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## Sheila Bridges shows Philly pride in new Walmart outdoor entertaining collection

Mina Llona Tribune Correspondent  
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Sheila Bridges showcases her new outdoor entertaining collection, the Philadelphia Collection, in collaboration with Walmart. — Photos courtesy Walmart

Interior designer and visual storyteller Sheila Bridges is bringing a piece of Philadelphia to tables across America this summer.

In collaboration with Walmart, the Philadelphia Collection, launching Tuesday exclusively online, is Bridges' first outdoor entertaining line and one of her most accessible collaborations to date. The 14-piece collection, which includes serving platters, pitchers, ice buckets, plates and oven mitts, features prices under \$20 and draws heavily from Bridges' childhood memories growing up in West Philadelphia.

For Bridges, the collection arrives at a fitting cultural moment. As the country approaches the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, she saw an opportunity to celebrate the city where so much American history, and so much of her own story, began.

"I'm from Philadelphia," Bridges said. "It was a great opportunity to kind of lean into my Philadelphia roots, and all of the history, and the architecture, and the iconography that I grew up with in Philly."

The collection combines recognizable Philadelphia imagery, including Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell and Benjamin Franklin, with some pieces displaying Bridges' signature Harlem Toile de Jouy aesthetic, the now-iconic pattern that reimagines traditional French toile through depictions of Black American life.

But beyond patriotic symbolism, Bridges said the collection is deeply personal. She described summers in Philadelphia as being centered around gathering outdoors with family, friends and neighbors. July was especially significant in the Bridges household.

"My birthday's in July, my brother's birthday's in July, my parents' anniversary was in July, so July was a really big month in our family and the Bridges family in Philadelphia," Bridges shared. "My childhood memories were always about being outdoors. There were cookouts and picnics and fireworks and all these different things focused around gathering."

While designing the line, Bridges says she revisited family photographs taken by her father, an avid photographer who maintained a darkroom in their Philadelphia home. The images, many preserved on Ektachrome film, captured scenes from annual family gatherings: competitive badminton matches, horseshoe games, ping pong tournaments and a young Bridges running around, popsicle in hand.

"It was neighbors, it was family, it was friends, it was community," Bridges said. "I don't remember it being about July 4th. I just remember it being about gathering."

For Bridges, who loves badminton, that sense of nostalgia influenced the collection's visual direction. Gingham backgrounds on the dinner and appetizer plates reference the picnic tablecloths Bridges remembers from childhood family celebrations.

Bridges also infused the collection with historical references she hopes spark curiosity and conversation. One plate highlights the façade of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, designed in part by Julian Abele, the first Black graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's architecture program. Other pieces incorporate imagery from the Declaration of Independence itself.

"I try to tell stories through my designs," Bridges said. "I try to educate through my designs."

That storytelling element has long defined Bridges' work, which often blends history, social commentary and decorative arts. She acknowledged that some viewers may interpret her pieces differently than others, something she welcomes.

"If you go to a museum and see a piece of art, you and I might interpret what we see in entirely different ways," she said. "Both can be valid."

This Walmart collaboration marks a significant shift in accessibility for Bridges, whose previous partnerships with heritage brands such as Wedgwood and Le Creuset often came with luxury price tags. She said Walmart offered a unique opportunity to bring thoughtful, high-quality design to a broader audience.

"Not everybody can afford my interior design services," Bridges said. "Doing this with Walmart meant that more people could have access to fun, hopefully thought-provoking design."

Though the collection is designed for summer entertaining, you won't see Bridges personally hosting large cookouts herself.

"I'm not bringing the potato salad," she joked. "I'll bring all the things to make it beautiful for your table."

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