

KEEP IT SIM- PLE MAKE IT FAST!

AN APPROACH
TO UNDERGROUND
MUSIC SCENES (VOL. 4)
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Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!

An approach to underground music scenes (vol. 4)

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2.1. Klitclique - Vienna's F€M1N1\$T Answer to Sad Boys

Magdalena Fuernkranz⁵⁵

A b s t r a c t

The female artists G-udit and \$chwanger, aka Klitclique, act as rappers and F€M1N1\$TS in Vienna's art and underground music scene. Founded in 2005, the hip hop duo uses trap rap and a certain DIY ethic to reconstruct the sounds of feminism. The fact that Klitclique raps from a feminist perspective seems to arouse greater interest in the art world than in the hip hop scene. Regarding the first album release, Klitclique plans physical releases in the form of installations as an equal component of its music. In their performances the two artists use music, language, and props as response to a male culture that still ignores, controls and irritates female sexuality. In this paper I will discuss the image and effects of feminism in trap rap, the role of languages in existing conceptions of gender identities as well as the de-/construction of gender clichés by analysing Klitclique's lyrics and performances.

Keywords: *Feminism, identities, Vienna music scene, trap rap, art.*

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1. Primer

On 18 December 2017, Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen appointed a new right-wing government. The two big winners of the autumn's election namely the ÖVP (center-right People's Party) and the FPÖ (radical right Freedom Party) have agreed on a common agenda. The ÖVP won 31.5 percent by calling for restricted immigration and limiting support for immigrants especially referring to Muslims - one of the FPÖ's signature issues (Weisskircher, 2018). Considering the government's agenda, neoliberal and discriminatory aspects become visible. By taking a closer look at "women" in the government's agenda, five key points are defined: "Equal pay for equal work", with the word "income gap" not appearing a single time, in second place "Reconciliation of work and family life", then "Social security - also in seniority", "Women's health" and finally "Prevention of violence and integration of women". Because women assume responsibility in "education, care, business, the environment or in voluntary activities", as the government programme states in this order, these achievements should be better acknowledged (Schmidt, 2017).

In the context of white supremacy and neoliberal tensions there is artsy feminist resistance from the underground. Klitclique's art and music is dedicated to the end of patriarchy in hip hop and elsewhere. The duo is associated with the fraternity Hysteria ("Akademische Burschenschaft Hysteria zu Wien"), a left-wing and feminist project in Austria that satirically takes up the rituals of fraternities. According to Hysteria's Facebook page, Leopoldine of Austria founded the fraternity in 1810. The well-educated wife of Dom Pedro, the Emperor of Brazil, execrated the immoral life of her husband. The historical Leopoldine intellectually outmatched her husband Pedro and advised him on the leadership of Brazil, under her influence the independence of Brazil was initiated. Reviewed as a satirical project, the feminist fraternity seeks to establish the "golden matriarchy". Hysteria calls for the withdrawal of men into private life. With posters and slogans such as "My husband stays at home!" in Gothic print, the restriction of male suffrage and the withdrawal of male football as a "real sport" are required. The statutes, duties, demands and the fraternity song can be read in the manifest *Mein Mampf* a reference to *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"), the 1925 autobiographical book by Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler. In the sense of the tradition of Austrian fraternities determined by sexism and anti-feminism, a women and transgender quota in public offices of 80 percent is required. The feminist fraternity's slogan 'Off to the golden matriarchy' inspires Klitclique's art concept.

2. Klitclique and the sound of trap

Founded in 2015, the hip hop duo uses trap rap, art, and a certain DIY ethic to reconstruct the sounds of feminism. Klitclique consists of the two artists G-udit, Judith Rohrmoser, and \$chwanger⁵⁶, Mirjam Schweiger. Judith Rohrmoser, was born 1983 in Salzburg (Austria), she studied graphic arts and printmaking techniques at Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and graduated in 2011. \$chwanger, Mirjam Schweiger, was born 1986 in Salzburg, she studied contextual painting at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and graduated in 2012. Their performances and art installations in galleries, at parties, in clubs and in off-spaces, shift between insulting the audience and fogging expectations, repeatedly drawing self-attention, partly disguised with masks. Klitclique's DIY-career depends on the artists' self-presentation, their self-marketing and

active shaping of their career as well as the recognition by other protagonists, colleagues and consumers of the queer feminist artsy underground scene. As part of a radical backlash, Klitclique deconstructs dominant dynamics of power and contributes to musical, queer and anti-discriminatory interventions. In their performances, the two artists use music, language and props in response to a male-dominated music sector that ignores or controls categories of inequality such as sexuality, ethnicity, body or age.

The sound of the trap allows an extension of Klitclique's listener circle. Musical characteristics include the slow tempo; the dominant 808 Subbass Kick Drum or the fast hi-hat beats as well as an atmospheric soundscape (Doerfler, 2018, p. 243). The word "trap" is a slang term from the US southern states and had no relation to music at the beginning. It derived from the drug milieu and in the narrow sense referred to a specific place where drugs are used. "Trap" may also mean drug trafficking in general or certain mental states (paranoia, megalomania, et cetera) that often occur in people who have long been involved in drug trafficking (Raymer, 2012). The term was used to describe a hip hop sub-genre by rappers dealing almost exclusively with drug dealing in their lyrics, its surroundings, and its concomitants (for example money, violence, parties). These songs are usually dedicated to persons who "trap" aka deal with drugs. These rappers were therefore called trap rappers and laid the foundation for the entire genre with their "trap rap".

In German-speaking countries, however, trap is more about communicating certain images and moods, as well as entertainment in contrast to the authentic, based on real experiences portrayal of the life of drug dealers. The beats for these tracks are typically held in a sombre atmosphere and are therefore often accompanied by a similarly aggressive rap performance. Nevertheless, there are often humoristic elements in the songs. Depending on the track's beat, there are references to the genres crunk, gangsta rap or even the genre of horrorcore.

2.1. G-udit, \$chwanger and the sound of feminism

With the DIY release of their first single and video D€R F€M1N1\$T, G-udit and \$chwanger left the Vienna underground and destroying the Parisian genius penis along the way with *Chérie je suis un Genie*. Klitclique use irritation and self-irony as a concept of their performance. The lyrics are not prepared by a long hand, but improvised. An obvious example of Klitclique's certain universality in dealing with irritation is the track D€R F€M1N1\$T. As the duo's most well-known song, it is illustrated by an expressive video starring the performance artist Florentina Holzinger. Starting with the common statements "Feminism? Of course, but" to exaggerated absurd facets like "I'm the 'going to vote for the only woman in the election campaign'-feminist", "I'm the 'carry my child for me and maybe I get it sometime'-feminist" or "I'm the 'women must be dressed in porn and talk to each other about anything other than men'-feminist," making personal references "But then I shaved my legs and smeared Coco Chanel in the face and studied at the academy" to result in "Everyone must, no one wants-feminism". Combined with the same suffix and spelling out of the eponymous noun DJ Vadim's *The Terrorist* in a significant similarity, the song celebrates feminism in different varieties and variations.

G-udit and \$chwanger state that they are Vienna's answer to sad boys, a reference to Swedish Cloud Rapper Yung Lean (Jonatan Aron Leandroer Håstad),

who founded *Sad Boys* in 2012 together with producers Yung Sherman (Axel Tufvesson) and Yung Gud (Micke Berlander). The fact that Klitclique raps from a feminist perspective seems to arouse greater interest in the art world than in the hip hop-scene. With the debut *Schlecht im Bett, gut im Rap* ("Bad in bed, good at rap"), the musicians enter a terrain where they have never planned to be active in. "The debut is somehow a story about its own genesis. We had never originally planned an album because we're also from freestyle. It's much more self-sufficient" (Klitclique in Pichler, 2018).

As a provocative statement the album follows the principle of conceptual eclecticism with a different concept for each track. The track *Maria* is a tribute to the Austrian artist Maria Lassnig. In the style of trap rap Klitclique states, "Career bitch at the age of 90, she only paints himself, each brushstroke survives content wise". On the other hand, tracks like *LSDAP* or *NCNP* are partly the result of hours of freestyle recordings. "\$chwanger and G-udit use whatever they want in a candy store, picking the best out of every genre and add some street cred on top of that" (Pichler, 2018). In addition to art performances, everyday props, which have been created down to the smallest detail, are shown to their full advantage in Klitclique's music videos, such as the DIY mixing console "Menstruator PMS 2000" made of lacquered cardboard. G-udit has also designed a textile jewellery collection called the golden vulva. Regarding the visual component, Klitclique's *Gesamtkunstwerk* is often ranked as a provocation.

This applies not only to the duo's music, but above all to the Austrian art industry and its market-oriented hierarchies that repeat Klitclique in their performances, as in the track *DIG 1RG€NDWA\$* ("Your Something"): "Your gallery owner is at the toilet and draws 1 line. He is at the toilet and all alone twelve bottles of wine". The irrepressible mockery of the duo is not only the result of increasing conformity and rampant neoliberalism, but also alternative milieus, especially the hipster-scene.

3. The terms scene and DIY industry in the context of Klitclique

The term scene was originally used in journalistic and everyday contexts; its prelude was the concept of community. Bennett describes two main ways of community applying to music: 1) "as a shared connection with a locally created musical style becomes a metaphor for community, a means through which people articulate their sense of togetherness through a particular juxtaposition of music, identity and place"; and 2) "as a romantic construct, created by the music itself through which individuals can cast music itself as a 'way of life' and a basis for community" (Bennett, 2004, p. 224). Straw (1991) distinct musical communities as groups whose population is rather stable because of the wide range of sociological variables and musical scenes. A musical scene is "the relationship between different musical practices unfolding within a given geographical space" (Straw, 1991, p. 373).

Considering a scene as a cultural space where a range of musical practices coexists, participants interact within processes of differentiation. Scene membership is not restricted to gender, class or ethnicity, but may cut across all of them (Bennett & Peterson, 2004). The global music industry creates music as profit-oriented for mass markets and is seen alongside scenes where music mainly is produced as non-profit-oriented. The transformation

of music scenes affected the development of the DIY industry as a domain of smaller event organiser collectives and fans-turned-entrepreneurs (Bennett & Peterson 2004).

Klitclique is part of Bliss, an independent event organiser collective, producing und performing queer feminist Viennese art between academy and contemporary hip hop, pop, performance and provocation. The founder and curator of the political electronic club series Marlene Engel meets artists in a place that has no national borders. Subcultural communities have formed online trying to give the club culture of the 21st century new structures. Genre misfits are mixed with the original club idea of a safe space that maintain the organisation of queer feminist events. "When we were teenagers, there were no women's rooms to go into" states G-udit (Saoud, 2018). They went first into the graffiti scene, then on confrontation in the battle rap ring. In rap battles, they have developed their skills for suggestive chains of associations that may seem odd as split in individual parts, but combined these parts form an overall concept. Instead of battling their opponents verbally with technique or poetic sophistication, the duo uses irritation and self-irony.

In 2015 Klitclique started working more intensively on their music with producer Mirza Kebo always keeping control of the production process instead of receiving finished beats. In the circle of the Hysteria fraternity, a network was also established that promoted exchange and made experiments possible. Regarding their debut *Schlecht im Bett, gut im Rap* ("Bad in bed good at rap") all songs were written and performed by Klitclique, produced and recorded by Mirza Kebo. The artists also collaborated with producers of experimental club music and DJs like fauna, or Franjazzco. The record isn't considered to be a feminist manifesto in the sense of equality at all; accordingly the rappers demand the 'golden matriarchy' in their lyrics.

4. An analysis of Klitclique's video clip M

By drawing critically on Angela Mc Robbies's argument that "women are currently being disempowered through the very discourses of empowerment they are being offered as substitutes for feminism" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 49), I'd like to offer an analysis of the video clip M. The video begins with a close up at the performer Lilly Pfalzer, who writes mama on her arm with sun cream. The ringing of a mobile phone can be heard and G-udit is faded into the picture. At that moment the beat begins. A woman's voice can be heard and G-udit raps "ciao mama". The words "mami" and "please send me some money" are repeated several times using auto-tune. The protagonists move in a barren landscape reminiscent of California and in a cardboard imitation of it. Emoji with pecuniary meaning are faded in alternately.

Through a video overlay – two video clips share the display screen at the same time, one smaller and superimposed on a larger image – the scenery changes between real and fictional landscape. Again and again video clips of elitist food or text phrases such as "non-profit off space art project" or "swift code" are shown. G-udit addresses her mother "I need more money to put my name into art history". Ad-libs like "Sheesh!" or "Skreet!" are also used imitating male rappers from Down South, cloud and trap rap. \$chwanger states "Money. I have expenses so many expenses. Art's so expensive" later she adds "life's so expensive". The rappers are mainly shown seated with dynamic intermission when G-udit is on the cell phone addressing the lyrics directly to her "mami".

The performer Lilly Pfalzer starts dancing and supports Klitclique's solicitation for maternal appropriation in the favour of art. Pfalzer's performance reaches its climax with the text line "I pay you back when we have matriarchy". At the same time, this line refers to the fraternity Hysteria, which in its statutes calls for the "golden matriarchy". The textual reference to the geographical location of the music video clip is established with the line "I'm in LA participating in this charity sculpture group show and it costs so much money". The sample of an on-hook tone signal ends the track. Klitclique leaves the cardboard scenery, a moving jeep with the two rappers and the performer can be seen in the video overlay. The beat starts again after a few seconds and both rappers softly shaking their heads and arms to the beat, sitting on the loading area of the jeep.

4.1. Deconstructing hegemonic masculinity in Klitclique's video clip M

In one of the earliest debates on the relationship between gender and pop music, Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie already formulated in 1978 in their essay "Rock and Sexuality" the thesis that rock music is essentially involved in the construction of sexuality. Above all, gender differences are constantly reproduced (Frith & McRobbie, 1978, p.373). Klitclique tries to cross gender boundaries and to deconstruct hegemonic masculinity with a subversive female performer, a bad cardboard scenery, the parody of props in hip hop like expensive cars or jewellery and lyrical allusions to the patronage in art. Lilly Pfalzers appearance partly corresponds to the androcentric trope of a female performer in hip hop. Nevertheless, this is defined by disturbing elements. She wears a colourful swimsuit, cut shorts, snakeskin boots, a colourful cap, and sunglasses. Additionally, she has silver colour on her lips. G-udit und \$chwanger wear cropped tops but several layers and create an artsy look including their fancy sunglasses.

Membership of the fraternity Hysteria, as well as state support for their art, allows Klitclique a position of power in the empowerment discourses mentioned by McRobbie, that in this case does not replace feminism. This video clip underlines the role of Klitclique as representatives of new feminism. By drawing on the "new" in feminism the junction of the postcolonial, the post- and transhuman, the cyber, the transnational, the colour and queer struggles need to be examined critically. These spaces propose alternative mappings on the nomadic organization of pleasures and desires including new modes of accountability and of speaking about one's own experiences. Most significantly, the gender question is an instrument in achieving other political aims besides redressing gender justice (Grzinic & Reitsamer, 2008). Klitclique's visual call for the "golden matriarchy" demonstrates new modes of accountability by drawing on the artists' own experiences in the Viennese art and music scene.

The video release was accompanied by an exhibition at the non-profit contemporary art venue "Wellwellwell". The venue includes an exhibition space and hosts occasional events related to a broad range of artistic and discursive activities, managed by artists studying at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and a guest curator. The project was established as intimate and informal environment to support artistic experimentation, discussion and learning with main focus on introducing the work of artists connected to the

University of Applied Arts. Consequently, Klitclique transfers Lucy O'Brien's comment on how "women have always written to make sense of their world, to clear an inviolable space that is theirs rather than the possession of a man" (O'Brien, 2002, p.180) in the 21st century.

5. *Klitclique as "ArcheYOLOgINNEN"*

Regarding the first album, Klitclique releases installations as an equal component of its music. The latest installation is called KLITCLIQUE.ARCHeyOLO and was shown in July und August 2018 at the MUSA. The Museum Startgalerie Artothek is a venue for the collection of contemporary art established by the City of Vienna's Department of Culture. The objects – acquired by the Department of Culture as part of a comprehensive support program since 1951 – represent a cross-section of Viennese art of the last decades. Humour is an important aspect for the "ArcheYOLOgINNEN" in their joint work and in their special field of research. Klitclique examines the fictive everyday life of Viennese women from past centuries from a feminist perspective. The artists explore the origins of male-dominated historiography and discover stories that they retell from a different perspective. Special female public characters of the recent past are as much in the centre as fertility goddesses of antiquity.

As so-called "ArcheYOLOgINNEN" they pursue an interest in things that were of particular importance to women but possibly irrelevant to the development of humanity. They reconstruct selected objects of research and present them as an installation. The result shows a post-factual collection of objects that provoke associations. The areas of cosmetics, care, clothing, ritual objects, fertility statues, and documents that pass on knowledge about poison recipes find their place in this presentation. Thus, the fictitious finding of an ashtray from the possession of the former Minister for Women's Affairs Johanna Dohnal arouses great interest, as she could have become the first female President of Austria. Klitclique explores selected props of women who may have been of personal importance to their owner. Maria Lassnig's childhood socks, lost on the way from Carinthia to the Vienna Art Academy, are also included in the collection. Usually, the "ArcheYOLOgINNEN" build selected objects as historical sources of research from cardboard and present them in the form of installations, whereby some artefacts can be marvelled at in showcases as in a cultural-historical exhibition.

6. *Is it art? Is it music?*

Klitclique's art transcends between social criticism, self-irony and queer hip hop. Although the art market and feminist discourses are satirized, the content of Klitclique remains in its comfort zone. Even if the duo is trying to get a low-threshold access – free download of the album and free concerts – most fans have probably already seen a university from the inside. The culture-funding framework Shift, an instrument that expands the spectrum of Viennese art and cultural life⁵⁷, supported the production of the vinyl debut.

Klitclique's performance represents empowerment, feminism and criticism of prevailing power structures in its musical work. The artists Judith Rohmoser and Mirjam Schweigerer comment on the current (political) culture of Austria with provocative texts, trap sounds and a subversive staging concept. They act in a fluid space between art and music, while at the same time having

⁵⁷ Funding is available for projects that provide artistic and cultural impulses at decentralised locations.

connections to the fraternity Hysteria. Recaptured as a politically leftist feminist project that satirizes the rituals of beating fraternities, the activists postulate a matriarchal society. When G-udit yodels on the first track of the album “Steuergeld, Oida, freu dich für mich” (“Taxmoney, dude, be happy for me”), she flirts with the accusation that artists would make themselves comfortable at the taxpayer’s expense.

There have been few misunderstandings in the Klitclique’s bubble. That it is about fun, solidarity among women, and genderqueer people. Klitclique consciously seeks to cross gender boundaries and deconstruct hegemonic masculinity with subversive female performance, contextualization of matriarchal art, the parody of props in hip hop, and lyrical allusions to the predominance of art. The courage to conquer stages without fear is a message that gets across (See Garrigós *et al.*, 2019). I’d like to conclude with a simple question: Who’s afraid of the sound of the matriarchy?

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