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Treasure Hunt

Three New York style-makers -- social maven Nan Kempner, fashion designer Narciso Rodriguez, and interior decorator Sheila Bridges -- take us along as they hit their favorite shops in search of holiday loot.

By [Amy Larocca](#) Published Nov 19, 2001

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There is a family of giant German tourists walking silently across 125th Street as interior designer Sheila Bridges begins her Christmas shopping at the Studio Museum of Harlem gift shop (144 West 125th Street; 212-864-4500), a few blocks away from her home and across the street from the office she recently completed decorating for Bill Clinton. In the twelve years that Bridges has been a decorator, she has, naturally, become a habitué of home-design stores, which means she gets some good gift ideas while she's working. But she likes to shop closer to home.

This year, she'll get Studio Museum memberships for her parents to use when they visit from Philadelphia, but she's also loading up on books. "My brother gets Colson Whitehead's *John Henry Days* \$24.95," she says, "and for my mom, *Elder Grace: The Nobility of Aging* \$40," an anthology edited by Chester Higgins Jr. She grimaces. "I hope she doesn't take it the wrong way." There's a heavy coffee-table book called *The Jazz Pictures* (\$60), with photographs by Carol Friedman, for Dad. "We're big on books," she shrugs. "And I really only get presents for my family, a few close friends, and my dog. But that comes from Petco." There is also jewelry to be admired: cameos in ivory with the profiles in black, ringed in gold and silver (\$85), as well as colorful velvet patchwork handmade scarves by Two's Company (\$32).

Bridges's next stop is a little way down Lenox at 116th: the Malcolm Shabazz Harlem Market (102 West 116th Street; 212-987-8131). Vendors sell everything from traditional African arts, rugs, baskets, and fabrics to CDs and soap. "I'm a major bead person," Bridges says, gesturing to the turquoise around her neck, "so I like to get things for my girlfriends here. If you don't live in New York, you just can't find this stuff. Friends in Boston and Washington love it." She picks stacks of bright-blue bracelets from Mohammed World. "I always like to put a whole bunch together." The giant woven baskets from Fatou Touba M'backe look good on top of cabinets, can hold stacks of magazines, and are naturally colored, which makes them a safe bet for matching in other people's