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Review: Benoît Pioulard (*Stanza*, 2015)

 [June 6, 2015](#)  [Valerie Polichar](#)

Done right, lo-fi can shock with its simplicity & ability to evoke emotions with subtle shifts in texture. No one does this better in 2015 than **Benoît Pioulard**, the project of Seattle-based artist Thomas Meluch, whose full-length LP *Sonnet* earlier this year continued to break new lo-fi and found-sound ground.

On *Stanza*, an elegant, multi-part composition intended as a companion piece to the album *Sonnet*, the music shifts and pulls beneath our tread like windblown sand. The aural sense is that of a gently waving tapestry, or a photographic scene that appears to be frozen in time but, when viewed closely, is actually very slightly in motion (think of the photographs of Rachael's childhood that Deckard views in *Blade Runner*). By keeping the sounds he employs constrained to a minimum, despite the richness and depth

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of the music, Meluch is able to preserve the illusion of immobility when one is not paying attention.

This ability to manifest differently depending on how one listens means the album can be a consistent, reassuring ambient background or an astoundingly complex piece of carefully attended artwork. Evidently designed as a single composition with multiple parts, *Stanza* can flow its sound unnoticed from one track to the next. But close listening reveals shape, differences in the segments. The penultimate track, “V,” in particular, has the ability to rouse intense emotion in the listener. Light-handed use of a whistling tone on “VI” evokes a landscape filled with birdsong. The composition has the feel of a soundtrack, and the mind can create a variety of movies to ride along.



All in all, *Stanza* is a superb short album that may persuade a few ambient listeners that lo-fi has unsuspected value, and may bring some surprised lo-fi indie rock fans into the ambient camp. We most highly recommend this subtle masterpiece.

Unappreciated Scholars Review Grade: A+

*Grateful thanks to Matt Titus for introducing us to **Benoît Poulard**'s exquisite sounds.*

Album is available on [Bandcamp](#). Follow **Benoît Pioulard** on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/pioulard>. Visit the



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