

**Yinka Shonibare  
the swing**



**We are all constructs  
made up of mythologies we build ourselves**



## THE OUTSIDE

"I am never moralistic, I do not think art should to much engage with politics, but I can say for my part (...) it happens to be political - it is political, but it is not politics."  
(Y.S.)

But what do we see here? A woman picked out of a painting by Fragonard, she has not got a head, her dress seem to be roccoco style, but is made out of apperent african fabric.

Going under the surface we learn that the fabric is not authentic ethnic african at all but designd in the Netherlands and the artist himself might be black but is half british. We are puzzeld - is this african, is this european? There is this kind of impossibility of fixing it on one place, like we are usually so keen on doing.

And then the scenery itself. We all know well about the repulsive opulent lifestyle during the roccoco age. Rich aristocrats enjoying life, while half the nation was closed to starve. "If you havn´t got any bread, why don´t you go for the cake?" one is reported to have asked the poor.

Fiddling while Rom is burning - it is easy to draw the parallel to the opulent and priveliged lifestyle in our overdeveloped world.



### THE INSIDE

"If you are a black artist and you choose not to make work about being black - that's cool, that's fine - you will be described as the black artist, who doesn't work about being black."

(Y.S.)

Shonibare is adopting the the roccoco european upper class with pseudo african fabric. And our carefully constructed system of stereotypes is somehow mixed up - consciousness or not we still have this arthistorically fixed picture of the black as the servants in a hidden corner of our minds. By swobing the roles he Shonibare is questioning exactly this. He is using the stereotype to take control over his own image. From his postcolonial perspective beeing rooted as well in the african as in the european culture he can build something new: a fitting identity for him with different parts of different cultures. And as he does so , it is him who has got the power about the new image.