

R E S I L I E N C E

Exhibition dates:
18.07.22 - 16.09.22

Location:
The Mill, 154 Angas St
Adelaide SA

A solo exhibition by Viray Thach elevating the voices of sexual assault survivors and opening conversations through education.



Strength in Numbers, A4 lino print on bamboo paper

Reshaping pain into beauty

Words by Renee Miller

'*Resilience*' is digital artist, print maker and educator Viray Thach's first solo-exhibition. It aims to elevate the voices of sexual assault survivors and help educate the broader public about this often-misunderstood topic. The exhibition is the result of The Mill's six month Sponsored Studio residency supported by the Mahmood Martin Foundation.

The desire to create *Resilience* has been with Viray since she first began to share her story as a survivor of child sexual assault after being deeply impacted by the #MeToo movement.

While sexual assault being a part of mainstream discussion helped survivors realise they weren't alone, Viray recalls friends and strangers casually victim blaming or questioning a survivor's motivations in her company, unaware she, like one in four women, had experienced sexual assault.

The ignorance Viray encountered helped shape *Resilience's* purpose; it is not just about bringing awareness, but about educating.



Dissociation, A4 lino print on rice paper

She wants people who see her work to consider their understanding of sexual assault and how they respond to survivors, whether they are loved ones or strangers.

The title, *Resilience*, reflects where Viray is in her own journey. Every survivor deals with trauma differently, and Viray is in a place where she wants to make herself visible as both an artist and a survivor.

A poem she wrote explains the role art continues to play in her journey: *Through art / I have learnt / To reshape my pain / Into beauty*. In the months it took to create the exhibition, Viray's everyday life became a site of her artwork and activism.

*“After naming the exhibition,
Viray discovered a word hiding inside
Resilience: silence. The very thing she was
trying to combat was written over and
repurposed into resilience.”*

She spent her time educating her social media following and talking with friends and survivors who engaged with her work.

After naming the exhibition, Viray discovered a word hiding inside *Resilience*: silence. The very thing she was trying to combat was written over and repurposed into resilience.

The gallery space itself is hardly quiet. White walls give way to a mural and the boldness of Viray's art style, inspired by pop art,



Life Sentence, A4 lino print on bamboo paper



Reclaim, A1 and A3 digital

art deco, art nouveau and Kbach, a form of Cambodian ornamentation.

In *Resilience*, Viray uses lino printing and digital art, amplifying the exhibition's focus on voice and ways of speaking by contrasting her modern comfort zone of digital art with the physicality of lino printing – a technique she developed during her residency.

Lino printing is imperfect and laborious. No two pressings are the same. The technique's limitations forced Viray to embrace simplicity, distilling her ideas into bold designs that draw on symbolism.

Some of the designs were inspired by poems she wrote years ago. Animals feature heavily as well: a bird in a cage, a phoenix being set free and schools of fish swimming together. Symbolising freedom and unity.

She draws on the bird's common associations with singing, flight, freedom, unity, and hope. It reminds me of Emily Dickinson's poem, "*Hope*" is a *thing with feathers*. The poem celebrates hope's resilience as a part of the human condition by portraying it as a bird that sings without stopping.

The digital art in the exhibition is used to create portraits of survivors. Viray used social media to connect with survivors who were willing to share their story with her.

The portraits depict where the survivor is now, incorporating their whole story, which Viray gathered through questionnaires and expanded on when they began communicating.

In these portraits, we are invited to see survivors through eyes they have chosen to view their story and trusted to capture their image.

The details aren't for us to know firsthand, but through Viray's art the survivors speak to us in their own way, through sensuality, whimsy, time, the confidence of a cloudless blue.

Viewing these portraits, encourages you to think of the survivors in your own life and how we have been trusted to paint them.

I see my loved ones, tangling me in the present and past.

I think about having to sit through day-long seminars about underage-drinking but not being allowed to discuss sexual assault in the classroom.

“Viewing these portraits, encourages you to think of the survivors in your own life and how we have been trusted to paint them.”

I think about my best friend telling me what happened to her and having no idea what to do.

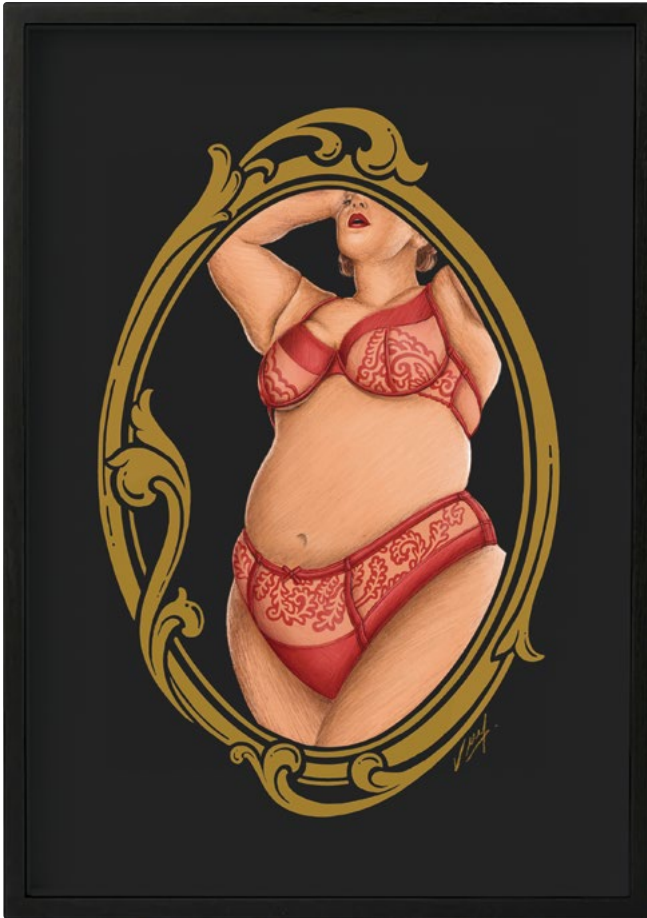
I think about how powerless I felt, silenced by a lack of knowledge and a world that intended for it to be that way.

I am reminded of how harmful our reluctance to educate about or even acknowledge sexual assault is.

Resilience resists this silence and encourages each of us to reflect.



Faith, A1 and A3 digital print



Mine, A3 digital print

If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual assault, you can contact the services below:

Yarrow Place

Located in North Adelaide, Yarrow Place provides services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

Ph: 1800 817 421

www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au

1800RESPECT

The National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Ph: 1800 737 732

www.1800respect.org.au

To read more about Viray and view her work visit:

www.viray.com.au

[instagram.com/viray_illustrative](https://www.instagram.com/viray_illustrative)

[facebook.com/virayillustrative](https://www.facebook.com/virayillustrative)

Thank you to the following organisations for making this exhibition possible:

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ARTS
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