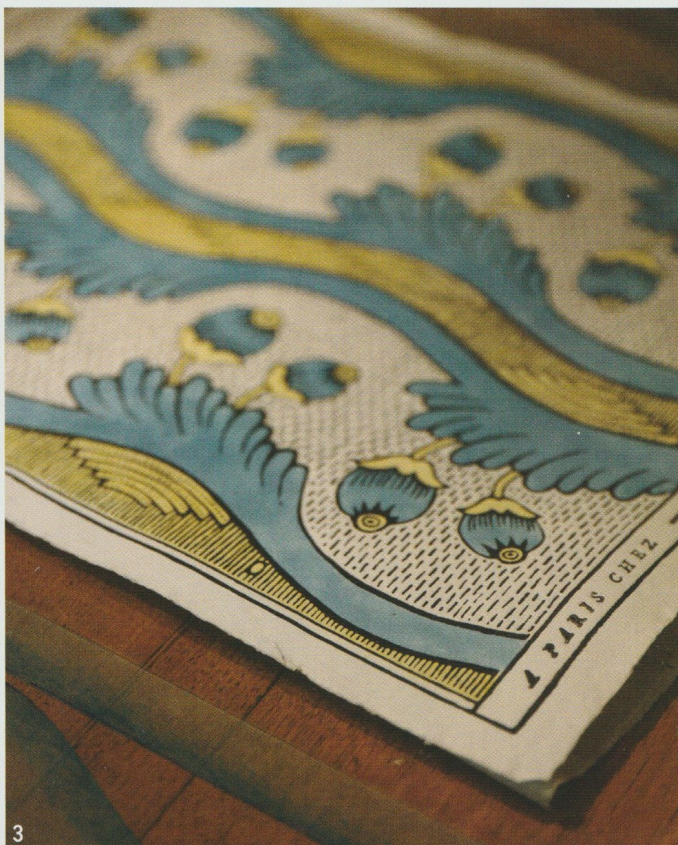


Despite being experts in their field, the three friends were baffled by how to go about renovating their newfound discovery. What they learned inspired them, and Antoinette Poisson organically sprung from the desire to reignite this elegant, forgotten craftsmanship.

From the beginning, the trio sought to recreate domino papers according to the original techniques employed in the 1700s. They started by sourcing the finest materials, a mission that led them to the mill of Jacques Bréjoux — one of the last traditional paper mills in France — which creates handmade paper from vintage linen and hemp rags. A slow, laborious process, the mill produces only 100 sheets a day, but the final result is exceptionally close to the rag cloth of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Initially, Antoinette Poisson was exclusively devoted to *dominoterie*, but in recent years, the business has expanded to offer fabrics, cushions, ceramics and decorative objects. It has also been called upon to partner with well-known brands and designers such as Dior, Gucci, Ladurée, Diptyque, Gien and Hotel Le Meurice. For Christmas 2020, it conceived a line of homeware and clothing for the beloved French supermarket chain Monoprix (the must-have collection sold out across France within hours).

A recent collaboration with British perfumer Lyn Harris (of Miller Harris), a bottle redesign for Nina Ricci's timeless fragrance, Air du Temps, and the packaging for an exclusive jam all see Antoinette Poisson taking its designs to new and exciting places.



### COLOR CODED

1. A series of hand-cut *pochoirs* (stencils) are used to paint the design — the same technique used in the 1700s.
2. Color choices are heavily inspired by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and draw inspiration from different fields, including fashion, painting, illustration and interiors.
3. Colors are freshly mixed for every print.



Jean-Baptiste Martin and Vincent Farelly, co-founders and artistic directors of the brand, work out of their studio and shop at 12 rue Saint-Sabin — an area that was the heart of Parisian art workshops in the 1800s. The space includes a large show-room with an adjoining atelier, which houses a growing team of skilled artisans headed by *première main* Catherine Montagneare. It is here that each sheet of domino paper is painstakingly block-printed then hand-painted using the art of *pochoir*.

These dominos go on to adorn the homes of clients worldwide, and this precious savoir-faire — and the legend of Madame de Pompadour — lives on. ♦

[www.antoINETTEpoisson.com](http://www.antoINETTEpoisson.com)

### REVIVING A LOST ART

1. *Première main* Catherine Montagneare paints the intricate details of the "Oiseaux & Feuillage."

2. A collection of precious *papier dominote*-covered books from the founders' private archives.

