

# REMEMBER THIS HOUSE



Designer Sheila Bridges in the living area of her country home in New York's Hudson Valley. The vintage chair is by Ernst Schwadron, the stool is by Grosfeld House, and the artwork (right) is by Kyle Meyer. **OPPOSITE:** The Louis XV and Biedermeier chairs in the dining area are antique, and the Fornasetti chairs are vintage; the lamps are from Stair Galleries, the window shades are of a Gastón y Daniela fabric, and the photograph (center) is by Fabiola Jean-Louis.



MAKEUP BY KELLEY QUAN

FOR HER NEW HOME IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, *ED* A-LIST DESIGNER **SHEILA BRIDGES** HAS CREATED A LIGHT-FILLED SANCTUARY OF MEANING AND MEMORIES.

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In the living area, the antique Swedish table is topped with a collection of hand-carved birds. The sofa is from Hammertown Barn, the fireplace is by Ortal, and the Italian sconces and side table are vintage. Bridges collaborated with the artist Elizabeth Parker to design the mobile. **OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT:** In front of the poolhouse, the lounge chairs are by Barlow Tyrie. The flag outside the main house is a replica of one by artist David Hammons, and the facade is painted in Black Tar by Benjamin Moore.



**I**N 2002, SHEILA BRIDGES WROTE HER FIRST BOOK, *Furnishing Forward: A Practical Guide to Furnishing for a Lifetime*, with a simple dictum: If you buy only what you truly love, then the things you buy will last forever. Her new home in New York's Hudson Valley is full of old favorites: an ode to all the things that, for her, spark joy. Take, for example, the Fornasetti chairs, which feature two African men in traditional Moroccan dress. "I think I first saw them in the early '90s," Bridges says. "They're classic, and they just come with me wherever I go."

The residence, a tar-black beauty with 30-foot ceilings, is hard to miss, located as it is on a road of traditional farmhouses. It is the first home that Bridges has ever lived in that was built from scratch. She spent her childhood in an old stone house in Philadelphia, and her other current dwellings, in Harlem and Iceland, both come with historic pedigrees. "I just always wanted to have a full-on design build," she says. "One where I could really sort of control the entire vernacular." Bridges started construction on the property in 2018 and moved in last year.

A perennial member of the ELLE DECOR A-List, Bridges grew up in the era of modern R & B and hip-hop, when samples of old soul tunes were constantly resurrected and reimagined. Similarly, the house in the Hudson Valley samples from her time spent in Iceland: The dark color of the exterior is reminiscent of Búðakirkja, a favorite church of hers on a remote peninsula there. Bridges has long admired the way the church's black-painted facade stands out against its snow-white environs.

Although her home sits on more than an acre of land, Bridges was disciplined in designing a footprint for it. Rather than go oversize, she opted for just what she needed—which included a poolhouse. "The house is only 1,600 square feet, and I decided I would not go over that," she says. "I wanted to, but I just decided that I really don't need more than that to live."

There are two bedrooms in the house, a guest bedroom

with an en suite bathroom, and then, on the second floor, beyond her study, Bridges has set up a kind of atelier: a main bedroom where the walls are covered with classic paintings from the Hudson River School, an expansive main bath, and a sitting room that is a playful mirror image to one depicted in a Mickalene Thomas print hanging on the wall. She painted that room in a serene lavender by Farrow & Ball.

Art is everywhere, and the abundance of paintings and prints on the double-height walls keeps the home consistently compelling. There's a Jean-Michel Basquiat print on one wall and a Renaissance-style image by the Haitian artist Fabiola Jean-Louis on another. A mural covers one side of the main bathroom, with parts of it lining the inside of the medicine cabinet. Like a library of first editions, Bridges's walls vibrate with works that tell the story of her heritage, her travels, and the friends she's made along the way. Flapping in the wind on the front of the house is a red, green,





**LEFT:** In the kitchen, the range is by Smeg, the custom cabinetry is by Dcor Design Works, and the sink fittings are by Waterworks. The window shade is of a Claremont fabric, the pendant is by Circa Lighting, the rug is by Mad Mats, and the painting (right) is by Nanette Hahn. **BELOW:** A desk by Donald Deskey and a vintage chair that used to belong to Bridges's father overlook the living and dining area from the study. The vintage sofa by Albert Hadley is topped with a throw from Iceland. An artwork by Peter Hildebrand hangs above a tufted chair from George Smith; the rug is Moroccan. **OPPOSITE:** The gallery walls on the staircase feature Bridges's collection of African American art, which includes works by Clementine Hunter, Dox Thrash, Calvin Burnett, and Henry Tanner.







**ABOVE LEFT:** In the main bedroom, the Swedish desk in the Gustavian style is from Finch Hudson, the walls are painted in a custom color by Benjamin Moore, and the artwork is a collection of Hudson River School paintings. **ABOVE RIGHT:** In the guest bathroom, the Kohler sink has Waterworks fittings, and the stool is from Ghana; the walls are painted in a custom design by Bridges, and the cat artwork is from the Chelsea Flea Market in New York City. **OPPOSITE:** The guest bed is upholstered in a fabric by Gastón y Daniela and dressed with a vintage *kantha* quilt. The antique nightstand is from BK Antiques, the wallcovering is by Adelphi Paper Hangings, and a pair of vintage sconces flank a still-life artwork from Sutter Antiques. For details, see Resources.

and black American flag—a replica of one created by artist David Hammons in 1990 to celebrate the election of David Dinkins, New York City’s first Black mayor. “I proudly fly my flag as a reminder of America’s deeply troubled history and the need for real and meaningful change,” Bridges says.

Throughout the house, there are pops of her signature Harlem Toile de Jouy pattern. Bridges’s iconic design remixes the traditional toile motif of the French countryside with vibrant scenes of African American life. It is most often seen in the form of wallpaper (and frequently has been featured as a backdrop to Gayle King’s Zoom telecasts on CBS), but it also adorns such products as umbrellas, glasses, and clothing. In September, Bridges will launch Harlem Toile on classic Converse sneakers.

But perhaps the home’s most alluring features are two

enormous mobiles that hang in the living and dining area, where Bridges likes to gather with friends around the table and spend long nights in front of the fireplace. “I had mobiles in my childhood bedrooms, then in my college dorms,” she says. “I’ve just always loved them.” The real magic happens when the sun begins to set and the mobiles cast shadows that fall in arcs all around the house.

It’s hard not to notice the smile Bridges wears as she shows visitors around her home; perhaps it can be explained by the joy of being both the hired designer and the satisfied client. “I work on big houses all the time for my clients,” she says. “Elaborate 10,000-square-foot homes all over the country.” But it’s very different to design something for herself. “This is small and simple and open,” she says. “It’s music, it’s art, it’s culture. I just filled it with things I love.” ■

