



The Need for Speed



On a tight COVID-19 deadline, designer Sheila Bridges overhauled her Hudson Valley guesthouse.

Last year, before sheltering in place and quarantining became part of our collective reality, designer Sheila Bridges had big plans to turn the two-bedroom cottage next door to her Hudson Valley, New York, home into a guesthouse.

The Pallet House—built in the 1940s and named after the wood pallets Bridges found on nearly every inch of the property—had the makings of a cozy place for visiting family and friends, but the New England–style farmhouse needed a considerable amount of work, and in a short period of time: Bridges had arranged for a renter to arrive in June, meaning the 800-square-foot space would need to be completed by Memorial Day weekend.



Reno Breakdown

LOCATION

Hudson Valley, New York

YEAR BUILT

1940s

SQUARE FEET

800

TIMELINE

4 months

TOP PRIORITY

Updating the home's foundational elements, including heating, cooling, and plumbing—before her summer renter arrived in June.

So in January she got her contracts in order and rolled up her sleeves. She took the interior down to the studs; addressed the mold issues that had developed as the house sat unoccupied; and installed new windows and doors, as well as heating, cooling, and septic systems.

Then about a month into construction, New York's shutdown began, bringing her off-to-the-races project to a screeching halt. Even when COVID-19 mandates eased several weeks later, by law Bridges could still only have one contractor on the job site at a time. Worried that the house wouldn't be ready for her renter, her expert design instincts kicked in. "I really wasn't working otherwise," Bridges says of her day job, which also was on pause because of the pandemic. "It was challenging, but I just felt that I needed to get it done."

So while her contractors plugged away at renovating the home's layout, Bridges took to the decor, which would revolve around a blue and green color scheme, all inspired by a vivid rug she scored at a sample sale. Now in the living room, the woven wonder anchors the open-format living-kitchen-dining space, which Bridges visually expanded with cathedral ceilings and seven windows. The blue-green throughline also appears on the walls

Previous spread: Armchair [cb2.com](#); Vintage Sconces [reganandsmith.com](#); Heritage Red Paint (on door) [benjaminmoore.com](#).

This page, from top: Vintage Mirror; Good Bad Dog Collage by Louise Laplante louiselaplanteart.com; Mobile by Volta conranshop.co.uk; Untitled Painting by Winston Roeth galerie_gris; Vintage Side Chair. On Bridges: Shoes by Converse x Union LA converse.com. Opposite: Vintage Armchairs; Rug onekinglane.com; Ottoman pinturastudio.com; Sofa hammertown.com; Throw Pillows walter-g.com; Waterbury Green Paint benjaminmoore.com.



via Benjamin Moore’s Waterbury Green and onto the backs of the living room chairs, courtesy of Pierre Frey yardage she obtained from a fellow designer. (She didn’t have enough to upholster the entire chairs, so she got creative and added it only to the backs for a contrasting, one-of-a-kind look.) “I love working with rich colors,” Bridges says of the sea and sky palette, noting that she added pops of sunny citrus shades to keep things interesting. Thanks to her job, she didn’t have to do much furniture shopping. “The majority of things I already had and just repurposed,” says Bridges, referring to the investment pieces she buys on the spot—like the living room rug and dining room chairs—and then holds onto for future clients, or in this case, herself. “Part of the reason why I like antiques and vintage so much is that they are timeless and you don’t have to keep spending a lot of money on things that have to be replaced every couple of years.” Her design

mantra? Furnish for a lifetime. In the kitchen, for example, she reimagined an existing vintage cabinet as an island; the dining chairs are vintage Herman Miller; and the black fiberglass horse statue in the yard previously adorned the Germantown farm she owned until 2015. An added benefit of repurposing what she already had: It shaved weeks off her makeover timeline, which she would have otherwise spent waiting for custom furniture and decor pieces to arrive. In the end, despite the pandemic’s slowdown, it only took Bridges four months total to lay bare her home’s Hudson Valley country charm, and the result is one that she says feels like home. “Everyone who stays here says the house has great energy,” notes Bridges. And we all know that type of warm, inviting feeling can’t be built overnight. But in a few months? Definitely.



A robin's-egg blue opened the door to Bridges's decorating palette—and allowed her to play with contrasting colors.





Speedy Decorating Strategies

1.

Make a Choice...

"The biggest thing that slows down construction is decision-making," says Bridges. "People get stuck or are unable to move forward at a pace that keeps everything on schedule and hopefully on budget." When in doubt, hire a project manager or interior designer to weigh in so that you don't halt progress early on.

2.

...And Stick to It

If you're in the middle of a job and decide that you want to make a change to the plan—say, add a fireplace or incorporate those oversize windows you saw on Instagram—remember that it will cost you both time and money. "Every change you make is going to be more expensive than had it been part of the original bid," warns Bridges.

3.

Gather Your Materials ASAP

"Another thing that slows down projects is when the goods aren't on site when your contractors are ready to use them," explains Bridges. To avoid delivery delays, pay attention to where your items are from. That Italian tile you love, for instance, may not be worth the extra weeks you'll have to wait for it to arrive. "The longer a job takes, the more expensive it becomes," she says.

4.

Create a Filing System

"No matter what you're doing, or how big or small it is, you want to be very, very organized," says Bridges. For her that means securing building and project permits early and keeping a binder, divided up by room, so she can take a quick look at the products she's selected for each. That way construction can move as easily as possible.

This page: Painting by Vincent Pomilio carriehaddadgallery.com; Vintage Dining Table reganandsmith.com; Vintage Dining Chairs theantiquewarehouseudsonny.com. **Opposite:** Vintage Chair from Carousel Antiques; Range blombergappliances.com.

In the open kitchen, vintage Herman Miller chairs mingle with a cabinet Bridges reclaimed—and reimagined—as an island.





This page, from top: Hudson Valley Toile Wallpaper sheilabridges.com; Mirror cb2.com; Faucet kohler.com; Atmospheric Paint benjaminmoore.com; Headboard onekingslane.com; Aziza Sheet Set matouk.com; Throw Pillow walter-g.com; Terracotta Ikat Pillow krbnye.com.
Opposite: Nightstand abchome.com; Footed Vase francespalmerpottery.com; Lumbar Pillow and Rug hammertown.com; Throw Pillow walter-g.com; Vintage Kantha Blanket; Print by Stephen Hanneck galerie_gris.com; Sanctuary Paint benjaminmoore.com.



Bridges invites guests to lay their heads on a Louis XVI-style twin bed with a cane headboard, a piece she's owned for nearly two decades.



Makeup by Kelley Quan at Kramer + Kramer