



SoiL Thornton Putting The PR in Praxis

People were talking about Josh Kline's essay on artists crushed by the economics of the art world in New York. A review of the Whitney Biennial lamented the children of Cameron Rowland. But [the press release for SoiL Thornton's show at Swiss Institute](#) feels like the most visceral and vital documentation of the state of the art at this dire, resilient but, again, dire moment:

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.

["Sensory warning: this installation contains a strong lavender fragrance that may be overwhelming or trigger sensitivities."](#)

You know what else overwhelms and triggers sensitivities? Realizing that diverting exhibition budget by reusing the previous show's setup to thwart an artist's eviction, and exhibiting the documentation, in a gallery amply funded by the arts program of another nation is truly the kind of art experience that can only happen in New York.

[SoiL Thornton: Metabolizing eviction try, work_mp3 and other games of topping](#), 29 Apr – 5 Jul 2026

[swissinstitute.net]



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