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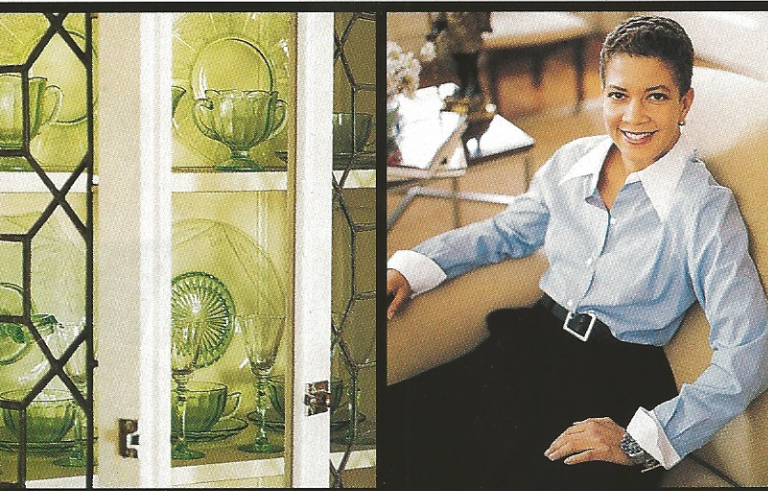
# ACCESSIBLE ELEGANCE

*Decorator Sheila Bridges took her cues from a classic Harlem apartment building and designed a casually graceful, culturally eclectic home*

BY CHRISTINE PITTEL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FERNANDO BENGOCHEA

PRODUCED BY DARA CAPONIGRO



"I grew up with fiberglass chairs in the 1960s, so naturally I went in a totally different direction," says decorator Sheila Bridges, who lives in a 1901 landmark apartment building in Harlem with the kind of high-ceilinged, generously proportioned rooms that are just a memory for most Manhattanites. "My style is classic, and I broaden the spectrum with other cultures." In business on her own just over a year, Bridges is currently working on a Colonial Revival house in Boston and starting her second project for Andre Harrell, president and CEO of Motown Records.

Flea markets from Paris to New York's 26th Street provided her furnishings. The former servant's room off her kitchen is stacked with the more decrepit finds. "Friends call this my Friday the 13th furniture because it's so scary," she says. Eventually such pieces make their way out to the restorer and back into the light. The living room's dark woods and cameo cream walls set off a palette of apple green and amber that seems lifted from the tones of the Depression glass she collects. Bridges salvaged some of the building's original sconces, abandoned in the cavernous basement stables few others thought to explore. "Harlem has some of the most phenomenal architecture in the city," she says. "I'm always looking up at doorways and cornices."





The apartment's good bones are enlivened by a mix of furnishings. Posture-perfect Victorian side chairs flank the living room fireplace. Opposite, near left: Armillary spheres intrigue Bridges, and the designer added a blackamoor because she liked it even though it "provokes discussion." Opposite below: A flea market Kandinsky competes with a Gothic Revival table for the strongest lines. Opposite, far left: The Depression glass goblets displayed in the leaded-glass cabinets were Bridges's grandmother's. Near left: Sheila Bridges.







*"I pick out pieces that might at first go unnoticed. Look closer and you see the details"*





A vintage portrait by American painter George Henry Taggart overlooks a bedroom chair covered in Nile blue cotton velvet. Opposite, clockwise from top left: The dining room table's mosaic tile top echoes a handsome mosaic floor in the foyer. The foyer's Louis XVI-style settee had only three legs when Bridges spotted it in a Harlem junk shop. She bought the sky blue-painted iron bed, then tinted the ceiling to match. Grass grows in bathroom planters.

FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE READER INFORMATION

