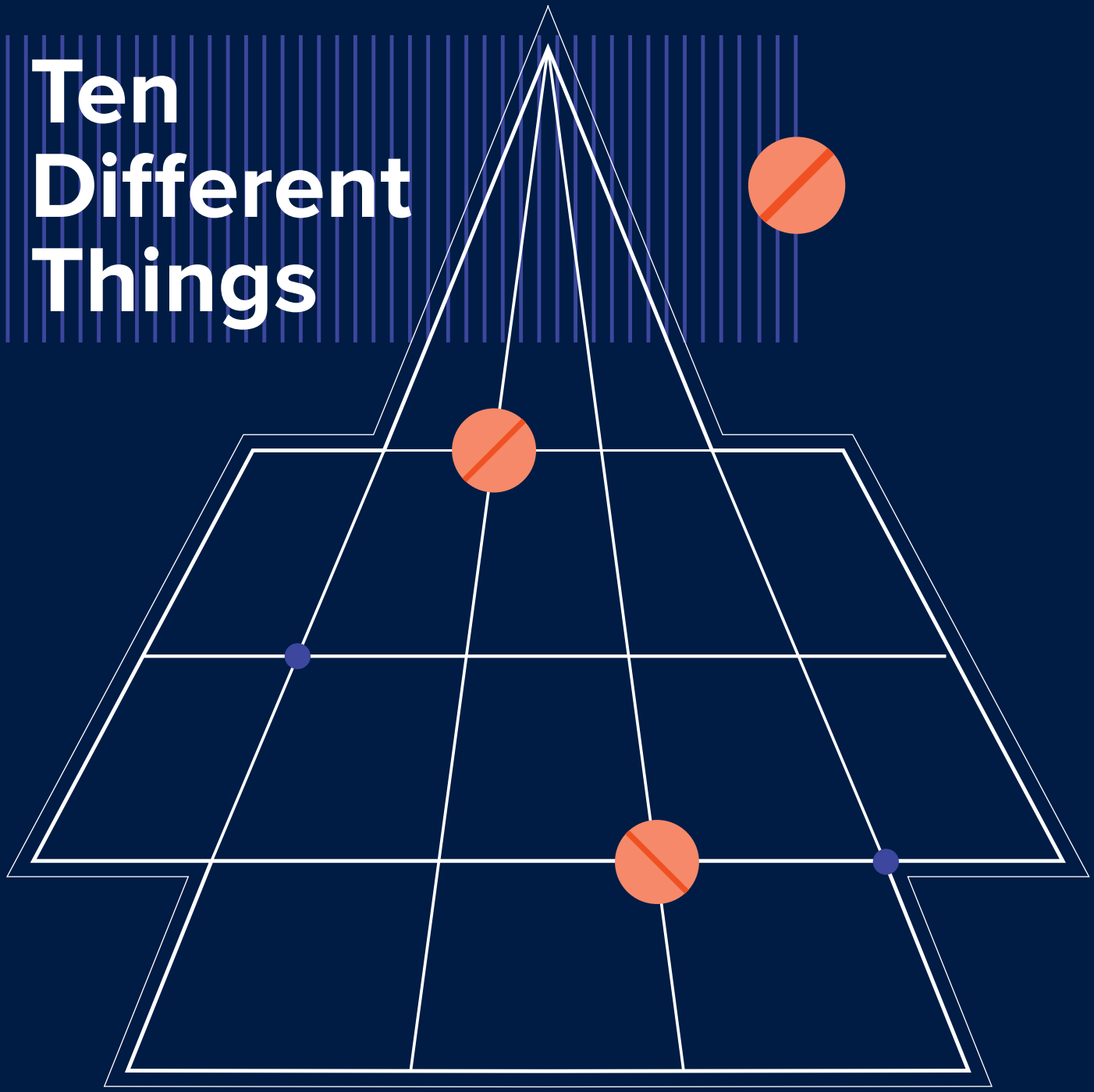
Ten Different Things



Ten Different Things

Vancouver, 2018

Ten Different Things

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Casey Wei

art rock? no. 31 FINALE

"When an institutional presentation platform exists, why do we so often see it in terms of the difficulties of access rather than the excitement of possibility?"

– Casey Wei

Situated in the space between art, installation and alternative music, this one-evening festival provoked thoughtful and unconventional engagement with intersecting publics at Robson Square. Performances included Strawberry (Barry Doupe and Dennis Ha, Julian Hou, hazy (Casey Wei), Gretchen Snakes (Brody McKnight with accompaniment).

Friday, April 27, 2018
Robson Square, 800 Robson Street Vancouver



Casey Wei: hazy, *Robson Square.*



Gretchen Snakes, *Robson Square. Photo: Casey Wei*

"I want to make something happen, but I'm not delving too much into the investigation of bureaucracy itself. There are annoying obstacles, that is part of the world we live in. To do anything in a city takes compromise. The conceptual side of practical difficulties is not a focal point in my practice, though the critique is always there. But it's a constructive critique, because ultimately, I just want to put on a show."

"The communities are already functioning. You have to keep what is interesting or specific about those communities. You don't want to get away from the details and try to homogenize things."

"In the context of artistic production in the city, we are held even more accountable than most operators because we are proposing to use different modes and models. It would be normal to be asked to do things the "right" or the sanctioned way, but even when we do that, we are looked at that much more closely because it is new or unusual. There is extra scrutiny on models that aren't understandable."

– Casey Wei

Casey Wei

31 MOONS OF ART ROCK? CHASING THE #POPULARESOTERIC

The *art rock? no. 1-30* series started in September 2015 and ran monthly at the Astoria Pub until March 2018, with no. 31 being a grande finale at Robson Square in April as part of Ten Different Things. I'm writing this post mortem as I slowly sink into post-production: editing all the footage I've collected over the years – all the way back to my first attempt at creating a publicly engaged artwork, Kingsgate Mall Happenings, in 2014 – into a music documentary. In hindsight, one way of looking at my practice that I hadn't considered before is that I am bringing live music performance into the framework of public art. But for what purpose? I have always wanted to create more dialogue between the music and art communities, mainly because I wanted to exist in both. But whatever an artist does within a symbolic realm of visual representation becomes incorporated into larger, societal questions of how we want the world to be.

The music scene goes to concert venues, dive bars, and underground spaces (whatever is left of them in Vancouver); it's inherent in our geography. The art scene is more fickle. To get the art scene to go to the Astoria on any night, there has to be someone active from the community doing something. To be fair, I think about the roles reversed: how often do I see music people at art things? So, when programming *art rock?* I always made sure to include one act made up of performers who had more active art practices than music practices.

Visual art can always find its ironic critical foothold if necessary, but the performance of music must be earnest. That sincerity has always been a guiding principle to programming the series. To perform a set of ANYTHING, to start and to finish, there has to be a level of care in the performer to carry through. It's the authenticity that we're always questioning in art. In music, when it is good, it being good already justifies itself, I never question that. It doesn't need to be technically perfect or virtuosic or verbose or meta-reflexive or slickly cool. It can be those things but it doesn't have to be any of those things, and that's what I have been continually chasing throughout the series.

When I was conceptualizing how I wanted the *art rock?* nights to feel, my references were David Lynch, Winnipeg Babysitter, and TV Party. It came from a visual, spatial place that felt connected to the DTES context of the Astoria Pub. *art rock?* was a vision, and it's hard to convey a vision to a public that has no reason to care, especially when you don't have any money. But because of that lack, every time it happened it was a real effort of everyone involved, and a great learning experience. To see a community grow over time around an event that happens once a month, like a full moon, and to see the work become slowly received and accepted into a community that can be as pretentious as Vancouver's, feels important. *art rock?* was never conceived of as a part of an art practice, it was a platform for other practices to be seen. I was beginning to wonder how long it could last -- foreseeably forever, as I am a Virgo and very much like routine, but the Scorpio rising took Ten Different Things as an opportunity for change. To see *art rock?* take place in that space with that community (a mix of friends, peers, artists, musicians, practicing dancers, passers-by, students, etc.) made the last few years make a bit more sense.

CASEY WEI is an interdisciplinary artist, filmmaker, and musician based in Vancouver. She graduated with an MFA from Simon Fraser University in 2012. Her practice has evolved from film-making (Murky Colors in 2012, Vater und Sohn / Father and Son / 父与子 in 2013), into works that cross over between art, music, and the community at large (Kingsgate Mall Happenings in 2014, Chinatown Happenings in 2015, and the *art rock?* series that began in 2015). In 2016, she began Agony Klub, a music and printed matter label that releases material under the framework of the "popular esoteric". She also plays in the musical projects Kamikaze Nurse and hazy.

HAZY is Casey Wei's solo shoegaze project, formed in 2015 during her time with Late Spring (now defunct). hazy's fluid treatment of genre creates a cinematic and dreamy guitar scape over which her voice pushes and pulls, through conventions of popular song. She has released two albums on agonyklub, x.o. Virgo Ox (2016), and 4 Letter Word (2018). hazyhazyhaze.bandcamp.com

STRAWBERRY is a rock band formed in 2012. Members are Barry Doupé (various instruments) and Dennis Ha (vocals, various instruments). agonyklub.bandcamp.com/track/strawberry-pearl

BRODY MCKNIGHT began Gretchen Snakes as a way to stay connected with his mother who had passed away when he was 14. Inspired by a specific feeling a piece needs rather than the sound created, the band has been free to perform in a multitude of ways; solo, ensemble or 4 piece. Gretchen Snakes performed the soundtrack to Milena Salazar's documentary 'Mars Barb' as well as had releases through Gary Cassettes & most recently ISLA. In 2014 the band performed the 8 hour VU inspired epic 'Sour Cream' in its entirety. Gretchen Snakes is currently at work on the debut full length. gretchensnakes.bandcamp.com

JSN began in the summer of 2014 as "Johnny Steve, Steve Johnny", a musical duo announced as a kind of battle between John Burgess on bass and Steve Hubert on keyboard and drum machine. Their mostly improvised approach was buttressed shortly after when Nikolai Gauer joined them on guitar. JSN's first performance as JSN (Johnny Steve and Nik) took place a couple months later when the band played a magazine launch for Looking at Nothing-RT.

JSN's first album, Mirror of Your Life, was released in 2018 on Agony Klub after a number of appearances as the unofficial house band for the *art rock? at the Astoria* series. Similar to these performances, the music for MOYL was prepared by getting together at Duplex on Wednesday nights and reviewing the day's events over beers. These stories were folded into lyrics, with the songs recorded on the same night in a single take. The resulting pop music has always been a surprise to JSN, since very little control is exerted by anyone.

After 4 years JSN is largely the same as when it started out: a therapy session turned into music. They cull their inspiration from hanging out, listening to music in a Ford Festiva, and sitting on the porch sipping Rolling Rocks outside Duplex. All members cite a special relationship that keeps the project going, against all odds, towards a weekly catharsis with varying results.

Past iterations of *art rock?* include performances by: Music for Evenings, Shearing Pinx, Ivory Towers, Swim Team, Eschatons, The Clear Channel, Zen Finger, Shitlord Fuckerman, Echuta, Pukesword, John Saint-Pelvyn, Group Vision, Rinse Dream, Francesca Belcourt, Christoph Clébard, Experience This, Magneticring, and others.

