

V&A Academy

BLACK JOY DAY
ALTHEA MCNISH
DESIGNING FOR
SCHIAPARELLI AND
OTHER LUMINARIES

Thursday 30 July 2026 11.00-17.00 BST





Details

Thursday 30 July 2026, 11.00 – 17.00, in person at V&A South Kensington, Learning Centre, Seminar Room 1.

Overview

Step into a radical space of fashion, art, and global cultural exchange, where Elsa Schiaparelli's daring vision and Trinidadian born designer Althea McNish's vibrant legacy meet parallel histories of Black brilliance, reshaping style, identity, and modern creativity.

Arrival

On arrival, please use the Exhibition Road Entrance of the Museum and make your way to Seminar Room 1, Learning Centre, Level 1 where you will be met by Janz Browne, Senior Producer Africa and Diaspora.

For details of the Exhibition Road entrance please click here rb.gy/qzl98b for the digital map. For any accessibility requirements, please email courses@vam.ac.uk

Schedule

10.45 – 11.00

Arrival, Registration, and Refreshments.

11.00 – 11.15

Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions, Janz Browne.

11.15 - 11.55

Elsa Schiaparelli in a Changing World

Led by Assistant Curator **Danilo Marques dos Reis**, this opening session explores Elsa Schiaparelli's groundbreaking work within the turbulence of the interwar years, when fashion became a bold expression of creativity, disruption, and modern identity. Through key objects and artistic collaborations, discover how Schiaparelli transformed clothing into statements of imagination and change. Danilo also highlights wider cultural exchange across New York, Paris, and London, referencing figures such as Josephine Baker to consider fashion as a site of movement, visibility, and international dialogue before experiencing the exhibition itself.

11.55 - 12.15

Q&A with participants and Danilo Marques dos Reis.

12.15 - 13.00

LUNCH – Packed Lunches. Beverages will be available.

13.00 - 15.00

Escorted access into the Schiaparelli exhibition.

About Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art Exhibition

"For me, dress designing is not a profession but an art." – Elsa Schiaparelli

The UK's first exhibition on Elsa Schiaparelli spans the 1920s to today, celebrating the innovative designer's influence. It traces the fashion house's groundbreaking origins and its evolution under current creative director Daniel Roseberry.

15.15 - 16.25

Designing Beyond Boundaries: The Legacy of Althea McNish

Our afternoon guest speaker, **Rose Sinclair** MBE, Reader in Design Education at Goldsmiths, University of London, leads this inspiring closing session on the life and work of **Althea McNish**. A pioneering artist-designer, McNish transformed textiles, interiors, and fashion through her bold use of colour and nature-inspired creativity. Rose explores McNish's groundbreaking career, including her connection to haute couture through the Ascher design house and its links to Schiaparelli. Drawing on V&A collections, original research, and fabric samples, the session reveals McNish's enduring influence on twentieth-century design and her legacy of innovation, cultural exchange, and creative independence.

16.25 - 16.45

Q&A with participants and Rose Sinclair MBE.

16.45 - 17.00

Concluding thoughts, participant feedback and evaluation of the session.

This event is in collaboration with the Black Gallery Visitor Network (UK).

Note: V&A Academy programmes are subject to change without notice.

Biographies

Danilo Marques dos Reis is Assistant Curator of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the V&A. He contributed to the development of the V&A's first public programme on sustainability, *Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures* (2022), and was part of the curatorial team for the V&A exhibitions *NAOMI: In Fashion* (2025) and *Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art* (2026).

Rose Sinclair MBE is a Reader in Design Education, Goldsmiths, University of London. Her PhD research focuses on Black British Caribbean women, their textiles and crafting practices through their making networks, and relationships between amateur and professional makers. Her research has featured on national TV in 'Craftivism: Making a Difference' BBC4 Feb 2021, BBC Woman's Hour, BBC Witness History, BBC Radio1Xtra, Smile Jamaica TV, national press and design magazines. Rose's current publications include "Tracing back to trace forwards: What does it mean/take to be a Black textile designer" in Elaine Igoe (ed.) *Textile Design Theory in the Making* (Bloomsbury, 2021), and "Does Design do Race" in Alison Hardy (ed.), *Debates in Design & Technology Education* (2nd edn., Routledge, Dec. 2022). Rose is co-curator of *Dorcas Stories from the Front Room: Caribbean Textile Narratives Then and Now* in Birmingham, 2023, the exhibitions 'Althea McNish: Colour is Mine', Whitworth Gallery in Manchester 2022-2023, and at the William Morris Gallery in London 2022.

Image by Bet Bettencourt