

## VIEW

***Sheila Bownas: A Life In Pattern*, Pallant House Gallery, 9 North Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1TJ, until 20 May 2018, [www.pallant.org.uk](http://www.pallant.org.uk)**

Sheila Bownas isn't a mid-century design name that is bandied about. Despite winning a scholarship to the Slade School of Art in the 1940s (for then, as now, London art schools unashamedly thought themselves superior) she didn't hang on the coat tails of the London design world and its nepotism. She was born in North Yorkshire where she eventually returned.

Pallant House in Chichester has mounted an exhibition of Sheila's designs; and the work sparkles, making you wonder why both it and her name have been missing from design histories. The story of Sheila's archive is itself intriguing. Bought posthumously by Chelsea Cefai in 2008, Sheila's 200-some surviving designs are now curated by Chelsea, who is behind this exhibition and has produced an accompanying book. That chance meeting in an auction house with unknown material by an unknown designer has given Chelsea the 'burden' of research and promotion of Sheila's work. It's not easy to look after a designer's legacy, to try to lift someone into the design cannon – with the additional worry of the future safeguarding of the collection to contend with. Ironically, whilst an archive like this should be catnip to design historians, a jobbing designer – and Sheila was certainly one of those – even if of the very best quality, is hard to name, research

