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Of her color choices, Ms. Bridges says: "I find that since I am involved with color all day at the office, I like to come home to very restful spaces, with soft whites and pastel colors."**"Sheila Bridges
Designer Living"**

Sheila Bridges says she's looking forward to the challenge of helping viewers of "Sheila Bridges Designer Living" find the design help they need.

The facts

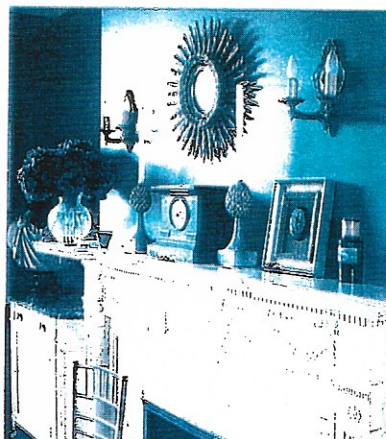
The show will debut Jan. 28 at 8 p.m. on the Fine Living Network, Channel 144 on digital cable.

The mission

"On the show, we will give advice on many aspects of design — useful and practical information and helpful hints relating to fashion, gardening, floral design and landscaping," Ms. Bridges says.

The interior designer, principal of Sheila Bridges Designs, Inc., in Harlem, also will interview guest designers and ask them for advice.

Of the show, she says: "I love what I do and I look forward to the television show as a way of helping people who cannot, necessarily afford an interior designer use the show as a way to discover their personal styles."



Decorative accents include pieces the designer has collected over the years.



Sheila Bridges

A long way from Philadelphia

Daughter of a dentist father and kindergarten teacher mother, Sheila Bridges grew up in an old stone house in West Philadelphia. Both her parents, she says, had artistic leanings and were able to pass along their interests to their young daughter.

After graduating from Brown University in 1986 with a degree in sociology, Ms. Bridges came to New York, where she completed a graduate program at the Parsons School of Design and found work in the fashion industry, participating in

the buyers' program at Bloomingdale's. When that proved unsatisfying, she went off in search of other career possibilities, working first for an architectural firm, taking design classes at night and on weekends, and then landing a job with interior designer Renny Saltzman.

The designer, who studied decorative arts at Polimoda in Florence, Italy, launched Sheila Bridges Design Inc. from her Harlem apartment in 1994, partly motivated by the desire "to provide access to African Americans to high-end residential design."

Ms. Bridges notes that "Growing up, I knew many professional middle-class families with the means but not the opportunity to engage an interior designer."

Her firm handles mostly residential interiors in Manhattan, New Jersey and the Hamptons. Sheila Bridges has been successful in the highly competitive New York interior design industry and includes any number of high-profile entrepreneurs and celebrities on her client roster, including novelist Tom Clancy, rapper/fashion mogul Sean P. Diddy Combs, and former

President Bill Clinton, whose 8,300-square-foot, 14th-floor spread of offices in Harlem she designed.

Along the way, she has accumulated her fair share of honors, among them being named "America's Best Interior Designer" by CNN and Time Magazine and landing on House Beautiful magazine's list of America's Most Brilliant Decorators, and has had her rooms featured in publications including Elle Decor, Town & Country, Vanity Fair, Essence and Martha Stewart Living.

— James G. Ferreri

JAMES G. FERRERI / Designers at home

The
personal
touchSheila Bridges' Harlem apartment speaks volumes
about the interior designer's style

When it comes to her chosen area of expertise, Sheila Bridges likes to keep things personal. "When I design spaces for myself, I like them to express my personal style, and when designing for clients, I can do no less," the interior designer said.

"At the end of the job, it should be the clients' personal style, their likes and dislikes, that have been conveyed, not mine."

This self-avowed traditionalist, namesake of Sheila Bridges Designs, Inc., has designed all types of interiors, from retrospective spaces featuring classical architecture and antiques to the sleek, contemporary offices maintained by former President Bill Clinton in Harlem.

With both a recently published book, "Furnishing Forward: A Practical Guide to Furnishing for a Lifetime," (Little, Brown) and her own cable television show, "Sheila Bridges Designer Living," set to premiere next week, this designing dynamo enjoys her career but knows the value of down time, too. That's why in her own apartment in a landmark building in Harlem, Ms. Bridges has brought forth a tenaciously calming set of interior spaces.

"When I bought the apartment eight years ago, it was in excellent condition, with a wealth of period detail," she explained. "The building was built early in the 20th century for the Astor family, and no expense seems to have been spared on construction."

The space boasts high ceilings, mosaic tile floors, numerous fireplaces, ceiling medallions and moldings, chair rails and carved dado, and lots of natural light.

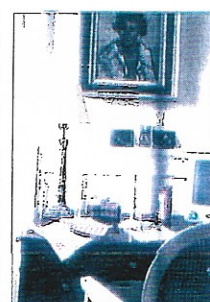
It is decorated in soft tones, furnished with pieces that Ms. Bridges has collected over the years.

RESTFUL SPACES

"I find that since I am involved with color all day at the office, I like to come home to very restful spaces, with soft whites and pastel colors," she said.

True to her word, off-white walls complement a fabric palette of soft blues and beiges in the apartment's living room, with some bold-colored stripes on the smaller furniture pieces as accent. The fireplace mantel, wonderfully proportioned and of strictly classical design, holds an antique mantel clock and some carved wood columns.

Surprising to many visitors is a small, painted bookcase in a worn blue finish that stands near the large win-



The apartment features a wealth of period detail, including chair rails and carved dado.

dows. Commenting on the "flaky paint" treatment on this piece and others in her home, Bridges allowed that she doesn't like furniture that is "too precious, too perfect."

"These finishes look aged and worn and are more interesting and comfortable," she said.

Underneath it all is an area rug of sea grass, another Bridges favorite. The designer said she favors the floor covering because it is a natural fiber, quite durable and comfortable to walk on.

The rough-textured carpeting also appears in the dining room, which features another working fireplace. Here again a soft color palette holds sway over a collection of furnishings that runs the gamut from the sleek and ultra new to 19th-century pieces.

By contrast, the master bedroom is as far as one can get conceptually from the rest of the apartment. White, tiled walls, a black-and-white tiled floor, white fixtures and linens are all juxtaposed with walls painted black and a ceiling painted a deep, medium blue. The room is as dramatic as the rest of the apartment is calm and laid back.

A RELAXING REFUGE

Leaving the drama behind, one steps into the master bedroom, a refuge that speaks volumes on the subject of relaxation techniques. Walls painted a

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BRIDGES FROM PAGE D1

A designer with the personal touch

soft, pale hue called "Ball Green," set the tone for a room that is both elegant and comforting.

Shades of pale blue appear as accent colors on both painted furnishings and fabric-covered furniture. White bedding and a collection of pillows complete the haven space.

The apartment has three bedrooms, one of which Bridges has set up as a home office. The latter continues the use of soft, elegant color and also makes use of a natural-fibered, grass texture on the floor.

The kitchen in Ms. Bridges' apartment is of ample size, quite the opposite of what most people think of as a New York City apartment kitchen. However, the designer admits it doesn't get much of a workout.

"Although I love to cook, I generally save the large meals

for weekends at my upstate New York home," she said, explaining, "In the city, meals are usually hurried affairs between meetings."

With a client list that contains high-powered executives, show business personalities and an ex-president, appearances on TV, a book and 13-week cable television series to promote — and visions of eventually licensing her designs and creating a brand she hopes one day will include "furniture, bedding and a paint collection," — it's easy to understand why she doesn't always find time to cook.

Still, at the end of the day it's important for Sheila Bridges to be able to return to her personal cocoon.

As she once told an interviewer, "Everything I do is about the home. I wouldn't call myself a homebody ... but I guess I am."



JEFF FASANO

Sheila Bridges launched her design firm from her apartment in 1994.