

# ARTISTIC VISION

Interior designer Sheila Bridges has redefined what a country home can be with a curator's eye and her compelling use of paintings and prints

WORDS JULIET BENNING STYLING OLGA NAIMAN PHOTOGRAPHY FRANK FRANCES/OTTO



## LIVING AREA

Every wall comes to life with pieces that tell a story of Sheila's heritage and also her travels.

Source an Ernst Schwadron chair and Grosfeld House stool on 1stDibs. Art (centre), Kyle Meyer.

Curtain in fabric by Claremont Furnishing





**LIVING AREA**

Sheila collaborated with artist Elizabeth Parker to design the mobile, which draws the eye up to the vaulted ceiling. Sofa, Hammertown Barn. Woodburner, Ortol. Blinds in fabric by Gastón y Daniela



#### DINING AREA

The way Sheila merges the new with the old is magical. Here, a gallery of black-and-white prints and a vibrant green throw sit comfortably with a collection of antiques.

Antique Louis XV chair and Swedish table, source on 1stDibs. Source a fleece rug at Nordic Sheepskin







## DINING AREA

Even the graphic print blinds look like works of art in this space that manages to be both fresh and grand.

### Framed photograph

(centre) by Fabiola

Jean-Louis. **Mobile** by

Elizabeth Parker. **Blinds** in

fabric by Gastón y Daniela





#### KITCHEN

A bold painting picks out the colours in the cooker and accessories, creating a sense of harmony.

Painting by Nanette Hahn. Range cooker, Smeg. Custom cabinetry, Dcor Design Works. Pendants, Circa Lighting. Rug, Mad Mats



Of the three touchstones in interior designer Sheila Bridges' life, her home in New York's Hudson Valley is perhaps the most representative of her personality – being entirely conceived by her. 'I did hire an architect but I had already designed the house because I had a specific idea of what I wanted,' she says. Her other two properties – in Harlem, New York City, and Reykjavik – are period homes while here Sheila began from the ground up. 'I had already been in the area for many years but I wanted to downsize. My previous home was a farm where I kept horses, sheep and goats and had a lot of land but I wanted a simpler life. Something more manageable but big enough for me to enjoy the garden and have enough room for a pool and my dog Loki.'

Amid a road of traditional farmhouses, Sheila's plot contained an abandoned home that was soon taken down leaving her with just under an acre to play with. Starting her build in 2018, Sheila considers herself fortunate to have avoided the drawbacks associated with the pandemic, yet her project was not without its hindrances. 'There was a lot of water on the property so we spent the first year trying to work out a drainage system before even thinking about building. I also had problems with my builders so half way through I let them go and finished the project myself, renting a house down the street and coming to site every day.'

The architecture recalls both a barn, with its sliding doors and hayloft detail, and Iceland's Búðakirkja church, a monolithic and stark beauty with a steeply pitched roof. 'There is a Nordic influence inspired by

my time in Scandinavia. I spend a lot of time there when the days are long, hiking, swimming and riding.' Outside the house, visitors are greeted by a replica of artist David Hammons' *African-American Flag*, which Sheila says is a 'reminder of America's deeply troubled history and the need for real and meaningful change.'

Inside, there is a vast living area with a mezzanine study that leads to Sheila's bedroom and bathroom. 'I wanted it to feel open and loft like. The floor plan allows me to participate in entertaining while cooking – all my previous homes have had a separate kitchen, and this is more enjoyable when I have company.' But in contrast further still, the crisp nave-like reception spaces lead to smaller rooms that charm and intrigue. 'When you open doors to the bedroom, powder room and bathroom, you're assaulted by colour and pattern, which is what people typically recognise in my work. I wanted those spaces to feel more intimate and familiar.'

As important as its ability to entertain, the house is also the host of striking art and antiques. 'It's a mix of things I've bought over the years – pieces of art alongside flea-market finds and things that belonged to my parents. I reupholstered their furniture and my mother was a collector of African-American art. Learning to layer through art, upholstery and print is a skill I've developed over time and the more I've travelled and the more I've experienced in life has contributed to making me a better designer,' says Sheila. 'It's pretty relaxed here. I spend a lot of time outside gardening and indoors I'm surrounded by the things I love.' 📸

■ [sheilabridges.com](http://sheilabridges.com)

“ON MY GALLERY WALLS I USUALLY PLACE THE LARGER PIECES FIRST AND WORK AROUND THEM – I LOVE TO JUST HAVE FUN WITH IT”





#### BEDROOM

The historical wallpaper from 1772 and antique artwork transport this room to the past.

Strawberry Hill Floret wallcovering, Adelphi Paper Hangings. Still life above bed, Sutter Antiques



#### STAIRCASE

The gallery wall features Sheila's collection of African-American art, which includes works by Clementine Hunter, Dox Thrash, Calvin Burnett and Henry Tanner



#### MAIN BATHROOM

A landscape mural and acorn pendant add a touch of whimsy.

Taps, Waterworks. Source a similar vanity unit at Neptune. Find an acorn pendant light at 1stDibs

#### MEET THE DESIGNER-OWNER

Sheila Bridges shares her style inspiration

#### MOST SUCCESSFUL ASPECT OF THE PROJECT

That it feels like home and I'm surrounded by a collection of things that I love.

**SECRET ADDRESS** Marrakesh for rugs and Hudson, which is right in my backyard, for antiques.

**GREATEST INDULGENCE** Definitely my swimming pool. I'm so thankful that I did it. There's now a three-year waiting list and the price has doubled.

**GO-TO COLOUR** I've always loved a lot of blues in soft shades and also green tones. I find pale blues very calming and soothing.

**YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS** Classic, modern, eclectic.





**MAIN BEDROOM**

The blue walls and desk chime with the sky and water of these paintings.

Hudson River School paintings are available at Vinterior. Swedish Gustavian-style desk.

Finch Hudson; try Vinterior.

Wall in custom colour by Benjamin Moore; Dulux's Cloudless Sky is similar