



Frank Frances

design + decorate

Vice President Kamala Harris Had Sheila Bridges Design Her Official Residence

The renowned New York designer brought her playful penchant for pattern to the stately abode.



BY RACHEL SILVA

PUBLISHED: FEB 22, 2023

Interior designer Sheila Bridges has been tapped to design the official residence for Kamala D. Harris and Doug Emhoff, the Vice President's office can confirm. The project, a year-long renovation that was completed at the end of 2022, was a reimagining of a 1893 Victorian home that sits on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory.

As the designer behind Bill Clinton's Harlem office and the former home of a state Supreme Court justice, Bridges, an ELLE DECOR A-Lister, is used to making a mark on American design. With an impressive client Rolodex that includes music mogul Andre Harrell and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, the Harlem-based designer is known for her witty classicism and lush design eye that simultaneously honors and reimagines history.



The residence of the Vice President on the grounds of the United States Naval Observatory on Thursday March 23, 2017 in Washington, DC.

The Washington Post // Getty Images

Harris and her husband moved into the house in Northwest Washington, D.C. in April 2021 following the completion of renovations. The Queen Anne-style home features 33 rooms, a large veranda, a pool, and a sunroom—all spaces that have been inhabited by seven former vice presidents who have each added improvements. Dan and Marilyn Quayle added a heated pool during the George H. W. Bush administration, the Cheneys upgraded an upstairs galley kitchen during George W. Bush's tenure, the Bidens, when serving under President Barack Obama, created an apple green sunroom, and Mike and Karen Pence installed a basketball court and a beehive. Now, Bridges has given the 128-year-old house its latest makeover.

The brief was to create a space that felt comfortable, yet was amenable to hosting events such as Diwali celebrations, military family receptions, and Latino small business owner gatherings, reported the *Washington Post's* Jura Koncius, who broke the story earlier today. Designing the main floor, which is often used for official

receptions and dinners, Bridges selected furnishings primarily made by American designers and manufacturers. She opted for a mostly neutral color palette, but not without vibrant color moments throughout: a perky pink wallpaper-lined library acts as an extension of the crape myrtle tree blossoms just beyond. “It’s important to have a dialogue between the landscape, architecture, and interior,” she told the *Washington Post*.



It remains to be seen if Bridge's signature Harlem Toile—which she created 17 years ago, a remix of the traditional pattern with vibrant scenes of African American life—will make a cameo in the house, be it through her latest Shade Store collaboration or her decorative Wedgwood fine china collection or something entirely new.

Bridges worked with furniture that was in storage from the home's official furnishings collection, as well as pieces that were already in the house or owned by the family. While former residents have had a refurbishing budget that came from the Vice President's Residence Foundation, all project costs were provided by the family's private funds, the *Washington Post* confirmed.



US Vice President Kamala Harris welcomes German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the vice presidents residence at the Naval Observatory for a working breakfast, in Washington, DC, on July 15, 2021.

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI // Getty Images

Bridges is rapidly establishing herself as one of the most important decorators working in America today. She starred in a groundbreaking early-2000s TV show,

Sheila Bridges: Designer Living, launched product lines in furniture, tableware, and window shades. She was anointed “America’s Best Interior Designer” by CNN and *Time* magazine, and is a recurring ELLE DECOR A-List denizen. She also authored two books, *Furnishing Forward — A Practical Guide To Furnishing For a Lifetime* and *The Bald Mermaid A Memoir*, a sassy read that chronicles her experience with alopecia. But accolades aside, her work speaks for itself: her colorful, layered homes in Harlem, Hudson, N.Y., and Reykjavik, Iceland had become her calling card long before she had garnered an impressive portfolio of prominent clients who wanted that *Bridges-je-ne-sais-quoi*.



RACHEL SILVA

ASSISTANT DIGITAL EDITOR

Rachel Silva, the Assistant Digital Editor at ELLE DECOR, covers design, architecture, trends, and anything to do with haute couture. She has previously written for *Time*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Citywire*.

Are you a home decor addict?

Sign up for gorgeous house tours and all the inspo you could need.

Enter your email address.	SIGN ME UP.
---------------------------	--------------------

By signing up, I agree to Hearst Magazines’ [Terms of Use](#) (including the [dispute resolution procedures](#)); my information will be used as described in the [Privacy Notice](#).

WATCH NEXT

Daisy Jones & the Six - Official Trailer | Prime Video