



Designers Connor Moxam and Joseph Cleghorn working on Obama's desk at their Brooklyn workshop Courtesy Chapter & Verse

## DISCOVERIES

# Exclusive: A First Look at President Obama's New Desk for the Obama Presidential Center

Plus, Sheila Bridges's new Americana tablewares, a psychedelic Beverly Hills restaurant from GRT Architects, and more *AD Discoveries* this month

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Hometown Hero

## Sheila Bridges Brings Her Harlem Toile —and Philly Roots—to Walmart



Designer Sheila Bridges with her new Philadelphia Collection. Courtesy Sheila Bridges



The 14-piece outdoor tabletop line references American iconography for the country's 250th anniversary. Courtesy Sheila Bridges

AD100 Hall of Fame designer Sheila Bridges is renowned for her Harlem Toile de Jouy, the witty adaptation of 18th-century French toile that's in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian and the Victoria and Albert Museum. But the designer is also known for her virtuosic color combinations, knack for stylish entertaining, and deep appreciation for

nostalgia. Bridges has drawn upon all these elements for the Philadelphia Collection, a 14-piece outdoor tabletop line for Walmart timed to the country's 250th anniversary.

“My parents loved to throw outdoor parties in the summer, and they're some of the best memories of my life,” says Bridges, a proud native of West Philly, where her parents lived in the same house for 55 years. “We'd be sitting out on lawn chairs, eating Popsicles, playing badminton—everyone just relaxed and enjoying the togetherness.”

The collection's mix of iconography—Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, gingham checks, Harlem Toile scenes—reflects her hometown pride as well as the unpretentious vibe of those 1970s backyard picnics, where, as she recalls, “everybody looked effortlessly cool.”

And while the plates, tumblers, pitchers, and Ben Franklin-emblazoned cake stand celebrate America's semiquincentennial, Bridges designed them to carry a little weight alongside the joy. For a Black designer who grew up minutes from where “all men are created equal” was first written, layering meaning into the work comes naturally. She's never lost sight of who she wants her work to reach—and takes pride in the very Walmart price point: everything is under \$20.

“If you know me well, you know I’m both things,” says the designer. “Yes, I like fancy things. But I’m not precious-fancy!” The quality of the products, she’s happy to report, bears that out. “If people have a choice between an expensive thing that’s not great and an inexpensive thing that’s well-designed—I think most people end up choosing the one that’s well designed.” The collection is available online only starting June 1.

—*Catherine Hong*