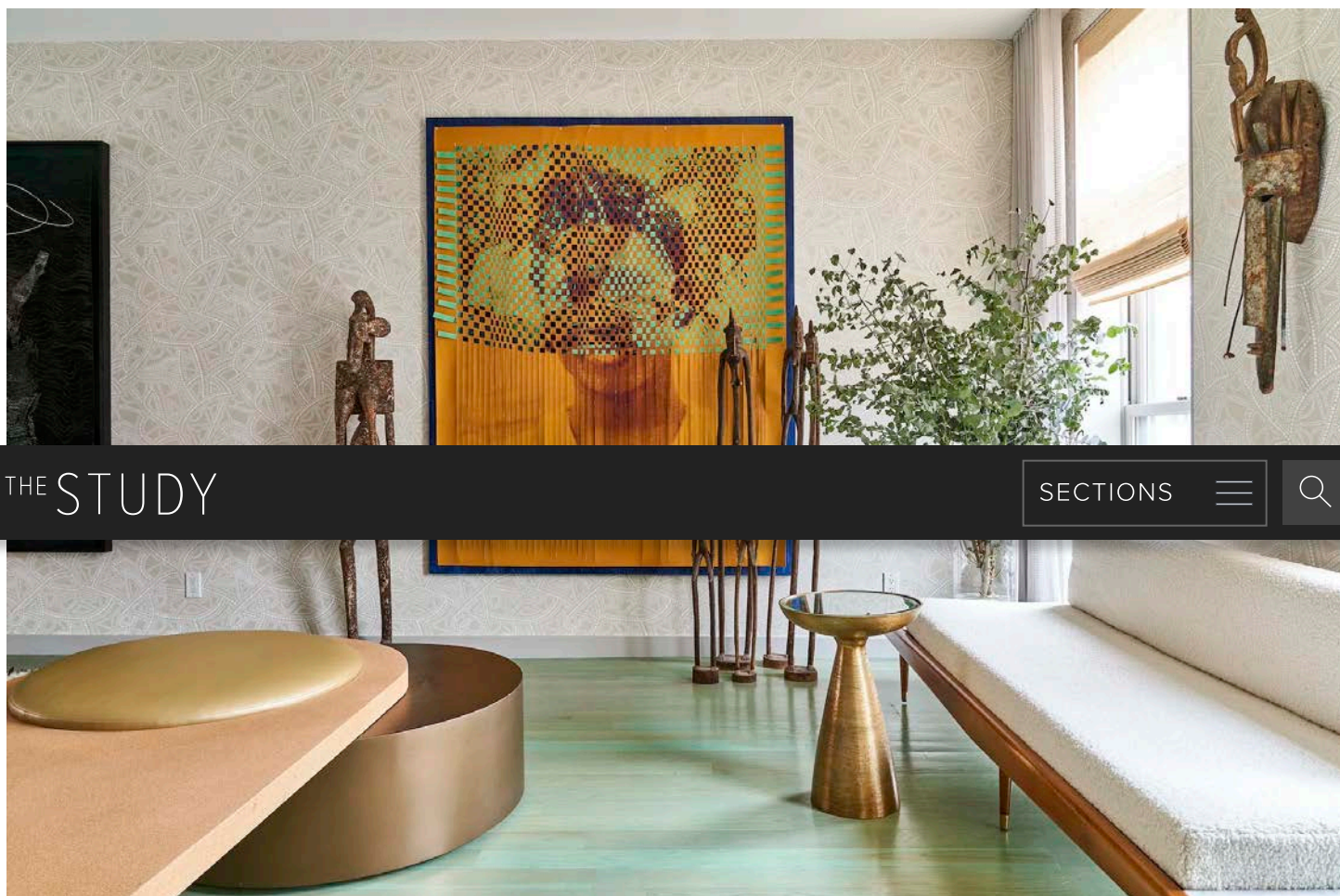


INTERIORS

ART BRINGS THE DRAMA IN THESE INTRIGUING 1STDIBS
50 SPACES

The world's top designers explain how they display art to elicit the natural (and supernatural) energy of home interiors.

BY TRENT MORSE



THE STUDY

SECTIONS



Photo by Pratya Jankong

In a [residence in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood](#) of Brooklyn, [Leyden Lewis](#) broke up the wide-open living room into “little vignettes punctuated with art and storytelling,” as he puts it.

“This home belongs to artist and activist Malene Djenaba Barnett, who explores her craft and identity through her work,” he adds.

“The interiors were designed to showcase her artwork and art collection, and also celebrate the visual and cultural history of this turn-of-the-century house in a historically Black neighborhood. It’s about bringing these important cultural markers of identity into the intimacy of one’s own home.”

To that end, Lewis flanked Barnett’s contemporary textile piece *Made for Mom*, 2022, with traditional [West African sculptures](#) and paired a streamlined mid-century [Adrian Pearsall](#) sofa with a custom rounded bench he created in collaboration with fabricator Wesley Daniels. The [mask](#) above the Pearsall sofa is also West African.

“Everything in this room feels like it has dimensionality,” Lewis notes. “In our designs, we aim to create visual and harmonious balance between furniture, art and objects. There is no hierarchy.”



Photo by James McDonald

In the dining room of a [townhouse](#) designed by [Bryan O'Sullivan](#) in London's Notting Hill, many of the elements, including the custom mural, [botanical chandelier](#) and [armchairs](#) upholstered in a floral [BDDW](#) fabric, reflect the garden visible outside the windows. So, O'Sullivan hung a quartet of antique and vintage [portraits of women](#) to introduce a human presence.

These are (clockwise from left) *Portrait of Blonde Girl*, 1950, by John Miles Bourne Benson; *Anne Burges*, 1751, by [Francis Cotes](#); *A Portrait of Marianne Langham*, ca. 1808, by Jacques-Laurent Agasse; and *Sunlit interior, the artist's daughter Ellen is playing the piano*, date unknown, by Peter Vilhelm Ilsted.

“The paintings not only complement the room but they also stand out on the mural, as they are in bold, ornate gold frames,” O'Sullivan says. “They work well within the space, considering its bespoke contemporary pieces like the dining table, but they also hold their merit against the [mid-century sideboard](#) and [table lamp](#). We love how these [Old Master paintings](#) add depth and intrigue to the room. We also love how they are all women-focused.”

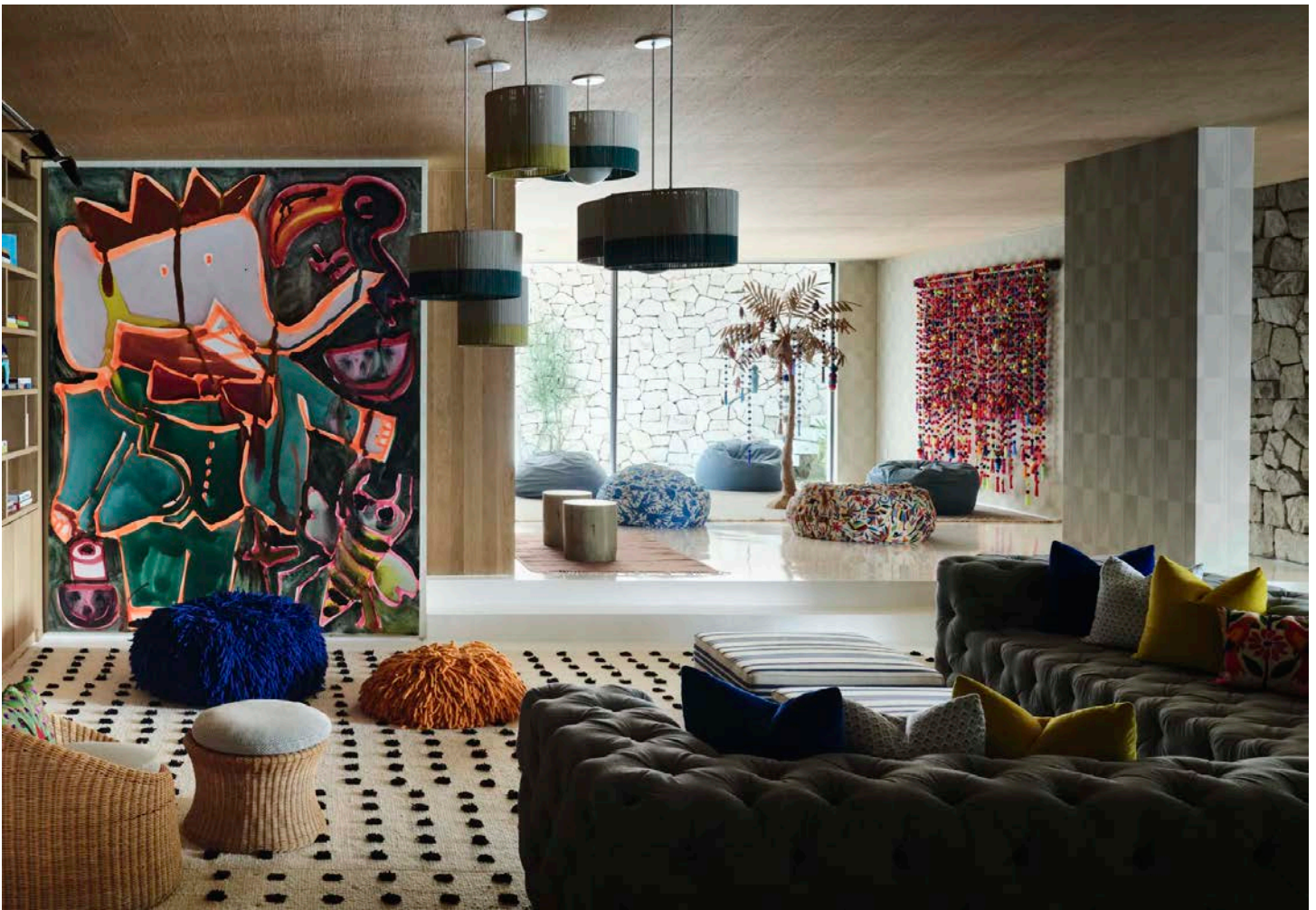


Photo by Douglas Friedman

[Sasha Adler](#) brought in loads of color, texture and whimsy to brighten the basement of a [house in Cabo San Lucas](#), Mexico.

“There is a subtle [Pierre Frey](#) pattern on the walls and a grass cloth on the ceiling, which is a fun play on sophisticated texture, paired with the white-oak modular millwork we designed,” she notes. “We found the large [rattan palm tree](#) on a sourcing trip and decorated with it [tassels](#) and birds. The oversize [beanbags](#) were custom upholstered in [embroidered Otomi textiles](#) sourced at the local markets.”

Both the beanbags and the tassels in the palm echo the rainbow-hued [wall hanging](#) near window, which the homeowners picked up in Mexico.

The elephant in the room is Katherine Bernhardt's acrylic and spray-painted canvas of children's book icon Babar. "This area is ready for anything from a game night to a cocktail party," says Adler.



Photo by William Waldron

Stephanie Bachiero's [large sculpture](#) *Pinnacle*, made from aerospace composite materials, looks right at home in the whitewashed trad-meets-mod living room of a [home in Washington, D.C.](#), designed by [Darryl Carter](#).

And while the swooping abstraction pairs perfectly with the subtly figurative [mid-century pencil drawing](#) over the [marble fireplace](#), “this responsiveness was frankly accidental,” Carter says. “What intrigued me about the drawing was its sinewy androgynous response to the forward sculpture.”



Photo by Stephen Kent Johnson

For the living room of a [residence in the village of Atlantic Beach](#), New York, with sweeping views of Reynolds Channel, [Neal Beckstedt](#) went with a design scheme appropriate to the setting: “modern beach with a casual nautical touch,” as he describes it.

A plush contemporary sectional sofa and ottoman are accompanied by [Børge Mogensen's Spanish chairs](#). But the tour de force here is the collection of epic paintings depicting [traditional seascapes and sailing vessels](#) hanging on the moody gray wall, whose color echoes the boulders, waves and skies found in the scenes.

“The art was a great and ongoing collaboration with the client,” Beckstedt says. “I worked with the client closely to figure out what to select and where each piece should be displayed.”



Photo by Douglas Friedman

“I’m a big believer in [gallery or salon walls](#),” says [Fern Santini](#). “Nothing makes a room more inviting than collected art in the space.” The design of this neutral bedroom in an [Austin, Texas](#),

[house](#) started with Mallory Page's grand canvas, *She passed a note to her adolescence and wondered if she would ever hear from her future*, 2018, over the custom [Savoir bed](#).

"The client, jewelry designer [Kendra Scott](#), owned the painting. Since it's a large single piece, we felt that the surrounding pieces should be groupings," Santini explains. The cluster to the left of the bed includes blue-chip works by the likes of [Pablo Picasso](#), [Wayne Thiebaud](#) and [Agnes Martin](#). A suite of Martin lithographs from the same 1990 portfolio appears on the right side, along with Elizabeth Schwaiger's *Warm Flow*, 2017. The gleaming artwork visible through the [mission-style](#) doors beyond the [Paolo Buffa](#) armchairs is *Mica Painting (Chirp)*, 2017, by [Catherine Howe](#).

"Art consultant [Amy Sawtelle](#) was an integral part of the design process," Santini says. "I felt that it was really important that the work have the depth and diversity to feel accumulated over generations, and I think we really hit the mark with this wonderful collection."



Photo by Kristin Perers

A [grand country estate in Northamptonshire](#), England, had been stripped of its character by multiple renovations that left it “beige and flat,” says [Nicola Harding](#). The latest owners asked the London designer to give the house a soul transplant by reintroducing color and eclecticism in its interiors.

Case in point: this seating nook in what Harding calls an “otherwise underwhelming corridor,” where she placed a [19th-century portrait](#) of a French gentleman in a glossy fire-engine-red [picture frame](#) as “a way of offsetting any pretensions he might have aspired to.”

The rest of the furnishings are an odd amalgamation “that shouldn’t really work together but somehow do,” she adds. There’s a [Georgian chair](#), a [mid-century lamp](#) and a [Victorian](#) seamstress’s stool used as a side table, all set atop a bespoke Vanderhurd [rug](#) that matches the [mauve](#) walls. “Because the mix is unexpected, it creates a dynamic energy,” Harding says. “I can’t help smiling when I look at it.”

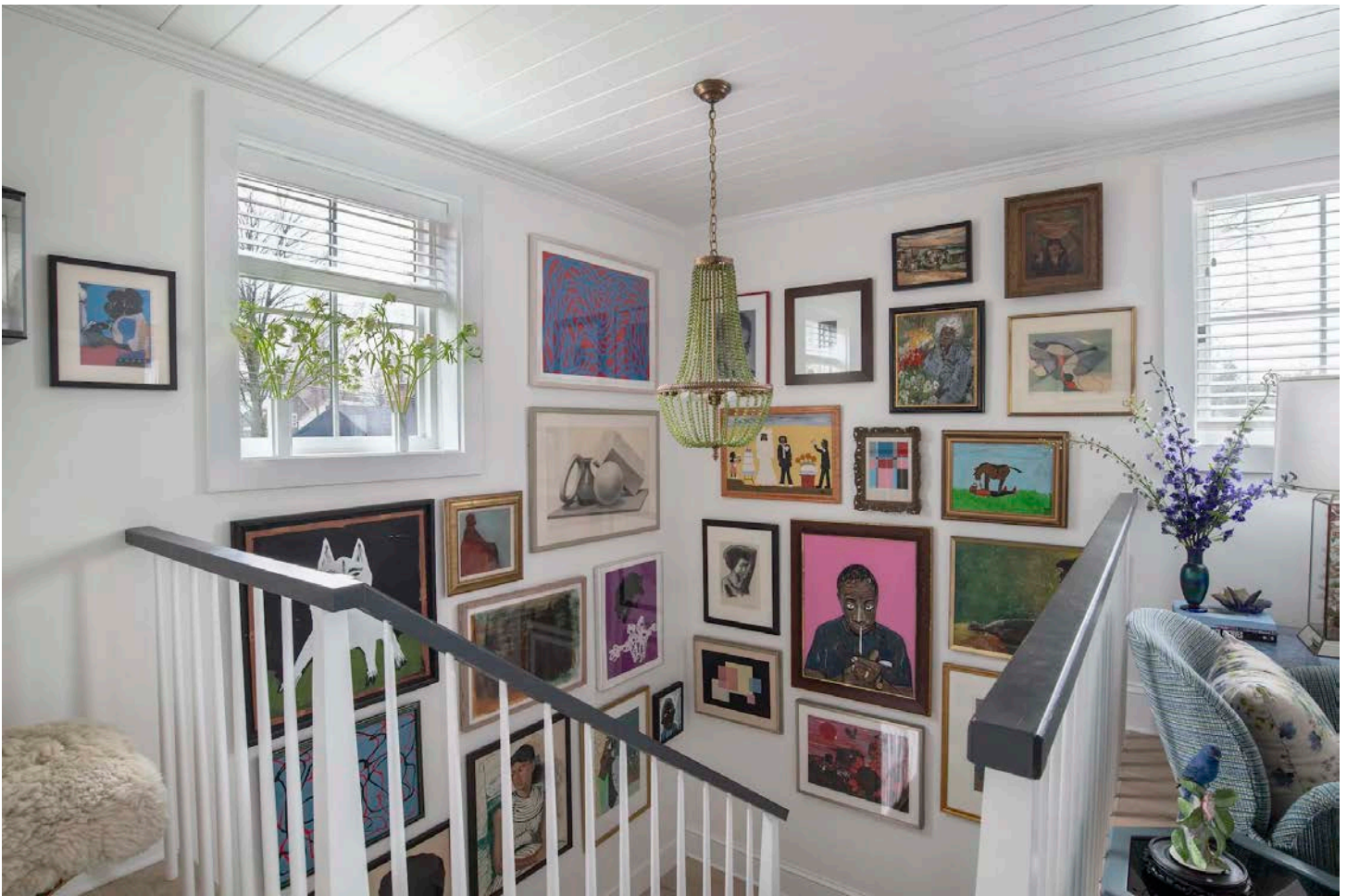


Photo by Pieter Estersohn

In the stairwell of her [country house in New York's Hudson Valley](#), [Sheila Bridges](#) hung an eclectic array of works to express her passion for “the landscape, culture and travel,” she says. Although Bridges has a penchant for “classic, thoughtful and colorful interiors,” the walls and trim here were kept stark to allow the art to shine.

Among the outstanding pieces on display are abstractions by [Danièle Perré](#) and [Sol LeWitt](#), juxtaposed with figurative works by [Clementine Hunter](#), [Calvin Burnett](#), [Dox Thrash](#) and Henry Ossawa Tanner, with Garrett Rittenberg's pink-backgrounded portrait of [James Baldwin](#) staring right into Bridges's eyes as she goes up and down the stairs.



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