

Szilvia Bolla - Project plan for Amarte Fonds 2025

Mill Girls is a site-specific installation to be developed during an invitation-only artist residency at Lower Cavity in Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA culminating in a solo exhibition in the Fall of 2025. This project allows me to materialize my ongoing research into the sociopolitical dimensions of mental health, labour, and resistance under late capitalism through an immersive, spatial narrative.

My practice centres on sculpture and installation that emerge from a critique of photographic abstraction, exploring the affective and resistant potential of hypersensitivity. I examine mental illness not solely as a clinical condition but as a political and social construct entwined with capitalist productivity, diagnosis, and exclusion. This project aims to trace experiences of anxiety and depression not as individual pathology, but as forms of resistance and refusal while foregrounding collective strategies such as mutual aid, peer support, and solidarity. Sculpture and installation allow me to embed these tensions directly into form and material, fostering a more embodied experience.

Lower Cavity offers a unique architectural and historical context. Located in a former industrial site in Holyoke, a centre of 19th-century textile and paper manufacturing, the space opens dialogue with the legacy of exploited female labour and the psychic toll of industrial capitalism. I plan to research local archives and draw on literary frameworks such as industrial gothic, particularly Bridget M. Marshall's *Industrial Gothic Workers, Exploitation, and Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Literature*, to reflect on how working-class women were pathologized while also portrayed as resistant, spectral figures. This aligns with my interest in disability studies, critical biopolitics, and new materialist feminism.

The residency, scheduled for August 15–September 21, 2025, will allow me to produce a new ecology of sculptural works made on-site, resulting in a solo show, opening on September 13. The works will include light-sensitive resin sculptures created from custom 3D models, photographic prints, found industrial materials, and varying light installations. The derelict architecture of the space will not serve merely as a backdrop but as an active component shaping the sensory and conceptual experience.

I aim to create a cohesive, materially ambitious new body of work that synthesizes research, spatial sensitivity, and artistic exploration. As a long-term result, the experience of executing my project *Mill Girls* at Lower Cavity will deepen the methodological frameworks that guide my practice and form the basis for future collaborations and site-responsive projects.

For the exhibition's opening, I will host an artist talk and walkthrough with Liz Deschenes and Artie Vierkant, two artists whose work has greatly influenced mine and whose practices I referenced on many occasions. Their contribution will enrich the discourse surrounding the project and open new avenues for reflection.

Mill Girls is a site-specific transdisciplinary project about vulnerability, labour, and resistance. It seeks to hold space for psychic struggle not as failure, but as a site of agency and collective imagination.