



**INHABITING DIALOGUE:  
ARTISTIC PEDAGOGIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA  
(ESPIRA + RAPACES 2007–2019)**

**Artists**

Patricia Belli with: Federico Alvarado | Darwin Andino | Diana Barquero | Marilyn Boror Bor | Edgar Cael | Javier Calvo | Natalia Domínguez | Elyla | Milena García | Alejandro de la Guerra | Mario Hernández | Jaime Izaguirre | Camile Juárez | Yavheni de León | Darling López | Anna Matteucci | José Montealegre | Gabriela Novoa | Abigail Reyes | Mariela Richmond | La Lola Rizo | li vallejo t | Paulina Velázquez

**Curated by Erika Martin in collaboration with Patricia Belli and Ilaria Conti**

**July 5 – October 5, 2025**

**Opening: Saturday, July 5, from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Remarks and Tour at 5 p.m.**

La Nueva Fábrica  
Callejón Contreras, Antigua, Guatemala  
[www.lanuevafabrica.org](http://www.lanuevafabrica.org)

La Nueva Fábrica (LNF) is proud to present *Inhabiting Dialogue: Artistic Pedagogies in Central America (EspIRA + RAPACES 2007–2019)*, an exhibition curated by Erika Martin in collaboration with Patricia Belli and Ilaria Conti.

This exhibition marks two significant milestones: it is the first time LNF features Central American artists beyond Guatemala, and, at the same time, it will be the first retrospective devoted to the groundbreaking arts education initiatives led by Patricia Belli.

***Then will and care become essential for repair, breathing new life into what is damaged. In this sense, to repair is to rebirth.***

**– Patricia Belli**

*Inhabiting Dialogue: Artistic Pedagogies in Central America (EspIRA + RAPACES 2007–2019)* celebrates the work of Nicaraguan artist and educator Patricia Belli, founder of EspIRA/La ESPORA—an art school that began in her home and transformed the Central American contemporary artistic landscape from 2001 to 2020. Rooted in developing and strengthening critical thinking, the school’s programs promoted experimentation, collectivity, exchange, hybridity, openness, diversity, risk, and error, reinventing arts education in the region.



In 2001, moved by intuition and seeking an alternative educational framework, Belli started TAJó (Taller de Arte Joven, or Young Arts Workshop), a group for dialogue, self-criticism, and rigor that she convened through an advertisement in the local newspaper. This space evolved into EspIRA (Espacio Para la Investigación y Reflexión Artística, or Space for Artistic Research and Reflection), a nonprofit organization based in Managua that developed various educational programs. In 2004, La ESPORA was founded, the outline of a university dream project inviting artists to unlearn the harmful habits of a formal and technical education. Using critical dialogue and group feedback as (re)learning methods, EspIRA / La ESPORA established itself as a school for life, spreading like a spore through different countries in the region. It offered an alternative to bureaucratic, rigid academic art education models that often fail to foster imagination or critical agency in students.

In tune with other local EspIRA / La ESPORA programs—TACÓN and Jóvenes Creativos—Belli led RAPACES, an artistic residency program for emerging Central American artists. Developed in 2006 and launched in 2007, RAPACES was an innovative collective residency model. Over 12 years, it cultivated educational strategies attuned to the desires and harsh realities of young artists raised in violent, precarious, and marginalized contexts. The training programs developed by Belli, together with guest teachers and former students, were adapted to the environment in which the bodies were delimited and to the context participants engaged with.<sup>1</sup>

These spores grew in hostile contexts; however, they flourished thanks to subversive, feminist, and emancipatory learning methods that gave life to an intergenerational community committed to critical thinking, personal growth, and social transformation.

This exhibition highlights the impact of the itinerant residency program RAPACES, which was implemented in Nicaragua in the cities of Managua, Matagalpa, Granada, Diriamba, and Masaya, and was also present in El Salvador and Costa Rica. Across 13 editions, the residency forged deep bonds among artists and educators, providing a free, collaborative, and horizontal educational experience that shaped generations of artists who have made their mark within and beyond the region. Operating amid political instability and social adversity, RAPACES wove a global network that continues today as an extended family.

For nearly two decades, Belli designed and implemented local and regional programs that fostered mobility and artistic exchange networks. Collectively and collaboratively, she built safe and intimate spaces for criticism, affection, coexistence, study, and reflection. These study spaces sought to relate and question the subject matter, concept, and intention of contemporary artistic production across the Central American region.

*Inhabiting Dialogue* revisits this legacy through a timeline curated with archival materials—catalogs, programs, objectives, texts, collaborations, and a list of alumni—bearing witness to the reparative work of the pedagogies Belli established. This archive is presented alongside works by artists who participated in EspIRA/La ESPORA and/or RAPACES. Their practices and reflections engage in dialogue between Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.



The exhibition includes a variety of formats—paintings, installations, objects, soft sculptures, drawings, and video art—by 24 Central American artists. Together, they form a visual community that through art, seeks to educate and heal the wounds of a shared territory.

In dialogue with a 2024 version of Patricia Belli's installation *El Circo*, these spores share their poetic, critical, and political voices around Central American identity. This living body of diverse imaginaries sheds light on the indelible imprint of Belli's legacy, inviting us to think about arts education and academic training in the countries that link North and South, inviting us to reflect on and question: What pedagogies are needed to create from the center of America?

During the exhibition, a series of public programs will deepen the core ideas and concerns of the project, reinforcing its participatory and community-based character.

---

<sup>1</sup> Patricia Belli. "No enseñar, aprender: Los experimentos educativos en EspIRA. Entrevista con Patricia Belli." In *Equilibrio y colapso*, ed. by Miguel A. López (San José: TEOR/ética, 2018), 188.

Curatorial text by Erika Martin