



The Refined Eye

Sheila Bridges

Interior designer and author,
New York City

Despite her perch in the highest echelon of American interior design, Bridges is truly grounded. “I believe in beauty, of course, but never at the expense of comfort and functionality,” says the Harlem-based designer, who is renowned for her modern-classicist aesthetic. A native of Philadelphia, Bridges studied sociology at Brown University, but fell hard for decorative arts during a year abroad in Rome. She launched her own firm before turning 30 (one client of note: former president Bill Clinton) and went on to author books, host a television design show, and create an iconic wallpaper—Harlem Toile de Jouy—that’s in the permanent collection of the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum. She is also one of the founding members of the Black Artists + Designers Guild, a trade group dedicated to promoting Black creatives. So yes, @harlemtoilegirl (as she’s known on Instagram) is a force, but she’s never lost her love for landing bargains, repurposing materials, and MacGyver-ing solutions. Simply put, she’s as fluent in HVAC systems and sump pumps as she is in Gustavian furniture. “I’m not running around town in heels,” she says. “I’m hoofing it, carrying my own tool bag.” —Catherine Hong



Her Essentials

1 | *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*

“Many of his poems speak to Harlem, where I live, and the culture of the neighborhood I love.” *Vintage Classics*, \$21, prh.com.

2 | COS Sheer Ramie shirtdress

“Simple and modern, COS dresses make the perfect backdrop for a chunky necklace or funky shoes.” \$135, cosstores.com.

3 | Nars Satin lip pencil, in Lodhi

“I’m a big fan. It has nice coverage but isn’t overly glossy.” \$27, narscosmetics.com.

4 | Hammertown Zaire linen cushion, in Tobacco

“I’d use this pillow to balance out a room with a lot of color.” \$170, hammertown.com.

5 | Sheila Bridges Garden Tools wallpaper

“With its unexpected color combination and quirky imagery, this new pattern would be terrific in a powder room or mudroom.” \$300 a roll, sheila bridges.com.

6 | Iceland

“I bought a place in Reykjavik in 2015. The city has so much charm, and is just 15 minutes from sublime natural beauty.”

7 | Matouk Liana sheets

“I’m not fond of sheets with a ton of color or pattern. The honeycomb embroidery on these adds just the right accent.” From \$99, matouk.com.

8 | Farrow & Ball Green Blue No. 84

“It can look blue or green, depending on the trim or what is in the room. I also love their Vardo and Oval Room Blue shades.” farrow-ball.com.

9 | Skin Fitness Pure Oxygen serum

“It’s very soothing, especially when I’ve been in the sun. I use it both day and night.” \$30 for 1 oz., skinfitness.store.

10 | Nordur sea salt

“I always have this flaky finishing salt on hand in the kitchen. It’s geothermally produced from Arctic seawater.” \$17 for 250 g, 177milkstreet.com.

11 | Trailing Jade plant and copper pot

“I tell clients it’s important to have something natural in the home. The beautiful shape and color of jade plants suit any interior.” \$64, shopterrain.com.

12 | Converse Harlem Toile sneakers

“I created Harlem Toile de Jouy in 2006. I love seeing my design on such an iconic shoe!” \$100, union losangeles.com.

13 | Harry Barker Classic Stripe Rectangle dog bed

“Jax, my Australian shepherd, uses this handsome and well-made bed. The cover is easy to zip off and wash.” From \$160, harrybarker.com.

14 & 15 | Blue Lagoon Iceland foaming cleanser and Lava soap bars

“These products smell good and remind me of being on vacation.” \$47 for 5.07 oz.; \$20 each, shop-usa.bluelagoon.com.