

Vogue
Work of Passage
Charlotte Jansen
December 2021

VOGUE

Work of Passage



Left: *Jah Shaka* (1983), by Denise Forrester. Below: *Jersey* (2008), by Hurvin Anderson



WORK OF PASSAGE

A new exhibition celebrates seven decades of artistic cross-fertilisation between the Caribbean and the British Isles. By Charlotte Jansen



On the 22 June 1948, HMT *Empire Windrush* docked in Tilbury, Essex. Among those on-board were 693 passengers who had crossed the Atlantic from the Caribbean to start a new life in the UK. This passage, and its consequences, is the subject of a landmark exhibition at Tate Britain, curated by Alex Farquharson and David A Bailey, featuring the work of 40 artists, from Sonia Boyce and Keith Piper to Lubaina Himid and Steve McQueen, but telling the stories of many more.

"I'm happy to see the spotlight on these narratives of migration and the perspectives of the Caribbean community, which are also the story of Britain," says Hurvin Anderson, one featured artist, whose paintings explore community and self-affirmation. "I feel privileged to show alongside them." Take the pioneering textile designer Althea McNish, who revolutionised post-war British modernism. Celebrated for her dazzling colours and abstract patterns inspired by the lush landscapes of her birthplace, Trinidad, McNish would go on to create fabrics for Liberty, and later for Dior.

McNish, who died last year aged 95, was also involved with the Caribbean Artists Movement, founded in London in 1966. It was one of many collectives formed to promote Caribbean artists, a necessary response to racism and lack of representation in a white-dominated society.

The conversation between islands continues to move back and forth across the Atlantic, from painters such as Peter Doig and Chris Ofili, now both living in Trinidad, to a new generation in the UK, including the 2020 Turner Prize co-winner Alberta Whittle and designer Grace Wales Bonner. Together the works offer a glittering, glorious portrait of what it means to exist "between". As Marcus Garvey once said, "Great principles, great ideals, know no nationality."

■ *Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s - Now is at Tate Britain, SW1, from 1 December*



Clockwise from above left: *Oceans Apart* (1989), by Ingrid Pollard. *Stokely Carmichael giving a Black Power Speech at the Dialectics of Liberation Congress, Round House, London 1967*, by Horace Ové. *Shostakovich Symphony no 12, Opus 112* (1981), by Aubrey Williams