

# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



## BINIBINING PARFAITE: A Descriptive Study of the Capsulated Beauty Standards of Young Filipinas

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**Abstract:** The study explores the capsulated beauty standards that are present among young Filipinas. It observes how these standards may include having fair skin, sharp facial features, a slim figure, etc. which may be considered foreign-looking. The study also aims to find the influence of foreign countries to the Filipinas' personal preference and definition of beauty and how other countries' beauty standards may become the basis to these Filipinas. The researchers had interviewed a handful of young female students ranging in the age of 18 to 19 years old to determine the features and physical traits that they deem beautiful and possibly how these traits align with various beauty standards. With the gathered information, the researchers intend to make a two-dimensional acrylic painting (solo piece) depicting the comparison between the beauty of the Filipina interviewees as muses and a muse based on the features that they mentioned/a country's beauty standard. Wherein the message is that though both muses look different and have different features, both are still beautiful in their own way.

**Keywords:** beauty standard; Filipinas; acrylic paintings; capsulated beauty; definition of beauty

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of The Research Project

Rondilla investigates the relationship between skin colour hierarchy and colonisation in the Philippines in her dissertation "*Colonial Faces: Beauty and Skin Color Hierarchy in the Philippines and the United States*" (pg. 21). She spoke with a library administrator who discussed the effects of colonization in the Philippines. It was stated that historically, colonists were viewed as superior and educated, with the majority of these colonists being light-skinned. In conclusion, the idea that being *white/lighter* skinned equals being socially higher and superior stems from the fact that Filipinos have been historically exposed to the notion for a long time. Darker skin tones are far less popular in the Philippines than they are in other countries, where they are often praised and complimented. For Filipinos, the ideal beauty standard is the facial features of prominent influencers or Eurasians, such as tall height, *makinis* or flawless skin, fair and white, long straight hair, pointy nose, and *payat* or skinny. In a RecCreate YouTube video titled, "*What are the Beauty Standards in the Philippines?*" an

interviewee stated, "Back home, people would tell me, "*Oh, you're too dark.*" However they also stated that in London/foreign countries, they would say, "*Oh, you've got such nice skin colour.*"

Words like "*You don't look like a Filipina, you have pale skin and light-colored eyes,*" according to one of the researchers' personal experiences. Some may accept that Filipinos adhere to Eurasian beauty standards, while others recognise and begin to accept a Filipina's natural features. Because of those experiences, some women do not realise their full potential.

Colorism and internalised racism continue to be present in the country's beauty culture as time passes. According to media depictions and artistic forms such as films and television series, the majority of Filipino actors and actresses who achieve success in Hollywood or the media are typically half white or mestizos/mestizas. This also applies to the Philippine industry, as many of the celebrities praised align more with Eurocentric ideals, and natural morenas/morenos are rarely seen. As the superiority of Eurocentric ideals becomes more apparent, Filipinos begin to lose pride in their cultural and ethnic characteristics,

# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



as the majority of Filipinos were taught that Western and European ideals were far more appealing. So much so that Filipinos are willing to undergo dangerous procedures and use products that pose serious health risks in order to meet foreign beauty standards.

This type of colonial mentality is still prevalent today. Although not as strong as in the past, younger generations have recognised the error of these ways and have come to speak out against prejudice.

## 1.2. Objectives of the Research

The Filipino people's ideal beauty standard focuses on other countries' facial features rather than natural Filipino beauty. Some may be aware of this reality, whereas others might subconsciously follow the trends of this beauty standard. To demonstrate this claim, the researchers will select 3 female participants from the Grade 12 batch, each from a different strand, using the purposive sampling method and taking into consideration their characteristics. Each of them will be interviewed and required to answer approximately 5 questions and perhaps additional questions in order for us to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that affect the personal beauty preferences of Filipinas?
2. How do these factors affect the personal beauty preferences of Filipinas?
3. Which country's beauty standard is the most prevalent in Filipinas preferences and why?
4. What are the basis that Filipinas use to define beauty?
5. In what ways do other country's beauty standards affect their personal beauty standards?

## 1.3. Scope and Limitations

The purpose of this study is to determine how prevalent global beauty standards are in the Philippines' beauty culture and how this affects artistic and psychological perspectives in the country. It will also cover topics such as colonialism and how it manifests itself in beauty culture and standards. The research participants, results, and overall research project will primarily focus on young Filipinas to provide insight and opinions on the topic. Results and data

will be gathered through direct participant recollection, such as personal interviews with a series of topic-related questions and/or a questionnaire, as well as previous research, studies, and documents that will be used as references. The participants' ages will be around 18 to 19 years old, with a focus on the younger generation because this topic/issue has been present for a long time and is still prevalent, directly impacting the current generation.

As previously stated, colonialism and as well as postcolonial feminism will be the primary focus of the research, so it is possible that it will not extend to more advanced explanations for why the standards are prevalent. Time constraints are another limitation. Concerning the final artwork, the appearance of said artwork/painting will vary depending on the results obtained from the participants, so a final vision or appearance of the paintings is unknown. Another limitation was the possibility of not being able to do face-to-face interviews which is a big part of the research as we want to personally engage with the participants about the topic.

## 1.4. Significance of the Study

Despite numerous previous studies and literature on the beauty standard and its impact on women, there is a significant lack of research and perspectives on young Filipina women. The majority of studies are focused on the Northeastern region of Asia (Japan, Korea, and China) or on more well-known countries. As a result, the research project will primarily focus on Filipina perspectives and opinions on how praised other countries' beauty standards are today.

Furthermore, we will investigate the impact that these beauty standards have on art and artistic perspectives. Answering questions such as why Filipinos prefer/adore lighter skin in modelling and why skin whitening products are frequently sought after, why plus-size is so negatively discussed and looked down upon in the country/among Filipinos, and why we Filipinos strive for such a "*un-Filipino look*" in general.

As previously stated, there is little international research on this specific topic, so a few Filipinos have come forward to speak out. Mendoza in their **Journal of Public Health Policy** wrote under a chapter called "*The skin whitening industry in the Philippines.*" (pg. 220) examined

# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



how skin whitening products are popularised in developing countries as a result of post-colonial and internalised racism. For the Philippines, this is because, for many years during our colonisation by Spain and America, darker skin was associated with being less attractive and/or inferior. According to Mendoza's journal, the desire to whiten skin stems from the way Filipinos view or perceive things like beauty, aesthetic appeal, class affiliation, and so on.

Furthermore, Singson's journal article (pg. 1-2) investigates the role of colonialism and its impact on the success of the skin whitening industry. She claims that colonial mentality has an effect on Filipinos' psychological well-being and ethnic identity, causing Filipinos to be ashamed of their natural ethnic appearance and culture.

The way the media favors those with more foreign appearances, such as *'Chinitas'* and *'Mestizas,'* causes internal conflict and ultimately leads Filipinas to want to be someone they are not. Filipinos are mesmerised and praise those who fit eurocentric standards while shaming those who are true to their Filipina heritage. The research project aims to demonstrate or draw attention to how damaging these foreign standards are and can be to our own cultural identity, and how it is past time for Filipinos to change their mindset about *'the perfect woman'* which is primarily foreign-looking. However, change will not occur unless Filipinos begin to desire it. And, in these modern times, it is time to stop associating *'the perfect woman'* with purely foreign ideals and to begin celebrating natural Filipina beauty.

## 2. THE PROCESS

### 2.1. Methodology

A paired observation under the ethnographic approach will be used to analyze the raw data that we get from our data collection since most of the participants are from the same ethnicity and culture. A second approach for data collection is phenomenology to get the interviewee's subjective experiences on the topic that we will be discussing. For the primary sources, the researchers will be conducting interviews wherein they will be asking a series of questions regarding beauty and how different country's beauty standards affect their own. For the secondary sources, data from other interviews are noted by the researchers.

Answers from different people of different ethnicities/mixed will be noted along with the answers of people of the same ethnicity as the researchers. There may be different opinions and experiences to compare the different cultures of each interviewee. There may be similarities in the personal interpretations of how the people view the topic.

Feminism and Gender Studies will be used in this research to further analyse how the Philippines' beauty standard has evolved to be affected by other countries' standards and how Filipinos tend to find more foreign appearances attractive. As a result, Filipina women are frequently oppressed and pressured to look a certain way, and the natural ethnic features of a true Filipina are forgotten and oftentimes undesirable. Additionally, we will also be connecting it to Postcolonial Feminism to further analyze the influence of colonialism in the mainstream. We will use these theories to examine how, because Eurocentric features are deemed ideal, women who do not meet these expectations are shamed, resulting in many Filipinas being insecure about their natural beauty.

### 2.2. The Art Concept

BINIBINING PARFAITE is a series of 20-by-30-inch acrylic paintings inspired by a "puzzle-like" painting with three split-down images called a "Triptych". The set of artworks will be three canvases of a two-dimensional acrylic painting depicting a half-and-half woman, where one side is from the features of the interviewees and inspired by many artworks depicting what a Filipina looks like while the other side is a well-known woman that is aligned with a foreign country's beauty standard. Showing the differences in the facial features of both women. Pop-art elements will be included in the artworks to make the characteristics more distinct, straightforward, and vivid enough to draw attention.

### 2.3. Medium and Technique

The medium for the final artwork is a visual art painting using acrylic paint. As mentioned earlier, a "Triptych" consists of three painted canvases next to each other. This is frequently used in artworks for altars and churches where there are brief religious narrative scenes. We will be taking inspiration from the divided panels or sections to make one whole image about the chosen topic.

# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



Furthermore, the pop-art style is incorporated with bright contrasting colors to give emphasis to the features. The artists also took inspiration from different paintings that depict Filipina women and analyzed the similarities and differences between various artists' perspectives on what a Filipina is. With this in mind during the artmaking process, each canvas depicts a different 'kind' of Filipina woman.

The first will depict pageantry Filipina beauty, the second is old vintage Filipina beauty, and the third is for a cultural ethnic group of Filipina beauty (Igorot).

## 2.4. Related Literature and Works

Chen and his companions in their study of "*Occidentalisation of Beauty Standards: Eurocentrism in Asia*" (2) examined how eurocentrism affects the modern Asian beauty standard and how Western beauty standards started to project in Asian beauty standards, claiming that due to this Asian standards started to align with Eurocentric ideals. They analyzed if European colonisation had any effect on the beauty standards both past and present in the majority of Asia. They were able to find evidence of Eurocentrism being heavily influenced in South and Central Asia. But they also found that although often these Western beauty ideals (E.g. thin and tall, large eyes, light skinned, big busts, small pointy nose, and high cheekbones) are idolised and followed, Asian culture ultimately are still able to maintain some part of their own identity through diverse representation in media. They maintain parts of their culture by in a way blending their own culture with the Eurocentric ideals, ultimately making a sort of hybrid beauty standard in the end.

Putri Amara in her research entitled "*Beauty is Pain: Eurocentric Beauty Standards in Asia*" (1) talks about the idealizations of having white and pale skin among the Japanese advertisements from a Japanese cosmetics company that is well-known for skin-whitening creams and supplements. They have shown a thirty second video advertisement that features a Filipino model who gets her confidence in her good looks thanks to the brand's skin-whitening cream. It encourages the customers to buy the cream because in their words, they too can have paler skin and be the "most beautiful" version of themselves. As we

collectively try to lessen the influence of colonial beauty standards—spending a little more time under the sun—we give way to a new era of beauty, one that embraces racial diversity and our natural features, so that one day, hopefully soon, young girls will look in the mirror and see their unique features as something worth celebrating.

Multiple scholarly studies have highlighted the persistence of racial overtones in beauty in relation to female sexuality in state ideologies, as well as a discernible tendency for mainstream pageants to reaffirm whiteness and dominant Western beliefs that undermine ethnic communities' cultural goals (Lieu, 2000; Saraswati, 2011; Nichols, 2013). In Georgina Mia's "*The Politics of Pretty: How International Beauty Pageants Promote Western Standards of Beauty in the Philippines.*" (2019). The standards followed by beauty queen candidates sent by their countries – all of whom appear to echo the same homogeneous notions of beauty and feminine ideals – sharply contrast with the illusion of multiculturalism and diversity that international pageant membership attempts to paint (9). International beauty pageants can successfully promote Western standards of beauty because they use the four different Foucauldian technologies of the self. Active agents in the beauty pageant industry, in particular, pageant contestants, demonstrate Western-oriented ideals in sign system technology through their use of English, as it is perceived as the "*international language*" and serves to not only ensure greater understanding between contestants, judges, and audiences, but also helps boost a candidate's performance due to positive regard from judges and audiences who perceive the use of English as an impress. Westernized or culturally appropriated forms of dresses and accessories are prescribed in production technology through themes set by pageant organizers and/or deliberate and tactical stylistic choices in wardrobe decisions by a candidate's coaches or managers to package beauty contestants as "*exotic*" entities, eliciting feelings of novelty in an audience (80-81).

In Mishra's journal, "*Postcolonial feminism: Looking into within-beyond-to difference.*", it explains that the theory of Postcolonial Feminism critiques the traditional norm of feminist theories. To further explain, the Postcolonial Feminism theory first appeared in the third wave of the feminist movement in the 1980s. The theory and its believers observed that the first and second wave of the feminist theories/feminism had failed to bring light into the

# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



struggles and hardships of the women in third-world countries and for women of different race and class. The first two waves had only taken into account the issues of white Western women who initially started the feminist movement. The concern of Postcolonial Feminism theory is that the Western feminists tend to universalize the issues stating that their beliefs represent all women in the world. Its main goal was to get inclusivity and widen the feminist movement in a much more complex way. But at the same time, Postcolonial Feminism theorists do not believe in the global sisterhood. This may be because the theorist observes that the movement oftentimes only reflects the perspectives and issues of privileged white women.

## 2.5. Ethical Considerations

Since the researchers will collect data through interviews, there are a number of ethical considerations to be addressed. According to De La Salle University's Operational Guidelines and Code of Research Ethics, first is the Principle of Excellence. The researchers strive to improve their skills and knowledge to guarantee the quality of their manuscript, research, and final output. Keeping in mind that the school is well-known in the field of research. Following the Principle of Beneficence and Maleficence, rest assured that no harm will be done to the interviewees that the researchers have selected. The information written by the researchers will be protected from misuse and influence as we preserve the well-being of the ones involved or affected by the conduct of research. Moving on to the Principle of Truth, they ensure that the sources they access are credible and none are exposed to deceit and fraud. Next is the Principle of Integrity and Professionalism whereas the researchers use their time to interview the people with topics that relate only to the research and will not go further than that. Along with the Principle of Zeal and growth, the researchers will use the knowledge they gained in this research as a guide throughout their journey as future artists in the creative industry.

Furthermore, as the primary artwork will be using the interview respondents as muses and inspiration for the final look, rest assured that all participation in the artwork was consented and the respondents had given their full approval in using their face/appearance as inspiration and reference.

## 3. THE ARTWORK/ CREATIVE WORK

### 3.1. The Artist's Worldview

The project's researchers and interviewees are all women. As a result, there may be gender-biased statements and judgments. Given the age of the participants, there may be differences in how the younger minds work compared to a more mature and wise woman. This is the first time the artists have organized a comprehensive background and research under the creative industry. What began as a concept for an artwork that supports and empowers women's beauty is now a reality of understanding the negative effects of the beauty industry on the majority of Southeast Asian women growing up in various backgrounds. The more knowledge that they gain throughout their research journey, the more that they strive to encourage several Filipina women to embrace their natural features for the reason that it creates their personal identity as a confidently beautiful woman with a Filipina heart.

### 3.2. Details of the Artwork

In the first canvas of the series; *Miss Universe* (Refer to fig. 5), the left side features are derived mainly from one of our Respondents, an 18-year-old female from the ABM strand, and a mix of Miss Universe Pia Wurtzbach. The design of the left side takes more inspiration from pageantry beauty and symbolizes the love and admiration Filipinos have for events like pageants. The right side was mainly inspired by the Japanese beauty standard and was inspired by Ms. Tamao Yoneyama from Japan who was recently crowned Miss International Japan 2023. The design of the right side also takes inspiration from Japan's national costumes in the Miss Universe pageant.

For the second canvas; *Binibini* (Refer to fig. 6), depicts on the left side an old vintage Filipina beauty with a woman wearing what is known to be a *baro't saya* and is inspired by the recent look of Maria Clara. While on the right side depicts Korean beauty standards, mostly inspired by kpop idols and their beauty standards. More specifically the right side was inspired by Irene from the Kpop Girl Group Red Velvet.

Lastly, for the third canvas; *Paparazzi* (Refer to fig. 7), depicts a ethnic cultural Filipina woman specifically from the tribe of Igorots. Wearing her culture, her clothing,

# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



and her tattoos proudly. While on the right side depicts the Western beauty standard, with over the top features and beauty. More specifically, the right side is inspired by Kylie Jenner's iconic Met Gala look.

The artwork features pops of bright colors and the style of painting is more abstract but with a mix of realism to give it the 'dreamy idea' feel. This is seen in the painting as the colors are not the usual colors used for a portrait. For example, you can observe that skin tones aren't the usual skin color; rather they are a bright magenta and a dark orange-red.

### 3.3. Impact of the Artistic Work

Through this artwork, the artists hope to give young Filipina's courage and confidence to know that although they may be different from the standards, they are still equally as beautiful. With beauty being objective and what defines beauty is different for each person, the standard may always change or vary. This is seen at the table below if you observe that the three interviewees had different preferred country's beauty standards. (See Table 1 below) With this the artist's combined them but were still able to depict the differences between two women and emphasize that even if the two are contrasting, one is not more beautiful than the other or vice versa, rather they should both be crowned equally as beautiful. Due to media exposure like pageants and modeling shows like Victoria Secret, women get exposed to these types of beauty and oftentimes their self-esteem gets affected. They wonder why they don't look like these women that get praised for their beauty and they criticize themselves on why they are different. But in contrast, in the interviews conducted for the research the interviewees mentioned that beauty was more of who you are rather than what you look like. They mentioned that a good personality and a positive aura contributes to one's physical attractiveness over time. So with this, the artist hopes to show that there is more to a woman's beauty than her outer appearance and that what defines beauty is different for every person.

Table 1

*Interview Results*

Respondents	Age	Strand	Sexr	Preferred Beauty Standard
Respondent 1	18	STEM	Female	Korean
Respondent 2	19	ADT	Female	Western
Respondent 3	18	ABM	Female	Japanese

## 4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Before anything, we the researchers would like to take the time to express our gratitude and acknowledgement to our research adviser for giving his best effort to give his aid, advice, and judgement on how to better this research. We would also like to thank friends who have helped us along the way through trials, errors, and successes. They have given their full support and suggestions to keep pushing this research forward. And finally, we would like to thank our school for giving us this great opportunity to spread awareness and confidence to all young Filipina's who are struggling to live their beauty.

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# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



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# Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth

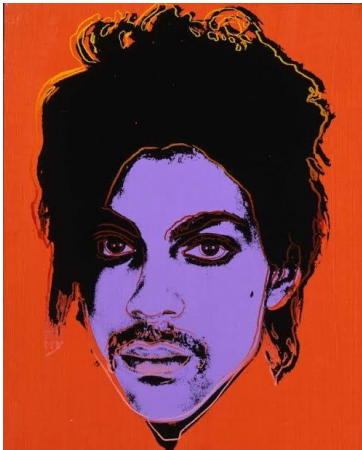


## 6. APPENDIX/ LIST OF IMAGES

**Fig. 1.** *Andy Warhol Marilyn Diptych (1967).*



**Fig. 2.** *Andy Warhol Orange Prince (1984).*



**Fig. 3.** *Andy Warhol Liz Taylor (1964).*



**Fig. 4.** *Diptych of Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza (c. 1473 – 1475) by Piero della Francesca*





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**Fig. 5.** *“Miss Universe”*



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Fig. 6. "Binibini"



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Fig. 7. "Paparazzi"

