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The imaging of sexuality and violence in Nandipha Mntambo's photographic work The Rape of Europa (2009)

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Abstract

This research examines the imaging of sexuality and violence in Nandipha Mntambo's staged photographic work *The Rape of Europa* (2009). Mntambo's reference to European Renaissance paintings, her quotation of ancient Greek mythology, and her reference to Picasso's etching *Minotaur Kneeling Over Sleeping Girl* (1933) become metaphors for historical narratives of violence that begin to address issues associated with race and gender politics. The photograph is a layered text that is implicated within political and ideological power structures. The concept of rape, as it is implied in Mntambo's photograph, is a metaphor for exploitation associated with the female body, particularly the Black female body, and the broader colonial project. Metaphors that relate to the imaging of both black and white female bodies are collated in relation to one another as intertextual narratives. I use Foucauldian and feminist theory on the social body, sexuality and the power/knowledge paradigm in relation to feminist discourses on the Western gaze. The relationship between violence and power is linked to the gaze as a site of reclaiming power through a counter gaze. The above theories are used as entry points into a critical discussion on the body of work produced for the practical component of this degree.