The New York Times

DESIGN FINDS

Sheila Bridges Displays the Things She Loves … in Her Dining Room

The interior designer searched close to home, in Paris and at an auction. Look for an easy upgrade, splurge on something unexpected, and bid on a one-of-a-kind object.

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An artwork by Fabiola Jean-Louis hangs in the dining room of the interior designer Sheila Bridges's house in Hudson, N.Y. via The artist and Alan Avery Art Company

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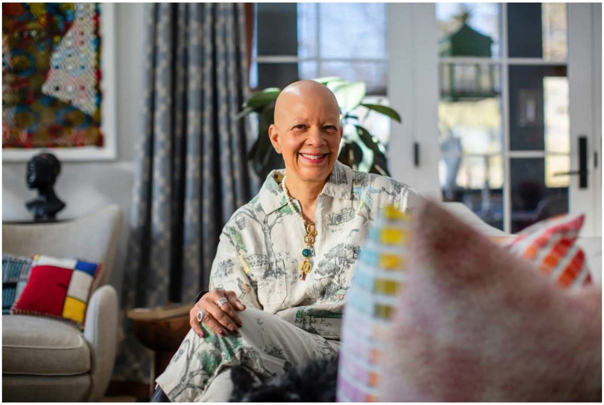
By Tim McKeough **Photographs by Lauren Lancaster**

March 17, 2025

When she isn't at home in Harlem, the interior designer Sheila Bridges can usually be found at a custom 1,600-square-foot barn-shaped house she designed and built for herself in Hudson, N.Y.

Inside, the dining room showcases the furniture, art and accessories she loves. Because she usually eats in the kitchen and entertains guests outdoors, it serves as more of a casual library and gallery than a place for meals.



Ms. Bridges fills her country home with vintage finds, contemporary art and natural objects she finds outdoors.

"Right now, my dining table is covered in coffee table books, including a lot of art books," which speak to her current interests, said Ms. Bridges, 60. "And I adorn my table with a lot of other personal things."

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"I love the power that comes with experience."

-Paulina Porizkova

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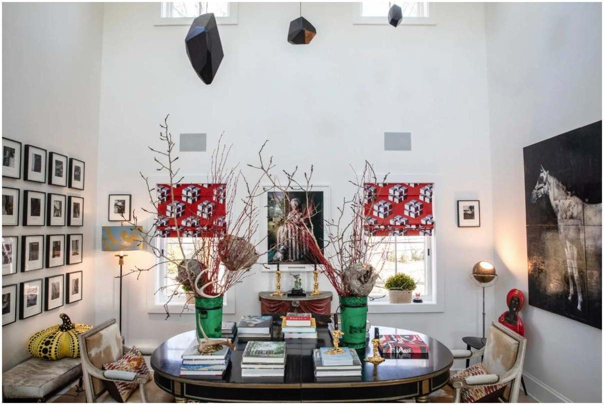
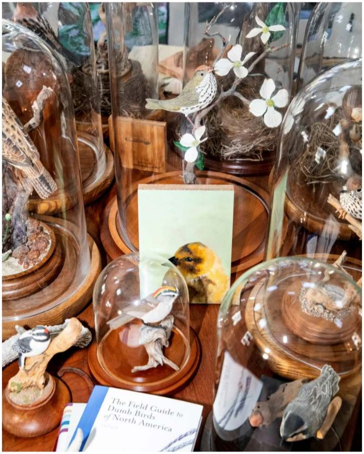
Editing the selections has been a challenge since she downsized from her previous country house, because she continues to hold on to family heirlooms and collects everything from vintage furniture to abandoned bird nests she finds outdoors. "It's a good thing I have a big basement," Ms. Bridges said with a laugh.



Her dining room functions as more of a casual library and gallery than a place for meals. The artworks on the left are by Lorna Simpson, and the work on the right is by David Seiler.

She recently shared with The New York Times a few of the key pieces that make her dining room one of her favorite spaces.

Easy Upgrade



Glass Cloche, from $88 at Anthropologie

Ms. Bridges began collecting hand-carved and painted wooden birds after stumbling upon them in antiques stores. There was just one problem: They looked so lifelike that her old cat, Wickham, would attack them. “After he damaged one of them pretty badly, I decided to put them under glass cloches,” Ms. Bridges said.

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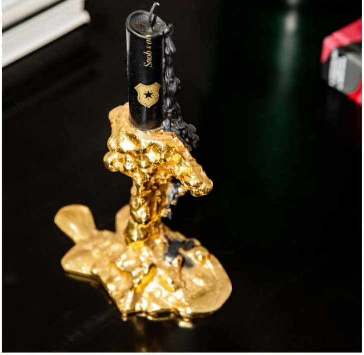
It ended the cat attacks while also enhancing the appearance of the birds. “I think what happens is they make you look closer. They draw you in,” Ms. Bridges said. “They make things look like they’re worth protecting.”

She doesn’t worry about having the cloches match, and mixes vintage and new ones from various sources. Now, she uses them to present not only wooden birds, but also objects from nature, such as wasp nests and antlers.

“I’m one of those people who, when I’m driving and see something I like, pulls over, makes sure there’s nothing living inside and shoves it in the trunk,” Ms. Bridges said.

Splurge



Message Candles, about $35 at Arty Dandy

Drip Candleholder, about $215 at Polspotten

When Ms. Bridges wants to treat herself to something special, she usually splurges on art, such as the collection of photogravures by Lorna Simpson she installed on her dining room wall. But she also values something more fleeting — candles from the Parisian company Ylustre, which she has shipped from France.

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She discovered the candles while attending furniture fairs in Paris, so they serve as a reminder of her travels. “They have quirky little phrases in French, which are all different,” Ms. Bridges said, and which are printed in gold ink. The phrases translate to sayings such as “This is Versailles” and “Guaranteed without social networks.”

Ms. Bridges uses another find to display them: plated aluminum Drip candle holders from the Dutch company Polspotten, which she found in Amsterdam. “I just love that they look like melted wax,” she said. “And then my candles melt on top of them.”

One of a Kind

an opportunity to acquire something special from a tastemaker she admired. (Mr. Talley died in 2022.) “I went to the preview and felt like I really wanted to buy something, but I figured I’d get priced out of most things,” she said, such as Louis Vuitton luggage emblazoned with the initials ALT (much of which sold for tens of thousands of dollars).

His former furniture, however, seemed to get less attention, which made it an ideal target. “For me, of course, furniture is my first love,” Ms. Bridges said.

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This carved and painted 20th century wood side table, in particular, captured her attention for its whimsical appearance. “It’s really funny, with these draping elements,” she said. “I think it has great style and individuality.”

She bid on the table without checking its dimensions. When she brought it home, it fit precisely between two windows. “That table could not be more perfect in my dining room,” she said. “I feel like I own a piece of history and culture.”

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