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# Wallflower

THE LIFE AND SOUL OF DESIGN



**The Designer Decades, pg 69:** Florence Broadhurst's wallpapers – vibrant diverse and full of dynamic colour – opened a door to a brave new world. Gone was Bobby, the vaudeville vamp, who had been buried in a grave so deep that even friends of Broadhurst, such as the outrageous television personality Jeannie Little, had no idea that a vibrant redhead had once been a successful touring stage star. Vanished, too, was Madame Pellier, the elegant French couturier of pre-war London.

From the ashes of these incarnations rose a phoenix: Florence Broadhurst The Designer. Between 1961 and 1977, Broadhurst released a kaleidoscope of imagery with an international edge into an isolated continent hungry for visual stimulation. Everywhere she had been, everything she had seen, would come to find a reflection in her sensual, funky, impulsive design range.

Viewed today, the Broadhurst designs appear to demonstrate a remarkable awareness of 'Australian'ness' at a time when the nation was only beginning to come to grips with where its heritage lay. Equally surprising is that the venture seems to emerge from nowhere. It burst onto the visual arts scene with the same exuberant boldness that characterises Broadhurst's iconic design *Horses Stampede...*

**pg 81:** To print a design such as the classic *Birds of Paradise*, more than one colour had to be used. Each silk-screen held a different colour, so each one had to 'register' precisely with every other. If even one of the screens was as little as a millimetre out, the wallpaper rolls would not match up when they came to be on a wall.

Four-colour designs such as *Chelsea* were even more complex. The creation of *Chelsea* involved breaking up a stylised image of Japanese chrysanthemums into four screens: each of which appears abstract on its own. One has bold but confusingly incomplete outlines of flowers, leaves and broken branches; another the ghosted strokes of flowing stems. The final two complete the petalled flowers; one gently, the other with emphatic movement. Each piece of artwork has to match – or 'register' – precisely with the others, or the pattern is meaningless.

Broadhurst's registration was a nightmare, one client sent back boxes of wallpaper they had bought for the relatively pricey sum of £12 a roll because the patterns did not match up. The very next day Broadhurst sold the boxes to a department store for their window displays, for £14 a roll. Problem solved. Because the rolls of paper would be separated in different windows, the registration did not matter at all...

*Florence Broadhurst Her Secret & Extraordinary Lives* by Helen O'Neal, Hardie Grant Books, available from the Selvedge Bookshop at the special price of £20 plus p&p, (rrp £36) T: 020 8341 9721 or visit [www.selvedge-bookshop.org](http://www.selvedge-bookshop.org)