

THE NEVER-ENDING CIRCLE OF EXPLORATION AND ITS COUNTERSPELLS

A Conversation between Daniela Brasil and Nayarí Castillo

DANIELA BRASIL: We have known each other for more than twenty years and have encountered each other in many constellations, geographies, and languages. We have both been based in Graz for more than a decade. Could you please share how you started to get involved with the Graz forests and how this relationship has evolved over time?

NAYARÍ CASTILLO: In addition to being an artist, I am also a molecular biologist and have always been interested in relationships in the surrounding world. However, my interest in the forest comes from nostalgia because I grew up in the megalopolis of Caracas in Venezuela. You could call it a forest of concrete.

BRASIL: A concrete jungle?

CASTILLO: Yes, but Caracas is full of animals, plants, and buildings. I do not know if it is among the greenest cities in the world, but it is very green. Since I came to Europe, I have longed for this close relationship with nature.

BRASIL: We have similar biographies. I also grew up in a concrete jungle in the tropics, in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. We both studied art at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, Germany, and our sensorial experiences had to be adjusted and developed to this new climate because, in the tropics, exuberance explodes out of every crack. It permeates everything. If you do not clean your table after eating, ants and cockroaches, at the very least, will come.

CASTILLO: Yes, and birds and all kinds of other beings. My aunt lives in the east of Caracas, next to a mountain and a waterfall. Her house is full of “others” – animated and unanimated. In the tropics, you have to check every day if scorpions are in your shoes, be aware that an ape can get into your house and steal your food, so food needs to be covered. Trees abruptly interrupt the streets with their powerful roots. Everything is bursting in this lush, exuberant way.

BRASIL: We had to adjust to the European bioregion. Our bodies had difficulty feeling it, and yet, over time, we did learn, right?

CASTILLO: You start becoming aware of other natural rhythms. It may not be a gigantic root destroying the asphalt, but just a small shoot opening a space and growing through the rocks. There are other types of resilience in nature and different kinds of “openings”. They may not

be as intense as natural phenomena in our latitudes, but they are there. There is not an overwhelming smell, but there is a smell that has to do with types of berries and herbs that are particular to different times of year in the city. Your body begins to understand because it is all about new bodily experiences you are collecting. After some time spent in the new place, it is possible to learn its particular ways of being with nature.

BRASIL: Here in Europe, we have changing seasons, the opposite of the constant, sensuous vibration of the tropics. This is how I became captivated by the realization that nature is both strong and fragile. For instance, in the calm wintertime, the light drastically changes. In the tropics, we have a homogeneous light throughout the year. Can you recall how those factors affected you?

CASTILLO: Yes, it could be felt as our circadian rhythms changing us, but also as new ways of capturing the poetry of the surrounding nature. However, I am careful when I use the word nature because it is often used in an alienating way – it can separate you from the other. Humans are also nature, and it is important to understand our space and relationship to the other creatures around us.

BRASIL: We can agree to use the word nature to facilitate the conversation because, after all, we grew up in urban spaces with a Western mentality that resulted from processes of colonization. We were socialized in an anthropocentric world that constantly posits that humans are separate from nature. We both want to reestablish connections that have been lost, and situate ourselves in an ecocentric system, but not with a romanticized idea of nature. This is what your forest-related projects and artistic research are all about, right?

CASTILLO: Yes, definitely. But the genesis of the *Forest Encounters* project lies in another project idea, developed in collaboration with partners and colleagues from the *Forest Encounters* project, called *Forest United*. It focused on the idea of dismantling state borders using the forest as an interconnected ecosystem. By learning from nature, we wanted to connect the territory from Albania to Germany that is currently politically divided. But then the idea changed. It lost its initial activist aspect and became something more focused on artistic research, observing the realities of participating countries – Slovenia, Serbia, Belgium, and Austria – in relation to the topic of the forest. I picked the topic of the city forest. This interest emerged from the project you and I conceived in 2020 called *Homeostasis: Between Borders and Flows*. At that time, we were interested in how the built infrastructure of the city clashes with natural flows, how planners and decision-makers control nature within a city, and how nature resists that control.

BRASIL: Going back to your transition from the initial forest-related project – which aimed at a transnational approach to forests with a broader political-administrative focus – you decided to work more locally and search for personal stories, creating the idea of personal forest encounters. By bringing in storytelling and the subjective experiences of people living in the city, you focused on how “nature”

– and specifically the forest – is perceived in middle-size European cities. Is that correct?

CASTILLO: Yes. We both share an interest in participatory inquiry. For both of us, engagement strategies don't just mean involving people while seeking specific arty results, but instead allowing their voices to enter and reshape the artistic process. We also both believe in co-creation not only with humans but with other beings and elements as well. For example, in the *Forest Encounters Glossary*,¹ some of the voices are also from those beings – or at least from people's perspective on them. I also created two additional projects within the *Forest Encounters* project: *Spells for Shapeshifting* and *Shrine for the Goddesses of the Wild* where I explore perspectives of other beings and forces in our interconnected world.

BRASIL: How do you let other voices enter the research process. How do you hear and sense the more-than-human world? Is there a spiritual component in your approach? While creating the *Forest Encounters Glossary*, for example, you had four ways of gathering stories that represent what other beings might be saying and feeling. Can you explain a bit about that?

CASTILLO: My research of the forest incorporates more-than-human voices in multiple ways. In the beginning, I had a more observational mindset, which was realized by developing technology of something called nature pods – physical structures where observers become aware of the presence of other organisms. The nature pods were planned as public explorations of their ever-growing “ancestors” called Rogues,² which were developed in collaboration with sound artist Hanns Holger Rutz. The Rogues are sensing tecno-organisms that communicate with themselves and their surroundings. In the project, *Stratification*, created in collaboration with artist Reni Hofmüller, we explored invisible gestures and beings of forest soils through deep-sound recordings and poetry. Then, I shifted to a more magical and activist approach in my research, developing artworks around shapeshifting and city forests where it is possible to absorb the perspective of others.

1 The *Forest Encounters Glossary* is available on the *Forest Encounters* website: <https://forest-encounters.net/glossary/> (accessed October 15, 2025). For some of the glossary contributions, see pp. 224–229. – Editorial note.

2 Rogues denote multi-sensory and multi-modal entities, sitting somewhere, in an exhibition space, or a private space, or outside waiting for the birds. They may appear in different forms, their size is about that of the human child. They emit sound and image. They take in the sensations of their surroundings. They are not surveillance devices. Their senses are touch, proximity, and light. They can make connections among themselves. They grow memories of place, accumulating sensory data, employing algorithms, adopting fragments of data from other Rogues.

Lastly, I adopted a participative approach, exemplified by the *Forest Encounters Glossary*, a collection of stories – gathered through different writing workshops and contributions of visitors at the exhibition *Wild Spots* at <rotor> in Graz (2024) – about people encountering the forest and their relationship with it. But, of course, how to record the agency of otherness is always an open question.



Nayarí Castillo in collaboration with Hanns Holger Rutz, *Rogues*, 2022–2025.



Collecting contributions for the *Forest Encounters Glossary* at the *Wild Spots* exhibition, <rotor>, Graz, 2024.

BRASIL: You have concentrated on many different techniques for gathering information. There is the contemplative, silent, observatory mode. Then there is dialogical storytelling and the spoken approach where collective knowledge is produced – like in the *Glossary*. Finally, you explore the inner spiritual voice in projects like *Spells for Shapeshifting* and *Shrine for the Goddesses of the Wild*. You're a sensitive person who can sense natural forces in very special ways. In this animistic world, not all things need to be verbalized – some things should remain opaque as the French writer, poet, and thinker Édouard Glissant suggested. How do you create what you gather and translate it into artistic output?

CASTILLO: Sometimes I have an idea about artistic outputs. For example, the idea of creating a glossary was a way to ensure that collectiveness would be present in a format that would include diverse voices. *The Glossary* has a lot of political ideas. The project reflects how things can be approached collectively. It was built over time through networks of love that emerged from previous projects and ways of coming together. It's not a coincidence that the project began with a workshop involving many of our common conspiratorial partners. The workshop took place during the *Habitat Graz* exhibition (Graz Museum, May 2024–February 2025) which you were curating at the time, bringing together people we had already connected with in previous projects – such as the Botanical Garden, the Waldschule (forest school), and the Grazer Grünes Band (Graz Green Belt).

Forest Encounters Glossary workshop at the Habitat Graz exhibition, Graz Museum, 2024.



BRASIL: I am interested in these networks of love and how your work evolves through such relationships. We could even extend these ideas and say it is about creating a family or making kin within the city's structures and institutions.

CASTILLO: It's interconnected. In the sense that we create emotional and intellectual connections with people with whom we work and create.

BRASIL: And it's constantly evolving.

CASTILLO: And changing and reshaping, but the underlying emphasis on interconnectedness has a lot to do with forest itself. As both a metaphor and an environment, the forest is a multi-layered structure interconnected on many levels, an intermingling of beings of all kinds.

BRASIL: Interconnected through solidarity and competition: nurturing and supporting each other but also competing for who will get more light, who will grow, who will die. The forest is a perfect metaphor for the art world where we're often put into competition with each other – because of the star system, funding, employment. Yet, beneath it all, there is a shared ground, a mycelium that sustains us.

CASTILLO: And that's part of the affective mycelium we're co-creating in the city. We each have different positions which change and are reshaped within the city landscape. Literal and abstract small forests permeate the city.

BRASIL: Could you explain how the process of reshaping the city landscape was significant for creating the *Glossary*, and how you designed, interpreted, and edited it?

CASTILLO: I've always wanted to publish a glossary of collective endeavors, a participative piece of collaborative ideas. Glossaries are a playful way of approaching information tied to a central idea. I wanted to make a very open one. During the first round together, with artists and co-editors of the glossary Polonca Lovšin and Dušica Dražić, we asked a group of fourteen people with different expertise – psychologists, authorities in charge of the greenery of the city, architects, dancers, artists, gardening experts, social workers, and biologists – to contribute glossary entries. We gathered twenty-eight of them.

BRASIL: Twenty-eight? Doesn't the alphabet have twenty-six letters?

CASTILLO: The English alphabet has twenty-six letters, but additional letters from other languages already appeared on the first day. That is why the glossary includes entries starting with letters like the Spanish ñ and š from Slavic languages.

BRASIL: What mesmerized you about the process used for the glossary?

CASTILLO: The accumulation of voices from different backgrounds, and also the expansion of the glossary through different writing workshops. The workshop with the Graz Feminist Reading Group, for example, incorporated the ecofeminist context and highlighted how silent resiliencies are interconnected. There are silent methodologies used by many in this group of interesting women that can be implemented as resistance. At the same time, it became clear that it is important to include contradicting views. Previously, much of the collected texts focused on the goodness of nature. This workshop – that streamed vibrant discussions – delved into political questions like forest commodification, exploitation, and systemic issues related to forest. I remember one contribution in particular: “Xenophobic Forest” – namely, a forest that doesn’t allow other voices.

BRASIL: Sadly, it seems these types of violent and disrespectful foresting are expanding: like the monoculture forest. Did you talk about things like forests cultivated for paper production?

CASTILLO: Yes, we talked about many exploitative and even war-related forest practices. The workshop explored a range of discursive possibilities – both positive and negative – from ultra-capitalistic to anti-capitalistic interpretations of the forest. There were also other engaging workshops. For example, the seminar with students from the Sustainability, Communication, and Climate Journalism department at the FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences was also engaging because the participants were environmental journalists. I love pluralities and contradictions.

BRASIL: Maybe our subjective forests are a mix of all the forests we inhabit and those that inhabit us.

CASTILLO: I am always impressed by how the creative and collaborative process permits and enables open connections back to my former biology studies and memories. Like the concept of a cloud forest, or *selva nublada* as Spanish speakers call it. For them, a rainforest isn’t just a forest in the rain but a cloud forest, because of the cloud cover. So, when I think of a cloud forest, I also return to my sensation at the Henry Pittier National Park, which has climbing platforms that are forty to sixty metres above the ground. From the platforms, you can see the entire rainforest from above the clouds.

BRASIL: I had a similar experience going up over the tree canopy in the Amazon. Your body is exposed to the weather and the sensation of being above the trees in the humid heat. We can now share these visuals from drones but recorded images can’t capture the bodily experience of being there. I also remember the workshop “Unlearning Weekenders” in 2014, which we did with Catherine Grau and Zoe Kreye on the Schöckl – the mountain near Graz. They led various unlearning exercises, such as “the collective body”, where we walked up a hill in a tight group, focusing on just one sense. I especially like to recall “the weather score” exercise. It went something like this: “Step into the darkness, find a nice spot and get naked, feel the cold, cloudy weather as long as you can.” Afterward, we had an exchange with all the participants. We discussed how difficult it was to overcome our hesitation. Exposing ourselves to the weather was unusual for us urban beings. We rarely pay attention to how our bodies encounter the air. This fantastic exercise made us reconnect with our skin, and feel vulnerability and permeability with the surrounding forest.

CASTILLO: Connection with our surroundings is crucial. I had a conflicted personal position throughout the *Forest Encounters* project. Many of the researchers we worked with and many discussions focused on rewilding or “leaving nature alone” so that it could recover. But the truth is that we are part of nature. And as you say: we need to get



Collecting contributions for the *Forest Encounters Glossary* at the workshop organized in cooperation with the NGO Danaida, <rotor>, Graz, 2024.



Collecting contributions for the *Forest Encounters Glossary* at the workshop organized in cooperation with the Graz Feminist Reading Group, <rotor>, Graz, 2024.

naked. The book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Tsing³ discusses the relationship between human intervention and nature, arguing that humans can't simply withdraw from natural spaces and processes. The idea of leaving nature alone doesn't solve the problem. We need to change how we relate with other beings. Leaving nature alone often means that somebody else exploits it – and this must stop.

BRASIL: The never-ending exploitative extractivist cycles.

CASTILLO: There are legal and illegal extractions, but in the end, they are all forms of extractions. What needs to change is our human mentality of extractivism. We need to live more balanced lives.

BRASIL: Absolutely. And this also connects to the topics of collecting and displaying. Natural collections have fostered the extractivist mode. If you look at naturalist expeditions in the Americas, we see figures like Alexander von Humboldt and Johann Natterer. Their scientific expeditions and the collections they accumulated supported 18th- and 19th-century geopolitical competition. There was a global rush to collect fauna and flora "objects" for display in national museums, which went hand-in-hand with the legitimization of the formation of nation states. These expeditions were often highly destructive. A single field research day in a tropical forest might involve killing thirty animals and collecting fifty plants. Even when done for research purposes, the practice of collecting reflects the idea of ownership – a need to bring home a trophy. We can't undo this legacy, but we can reframe how we approach research, learning, collecting, and classifying.

CASTILLO: That's totally on point. That's why I try to introduce magic transformation spells – inviting people to become animals. For me, trying to transform yourself – becoming the eyes, the senses of an animal – isn't about extraction for study but about perceiving. It shifts away from purely aggressive physical taking toward an exercise in relating and understanding. It operates against dissecting the specimen, which is how biology operated for many years – taking, destroying, categorizing, and labeling.

BRASIL: Yes, and in doing so, we classify everything in a way that does not value relationships within our ecosystems. We place butterflies with butterflies, flowers with flowers, but rarely the butterfly with the flower. Our classification system still insists on separating rather than interrelating.

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3 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2015.



Nayari Castillo,
*Spells for
Shapeshifting*, one of
several interventions in
public space, Graz,
2024–2025.



Nayari Castillo,
Spells for Shapeshifting,
site-specific installation,
Lech Forest, Graz, 2024–
2025.

CASTILLO: In my projects – and I believe we share this perspective – I am advocating for other ways of communicating with, classifying, and understanding nature. Ways that involve relating to nature, becoming part of it. These ways might come, in our case, from Indigenous imaginaries and epistemologies. This is an approach that is not about abolishing, killing, or dissecting, but rather about appreciating, communicating, and seeing.

BRASIL: It's about creating a more respectful, reciprocal relationship that does not prioritize human beings above everything else.

CASTILLO: And I am increasingly interested in hidden knowledge – hidden because of being peripheral, vernacular, quiet, almost underground. This is Indigenous knowledge from across the world. It is situated but not tied to a single location. It comes from the Sámi, the Wayúú, the Yanomami, ... There is something about engaging with “the other” differently that deeply interests me, and I want to explore it further.

BRASIL: Yes, and I think this different way touches on another dimension of the sacred. It opens up forms of enchantment or embodiments that pluralize and decentralize the individual being, acknowledging that we can never be complete but are always in relation, ecological and unfinished. I guess this is the path you and I are trying to follow: restoring or reconnecting with the world’s enchantments without falling into the trap of becoming commodified.

CASTILLO: Commodification is also another form of extractivism. We commodify and extract. My work, particularly within the shapeshifting narratives, centers around re-enchanting the world – recovering magic. In this sense, magic is a resilient methodology for attuning and connecting. In Latin America, for example, there are methods of resistance rooted in absurdity that are woven into our stories. We’ve had many external elements imposed on us, such as hegemonic religions. Instead of just accepting them, we resisted by combining and infiltrating them into our own beliefs. Hence, syncretic systems are not just a way of connecting to the supernatural but also a methodology of resistance.

BRASIL: It’s a methodology of resistance that embraces plurality and ambivalence. That is one of the difficulties I have with living here in Europe – there is often a particular kind of purism. You must belong to this or that, but not to both, plus something else. This linear trajectory, this singularity, is always expected, even in academia. The mixed, the *mestizo*, and the trans-(gender / disciplinary/ cultural) are systematically marginalized, exoticized, and even expelled. I love that we can be syncretic, that we can re-signify our contradictions, and allow ourselves to be “okay with being multiple”.

CASTILLO: The idea of being “okay with being multiple” is so beautiful.

BRASIL: We should not have to justify ourselves for being multiple. We can be this and that, and we can also change our minds. We can evolve in *becoming*. I discussed this recently when my daughter’s new school requested a baptism certificate. Well, my daughter was born on the day of Yemanjá (the Orixá of the salted waters), and for me, the Atlantic Ocean is part of our spirituality in a broader sense. I am a creature of the Atlantic with all the incongruities and systems of belief that these waters carry. Yemanjá and her waters blessed my daughter. So, I made a certificate of this blessing with the image of Yemanjá, a cowrie shell, and waves to submit to the school. Some colleagues said: “But you are making a false document.” And I replied: “I am not. I am registering this blessing

on paper because the state needs papers.” For me, a paper can be an act of violence.

CASTILLO: Yes, bureaucracy can be very violent. It is systemic violence.

BRASIL: So, if I make a document myself, it is an act of resistance because it validates the act of blessing while at the same time names and vocalizes it within the language of coloniality.

CASTILLO: That is the beauty of using different methods we have learned or things we have picked up from other places. You mentioned coexistence, which ties into the history of syncretism – a way of being multiple. Like you said: “I am the Atlantic. I am water.” My water is the Caribbean, and my Caribbean comprises multiple influences. This makes me think of the idea of the archipelago. Glissant says we are not just accumulations of separate stories but rather interconnected ones. This idea of constant interconnectedness, of being plural, is a key part of the strategies discussed. We are essentially collective.

BRASIL: We use the vocabulary of migration, the language of nature, and, at the same time, we reject it – because we acknowledge we are all mixed, that we exist within chaos, and that chaos itself is interconnectedness.

CASTILLO: I would love to dismantle purity. It is something that, within our political framework, we both have been trying to do since we arrived here – not through combative projects, but through smaller ones that carry this idea of blurring cultural boundaries and identities. We should not only mix but accept that we are a mixture.

BRASIL: As you mentioned, it is important to enable transcultural spaces of conviviality – spaces of positive exchange, joyful learning, and playful interactions.

CASTILLO: Yes, we should advocate for conviviality, commonality, collectiveness, and the co-creation of knowledge. This is about the pluriversal – not just the multiplicity within us as human beings but different ways of being together and standing side by side in the same space we share.

BRASIL: Our roots may have been elsewhere, but they are still growing today, here in a different soil, too. Everybody’s roots are looking for nurturing spaces, aren’t they?

CASTILLO: That is the forest humus. The forest is a good metaphor – it includes coming together and interconnecting layers. It is connected from ground to sky.

BRASIL: Some plants extract contamination from the soil, they even regenerate it for others. That also is a role within the collective: to remove toxicity and create fertile ground.

CASTILLO: Both of our work has to do with collectivism. In a sense, we bring together a way of being that is deeply connected, an interconnection of the multiple, and these processes also relate to the forest. I believe more and more in each person and each being.

BRASIL: Maybe we can agree with the personification of nature, not only for the sake of the rights of nature but also through the lens of Amazonian perspectivism: when we say “person”, we might also be referring to a jaguar, a river, a rock, a tree.

CASTILLO: All beings have individuality. The idea of a coalition – coming together and standing together in solidarity – is very important to me. It is not about becoming a collective by destroying individual essence. I do not believe in collectivism as a single voice – that idea is killing us. Instead, I advocate for a forest of multiplicity where individuality is preserved, or as Judith Butler calls it: “bodies in an alliance” – a collectivity of individuals bringing their unique elements together.

BRASIL: They exist in relation because you can be unique without dissolving into others.

CASTILLO: Yes, but this is somewhat flexible. Sometimes you act as an individual, sometimes you become another in a collective, and sometimes you are “bodies in alliance” preserving individuality within the group. That’s why mycelium is so important to me. It represents an intelligent form of collectiveness – something invisible yet profoundly interconnected. Mycelium can act, decide, gather, and separate. It functions as a collective force, much like how we attempt to understand and shape collectivity in society through our projects. The mycelium of the forest is such a good metaphor – it provides the collective power that holds everything together.

BRASIL: I would like to ask one final question. I love the space of the shrine. How does your need to create a shrine – for example, in your work *Shrine for the Goddesses of the Wild* – fit into what we are talking about?

CASTILLO: For many years, I denied the spiritual part of myself – not in the sense of belonging to a specific religion, but in recognizing that there are other forces to which I am attuned. Lately, I have been exploring my animistic part. I believe the wind and the mountains have souls that need to be heard. But I also long for something spiritual that ties into different forms of knowledge. I have spent years immersed in the artistic and academic worlds, leaving behind something very present in my childhood – that syncretic belief system we discussed. I am starting to reintegrate aspects of that in my art practice – artifacts, methodologies – and ways of being in the world. Synchronicity and magic can appear in anything. Shrines, specifically, make these connections material. Creating them is an exercise in nakedness. It is scary to confess that you have this spiritual part, but I am becoming more open. I see these beliefs as a way to better relate to the forces that bind elements together.

BRASIL: But the arts can materialize and give visibility to the spiritual space. For many people, or within many spiritualities, the shrine can be a forest, a river, a waterfall. When you create a space for the spiritual and name it as a space for healing, is that not a way of saying that we need to reconnect and intentionally create a space for that?



Nayari Castillo,
Shrine for the Goddesses of the Wild, Hoke Workhouse, Austria, 2024.



CASTILLO: Yes, for sure, and also a way of acknowledging magic. In the *Shrine for the Goddesses of the Wild*, I worked with a version of an animal deity called *Potnia Theron*, a very ancient, somatic force of deity-related primal forces. Another one, *Ereshkigal*, is part bird, part human. I have been working a lot with these deities of transformation – beings in transformation. The idea of transforming into other beings is ancient in history. It acknowledges the importance of embodying spirituality. Also *Spells for Shapeshifting* deals with feminist epistemologies and advocates for subtle becomings – the possibility of becoming an animal by activation through a spell or a poem. This may have to do with the idea of *buen vivir*, acknowledging that there are different ways of being in the world – some that aren't about extraction or destruction but rather about deeper relations and conviviality.

BRASIL: So which animal are you? Within your project, I became a spider and was very curious to relate to it.

CASTILLO: I chose the spider for you because the spider is about making connections. I chose the bear for myself, knowing that a bear's quality is not strength but the incredible ability of knowing when to rest. In transforming you into a spider, I talked silently about your exceptional abilities: connecting things that are far apart and seemingly unconnectable. This ties back to our original discussion about networks of affection. These features are deeply connected to the individuals I selected as instances of transformation – they highlight specific qualities, almost like enhanced superpowers that these people already possess or could experience. In my case, it was more about a wish to embody that characteristic.

BRASIL: So you work on empowerment. Empowering in the sense of recognizing your superpowers and using them to make society better.

CASTILLO: Yes! It's about superpowers. Moreover, I wish us superpowers and I want them to connect with good magic – features for constructing a feminist better world.



Nayarí Castillo, *Spells for Shapeshifting* at the *Bodies in Revolution* exhibition, Neue Galerie Graz, 2025.



BRASIL: Superpowers that aren't superheroes fighting wars but superpowers that create symbiotic relations – like in the forest.

CASTILLO: Yes, the ability to create connections – to save, to care, to connect, to make things familiar. These are the superpowers of the animals I call upon. In the piece, for example, my mother is the chamois – an animal that shouldn't be naturally in the territory of Graz, yet it is here. It is a quadruped, like a deer, with an incredible ability to adapt, move across land and stones, and climb almost vertically despite coming from arid spaces. I see that same flexibility in my mom – her ability to navigate space to find commonality even in places where she might not naturally belong. That is the quality I call upon for her.

BRASIL: It is a beautiful project. I hope it continues to evolve and even brings more magic to the regeneration of Gaia!

CASTILLO: I hope so, too. Right now, I am focusing on keeping these lines of research growing. *Forest Encounters* for me aligns well with other collaborative projects I am involved in such as *Simultaneous Arrivals* (www.simularr.net). All my work seems to revolve around this same theme – whether it's collaboration with others, more-than-human entities, artists, invisible forces. It is all about coexistence.



Nayarí Castillo, *Spells for Shapeshifting* at the *Wild Spots* exhibition, <rotor>, Graz, 2024.