

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



The prolific work of Australian designer Florence Broadhurst is set to live on in the homes of consumers around the world thanks to Signature Design Archive's licensing program. RACHAEL GAVIN reports.

A woman of many talents, Florence Broadhurst, born in 1899, was at different times a performer and couturier but it's her work as a wallpaper designer that ensures she'll never be forgotten. Bold and beautiful, flamboyant and fabulous, Broadhurst launched her design career at the age of 60. She was murdered 18 years later.

Today some of her 530 prints appear on towels, cushions, toiletry bags and candles as part of a licensing initiative from Signature Design Archive to make Broadhurst's work more accessible to a wider audience. Previously the wallpaper designs were only available in the high-end interior design and fashion circles.

"Florence's design library is very broad and eclectic," says Mark Smale, Signature Design Archive CEO. "There's... everything from tapestries to geometrics, to Asian influence to floral, so the diversity of the range and its ability to apply to a very broad range of product is certainly a valuable component of the library. Therefore with each product we look to ensure that the product is consistent with the quality and the positioning of the brand, but also that there is a story behind the product."

These stories include references to Broadhurst's travels to locations such as Shanghai—where she ran a finishing school—as well as Europe and other parts of Asia. This is reflected in the design, point of sale and marketing material. Each of the brands responsible for specific product categories follow the same themes.

"What we try and do is we develop a colour palette and design selection for different seasons, so there is cohesion in the product when it appears at retail even though it may come from a range of people.

"That combined with working in partnership with our various licensees and trend forecasts, looking at what trends are appropriate, how relevant are certain colour palettes and what stories or rationale can be put behind the selection of a given group of designs.

"For example, we have a collection for [this] autumn/winter that is under the theme Shanghai Nights, and very much draws upon the whole Gatsby, roaring 20s, Asian influence and colour palettes associated with that. So we try and steer licensees to using those colour palettes and those designs so they end up looking like they'll fit together."

This approach allows retailers to present each season's products as one collection despite them being produced by different



companies. Choosing a range of licensees to produce different product categories instead of having one business responsible for all items makes the most of each company's expertise in branding and distribution, according to Smale.

Licensees range from Rapee (cushions, throws and kitchen textiles) to Outliving (desk stationery and beach, travel and garden accessories) and Circa Home (candles and diffusers).

"From the moment I became familiar with the works of Florence Broadhurst I fell in

love with her theatrical story and with the staggering array of beautiful hand drawn wall papers," says Nicole Eckels, co-founder and creative director at Circa Home. "I'd long had an appreciation for how these artworks had been applied to various products in clever, creative ways and I knew instinctively that this kaleidoscope of culture and style sat perfectly with the Circa Home collection.

"The pattern of the print really gave me all the clues I needed to design each of the new fragrances. The four Florence Broadhurst prints were applied to the packaging of our Circa Home classic candles, fragrance diffusers and Perfect Spaces candles."

Smale believes the relevancy in the images comes from their timelessness, simplicity and boldness making them "endlessly reinterpretable". He says when prints are on trend they can be highlighted more and when a subtler print is in fashion Broadhurst's designs can be an accent.

"Whilst the designs are very important and ground-breaking, it was her ability to do things that were unexpected. So one of the things she did was she increased the width of wallpaper to accommodate scale so her designs tend to be bolder and larger in scale—a little bit like the lady herself in terms of her personality," he adds.

"That combined with some imaginative use of colours and textures in metallic—some of them tone on tone and some of them very bright—really set her apart... a lot of other designers or design libraries and brands have a very common look—Florence didn't, she was very diverse."

According to Outliving director, Barry Glick, Broadhurst's designs are just what today's consumer wants.

"People are always looking for gifts with meaning, and they are more frequently

