

The New York Times



HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Gifts For Hard Cases

They're Impossible to Shop for, but It's Not as if
You Have a Choice. Five Design Experts Offer Guidance.



**FOR SOMEONE WHOSE
TASTE NEEDS SHAPING**
Sheila Bridges recommends the Impulse Ghost Tumblers (\$85 for a set of four at Nest Interiors, 212-337-3441).



For the Style-Impaired

YOU, of course, are not a design snob. Some people are aesthetically aware. Some, like your younger sister, are oblivious, particularly to the pain it causes you to walk into the mismatched chaos they call home. That Miró poster on the wall that she's had since college. The squat, naked-people coffee cups. The Mamie Eisenhower plate, which once belonged to your grandmother, displayed without a shred of irony.

You want — indeed it is your obligation — to find a gift that will not merely improve the homes of your design-challenged loved one, but influence and inspire him or her. You want to suggest that there is another way.

Sheila Bridges, who's decorated the office space of former President Bill Clinton and is the host of "Sheila Bridges: Designer Living" on the Fine Living Channel, says she, too, has such people in her life. She is not unsympathetic to their situation; it can be hard to figure out your style, she says. Even so, she never offers unsolicited advice; she likes being invited to her friends' homes, she says, and if you are critical of the way someone lives, you're not going to get invited back. She does agree, however, that certain gifts can subtly awaken a friend to design possibilities.

To demonstrate, she started at Nest Interiors, in Chelsea, where her eye was caught by the Impulse Ghost Tumbler, a hollow wineglass form within a highball glass.

"Glassware is always a good gift, especially around the holidays," she said. "It's stylish and not particularly expensive." She also liked mercury glass candlesticks, which look antique — they're the sort of items that might inspire the recipient to buy silverware or napkins to complement them.

She was intrigued with the Feng Shui Desk Set, by Red Asterisk, which included a small figure of a dragon, a phoenix and a tiger. "Most peo-

ple have a computer and a desk and it's good for someone just learning about design who has heard of feng shui."

Trays of pressed recycled wood printed with vintage French photos of ornately costumed birds, by Ibride, charmed her. "Instead of the framed poster you have from college, I'd rather see this on the wall," she said. "I actually own one of these." A moment later, her cellphone rang. The ring tone was the sound of chirping birds.

She also liked Trophy Hangers, a playful pair of three-inch resin wall hooks in the shapes of the front and rear of a moose, by the New Zealand designer Phil Cuttance, for Charles & Marie. "People seem to enjoy stag and moose heads without actually having to harm an animal."

Ms. Bridge's splurge item was the Phonofone II, a large black ceramic iPod player in the shape of an old-fashioned Victrola, which sells for \$600, and was designed by Tristan Zimmermann, in a limited edition of 200. Henry Stozek, an owner of Nest, cautioned that the Phonofone is primarily an art piece; it has no electronics and works entirely "on the gentle amplification" provided by the ceramic speaker.

Her next stop was Georgia Tapert Living, in SoHo. She liked linen guest towels in white or chocolate (other colors can be ordered), embroidered with a single lowercase initial.

"Everyone needs to have guest towels," Ms. Bridges said. "This is very tasteful and can go anywhere, it doesn't matter what style of bathroom you have. They don't have the pretentiousness of the traditional monogram with three letters."

Don't people fear the embroidered guest towel?

"I think maybe they fear them a little bit," Ms. Bridges said. She laughed. "I think everybody should have some things in their apartment that people are afraid of."

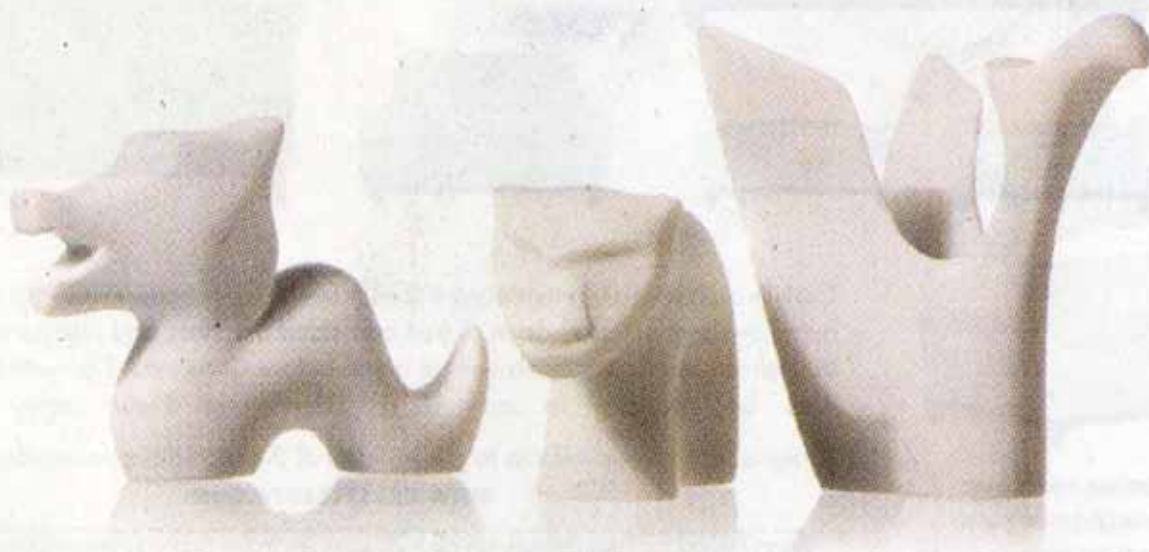




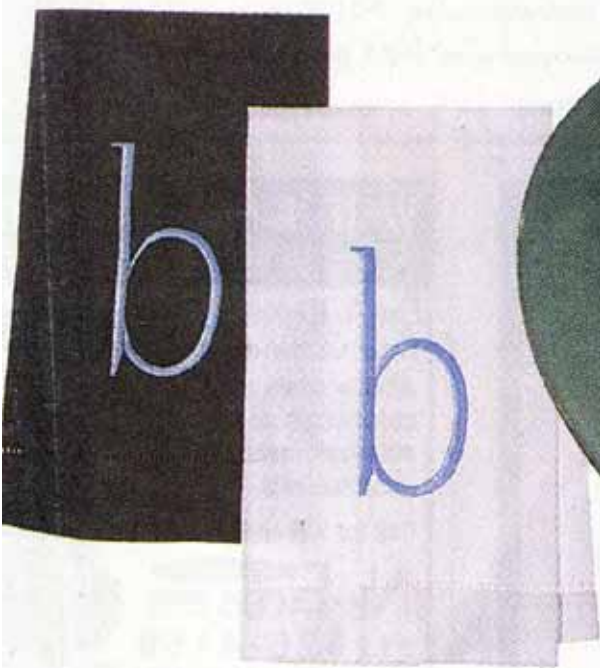
Wood tray printed with vintage French photo, by Ibride, \$190; Nest Interiors, (212) 337-3441; www.nestinteriors.com.



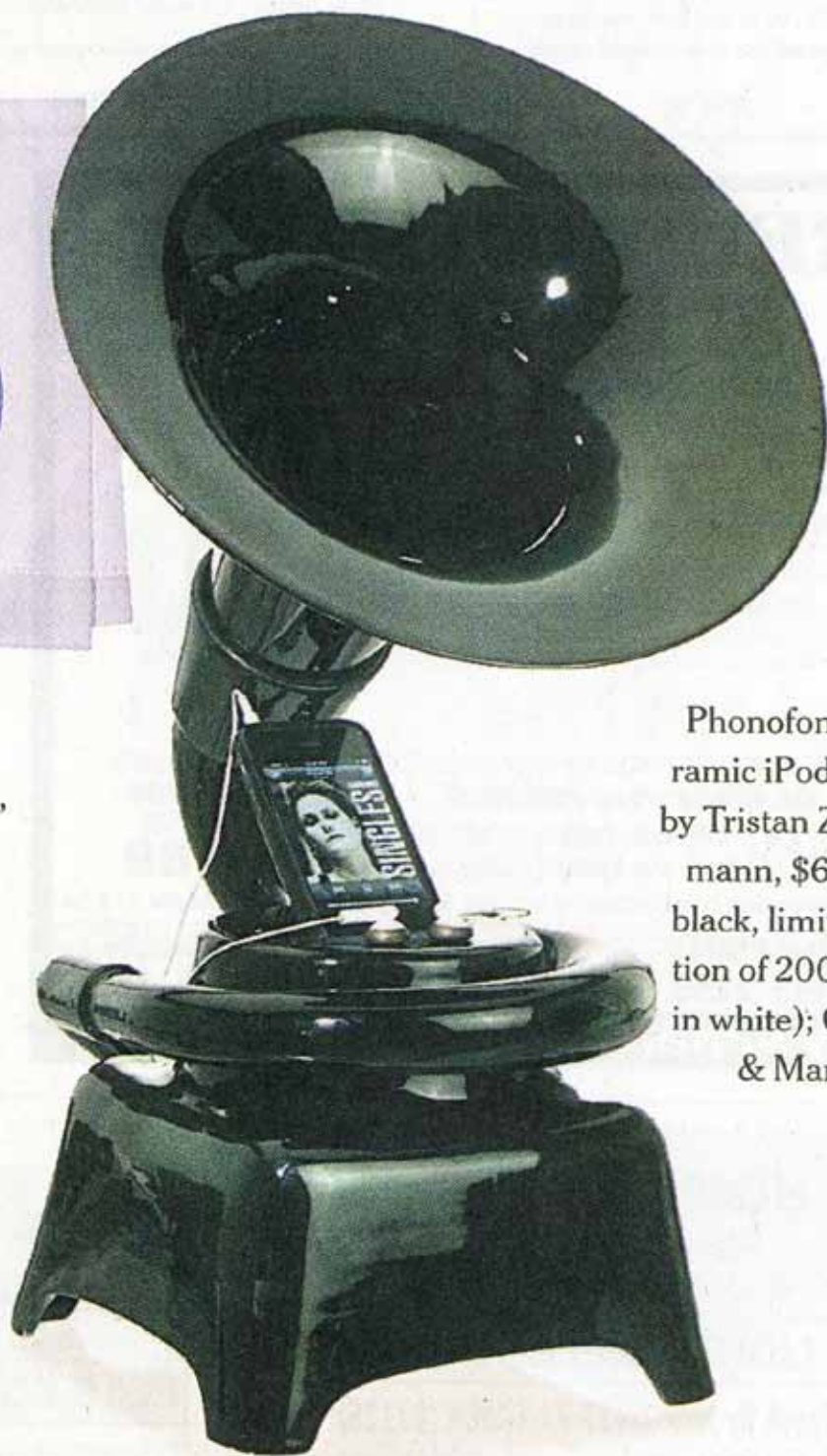
Trophy Hangers (two wall hooks shaped like the front and rear of a moose), by Phil Cuttance for Charles & Marie, \$50; charlesandmarie.com.



Feng Shui desk set, by Red Asterisk, \$36; (212) 941-5521; red-asterisk.com.



Embroidered monogrammed linen guest towels, \$22 each; Georgia Tapert Living, (212) 334-7969; georgiatapertliving.com.



Phonofonell ceramic iPod player, by Tristan Zimmermann, \$600 (in black, limited edition of 200; \$500 in white); Charles & Marie.

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