

**Born**

1962, London, England

EducationByam Shaw School of Art, London, England
MA, Goldsmiths, University of London**Lives and Works**

London, England

About the Artist

Known for using batik in costumed dioramas that explore race and colonialism, Yinka Shonibare MBE also employs painting, sculpture, photography, and film in work that disrupts and challenges our notions of cultural identity. Taking on the honorific MBE as part of his name in everyday use, Shonibare plays with the ambiguities and contradictions of his attitude toward the Establishment and its legacies of colonialism and class. In multimedia projects that reveal his passion for art history, literature, and philosophy, Shonibare provides a critical tour of Western civilization and its achievements and failures. At the same time, his sensitive use of his own foibles (vanity, for one) and challenges (physical disability) provide an autobiographical perspective through which to navigate the contradictory emotions and paradoxes of his examination of individual and political power.

Teaching Connections**Media and Materials**drawing, film, **installation**, painting, photography, sculpture**Key Words and Ideas****appropriation**, beauty, **collaboration**, costume, critique, history, **juxtaposition**, **parody****Related Artists**

Eleanor Antin, Walton Ford, Laurie Simmons, Kara Walker, Cindy Sherman

My work is artificial; it is artifice. It is art, made as art; it is not unmediated reality. It is mediated reality through form, and form is artifice. What I really like in a work of art is for the formal strategy to be part of the meaning of the work.

DISCUSS**Before Viewing**

- How is beauty defined? Why might beauty be important to society and culture? In what ways are notions of beauty different among different cultures and in what ways are they similar?
- Discuss and define the words **parody** and *mimicry*. How do these terms relate to humor and **satire**? Discuss examples of parody and mimicry found in art history or contemporary culture. Why and how are they used in art?

While Viewing

- Select works of art in which Shonibare uses beauty to engage viewers with specific issues and themes. Identify which elements of beauty engage the viewer. How do they relate to the issues and themes that Shonibare presents?
- Describe the figures in Shonibare's work, including their construction and clothing. Why did Shonibare present them this way? Describe the identities of the figures.



Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 14.00 hours, 1998. Type-C photograph, 72 x 90 inches. Edition of 3 (1 AP). Collections of Peter Norton and Eileen Harris Norton, Santa Monica. © Yinka Shonibare MBE, courtesy the artist, James Cohan Gallery, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

After Viewing

- Compare and contrast Shonibare's *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* with Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress*. How does each artist use **parody**, humor, and **satire**?
- Shonibare talks about the difficulty of living in his own body. Which of his works address this difficulty, and how?
- When referring to some drawings that he started to make as a result of the issue of climate change, Shonibare says that for him climate is about **zeitgeist**—about trying to capture the climate of the moment. What do you think he means? In what ways do *Black Gold* and *Scramble for Africa* address an historic or contemporary climate?



Black Gold II, 2006. Acrylic paint on wall, acrylic on 25 Dutch wax printed cotton canvases, 130 x 265 inches overall, canvas dimensions variable. Photo: Stephen White, © Yinka Shonibare MBE, courtesy the artist, James Cohan Gallery, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

CREATE

- Assemble a collection of political cartoons that describe the climate of the moment. Use the images as inspiration to create an original cartoon representing your own perspective about the current political or social climate.
- Shonibare says that he would like to have the trappings of wealth, even though he criticizes it. Consider the genre of **satire**: create a work of art that critiques something you desire.

OPPOSITE: *Scramble for Africa*, 2003. 14 life-size fiberglass mannequins, 14 chairs, table, and Dutch wax printed cotton, overall 52 x 192¹/₁₀ x 110¹/₂ inches. Commissioned by the Museum of African Art, Long Island City, New York. The Pinnell Collection, Dallas. Photo: Stephen White, © Yinka Shonibare MBE, courtesy the artist, James Cohan Gallery, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

