



# BARTLEBY REVIEW

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Footsie Chain ..... Tiziana La Melia

**Alison Yip and Justin Patterson**

*'Footsie Chain'*

Monte Clark Gallery  
#105-525 Great Northern Way  
Through November 30, 2013

*"Convex walls tease" – Alison Yip*

*She'll grow into it* (2013) is the most difficult painting in this suite for me to look at. The central figure is a woman with arms spread open. The veil of her skimpy dress mimics the directness of the paint application, cast under blue velvet shadow. I must admit, I think the painting is difficult to look at because it makes Marilyn Monroe eyes at me. It reminds me of a lecture I sat through ten years ago by the late Josephine Junjic, where she showed us images of flirts, and spoke enthusiastically about the popular 18<sup>th</sup> Century trend of the *mouche*. The *mouche*, also known as court plaster, was used for covering up small pox scars and dates back to early Roman times as a way to hide other skin defects. Most brutally, these might have been the branding marks borne

by slaves. I remember a satirical cartoon poking fun at an 18<sup>th</sup> century coquette, depicted as a ditz, sitting at the vanity table applying a horse drawn carriage across her cheek. For the cartoonist, the free behavior of the flirt posed itself as some kind of moral threat. With a similar threatening intent, Alison proposes playing footsie as method.

Motifs in *Footsie Chain* include *waning moon*, *melancholy tile*, *pewter knob*, tree, vase, fish and *philodendron*. Shape, you could say, morphs into moods and rhythm: I read the quick and direct brushwork of a garden, an emphasis of line that articulates the sneaky bends of impish legs, shuddering moss, the punctuation of dots or bold lenticulars for eyes, and the tessellations of rattan basket weave to situate these paintings in the artists home of daydreams. The ekphrastic tradition of poems based on paintings is well documented but painters scribbling poems as a tool for understanding is not taken as seriously. Alison frames the exhibition with a poem consisting of images that echo the content in the room. The figure in this poem moves through her objects, rather than next to them; so in a sense becoming her objects, even if momentarily. The constellations of paintings are layered over top of a wall painting that adopts the format of St. Sebastian's catacombs in Rome. Acrobatically executed, at moments the wall reveals a palimpsest of decisions, and in effect acts as a costume that transforms the gallery walls into a crypt. Justin Patterson's accompanying project consists of a 1600-watt, 18 inch PA and felted lamb that gives off a forty-Hertz tone. This purr repeats in a cycle that slowly grows in volume

and then abruptly stops. It reminds me of a short story I read by a friend who describes the hum and rattle of her grandparent's fridge as a kid. Made in response to Alison's paintings, Patterson's sound heightens the zig of my own knees, brushing against so many footsies.

My first real conversation with Alison happened when I drove her home one night. I asked her what she was doing and she told me about *Tryst I*, a painting based on Gardenia Villa, a condo near Broadway and Nanaimo. This palazzo is Postmodern architecture at its most subtle. Perhaps more LA than Vancouver, it stirs up the fantasy of a tectonic Mediterranean diet of terra cotta tiles, canopy of grape vines, water fountains, and tans. The building mimics a hill with its sloping roof, to remind us that the vision of the *architect* who cast our homes wanted it to be anything but itself, which is what makes the Gardenia Villa so funny. If, as Alison writes, *venetian slats turn coy*, then knobs made of brass transport us to the fantasy of the malls whose walkways we mistake for streets. It is the kind of structure responsible for at least two decades worth of rose-tinted-ennui-staccato-angst poetry.

**Tiziana La Melia**