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FALL 2004

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Tips from *Find!* TV's Leigh & Leslie Keno

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Leigh Keno says

The Blue Willow pattern always includes a willow tree, three figures on a bridge, and two birds. The design, developed in England in the late 18th century, depicts a faux-Chinese legend: A Mandarin catches his daughter eloping over a bridge with a young man. The gods take pity on the fleeing couple and turn them into a pair of doves, who flutter out of the father's reach.



WALL OF CHINA

WRITTEN BY PETER WEBSTER PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSHUA McHUGH



Bridges composed the symmetrical arrangements on the floor, adding white dishes for a contemporary feel, before fixing the plates to the Chinese Blue walls



DISPLAY

BELOW: Sheila Bridges used Velcro to hang Willow Pattern transferware on the walls of the dining room she decorated in the eBay show house last June. RIGHT: A modern pink version of the 18th-century pattern.



Invited to decorate the dining room in eBay's second annual show house on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and given a budget of only \$12,500—all of it to be spent on the Internet auction site—New York interior designer Sheila Bridges created an unabashed shrine to that eBay perennial, the Willow Pattern plate. "I decided to focus on the dinnerware," says Bridges, who painted the walls Farrow & Ball Chinese Blue and covered them with more than 54 examples of the iconic transferware. "I started by searching

GREAT

WHAT IT COST

BLUE PLATE SPECIAL

Sheila Bridges spent \$12,500 on eBay decorating the dining room. She replaced the traditional dining table with a tufted ottoman (\$1,400) and put eight Louis Seize-style Henredon chairs (\$2,125) around the walls. An American Empire console table cost \$915; Syrian and Moroccan side tables ranged from \$92 to \$290. The Willow Pattern and other dishes, vintage and new, were bought in random batches (none more than \$100) for a total of \$990.

for the very traditional Blue Willow version," she says, describing her eBay technique. "But pretty soon, other colors—pink, red, brown, even black—began popping up. I bought everything that caught my eye, including some non-Willow designs, because I was more interested in creating a mood than in questions of age, authenticity, or value." The dishes may be humble, but they're displayed to grand effect. "Hanging these inexpensive plates in large groups gives them a certain authority," explains Bridges, who carefully composed the symmetrical arrangements on the floor before fixing them to the walls with Velcro. "I added some white plates to the mix, to break it up and make it a bit more contemporary," she says. "With all that pattern and color, the eye needs a few places to rest."

