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Image created in Edmonton, Alberta

Beauty is Painful

Semi-finalist

My research looks at transwomen sexual reassignment procedures in Indonesia and Singapore. In Southeast Asia, positive social attitudes toward transwomen are largely based on their ability to transform themselves into glamorous and stylish women. The most visible and compelling sites for the presentation of transgendered beauty are public beauty contests, wherein a performance is judged through the ability to transform oneself successfully from one's ordinary status through dress and other appropriations. In beauty pageants, there is a linked shift in the growth in permanent body alterations to achieve a women's physique. In most cases, these can be legally obtained. Unfortunately, many transwomen take hormones and undergo surgeries without proper medical supervision. The procedures entail consequences that transwomen may or may not be aware of – if they are blinded by their desire and need to achieve their bodily aims to transform their bodies to approximate the ideals of female beauty. I plan to shed light on the intended and unintended consequences of these transitioning procedures. As such, the image represents the idea of uncertainty of these transitioning procedures; for many transwomen, physical pain is necessary and accepted as part of their journey to becoming a woman.