The Theoretical Usage of Danto's Style Matrix in the redefinition of Hip-Hop

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Aurther Danto had considered the development of fine-art as fundamentally over due to the onset of the Greenbergian era, defined as, *"where each individual form of art was seen as striving for a purity of expression through a process of self-examination of its own techniques and materials."* However, paralleled to advancements of abstract expressionism in all its multifarious forms, there lies the epistemological issue that if x has developed to the point that y could be considered x, then what is x's future as itself, x? Danto answers this question with a bleak realization, that being, *"art has exhausted its conceptual mission. It has brought us to a stage of thought essentially outside history…"* This means that art is no longer subordinate to a temporal lineage, nor exterior, aesthetic dictations. Rather, it resides in a prolonged state of categorical immateriality, where its very essence is subsumed in radiating waves of *'I know what it is'* and *'I think it might be that.'* Dr. Michael G. Lafferty raises the natural corollary to dialectic observations on Andy Warhol's provocative 1964 sculpture Brillo Boxes, *"the work of art is not solely the object: it is the object. the reason for its display and the contextual interpretation it engenders as a statement about art."* No longer is art evaluated for its superficial characteristics, quite the opposite. The reason Brillo Boxes was a seminal work of art-history was due not to its substantive existence, but it's unseen creation, anti-utilitarian existence, and advantageous time of birth. To further the anti-utilitarian label, Danto's artworld theory supports the notion that any mundane, tangible or in-tangible, object can transcend pedestrianism simply by being adopted into the artistic locality, *"is this man [Warhol] a kind of Midas, turning whatever he touches into the gold of pure art? And the whole world consisting of latent artworks waiting, like the bread and wine of reality, to be transfigured, through some dark mystery. into the indiscernible flesh and blood of the sacrament?"* Dr. Lafferty corrects Danto, however, by reinterpreting the word transfiguration to transubstantiation, insinuating that the *'bread and wine'* have not altered their molecular structure, but symbolically have converted from simple nourishment to devotional sustenance.

The process of classificatory transubstantiation can be observed in a non fine-art context, case in point the debate of *'is genre dead'* and its accompaniment discussion of *'genre vs. style,'* reminiscent of the Soviet Musicological debate of *content vs. form*. In the former, supportive argumentation has pointed to the ubiquitousness of cross-genre referencing as a prime example of how the traditional view of genre is contemporarily defunct. Articles like *Pop, rock, rap, whatever: who killed the music genre?* and *Entry 12: Is genre really dead, or have the boundaries just moved?* seek to substantiate the ontological confusion surrounding what the role of music genre is in the 21st century, or if there really is a need for the specification at all. The latter argument focuses more on contextualizing *'genre,'* that is to say first viewing 'genre' as a misnomer for stylistic propensities [style], then reassessing the work's features for evidence of stylistic traits which then would be documented and the work would be placed, hypothetically, in a specific genre without the pressure to conform to the term. Tetiana Maslova describes, in a linguistic orientation, the primary differences between style, genre, and register, which she delineates as subordinate to style. Style is defined as, *"a set of linguistic means characteristic for a particular purpose of communication between given persons in a definite context,"* musically speaking, the codified psycho-spiritual aesthetic of the composer, which forms into their unique musical phraseology upon its compositional execution. Maslova makes a distinction between the other two terms, genre being referred to operating on a *'higher level'* than register which, due to being a derivative of style, is only able to be formed from its parent material. Genre, described by Maslova, is, *"a structure common for groups of texts which are recognized as performing broadly similar functions in a society,"* otherwise, a balloon term for generally similar components. This operational definition is what bolsters the need for a rearticulation of what exactly is being accomplished by retaining antiquarian musical terminology such as 'classical music,' 'jazz,' and like genre titles which clearly are being bent and manipulated, to the point of abstraction? I argue that the titles themselves are not the

issue, but what societally they represent, the 'baggage' they carry before and during an artist's bestowment of the respective title, and what is conventionally 'expected' of such title, each genre harboring a distinct sonic vocabulary in both a musicians and audience member's ear.

To answer the ostensibly tangential question of how can we preserve the construct of genre, utilizing Danto's Style Matrix can provide a baseline for the interested party in deciphering the exact musical aspects of a genre, thus exposing the umbrella term to musico-architectural reconditioning. The Style Matrixe's purpose is to highlight the onset of artistic styles as they appear within any work in question, in other words, *"When an artistic innovation introduces us to a new artistic property, the matrix gains a column to display the possibility of its presence or absence."* Although created to study fine art, the methodological approach taken can be supplanted to various form of expressionary output, in this case the Matrix will be applied to Hip-Hop and its derivatives, thus providing an opportunity to evaluate both exterior and interior influences upon the genre and its linear evolution, albeit here, the contemporary Hip-Hop genre will be studied, more specifically the Russian rapper Husky [Хаски] and his musical output. Before attempting to construct a hypothetical Matrix correlated to Husky's music, it is imperative that epistemological and metaphysical concerns, made evident by scholarship by Frank Boardman, are adequately addressed. Regarding the addition of each successive column, Boardman observes two contiguous, albeit dissimilar, approaches. One being the metaphysical interpretation, *"a new column models the creation of a new pair of properties,"* the second being the epistemic interpretation, *"it [addition of a column] models the discovery of a new pair."* The distinction, while miniscule, sets the president for the methodology used in the creation of the Matrix, as with the former option, the establishment of an artistic style is the catalyst for the additional column, whereas with the latter option, the addition of the column only signifies when the Matrix creator 'found' the style in question, not when it was formally invented. This then leads to issues of backwards causation, described as, *"the newly discovered property or its absence becomes artistically relevant to criticism and interpretation of the prior work,"* simply put, the epistemic problem of applying modern artistic traits to past works which were not created with the modern trait in mind. Whilst salient, this is inherently avoided as the Matrix is being crafted from contemporary material with little to no historical references involved in the process of musical trait identification.

To further benefit the process of Matrix creation, Boardman proposes several new additions to the process in order to facilitate a greater recognition of the continuous nature of stylistic development. He simultaneously distinguishes the discrepancy between the identification of stylistic traits in a work as coming singularly from the artist versus as a broad, stylistic movement with wider, artistic participation. He further clarifies the stylistic property saying, *"A stylistic attribution...must help connect a work to one or more artists, periods, movements..."* although it cannot be attributed to all artworks in general, as the conceptualization of the stylistic attribute only works if it correlates to a subset, not the whole. Simply put, to categorize talking over a beat as a *'stylistic attribution'* when referencing the larger corpus of rap music would be incorrect, as that singular trait is ubiquitous among the entire rap genre, thus nullifying the observation that rhythmic talking is *'unique.'* However, to categorize the usage of classical music motifs, melodies, and passages as an *'artistic property'* would be an accurate assessment, as there are numerous cases of hip-hop artists utilizing Leitmotifs and recognizable melodies, such as Хаски's 12th song [Владыка слов] on his 2020 album, 'Хошхоног,' where he uses the instantly recognizable horn-motif from Stravinsky's Rite of Spring Part 1.2, The Augurs of Spring, where the entire tribe have starting celebrating the arrival of Spring, while an old-woman comes and foretells the societies future. Another notable example being Atmosphere's 1997 first track *'1597'* from his first studio-album *'Overcast!.'* The track sampled[6] the final movement, 'Allegro Molto,' of Beethoven's Third Symphony, 'Eroica,' but more specifically the intrepidly disconcerting 'lull' before the inescapable storm, the sample coming only moments before the final, fearless conclusion. Although not the central tenant of this article, the sampling of classical music in hip-hop often coincides with the artist's desire to emphasize very specific emotional characteristics, thus the sample is used not as a musical device, but as a sonic-ecological manipulator. Boardman also mentions that,

"not all artistic properties are stylistic," insinuating that the identification of creative propensities does not itself suggest its usefulness in identifying pervasive qualities among the entire corpus; The observation of similar traits does not guarantee 'genre.'

Boardman thus, by extension, provides an excellent counterargument to the contemporary notion of *'genre is dead,'* if one reconsiders genre from a structuralist perspective. In this mindset, the classification of 'genre' is reduced to formative nomenclature, solely applicable to the current epoch's set of artistic properties from which the name derives its existence. From this angle, genre cannot die or even be exhausted of its practical usefulness, as its existence gravitates around contemporaneity, levelling out the categorical 'field,' where a three-minute composition and a three-hour performance can both be considered opera if they fulfill certain, standard *'artistic properties,'* such as timbral quality, plot development, aesthetic tropes, etc. By this same verbiage, the counterargument that 1990s rap and 2020s rap are unambiguously dissimilar can be easily dismantled, as in their respective epochs, what fulfilled the stylistic property of 'rap' was chiefly linked to what was considered standard-practice during this time. In the 1990s, rap's relationship with the domestic locality changed, Murray Forman observing that, *"Was the popular acceptance of rap evidence of an African-American cultural victory, or did it signal the ascendance of corporate America's authority over hip-hop?"* This symbiotic relationship of consumer, marketer, artist, and businessman all contributed to the rise of the sub genre 'Pop-rap,' Forman commenting on its two founders, *"Neither artist [MC Hammer and Vanilla Ice] showed exceptional talent on the microphone, but their production qualities were unassailable, and they excelled in live performances, with their elaborate dance routines, and a full band."*[7] As a result, the modern understanding of 'rap' is far from its 1980s equivalent, but by rearticulating what the genre's fundamental components are in relation to nothing but the its current climate, one could hypothetically construe that rap has not 'changed,' just 'updated.' Again, no definite opinion will be offered here, but by allowing musical categories to establish themselves a-new with every successive epoch, society subsequently avoids the Nietzschian, Antiquarian method of historical documentation, where the past is relished as the superior model, and all other forms are simple inaccurate derivatives.

Going back to the Matrix's methodological construction, an abridged passage quoted by Lafferty derived from T.S. Elliot's *"Tradition and the Individual Talent"* plainly illustrates the vital importance of utilizing Danto's Style-Matrix onto the developmental genre of hip-hop, where in the Matrix then becomes a way of mapping influences onto a linear-based timeline, *"...no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone...his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him...among the dead...The necessity that he shall conform...is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it...the relations. proportions. values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted."* The lengthy quotation is inserted here as confirmation that the Danto's Matrix should not be employed as a contemporary tool, with an intended goal of identifying contemporary traits. Rather, the Matrix's deconstructive methodology allows the respective work the opportunity to historically 'fall apart' into its manifold components, influences, trajectories, quotations, and resemblances. That being said, Lafferty includes Danto's view on artistic filiality, *"family resemblance approach is too slack too inclusive: anything...bears some resemblance to something else,"* and when constructing a Matrix, one has to take careful precautions and articulate exact reasons as to why x may / may not reference y, x's relationship with the antiquarian y, and if there are unique traits present within x that have no direct connection with y. Venturing back to Boardman's stylistic vs. artistic property conjecture, he clarifies the significance of the terms by stating that they are not mutually exclusive, *"Left to right traces the history of style change- here understood as an artistic property becoming a stylistic artistic property."* Within the Matrix itself, defined by the geographical proximity towards the artistic nucleus which represents chronological placement, on the left are the descriptors that can be functionally used for interpretative purposes, and *'artistic/stylistic properties'* able to be correctly used, while on the right are those that cannot

be used due to their temporal birth, although they are chronologically ordered as well regardless of their lack of interpretative function. If personally understood, those qualities belonging to the left are for interpretative use, while those on the right could be used for non-historical, artistic identificationism, although again this houses debatable usages.

As aforementioned, the intention of this article was to postulate on how one could properly utilize the Style Matrix in accordance to the modern hip-hop genre, specifically targeting Хаски's musical output. Throughout research for the article, the stark observation was made that artistic phenomena studied by way of The Matrix had both a historical lineage and an already developed future, which could be tangibly accessed, and epistemologically avoided when conducting work with The Matrix. The knowledge base this article was constructed upon were from two sources, one temporal zone being 2015 and the other 2006, although the conundrum arose not in their publishing years, but in their documented examples used. Neither paper provided contemporary models of the Matrix, either in a deconstructionist fashion or in an analytical, epistemological fashion, hence part of the conclusion of the paper is solely dedicated to a theoretical formula of Danto's Style Matrix, in conjunction with Boardman's Integrated model, collaboratively applied to a singular track by Husky from his most current discographic addition. Husky released his new, post-solo hiatus 2020 album, 'Hoshkhonog' on September 25th, 2020, along with a music video and a three-track remix album in association with Dirty Move Beats. Of particular interest, however, is the 12th track on the album, "Владыка слов" / Lord of Words, due to its incorporation of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, his Pushkianian manipulation of allusion and terminological imagery, and formal construction, as well as timbral qualities, textural choices, and overall aesthetic. Pertinent to this article, however, is his quotation of Stravinsky and the 'classical' components that Husky utilizes, as up until September 25th, there had not been any attempted implementation of Rite of Spring and its associated thematic elements into the genre of hip-hop / rap. Attempting to create a Matrix for a contemporary work, 'contemporary' being defined here as a work that has been produced in the 21st century and with little to no successive, artistic lineage, produces ontological inquiries as to what belongs to the right of the work. One could argue simply leave it blank as, like Danto had said, the developmental nature of art and its collegial subjects have reached their natural conclusion, and to postulate on what could come next would have no bearing on the work in question, as all one could generate are theoretical assumptions. On the other hand, theoretical speculations about the work's prospective influence could very well be a fitting innovation upon the model as, at time of this article's construction, no updates in the Matrix have been completed nor any formal, 21st century innovations taken.

In conceptualization of a personal Matrix attributed to the medium of music, it is important to reference Danto's own methodological approach, published in his 1964 essay, "The Artworld"[8] where, unlike other posthumous scholarship, he actually exhibits the Matrix, instead of incessantly talking about its supposed structure. In Danto's words, "…*it might have been thought that G was a defining trait of artworks when in fact something might first have to be an artwork before G is sensibly predicable of it*," thus highlighting the absolute difficulty of using a Matrix to accurately depict a work's influences and aesthetic structure, although this is partially rectified by enlisting Boardman's integrated method of left-right dichotomous positioning. Because the content in question has been contemporaneously created, the right would either house theoretical cogitations, nothing at all, or stylistic traits that developed following the content's creation, however minor the advancements may be. Purely for conjectural purposes, adding on Danto's statement that, "*An artistic breakthrough consists…in adding the possibility of a column to the matrix,*" although it would not have any technical relation to the creator, one could speculate what innovative columns could be added which correspond to a work in question, in Husky's case the addition of the column 'Neo-Symbolist' could be considered due to his philosophical decompartmentalization of corporal requirements, anti-humanistic propensities, and Neoplatonic, linguistic aptitude. Along with Danto's classification of an '*artistic breakthrough*,' he also relayed the terminological difference between '*contradictory predicates*' and '*opposites*,' the former only having one version temporally available at a time,

while the latter holds the possibility of having both existing simultaneously. If these terms are applied to the rap genre, this explains the difference between rappers like Lil Darkie, Husky, and other more cerebreal sonic-poets, and their far less psychologically complex alternatives like Cardi B, Nicki Minaj, and their derivatives. Danto also mentions that prior to distributed opposites, a work has to be a work in itself first.

<p style="text-align:center">Conclusion</p>

Attempting to decipher Husky's linguistic influences is aided by his own words, in a 2016 Interview stating, *"But I don't want to offend the girls with the bags [designer]. It's not their fault that they have money. They are useless creatures, of course, but still...These are two worlds, they do not touch in any way. Only if in classes that I hardly attended."*[9] Although Danto had originally conceived his Matrix to be mapped onto fine art and its columns corresponding to specific artistic styles and movements, just as genre / stylistic properties develop with every success epoch, so too should what defines a column, how a column is constructed, and what artistic properties are used to figure out the *'true'* interpretation of a piece of art, no matter its medium. Danto's Style Matrix does little to account for interpretational authenticity, as Boardman points out, and does even less to ensure and argue for interpretational uniformity among evaluators. But what it does promise is a rudimentary model on how to start to analyze formative traits in artistic content, furthering one's *'conscious contemplation'* as Boris Asafiev write, dictating a type of listening which rebels against psychosomatic lethargism while in the act of sonic observance. Aiding in the comprehension of Husky's psychological influences, he says, *"I don't want to show off my tastes [cinema]. I'll say now that I like Bergman, and everyone will think: "Oh, you, ***** (damn it)." But in general, I really like Bergman [Rori Bergman?]. Although you can watch any movie - even the most shitty one, "Harry Potter" any. Don't be a snob."* When the Matrix was first conceived, Danto may have acknowledged the artist's psychological condition and supraphysiological influences, but what could be argued is not enough, as the infamous sculpture 'Brillo Boxes' is more than just the natural evolution of modern art, but a satirical chide to the viewers unspoken expectation of what art is, the overdevelopment of the need for comprehension, and the overactive nature of the artworld to intellectualize literal waste, while at the same time devolving that which they attempt to revolutionize. Danto's Matrix stands as the vanguard to a new style of modern artistic analysis, but only if its implementation is used with the recognition that many influences are not artistic at all, but seemingly mundane or exteriorly insignificant to the average observer. Hip-hop could benefit from a recognition of its influences, both past, present, and future present, where Nicki Minaj is not the influence, but KRS-One, where Pop-Rap is not considered the pinnacle of modern rap creationism, but underground 'Spitters' whose message is still tied to their 'hood,' the fight for economic stability, and a better life. Husky is Russia's Lil Darkie, and through the acknowledgment of where rap came from, there can be formed a much better future, *"Hiphop is a spiritual Hip Hop movement concerned with overcoming the obstacles and temptations of "street" life and institutional entrapment and sabotage."*[10]

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Further Reading

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