

# domino

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# A BOLD COTTAGE MAKEOVER

With a few small renovations and plenty of paint, interior designer **Sheila Bridges** turned an eyesore in her backyard into a guesthouse so inviting that her friends call it the “boutique hotel.”

photographs by LAURA RESEN text by KATE BOLICK



Bridges added a porch, four squared columns and a clapboard pediment to the face of the building, so it would fit in with the rest of her property.

before



**EIGHT YEARS AGO**, when Sheila Bridges moved into a 19th-century Colonial overlooking the Hudson River in upstate New York, she was more interested in the spectacular view off the front porch than the dilapidated shack behind the house. But last year, feeling a need for more space to accommodate her many weekend guests, she gave the outbuilding a good hard look. Perhaps best known for designing Bill Clinton's New York office, the prolific Harlem-based decorator has also written a book, *Furnishing Forward*, and hosted a home-decor television show, so she was hardly at a loss for ideas. (Indeed, her newly launched design newsletter, [thenestmaker.com](http://thenestmaker.com), is full of them.) The trick, she realized, to transforming the sad structure into an alluring retreat was a slight restructuring of the interior, enlivened by an imaginative color scheme. She broke down some walls, carved out a few more windows and constructed a portico out front to give the exterior a welcoming feel. Then came the fun part: choosing a palette that's cozy but not too country.

MAKUP: DANIELO SHAPIROV; PRESS: CATHERINE MALANCHINO

opposite page:  
**DECKING, SIDING** and  
**COLUMNS** williams-schlumber.com for information  
**EXTERIOR PAINT** Satin  
in Brilliant White  
BenjaminMoore.com for  
stores **WEATHER VANE**  
(similar to shown) "Pig"  
\$279 windandweather.com  
**LIGHT FIXTURE** (similar  
to shown) "Cranston  
Heritage" \$109 bellacor.com



Bridges and her dog, Dolby, face off in front of a giant 7' x 9' map of New York State that leads visitors from the entryway to the kitchen.

"I went with bright, contemporary colors to give my living room more of an urban country look."



## living room

The center of the house—a wide area with the kitchen opening onto the living room—is a comfortable mix of traditional touches and vivid colors that sets the tone for the rest of the decor. To keep the two rooms distinct but harmonious, Bridges selected one note from the kitchen palette—butter yellow—and brought it into the sitting area. "I don't use yellow often, but it seemed to me a cheery element for guests to spend time around," she says. But mostly, she thought pink. A classic love seat and club chairs (her own design) in a near-matching hue create a lively salon atmosphere, while old-fashioned details, like the silhouette of Bridges at age 9 (painted by an artist friend onto a raw silk-covered ottoman), add a little gravitas. These pieces, plus jolts of white, break up the dark background. While black trim (she opted for Farrow & Ball paint for its "depth and pigmentation") and wainscoting might seem counterintuitive in a small space, they lend the low, featureless room the illusion of architecture.

**CHAIRS** (similar to shown) "James" \$849 each, calicocorners.com for stores **CHAIR FABRIC** (similar to shown) #41729-124 \$47.50/yard, Duralee (800) 275-3872 **SOFA** (similar to shown) "Monique's Settee" \$2,169 calicocorners.com for stores **SOFA FABRIC** Holly Hunt "Pink Lady" \$176/yard, e-mail designpro@ddbbuilding.com **RUG** "Palais" \$104/square yard, Stark Carpet (212) 752-9000 for information **TRIM AND BOOKSHELF PAINT** Dead Flat Oil in Off-Black, farrow-ball.com

above:

**SIDE TABLE** "Swedish Stool" from \$900 Chole Decor (323) 954-0037 **CURTAIN FABRIC** John Rosselli & Associates La Gracieu "Sava Weave" about \$92/yard, e-mail designpro@ddbbuilding.com



The built-in bookcase is Bridges' ingenious solution to what had been an off-center window.





## bedroom

In her main house, Bridges prefers soft, muted colors, but the cottage offered her the chance to dream up surprising, often potent, combinations and inject more humor than she would normally. Still, she finds ways to temper these romps. The all-green bedroom—literally inspired by the bright summer lawn—could have easily been too much, but white and black accents cut the saturation and make the room feel vibrant, crisp and grounded. A George Smith chair provides an accent note while referencing the strain of yellow elsewhere in the house. Linen shades with green, black and yellow stripes pull the room together. "It's important for one thing to serve as a template for a room's overall palette, to make sense of everything," she says.



The key to using multiple patterns in a small space is varying the sizes; here, the leaves on the coverlet and carpet complement rather than compete with one another.

**QUILT** (similar to shown) "Oakleaf Applique" \$2,000 Amish Country Quilts (866) 352-1991 **THROW FABRIC** "Pillar" \$118/yard, Lee Jofe (800) 453-3563 for information **SCONCES** "Zig-Zag" \$1,900 each, Lyle and Umbach, Ltd. (207) 734-8299 for information **BLACK LAMP** (similar to shown, at bedside) "Cast Column" \$140 restoration hardware.com **ARTWORK** (over bed) Sol LeWitt oil-base woodcut print "Loop Doopy" \$15,000/set of eight, evitart.com **MIRROR** (similar to shown) "Cameo Plate" \$100 bellacor.com **CHEST** (similar to shown) "NY Empire" from \$900 eantiques.com **LAMP** (similar to shown, on chest) "Peyton" \$169 crateandbarrel.com **ROMAN SHADE FABRIC** Rosa Bernal "Coordinate White Toile" about \$310/yard, Claremont Furnishing Fabrics Co. (212) 486-1252 for information

right:

**CHAIR** "Brewster" from \$3,950 georgesmith.com for stores **THROW FABRIC** (similar to shown) Antique suzani "Urgut" \$99 uzbek-craft.com **WALL PAINT** Eggshell in Baby Fern #2029-20, benjaminmoore.com for stores **RUG** "Floral Vine" \$149/yard, Stark Carpet (212) 752-9000 for information

"A guest room allows you to experiment with different sides of yourself."



An antique suzani over the chair plays off the leaf theme, while the Boston terrier portrait in the room's accent hues is one of several that Bridges bought en masse at a flea market.



Tord Boontje's ornate cuckoo clock, mounted on elaborate wallpaper (Bridges' own design), is an extra layer of decorative flourish. "I really identify with the way he gives country motifs an urban twist," she says.





The window treatments are a signature Bridges touch—"classic roman shades are my favorites," she says.

**CHAIR** (similar to shown) Fiberglass "Case Study" on stacking base \$239 modernica.net **ROMAN-SHADE FABRIC** George Spencer "Lucy in the Sky" about \$288/yard, Claremont Furnishing Fabrics Co. (212) 486-1252 for information **LIGHT FIXTURES** "Star Flush" \$225 each, Hudson Home (518) 822-8120 **FLOORCLOTH** Sheila Bridges custom "Florentine Floral" from \$30/square foot, Smith Floorworks (866) 269-7030 for information **WALL PAINT** Eggshell Modern Emulsion in Arsenic, farrow-ball.com

below: **TABLE** (similar to shown) #WTWB-350 \$181.50 and **CHAIRS** (similar to shown) #FC5-1 \$109 each, Mr. Mony's, Inc. (866) 933-0071 **RICE BOWLS** Tord Boontje Tablestories IV \$42/set of two, and **PLATES** "Deco" \$55 each, modernpoverty.com

opposite page: **WALLPAPER** "Harlem Toile de Jouy" \$127/roll, Studio Printworks (212) 633-6727 **CLOCK** "Cuckoo" \$207, unichome.com **SOUNDDOCK** Digital music system from \$299, bose.com

## kitchen and dining area

Bridges' talent for updating tradition is nowhere more evident than in her own "Harlem Toile de Jouy"—a cheeky modernization of the classic motif featuring stereotypical African-American themes like jumping double Dutch and playing basketball. The line of wallpapers and fabrics comes in six color options, but she picked sunny yellow for the kitchen to riff off the map and the turquoise walls in the entryway. She designed the floorcloth to unite the palette (its "Florentine Floral" pattern will be part of her new home collection, launching this fall). White cabinets and marble counters, along with gray painted-wood floors and a white ceiling, instill a sense of spaciousness and keep the focus on the shots of color. Likewise, an enclosed porch emphasizes only the simple pleasures of outdoor dining and the verdant view.



Bridges dressed up a vintage fiberglass dining set with custom cushions; the dinnerware is by Tord Boontje.