

# NORTHWEST SEATTLE LIVING

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MAKE A SCENE WITH DOMINIQUE QUINQUE

THE NORTH BEACH ENTREPRENEUR REIMAGINING CHILDHOOD CREATIVITY

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Photography by  
Jhon Rose Photography

Imagine a quiet North Beach street. There's a little library-style display box that catches the eye of passersby. But instead of books, it's filled with tiny worlds: a child perched in the branches of an apple tree, a woodland tent crafted from moss, or a miniature forest path strewn with wildflowers. These are dioramas. Meticulously built, whimsical scenes that spark curiosity. They are also the signature creations of Heidi Huckleberry, a small, sustainability-minded business founded by local resident Dominique Quinque and her business partner, Jacklin Cagnatel. The brand's name is a loving nod to Dominique's daughter, Heidi, whose adventurous spirit and boundless curiosity embody the heart of Heidi Huckleberry.



These display boxes are more than a showcase. They are a window into Dominique and Jacklin's lives. Lives defined by creativity, reinvention, and a deep belief that childhood should be full of exploration, imagination, and muddy shoes.

Dominique's story starts far from Seattle, in the former East Germany, where she was born and raised. Growing up as one of five children, she spent her weekends outside climbing apple trees, building forts, and inventing games with whatever nature provided. "We were more independent and resourceful back then," she says. "We were more bored, and more creative. That's where imagination is born."

Her path took an unexpected turn when she entered the world of science. She met her future husband, Adrian Briggs, an English scientist, at the Max Planck Institute in Germany, where she worked and he pursued his PhD. Their shared passion for research brought them to the United States in 2010. First to Boston, where Adrian completed his postdoctoral work at Harvard, and Dominique worked in a Harvard lab. Their daughter, Heidi, was born there.

But science, Dominique admits, was never her true calling. "It was interesting, but it wasn't my passion," she says. "I'm a very creative person." When the opportunity arose, she pivoted, enrolling in Boston's School of Fashion Design. It was a bold move, but it paid off: she became a featured designer at Boston Fashion Week and immersed herself in the vibrant East Coast fashion scene.

Life shifted again when Adrian's career brought the family to Seattle. She found unexpected joy in the change.

"When we moved, Heidi was four, and I fell in love with the greenery of the area. I enjoy walking around our community and admiring all the beautiful gardens and landscaping," Dominique expresses her love for her North Beach neighborhood. "I love living by the sea, the sound of seagulls takes me back to summer vacation when I was a child. The only time I would hear the sound of gulls was when we would visit the Baltic Sea in the summer, so it brings many good feelings when I hear that sound. And I enjoy the community, we like our neighbors."



But the city didn't have the same fashion community she'd found in Boston and New York, so Dominique pivoted once more, this time toward environmental advocacy. She organized beach cleanups, neighborhood litter patrols, and DIY workshops for kids.

Then came COVID-19. "Everything stopped. At first, I thought it would be over in a month," she recalls. "But it wasn't, and everything changed."

That pause gave Dominique time to reflect - on her childhood, her daughter's screen-filled generation, and what she wanted to create next. "Now we have more screens, less mud. We buy more stuff and make less," she says. She wanted to design something that would encourage kids to reconnect with nature, their own creativity, and their families.

The idea that emerged became Heidi Huckleberry, named in part after her daughter.

At its heart, Heidi Huckleberry is simple: screen-free diorama kits that blend outdoor exploration, paper crafting, and storytelling. The process starts with a walk outside. Families are encouraged to collect natural treasures, moss, twigs, stones, and flowers, and use them to decorate small cardstock characters and backdrops included in the kit.

The result is a miniature scene built from imagination and what nature provides. "It's about encouraging families to spend more time outside, helping kids explore, and reducing plastic waste," Dominique explains. "So many toys are already half-done. You just put A and B together and you don't need your own creativity anymore."

The kits are handmade in Dominique's home studio, where she sketches each design, transfers it into Photoshop and Illustrator, and uses a cutting machine to produce the shapes. Though she dreams of scaling up production, she insists on keeping manufacturing local. "I'm not interested in seeing my ideas mass-produced overseas. I'd much rather support other local businesses," she says, even though it makes the product more expensive. It is a labor of love.

Dominique's commitment to sustainability is more than marketing; it is the back-

bone of her brand. She avoids plastic, aims to use recycled paper, and even chooses slower, less efficient production methods if they align with her values.

For example, rather than hot glue guns (which require plastic-based glue sticks), she uses regular glue, which means the process takes longer. "It slows you down, and I think that's part of the experience," she says. "You're not rushing. You're just in the moment. That's human nature."

Her goals are modest but meaningful: create something that entertains children, connects them with nature and their families, and leaves as small an environmental footprint as possible. "There's so much other stuff on the market," she says with a laugh. "I just want to make something meaningful."

Looking at Dominique's varied career, from science to fashion to entrepreneurship, there is one common denominator: creativity. She's tried nearly every craft imaginable, from knitting to lace-making, from furniture building to landscaping. "I always have ideas," she says. "I love to solve problems."

Still, her path was shaped by the advice of others. After high school, she wanted to study graphic design but was discouraged by adults who warned her she'd "starve" as an artist. At the time, she followed the safe route into science, but now tells her daughter to follow her own passions. "You're more likely to be a happy grown-up if you do what you love," she says.

Though Dominique is the face of Heidi Huckleberry, she isn't building it alone. Her business partner, Jacklin Cagnatel, is also from East Germany, a coincidence the two discovered after meeting in Seattle. "We actually met at the airport, both flying to Germany," Dominique recalls. "We have different backgrounds and complement each other well. For me, it made all the difference to have someone else's voice and optimism."

Her husband, Adrian, continues his groundbreaking scientific work in gene therapy, having previously contributed to sequencing the Neanderthal genome under Nobel laureate Svante Pääbo. Their daughter Heidi—now 13—is a theater kid who sings, acts, and performs in Broadway-bound productions. And then there's Piper, the family's Australian labradoodle, who often makes cameo appearances in photo shoots.

Dominique believes adults have much to learn from children, especially their unfiltered imagination. "We lose that as we get older," she says. "Kids are blank canvases, and it depends on what tools you give them to paint their world."

She's also an advocate for unstructured play, which she feels is more important than ever in today's overstimulated, instant-gratification culture. "When I was a kid, we barely had toys, but that forced us to invent our own games," she says. "It taught us to make something out of nothing."

Her diorama kits are a small rebellion against the hyper-structured, always-on pace of modern childhood. They ask families to slow down, get a little dirty, and build something together, no screens required.

The company's playful slogan is Make a Scene. A nod to both the diorama-building process and the idea of making some-



thing you can be proud of. "If you have to make a scene, make it a good one," Dominique says with a warm laugh.

That sentiment sums up her journey: embracing pivots, holding firm to her principles, and creating work that reflects her values. Whether she's designing fashion collections, organizing beach cleanups, or sketching tiny apple trees for a diorama kit, Dominique is making her own kind of scene. One filled with purpose, creativity, and connection.

For Dominique, success isn't about mass production or rapid scaling; it's about impact. She wants her kits to inspire families, encourage outdoor exploration, and promote sustainable choices. She also hopes to continue hosting community craft sessions at libraries and local shops, bringing neighbors together around the simple joy of making something with their hands.

Reflecting on her journey from a moss-collecting child in East Germany to a creative entrepreneur in Seattle, she laughs. "My younger self would probably say, 'That's so cool! You should have done that from the start.'"

And in a way, she has. Because at the core of her work, then and now, is the same impulse: to notice the beauty in a patch of moss, to collect it, and to use it to tell a story.