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Reclaiming the Gaze: Interdisciplinary Feminist Interventions in Representations of Sexual Violence

This paper situates interdisciplinary practice-led research within the broader discourse of art as a pedagogical tool for social change.

Grounded in feminist theory, this paper presents PhD research that uses visual art to challenge rape myths and cultural narratives that normalise sexual violence. It interrogates representations of sexual violence across classical mythology, art history, and contemporary media—narratives that persist and shape harmful attitudes today. Through deconstructing these tropes and creating counter-images, the project reclaims visual art as a site of resistance and ethical engagement. The creative work—photographic light paintings, cyanotypes, and embroidered banners—functions as an educational resource, mapping how rape myths manifest in media and inviting critical reflection around rape myth acceptance. This presentation will focus on the photographs, inviting participants to uncover implicit meanings through observation and slow looking to foster critical media literacy. By integrating artistic inquiry with advocacy, the research demonstrates how practice-led methodologies informed by victim-centred approaches can dismantle harmful ideologies and contribute to cultural change. Ultimately, it argues that feminist interventions in visual media are vital tools for prevention and for cultivating more inclusive and ethical futures.

Keywords: feminist intervention, media literacy, rape myths, visual culture

Disciplinary field: Visual arts / feminist media studies

Format: Paper presentation with visual artworks

Dr. Dida Sundet is an interdisciplinary researcher and artist whose practice investigates feminist interventions in visual media and the role of art in teaching critical media literacy as advocacy. Her work critiques representations of sexual violence in classical mythology, art history, and contemporary media, challenging rape myths through creative strategies informed by feminist theory. She has presented at the Australian Women and Gender Studies Association 2024 conference and published in *Findings 2* journal (pending). Dida was a finalist in the 2025 Australian National Photographic Portrait Prize and National Emerging Art Prize. Her creative practice fosters dialogue, education, and cultural change.