Diary of a Victorian Dandy is a series of five photographs depicting the artist Yinka Shonibare playing the role of a dandy. The series of tableaux show this pretentious, status-conscious figure who seeks acceptance in an aristocratic milieu, at different times of day, engaged in increasingly debaucherous activities. The work demonstrates Shonibare’s identification with the dandy as an outsider or foreigner who uses his flamboyance, wit and style to penetrate the highest levels of society, which would otherwise be closed to him. Much of Shonibare's work engages with his ‘outsider’ status as a black, disabled artist and investigates conditions of postcolonialism and globalisation. This series also engages with the construction of identity and nostalgic representations of British heritage.

The photographs are the result of an elaborate production. Shonibare employed professional actors, make up artists and costumiers, a commercial photographer, and the director of BBC costume dramas for a three day shoot ‘on location’ at a stately home. Shonibare describes the photographs, which he presents in fake gilt frames, as ‘pure theatre’.

This image from the series was first displayed as a 16-sheet poster at almost 100 sites across the London Underground. The display was deliberately ambiguous and the Institute of International Visual Arts, who commissioned the series, employed a market research company to test public responses to the posters. The people surveyed mostly associated the image with theatre productions, stately homes and period dramas, as well as genuine historical figures. The photographs are conscious imitations of these sources and also make reference to William Hogarth’s series of paintings and engravings A Rake’s Progress (1733).

Diary of a Victorian Dandy was acquired in part through the Staying Power project. Staying Power is a five year partnership between the V&A and Black Cultural Archives. The project aims to explore black British experience from the 1950s to the 1990s through photographs acquired by the V&A and oral histories conducted by Black Cultural Archives.

**Descriptive line**
Photograph by Yinka Shonibare, 'Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 14.00 hours' from the series Diary of a Victorian Dandy, C-type print, 1998, printed 2012, AP 1 of 2, from an edition of 5, plus 2 APs

**Physical description**
A framed colour photograph of a man dressed in a grey suit standing in the centre of a study holding a piece of paper. He is surrounded by five other men, three are seated and two standing. To the right of the image, four women dressed as maids stand in the doorway.

**Dimensions**
Height: 122 cm image, Width: 183 cm image, Height: 134.5 cm frame, Width: 195.5 cm frame

**Museum number**
E.236-2013

**Object history note**
The V&A acquired this photograph as part of the Staying Power project. Staying Power is a five year partnership between the V&A and Black Cultural Archives. The project aims to explore black British experience from the 1950s to the 1990s through photographs acquired by the V&A and oral histories conducted by Black Cultural Archives.

**Historical context note**
This image from Shonibare's Diary of a Victorian Dandy series was reproduced on posters placed at sites across the London Underground in 1998.

**URL**
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1263374/diary-of-a-victorian-dandy-photograph-shonibare-yinka/