

Talking Points: Althea McNish

Videos and sources to help you explore the work of African-Caribbean textile artist Althea McNish.

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AGES 11-14

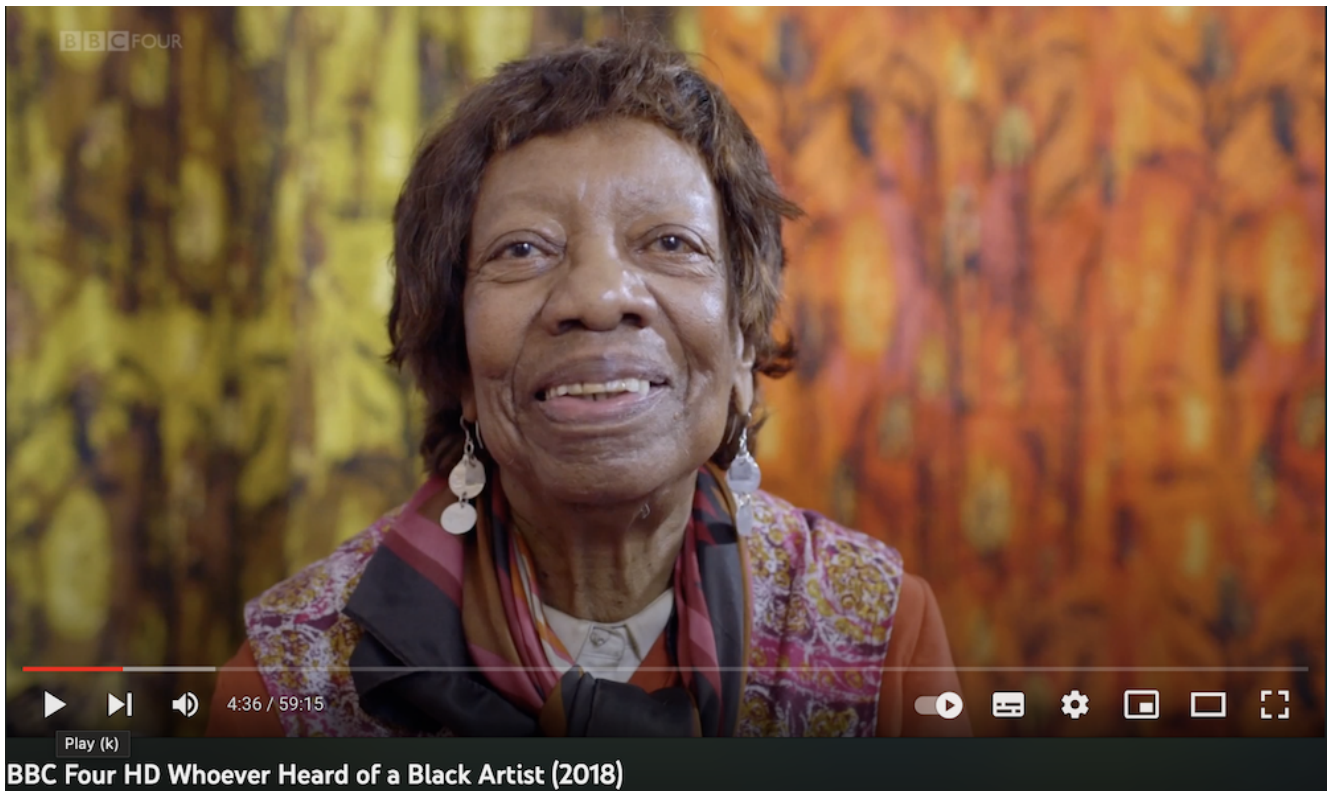
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Althea McNish

Althea McNish (1924-2020) was one of the first African-Caribbean textile designers to gain international recognition for her work. Althea came to England with her family as part of the Windrush Generation. Her designs capture the British landscape through a “tropical eye”, bringing bright colours and abstract patterns depicting flora and fauna, injecting much needed colour and excitement in a post-war textiles industry.

Althea McNish used a variety of printing process to create her designs, from monoprint to screenprint.

McNish’s work proved popular with the chairman of Liberty London’s department store and soon she was creating exclusive designs for furnishings, wallpapers and fashion designers across Britain. Find more information at the V&A website and explore some of McNish’s works.



Watch on Youtube from minute 4.10- 7.30 of Whoever Heard of a Black Artist to find out more about Althea McNish and her work.

Questions to Ask Children

“Everything I did, I saw it through a tropical eye.” – Althea McNish 2015

Can you spot the influence of both tropical flora and fauna and British landscapes in McNish’s designs? Describe what you can see.

Why do you think Britain was ready an injection of bright colours and patterns post-war?

What do you like about Althea McNish’s designs?

Which design is your favourite? Why?

How does McNish's work make you feel?