

SOIL THORNTON: METABOLIZING EVICTION TRY, WORK_MP3 AND OTHER GAMES OF TOPPING

April 29–July 5, 2026

Swiss Institute (SI) is pleased to present *Metabolizing eviction try, work_mp3 and other games of topping*, the first institutional solo exhibition by artist Soil Thornton in New York City, where they live and work. Crossing boundaries of media, Thornton's work grapples with identity, systems of order, and regulative apparatuses. "Topping" implies relations of control and power, which unfold here in the dynamics and negotiations between artist and curator, artist and institution, artist and city, as well as between the artist, their peers, and their own artistic production. It is both a method and a condition. Within this framework, meaning is broken down, processed, and transformed through lived circumstances shaped by precarious systems. The exhibition thus traces the fragile entanglements of life, labor, health, and property, reflecting on what can be made and upheld in their wake.

Upon entering the gallery, viewers encounter *realization suppression / Rihanna_work.mp3* (2026), a large-scale video installation composed of digital rips from YouTube recordings of 79 artist lectures and interviews, excerpted at the moment when the speaker says the word "work." Each instance corresponds to an utterance of the word in Rihanna's 2016 hit single *Work*, with every clip slowed by the same percentage. "Work" hovers between effort and object, verb and noun, insistence and refrain. Through its rhythmic accumulation, the cadence of the pop anthem becomes legible even as the meaning of the references to labor or the art it manifests dissolves. The video is projected onto an existing film setup left in place from the previous exhibition, an "assist." These remains are used as is. Support is neither neutral nor hidden.

Adjacent to the projection, a framed wall piece assembles documents from the artist's recent eviction proceedings, including the initial notice and records of its resolution. It also includes email correspondence with the exhibition's curator, a signed agreement with Swiss Institute, and a kitchen dish towel acquired when Thornton moved into their apartment ten years ago. Production funds for the exhibition were, in part, directed toward eviction relief, collapsing distinctions between the work and the conditions that sustain it.

Dried lavender, associated with relaxation and calming, spreads across the gallery floor in a quantity indexed to the curator's weight. Its scent lingers as the form is broken down; soiled, tracked and redistributed underfoot by visitors. Nearby, a transparent inflatable structure contains the artist's mattress and bedding. The bed is both protected and displaced, evoking temporary shelter while staging rest as something deferred.

On the second floor, positioned atop residual wall paint from the previous exhibition, a two-channel video presents footage of a colonoscopy performed on a prosthetic dummy. One channel is overlaid with records of funds that entered the artist's bank account in 2025, while the other shows funds that left it. Money in, money out. The artist sought access to documentation of their own procedure for inclusion in the work and was denied. This refusal points to a broader system structured around risk and liability, where access to one's body and its data is restricted by corporations. The camera may enter, but its record does not return and visibility is conditional.

Across these works, Thornton exposes fault lines where preordained answers foreclose possibility, asking instead what produces such limits and how they might be reconfigured. The opposite wall is painted chroma-key green, a placeholder for the possibility of a different world.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Swiss Institute will present a performance by Violence on June 11, 2026 and an event with Hard to Read (date forthcoming).

Metabolizing eviction try, work_mp3 and other games of topping is made possible through support from Every Page Foundation, and Paul Judelson.

The exhibition is curated by Alison Coplan, Chief Curator.



Swiss Institute

Contemporary Art

38 St Marks Place
New York, NY 10003

+1 (212) 925-2035
info@swissinstitute.net

swissinstitute.net
Free and open to the public

About SoIL Thornton

Soil Thornton (b. 1990, US) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include: *8 Hours of Rest*, The Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2026); *candidate screening methods*, Progetto, Lecce (2024); *Choosing Suitor*, Secession, Vienna (2023); and *Decomposition Evaluation*, Kunstverein Bielefeld, Bielefeld (2022).

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent nonprofit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental artmaking through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and environmentally conscious in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free of charge, SI seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

SI Programming is made possible in part with public funds from Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council; Canton Basel-Stadt; the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council with the support of council member Carlina Rivera.

Main supporters include LUMA Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Friends of SI; Every Page Foundation; Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso; A4 Arts Foundation; and Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger. Exhibitions are made possible in part by the SI Artist Vision Fund with leadership support provided by the SI Board of Trustees, Becky and David Gochman, and Nicoletta Fiorucci. SI gratefully acknowledges all TimeForArt Partners, Swiss Re as SI ONSITE Partner, Vitra as Design Partner, and Crozier Fine Arts as Preferred Shipping Art Logistics Partner.

Critical operating support was provided to SI in 2024 and 2025 as part of a collective fundraising effort with CANNY (Collaborate Arts Network New York). We thank the following supporters: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Arison Arts Foundation, and The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. SI is integrating sustainability and environmental consciousness into all facets of the institution. Support for this effort comes in part from the Frankenthaler Climate Initiative and Teiger Foundation.

Press Contact: julia@suttoncomms.com, 212.925.2035