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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Say what you like about Bolivia's underdevelopment or skewed progress trajectory; unemployment is not as big a problem here as it is elsewhere. Take Spain, where over a quarter of the population is currently out of a job, a rate almost four times higher than in Bolivia, or even the UK and the US, which are a couple of points above the local figure of 6%.

This is no coincidence. Looking for a job here needn't involve printing out stacks of CVs and leaving them at shops and cafes, or sending them to big corporations through online application systems. Finding a job here often means inventing one. And stakes are high; due to weak welfare provisions not having trabajo can mean not having anything to eat, or even where to sleep.

For better or worse, these conditions have created a country of creative micro-entrepreneurs, individuals who constantly need to hone their skills and market knowledge in order to survive. Figures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank estimate that the informal economy makes up around 65% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for up to 80% of all urban and rural employment.

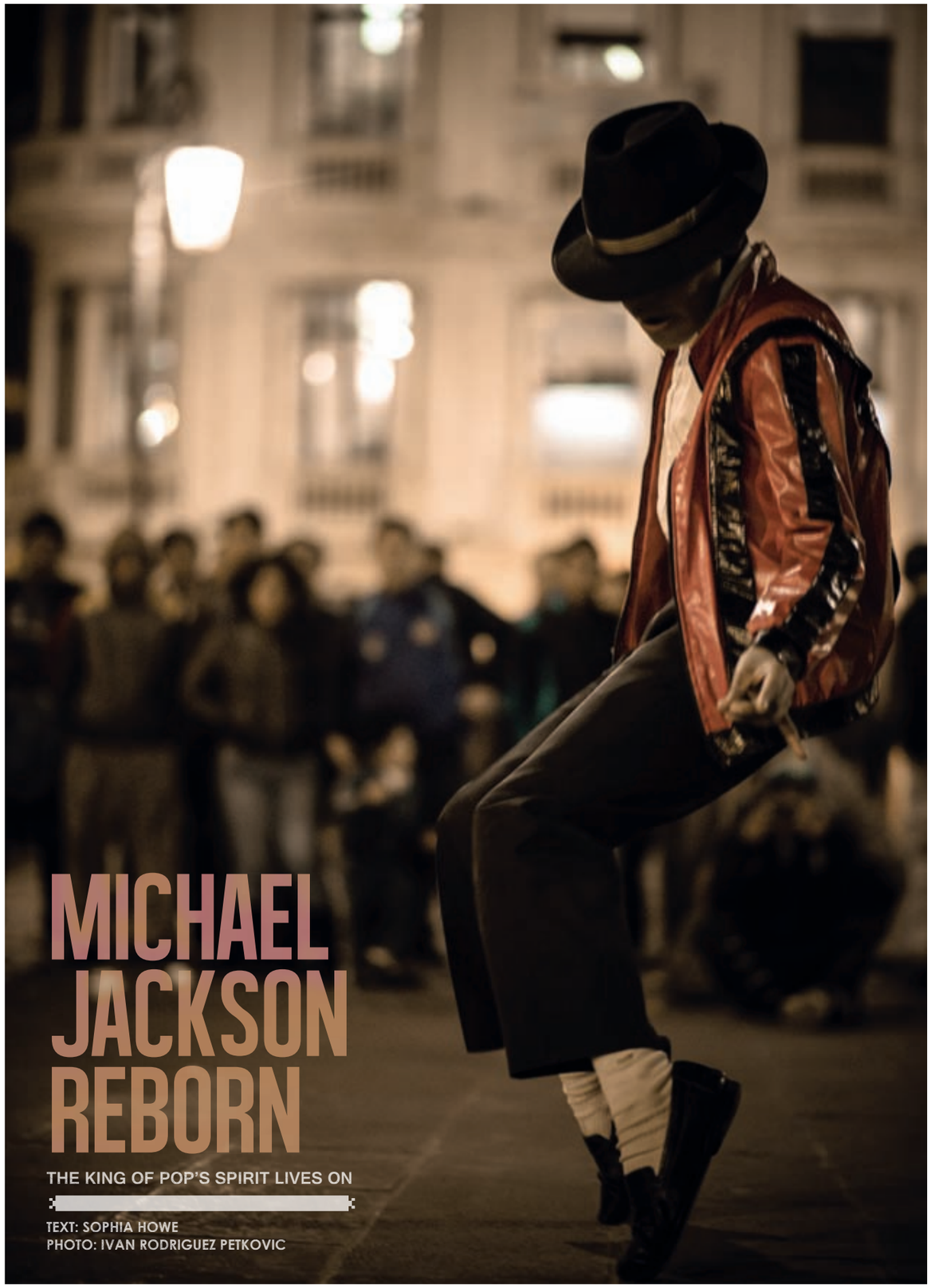
The quick-mindedness and improvisation power of this sector is hard to overstate: one needn't look further than a social protest in the centre of La Paz to discover peddlers springing up out of nowhere when the police start spraying tear gas. They can be found selling vinegar to marchers to reduce the symptoms, and even the new Hydrocarbons Law for them to understand what they are marching about. Further examples are abound: we're told about a man on Calle Murillo who gives advice and information to minibus drivers (how long ago the 290 passed) in exchange for a small tip.

In this issue we have sought to find the pockets of creativity in the local workforce. Standing in the street and small shops, through rain and hail these individuals continue to reinvent themselves, and with them the whole country's imagination travels forward. It is our aim to celebrate these unsung heroes who with little more than a mobile phone, a leather jacket, their hands, a piece of rope, some nail polish, a battery-powered speaker, shoelaces, some face paint, their voice, and local knowledge, leave their houses every morning to seize the day. They are as much a part of our past as they are of our future.

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue
Their meanings can be found in our glossary

GLOSSARY

ANTICUCHERA	Seller of skewered and thinly-sliced cow hearts
BULTO	Bundle
CHIWIÑA	Aymara word for 'meeting place'
ESTATUA VIVIENTE	Living statue.
EXTRAÑA	Strange
GRAN PODER	Local music and dance festival devoted to el Señor del Gran Poder
GUATO / WATO / HUATO	Colloquial term for shoelace
HUAYÑO	Melancholy rhythm played using wind instruments, popular across the the Andean region of South America
INSTITUTOS	Educational institutes (in the context of the piece)
JOVEN	Young man
LUSTRABOTAS	Shoeshine boy or girl
MESERO	Waiter
MICRO	Bus
PAJPAKUS	Derived from the quechua word for owl, it is the name given to wandering salesmen renowned for their oratory skills
PERSONAJE	Character
REBAJA	Price Reduction
SALTO	Jump
SONRISA	Smile
YAPA	Bonus goods obtained from a seller as part of the haggling process



MICHAEL JACKSON REBORN

THE KING OF POP'S SPIRIT LIVES ON

TEXT: SOPHIA HOWE
PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

The year 2009 was shadowed by the tragic death of Michael Jackson, but the legendary entertainer's spirit was reborn in one of the most unlikely places: La Paz, Bolivia. Gonzalo Mamani, age 15, takes to his stage at Plaza San Francisco from Monday to Wednesday every week to re-lives MJ's magical moves.

Gonzalo grew up listening to Jackson's powerfully smooth tunes. 'I like him alot—he inspires me' is the shy young boy's way of summing up the singer and dancer's importance in his life. By studying Jackson's music videos, Gonzalo learned all his signature moves—the moonwalk, the circle slide and the 'up on the toes'. His excellent rendition of 'Thriller' is complemented by his black and red leather jacket, made especially for him at Mercado Illampu. He even has a sequined jacket and two stylish hats for other numbers.
Gonzalo receives some assistance from his proud mother, who helps him pack his props. His uncle has also taught him some magic tricks—'I love both magic and dancing', Gonzalo says. Living with his mother and sister (who is not called Janet), Gonzalo examines each and every toe point and **salto** on the screen to perfect his next performance.

HIS RENDITION OF 'THRILLER' IS TAILORED WITH A RED LEATHER JACKET MADE FOR HIM AT MERCADO ILLAMPU

During the day, Gonzalo is just an ordinary kid, studying at school and playing football with his friends on the weekends. 'Some friends show me new moves and we practise together', he says of his buddies, 'they really support me'.

Gonzalo plans to continue his studies, and then see if he wants to continue dancing. He can usually earn 80 to 100 bolivianos a day from the crowd that gathers where he dances. He can make more than this during large events and festivals. While he did not perform in the **Gran Poder** parade itself, he did perform nearby in Plaza San Francisco, alongside all the other sparkly and eccentric dancers of the celebration.

Even in the helter-skelter chaos of La Paz, Gonzalo has to obtain a permit to perform, which can sometimes be quite difficult. His fans, though, are grateful to see this Bolivian incarnation of Michael Jackson every Monday through Wednesday at his usual spot, dancing away to the joyful songs of the King of Pop. ×

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

Me llamo, Vicente Mayta Rivero nací en el año 1965 un 5 de abril en la ciudad de La Paz.

I can't remember the last time I wrote a letter to someone. Vicente Mayta Rivero does it everyday—on a typewriter. He's been at it for the past twenty-five years. His job has suffered transformations during this time period, largely due to the democratisation of computers, but Rivero still has enough work to support his family.

One might reasonably ask, how does this occupation continue to exist? 'It survives because you need it,' Maya explains. These needs can include typing up credentials, tax forms, and writing plain-old letters. Bolivian people find these tasks are done faster and more efficiently using a typist.

'I've written many letters for people to presidents such as Victor Paz Estenssoro, Hugo Banzer Suarez, and Evo Morales.' Rivero has also typed out many love letters during his time. 'Love letters, yes. Just ask for them', he says with a twinkle in his eye.

I ask him how he began in this line of work. 'In '86 there weren't many job opportunities. A new tax law came in and it was too messy to fill in the forms by hand, so people got students to help them with typewriters. I just stayed with it.'

Mayta once dreamed of becoming a lawyer but he had to continue the with typewriting to support his three children. In giving up his dream, Mayta came to find joy in his job, and joy in watching his three children succeed in the fields of law, commerce, and mechanics. I asked Rivero if he would ever consider practicing law, but he's found so much fulfilment in typewriting, with all its ups and downs, that he won't be leaving his occupation any time soon.

I'VE WRITTEN MANY LETTERS FOR PEOPLE TO PRESIDENTS SUCH AS VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO, HUGO BANZER SUAREZ, AND EVO MORALES

'Overall it is lovely working on the street. The only thing is that we also have to go through is the harshness of the weather. Sometimes its cold and we have to dress up warmly, and sometimes its hot but, anyhow, we're happy.'

Name: Vicente Mayta Rivero . Age: 48 . Job: Typist

TEXT AND PHOTOS: CATERINA STAHL

LACEMAN

TEXT: JONATHAN COUBROUGH
PHOTO: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

'**Guatos**!' a man shouts from a passing car, as Pedro Machaca slowly stumbles down Avenida Montenegro, with an assortment of colourful shoelaces slung over his shoulder. He turns to greet the man, but he is already gone. Don Pedro, now and elderly man, has been selling laces in San Miguel for the past fifteen years.

A humble profession for a father of six, he says that he earns as little as Bs. 20 on bad days, and upwards of Bs. 40 when things are going well. Don Pedro lives near the *Cementerio General* and has to travel 15 km on a **micro**, across opposite ends of La Paz to get to where he sells his laces. 'It's far away!' exclaims Don Pedro, 'but micro will bring me here, Micro comes!'

We walk down the road towards the roundabout at the bottom of calle Montenegro. He hobbles down slowly, but silently determined. With this same patience, he walks up and down the sloping streets of San Miguel every day. Perhaps most distinctive is his cheerfulness to be engaged by passers by, a trait for which he has become a local celebrity and institution in this neighbourhood. He is known by the names of 'Don Pedro', 'Don Guato', 'Don Batons', or simply 'Guato', to the thousands of people who, like him, walk up and down these streets.

Pedro Machaca brings a typical Paceñan charm to an area of the city that has an atypical consumerist feel to it. He is a familiar and welcome sight to many of the locals there. 'He's a very sweet man, and he always has a smile'; 'this man radiates tenderness', and 'someone who deserves much respect' are a few things that Paceños have said about this **personaje**. His fame is such that a picture of him taken by Silvia Salinas Mulder (and subsequently posted on the Humanos de La Paz Facebook page) already has over 1,000 likes, not to mention the dozens of comments of appreciation which followed his online appearance.

FREEDOM IN CHAINS

THE SILVER MAN STANDS STILL

For 27-year-old actor Ronald Millares performing is a way of life. In his continuous pursuit for artistic independence, he has found freedom on the streets—his perfect stage—acting as a chained silver soldier—his perfect role.

TEXT AND PHOTO: RYLE LAGONSIN

Amid the noise and the ruckus of El Prado's many bustling streets, one peculiar-looking fellow is causing quite a commotion among passersby going to and from the bridge by the Reloj de la Perez. Decked out in old worker's overalls and high-top shoes, hands and feet bound in papier-mâché chains, and painted entirely in grey, the figure looks as if he had jumped out from the concrete wall behind him. A human rock atop an improvised pedestal, he waits in silence, only to break his still form with the clinking of a coin.

There was never really much expectation in Ronald Millares's artistic capability. Growing up in Tarija, the fifth of ten children, Millares's early years saw him as a timid boy. He was an introvert, who rarely spoke in class and hated being in front of many people. One unforgettable incident, Millares recalls, was when a teacher asked the entire class to dance. Determined not to participate and desperate to be left alone, he resorted to the one thing he knew would definitely win him his case. He cried.'When I was a boy', he says, 'no one could ever make me dance'.

At nine years old, he began learning his father's trade as a plumber. With his earnings, he was able to support himself, but when he started university he had to find more stable work. And so he became a hotel **mesero** and a gas-boy, among other occupations—not once showing any interest in singing, dancing, or even being the focus of attention.

For this reason, no one could have predicted the change in Millares's outlook when, at seventeen, in the middle of his psychology studies, the once-shy young man found himself longing to become a performer—an actor to be precise. 'I think what really inspired me to make theatre a lifestyle was seeing the work of Teatro De Los Andes', he now says. 'That group revolutionized Bolivian theatre during the early '90s.'

After finishing his studies, Millares soon found himself participating in acting workshops and theatre productions across Bolivia. He even formed his own theatre group, Teatro Tres Cuartos. And although his family did not support his decision at the time, Millares decided to fully devote himself to the acting craft by the time he was twenty three.

Theatre thus became life for Ronald Millares. Beyond the curtains and the applause, he stretched his stage out far beyond the walls of the salas and into the streets. He began honing his passion for acting while making a living by playing the same character over and over again: the chained soldier, the silver **estatua viviente**.

'Being an actor is 80 percent public relations, and in the streets, people are never conventional. It is not the same in all areas. It's not like in theatres where people enter, conditioned to see a play', Millares says. 'Sometimes, they poke me, touch me, make fun of me. So I have to be alert and sense what is going on around, even if I am not moving. If they try to do something bad, I firmly put them in their place. But it is because I like interacting with people. Sometimes, they talk to me. They tell me their stories. And I learnt a lot. So, even though I learned almost everything in the theatre, the street is where I get the artistic experience.'

MONEY IS NOT IMPORTANT TO ME. IF I HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT AND TO GO WHERE I NEED TO GO, IT IS ENOUGH

'There is not enough appreciation for street artists in Bolivia. Only for mainstream actors like those in television and films', says Alvaro Ramos, a

Fresh from a role in the recently ended No Salgas (Don't Go), a local theatrical production on human trafficking by Bolivian director Freddy Chipana, Ronald Millares will soon be working on a project with the Red de Teatro del Oprimido. He will also be performing in theatre productions in the Ferias Dominicales del Prado, organized by Elvis Antezana of ARLEQUÍN Productions, before heading to the International Festival of Theatre, Arts, and Popular Culture in Chiclayo, Peru.

colleague of Millares from Teatro del Oprimido and a social worker at the San Pedro Prison. 'The general view is that street artists are hippies who do drugs, or they feel bad and think, "Oh, we must give them money". It is tough for unknown artists to get recognition or even small spaces to perform in the street. They always need permission from the government. It is great for artists who can live from what they like, but it is hard.'

La Paz, in particular, is not very hospitable to street performers, according to Millares.

'I earn more or less 100 to 150 bolivianos in this city on a good day', he says. 'But it is only in La Paz where the government charges artists for using public spaces. They charge me Bs 1.50 per square meter, which I have to pay at a bank for every day that I perform. The best way to avoid charges is to have a friend working within the government. Corruption is everywhere.'

At the clink of a coin, the silver man turns slowly—as if instinctively—towards the little girl who dropped it into his box. He opens his eyes and reaches his hand out, gesturing her to come nearer for a handshake. The little girl smiles widely as he whispers his thanks to her before becoming motionless once more.

'What makes a Latin American artist unique is the creativity, the originality', says fellow actor Juan Jose Ameller. 'Bolivian actors don't have that kind of formation. We don't have formal classes for people who want to become actors. We work with what we have. We get books, we search for workshops. We create our own stories, our own style. We do it ourselves, because no one else will do it for us.'

Dusk draws near. But though it seems the spectacle is not yet over for a few curious people passing by the bridge, Millares decides it is time to break out of his chains, retrieve the day's earnings, and head to where home is for the night.

'If I couldn't be an actor, I would die. It would be like becoming a cripple, not being able to do this kind of work. But I don't like fame', he says, without a hint of pretense in his voice. 'Fame is superficial. Fame or money does not necessarily mean success, because success is being content with yourself. It is being able to go back home and to give thanks to God for giving me the opportunity to do what makes me happy. In that way, I believe I am successful.'

NIMBLE CREATIONS

TEXT AND PHOTOS: CATERINA STAHL

Name: Tania Mamani
Age: 35
Job: Nail artist

This is just too good to be true, is my first thought upon discovering that for as little as 1 USD, I can get my nails done by women at little manicure stands in storefronts, and even on the street. When I first meet Tania Mamani she is with a client. She agrees to talk to me while she replaces an old set of nail extensions. I'm afraid I'll cause Tania to lose focus, but she talks very animatedly while doing her job with uncanny precision.

Tania began her career after studying at a beauty institution and specializing in acrylic nail extensions. 'It's an art', she tells me with full conviction. I'd never really thought about nail technician in that way before, but watching her work after she tells me this makes me realise it's essentially a combination of sculpting and painting on miniature canvases.

She made the full time switch from being an auxiliary nurse to doing nail extensions about a year ago. Leaving nursing was beneficial for Tania in many ways. Not only does she love her new job but she earns more money and has more time to take care of her two sons, who are ten and twelve.

Tania's abilities are in high demand even when she's not on the clock. Tania has many examples of her work, which she eagerly displays for me on mini nail models. To be honest, I'm a little giddy myself at the thought of knowing a nail technician as good as Tania—I'd want them to do my nails all the time. 'Yes, my friends love that I can do their nails. There are even boys younger than fifteen who want one nail done'.

During the interview I notice a certain familiarity between Tania and her client, Aime. When I ask about it Tania tells me that most of her clients are regulars. 'They like my designs. It's more personal. Many come back two times a week.' In fact, Tania's fan base is so big she hardly has any walk-ins. 'My clients know about me before they come. They come and find me.' Aime proudly tells me, 'girls like cute long nails and someone to do it for them. I am very happy with Tania's work'.

I'd been told by various Bolivian locals that the religious festival El Gran Poder brings in much work for nail technicians because of the elaborate costumes of over 50,000 dancers planned right down to the fingernails. I assumed Tania had done much work during the day but when I asked her she simply said, 'no, I didn't work during it'. She knew everyone would be vying for business that day but she decided to relax and enjoy the time with her family.

WATCHING HER WORK MAKES ME REALISE IT'S ESSENTIALLY A COMBINATION OF SCULPTING AND PAINTING ON MINIATURE CANVASES.

FROM THE STREETS TO *The Radio*

A Young Man's Dancing Journey

TEXT AND PHOTO: SOPHIA HOWE

Franz Rodrigo Chavez began his career singing on the **micros** of La Paz ten years ago. However, this was not as successful as having his own corner near the bustling Prado. Now you can find Franz lighting up Calle Comercio with his blasting speakers and smooth moves.

Five years ago, Franz had to start dancing in the street in order to earn a reliable source of income. Although he still lives with his parents in La Paz, he wants to rely on them less and be able to support them more. This 19-year-old spirited **joven** dances all day, from the morning up until his speaker battery dies in the evening, earning enough bolivianos to keep himself going.

'It seemed weird to people because I was the first time they had seen a man dancing as if he was at a party.' Franz is not yet bored of dancing to the lively beats of cumbia, and he continues to attract a crowd. 'Cumbia makes me happy', he says, performing to groups such as Sin Control and Nene Malo. Christmas and other festivities prove to be the best time for busking, but on the eve of Corpus Christi, only a two-boliviano coin lies in his hat.

'I don't want to continue dancing in the street for very long', Franz says. He thinks he will leave this job and in the future dedicate himself to being a radio presenter. Already Franz has worked with his friend's Internet radio station, Salta Tropical, claiming that 'my experience on the radio has enhanced my street performance'.

Finding work experience to succeed in this career path is proving difficult, but there are **institutos** where Franz can learn about this occupation, and the money from street dancing will hopefully pay for the opportunity.

'I don't only dance, I entertain', Franz says. As people rush by, glancing at this young man's moves, he longs for them to drop a coin into his hat. There is no routine that he follows: 'It's all in the moment, without control.'

"One envies the aparapita, that unattainable simplicity, that sovereign lack of concern [...] during his delirious transit through the streets of the city, the aparapita leaves in his wake footsteps which are possibly legendary [...] "Who's one to say whether he will take over the city. I would like my eyes to see what I see: it's him, it's the city assimilating itself, becoming the true city with to the irruption of the peasant. Of the peasant who in the city became an aparapita"

FROM JAIME SAENZ - EL APARAPITA DE LA PAZ (1968)

PHOTO: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

FRESHLY SQUEEZED

TEXT AND PHOTOS: CATERINA STAHL

Name: Emma Ramos
Age: 52
Job: Making fresh juice

Craving some fresh hand-squeezed juice? Back home in Maine, USA I could only buy such a thing at an organic hippie fair (and only during the summer), or by making it myself. Since arriving in Bolivia a few weeks ago I've become spoiled by the abundance of fresh juice. Orange and grapefruit? Mango and banana? The fruit combinations seem endless, and come with milk, water, or just pure undiluted juice, or *zumo*. The creators behind these healthy treats are men and women, usually sitting behind a small stand or pushing a juice cart.

In my quest to learn more about this occupation I decided to talk with a real *juicerista* to make it more personal. Enter Emma Ramos.

Doña Emma appears lost in deep thought at first look, but her smile lines readily deepen as soon as she breaks into a well-worn **sonrisa**. For twenty years she has been squeezing (or one might even say squeezing by) for a living. Now, at fifty-two, Doña Emma is still making fresh juice to support her family. There is a lot of competition among street vendors in general, but juicers in particular. Many are known to be fiercely territorial.

DOÑA EMMA APPEARS LOST IN DEEP THOUGHT AT FIRST LOOK, BUT HER SMILE LINES READILY DEEPEN AS SOON AS SHE BREAKS INTO A WELL-WORN SONRISA.

Doña Emma started selling juice when she detected a location with untapped juice-selling potential. She has never looked back and has now been selling juice for two decades. 'I used to bring my son when he was three and now he is twenty three!' Ramos lives with her companion and has two children. 'I used to be a housewife but we lacked money'.

Doña Emma works from eleven 'til five, almost every day. 'I work for rent and food but it's not enough all the time.' As she gets older the job takes its toll on her. She has to push the large cart full of oranges and grapefruits by herself most days. 'I have pain in my belly and side.' I was amazed at the initiative and strength Doña Emma showed. Here's a woman about thirty years my senior who's more physically active in a day then I possibly am in a week.

After downing my orange-grapefruit *zumo* I handed the cup back to Doña Emma feeling refreshed in many ways. The juice of course left a clean healthy feeling in my body but I also left with a fresh perspective on what initiatives people will take to support their families.

WHAT'S FAIR AND PRETTY

TRADING AT TARABUCO MARKET

TEXT: JONATHAN COUBROUGH
PHOTOS: MICHAEL NEWPORT CC @FLICKR

Every Sunday Mariano Roque Ylofayo travels 60 km from the city of Sucre to Tarabuco to sell traditional local clothing at the town's legendary market. The historical charm and significance of Mercado de Tarabuco has been attracting buyers and sellers alike from across the surrounding communities for several centuries.

What's perhaps most distinctive about this market is that money is not needed in order to leave with goods. Whilst money can be used, many prefer to bypass using money and simply exchange their products through a bartering process, or *trueque*. 'I think that it is better when goods are exchanged for goods and money is not involved', Mariano tells me. 'There are times when I find that with money one can be deceived'.

There is a certain sense to this logic: people at the market know what they have and what it would take for them to give it up, so why let money complicate the process? However, once Mariano starts to explain how the exchanges take place I begin to think that perhaps there are no real practical reasons for this bartering system, but rather that it is an attempt to keep alive a cherished tradition for which the market has become well known.

The value of products are first converted into monetary terms, and then converted back into the value of the other products involved. 'This poncho would cost Bs. 20, let's say 3 kg of carrots is Bs. 6; so my poncho would cost 10 kg of carrots' Mariano explains. So rather than a way to bypass the need for money, monetary value is paradoxically at the core of this type of exchange, being used as a proxy to decide the relative value of each good.

In addition to this, there is limited room for negotiating a **yapa** or **rebaja** for products when exchanging them, as the value of the products are predetermined by the leaders of the market in a meeting with the Mayor of Tarabuco. 'All the prices are closely regulated by those in charge', explains Mariano.

The market of Tarabuco was founded next to the mountain Qara Qara on the 29th June 1578 by the governor Don Francisco Toledo. Centuries later, its surrounding countryside was host to three of the most crucial battles during the Wars of Independence. Much of this history is remembered and celebrated during Tarabuco's many festivals. Along with its history, the town's architecture and its natural beauty have led to Tarabuco being declared a site of 'National Heritage of Historic and Cultural Priority in Bolivia'.

'As well as celebrating the anniversary of Tarabuco during the festival of San Pedro on the 29th June, there is also the celebration of the Virgen del Rosario in the month of October,' Mariano explains. 'There are many traditions in Tarabuco. These are times to be spent dancing, drinking and sharing with family.'

CARVING FREEDOM

TEXT AND PHOTOS: CATERINA STAHL

Name: Luis Aerrere
Age: 33
Hometown: Buenos Aires Argentina
Job: Artisan traveler

It began as just a hobby for Luis Aerrere. He got into artisan crafts such as wood carving and jewelry when his older friends showed him how, and later discovered he really liked it. He realised that instead of just using his leisure time to create art he could sell his creations and earn a living. At fifteen Luis left his job as a phone receptionist. When he was seventeen he began traveling locally while making his art and by twenty years old he was selling it for a living.

SOMETIMES ITS SELLS, SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T', HE TELLS ME WITH AN EASY SMILE.

'Freedom', is what drove Luis to leave his old job. The combination of his artistic talent and his enjoyment for the activity gave him the perfect conclusion to quit. 'I am the owner of myself, my time, and my life. Total independence'.

He used to sell his crafts at the Monte Grande fair in Great Buenos Aires until last year, when he left to travel South America. He initially wanted to go to Venezuela but only made it up to Ecuador due to family problems. On his way back home Luis decided to stop by Bolivia for a while. 'I like the food, the landscape, and the house structures—they look old fashioned. The people are very sociable, kind, and gentle. They are also respectful. I also like how the people pronounce words here.'

Luis spends his days selling and making his art. 'Sometimes its sells, sometimes it doesn't', he tells me with an easy smile. A perk of the job is getting to talk to people from all over the world. While we were talking a few Brazilians walked up to Luis and his friends and asked if they were also from Brazil.

Luis is friends with a couple, plus their two kids, ages eight and fifteen. They met seven years ago at a hostel in Argentina. Luis calls the couple and their children his family. They have been traveling and selling their artwork for a living for the past two years. 'We can support the family with crafts', he tells me. This very unique family currently lives in a hotel in La Paz. The kids are learning the trade and are currently specialising in making bracelets. As for schooling, Luis says, 'Children can study any place in the world'.

This kind of nomadic life has taught Luis to value the small things that most people usually take for granted. 'For example, if you only have money for one coffee you are thankful for this whereas others might want more than this.' According to Luis, structured jobs don't leave room for gleaning such insights from life. Now that he sees things differently he values his freedom immensely. 'If someday I don't feel like working I don't have to. I love to live my life from making art.'

CREATING NEW OUT OF OLD

TEXT AND PHOTOS: SOPHIA HOWE

For the past year Oscar Herrera has been running an original stand, called ZAFAR, along with his partner Miguel Sanchez Gomez. They sell the most eccentric designs and colourful patterns that stand out from the overabundance of Alpaca jumpers and aztec rucksacks.

Squeezed next to a lady selling silver on Calle Sagarnaga; Oscar sells his own vests, denim jackets, shorts, and makeshift purses to people from all around the world, many of whom come spilling out of Cafe Luna. He calls it 'new creativity'. Oscar's designs are a combination of Bolivian prints and photos with modern art and retro patterns. 'We work with good quality and diversity.' Items here are one of a kind, which upset a friend who couldn't quite fit into her favourite pair of shorts.

Recycling is very important to Oscar, which is evident when he takes you to his other small shop in Galería Gladys on the same street. 'The gallery is for people to feel comfortable to try things on, and it's a little warmer.' Cassettes, floppy disks and old records have been transformed into distinctive purses and bags, costing only 35 Bs.

The ever-so-soft vests are completely handmade. Oscar buys the cotton himself and cuts out the designs; 'that is why there are so many different shapes'. The shorts are created from a collection of old jeans donated by friends and family, and even his own cast-offs. Designer brands such as; Calvin Klein, Levis, Guess and American Eagle all get recycled. The cut of the shorts are very modern and fashionable, ranging from hotpants to the more high-waisted style.

Should I be insulted that he's just recommended me a size L when trying on a pair of shorts? Not at all—he sized me up correctly, and the pair fit comfortably.

'The designs come from our imagination and our learning comes with experience.' Oscar tells me that it all started out of curiosity. After leaving University, he started to design prints using his computer out of the despair of having to learn maths; thus ZAFAR was born. The initiative of creating something different in the midst of all the llama and alpaca socks and jumpers has really worked in favour for these two creative and fashionable Bolivian men.

To this day, ZAFAR products have reached Mancora, Peru and Medellín, Colombia, and Oscar has future plans of opening a store in Santa Cruz. One huge dream for Oscar, if the difficulties of obtaining a Visa subside; is the chance to open shops in Europe, such as in Camden Market (London), Berlin, Toulouse and Strasbourg. Oscar has been one of the most genuine and friendly people I have met here in La Paz. I have no doubt his inspiring enthusiasm and innovative mind will take him across the world. Watch this space.

SEEING THE CITY THROUGH A BALACLAVA

FLISS LLOYD GOES ON A TOUR WITH HORMIGÓN ARMADO TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CITY LOOKS LIKE TO A SHOE SHINER.

PHOTO: CARLOS SANCHEZ NAVAS

It was an afternoon well spent when I decided to do a tour of La Paz through the eyes of one of the city's 'seen-but-never-heard' **Lustrabotas**. Yes, admittedly I had my own preconceptions of the tour before taking it. Like many gringos who have spent a month or two traveling in Bolivia, I too asked myself: 'Why bother with another city tour? I've been in Bolivia for nearly four months now—I basically know the whole of this country.

It didn't take me long to realise how short sighted I had been. Starting at 2pm, I spent a sunny afternoon walking the height of La Paz, seeing the beautiful city through the eyes of someone who is more familiar with the labyrinths of the Gran Cementerio and the back alleys of Mercado Uruguay than with the Witches Market on Calle Sagarnaga and the tourist hotspots of the sprawling Prado. I was able to glimpse sides of the city to which I'd been oblivious since my arrival.

For 80 Bolivianos (£8) I had my own personal tour guide, Roger, a young Lustrabota who has been working with Hormigón Armado for three and a half years, earning him a degree of leadership among other shoe shiners with more limited experience.

Hormigón Armado is a foundation that supports the city's shoe shiners on several fronts: the organise an environment in which boys and girls who work on the street can co-produce a publication through training initiatives, and also by providing them with the publications themselves, which the shoe-shiners can sell to supplement their income. They have also created a community in which those who are part of the project can attend workshops and have fun days out.

Through his involvement with the organisation, Roger was not only a shoe shiner, but an alternative and highly specialised city tour guide. For those who aren't just passing through La Paz on the travellers trail this tour shows both initiative and many nooks and crannies of the city untouched by the traveller's trampling foot.

According to Roger, the route of the tour is pre-decided between the Lustrabotas and the leader of Hormigón Armado. 100% of the proceeds go to the guide. Until a few years ago, Roger was living out in the countryside with his family where unemployment runs high and earning money is a challenge. In search of a job and a means to help their family, young kids like Roger take it upon themselves to move to La Paz to try their luck as shoe shiners. Of course, children end up working in this occupation through various reasons including homelessness and violence at home.

Our first stop was the Cemetery, where Roger explained in detail the customs and traditions that surround the death in Bolivia. He also named several famous people who had been buried there, such as former Presidents and Military Generals. Next we went to visit nine further points of interest, such as 'Fish Street', where the fish from Lake Titicaca is prepared and sold in bulk at economic prices. We hung out at crowded Ice Cream Stalls where mountains of fuschia-pink cinnamon ice cream beckons pedestrians to linger. We walked along 'Cholita Hat Street', where hats ranging between 300 and 1500 Bolivianos don the heads of Cholitas of every economic background. We visited the Mercado Uruguay, tucked away in a back alley, where we came face-to-face with live ducks and fluffy guinea pigs which were soon to become someone's dinner.

I began to fawn over the garments on the Cholita Clothes Street, only to learn that the metres and metres of silky, decorated material led to a surprisingly expensive way to dress; refreshment came on the street adorned with endless rows of inexpensive, organic fruit which, along with the fish, would later be brought down to Mercado Rodriguez, to be sold at a higher price.

To show me where the shoe shiners lunched at a discount, Roger took me to Comedor Popular, a food court near Max Paredes. Last but not least, we arrived at the infamous San Pedro prison, where I was told prisoners often live with their families, including children, in order not to be separated.

It was a thoroughly interesting tour that took me to parts of the city I had never known about, let alone thought to visit. At times I found myself walking off the beaten track on overturned piles of cement and gravel, behind the stalls where vendors sell their wares, or through crowds where I was asked to hold my bag close to me. In other words, I was walking through the real La Paz, as seen through the balaclava'd eyes of the shoeshiner.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HUMAN PHONE BOX

Originally written in 2008, this piece documented the gradual decline of a once-popular occupation: that of the chalequero. Their work consisted in providing phone calls (by the minute) to passersby who didn't have a mobile phone or were out of credit. Now almost entirely extinct, the chalequero can only be found in the city's outskirts.

TEXT AND PHOTOS: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

I walked naively from Plaza Del Estudiante to San Fransisco church in search of a 'chalequero'.

On the way I came across innumerable phone boxes, call centers, kiosks with up to six phones, and even a shoe shiner who sold calls from a telephone built into his stand. I walked up from Calle Comercio and asked one of the street performers if he had seen a chalequero in the area. 'They rarely come here. Go to the Plaza De Los Heroes, near the heads... know where I mean?'
I followed his instructions and headed over once more to San Fransisco Church and its surroundings. In one corner, under the midday shadow I saw a solitary sun-burnt man wearing a neon green waistcoat. 'I was looking for you!' I said, whilst he nimbly marked a number for a man in a hurry wearing a three-piece suit and holding a briefcase.

He looked at me suspiciously, taking another phone out of his pocket, gesturing at me to dictate a telephone number to him. The man in the tie was now mid-conversation. I said I wanted to ask him some questions as I took out a tape recorder from my rucksack.

He told me his name was Wilfredo. 'I have been a chalequero for two years. I work at San Francisco from 11 in the morning. The best times for me are from 4 until 8, there's more activity around here. Chalequeros have existed since 2002 or 2003, but there are fewer of us all the time'. I ask him about territory. He interrupts me 'yes, of course, if another chalequero arrives [he mimics a violent gesture]....we have always protected this area. There are five of us here'.

There are two main reasons for the extinction of the chalequeros. On the one hand, the increased ease of installation of mobile telephone spots means that any shop-keeper can offer passersby phone calls. It's like phone boxes springing up everywhere. On the other hand, the existence of these local personages has seen itself threatened by Supreme Decree #28994, which states that calls must be charged by the second instead of the minute. For the time being, they are not regulated or taxed by the Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (SITTEL) who have exempted them from this law as they are providing a private service and taking part in an alternative form of employment.

Chalequeros also exist in other countries. In Peru there are people who offer special SIM cards for chalequeros which claim to guarantee their profits. A few years ago they became a concern for Colombian mobile companies who saw them as resellers of their services.

Yet it could be argued chalequeros offer a value-added service. If the other line is busy they will redial a couple of minutes, later, and quickly re-approach you if it starts ringing. I've seen chalequeros following businessmen who walk hurriedly to some appointment while using one of their phones, somewhat like a mobile phone box. Sometimes the phone found its way to you instead of the other way around.

But what would happen with the chalequero if the rising number of puntos telefónicos comes to invade this small fort? 'well the clients will drop, but because I have another job I'm only here during my free time.'

And what is the life of a chalequero like? 'Well there's the heat... it's a sacrifice. In the wet season you also have to find places to hide from all the rain. It pays well but that's because there are not many of us.
'Sometimes I have clients who call asking the other person "where are you?", on the other line they respond with "I am here! Waiting for you". The client turns around and realises the other person was behind them all along. Sometimes couples fight; one day someone spoke for an hour with his girlfriend. I charged him sixty Bolivianos and went home happy.'

EL CHALEQUERO

Carcajeante, jovial y paspado, el chalequero camina flotante bajo el sol de la tarde. Vive encadenado a celulares Nokia, que a su vez son prisioneros de sofocantes estuches chinos.

Mas estos aparatos no son sus carcelarios, sino tentáculos que lo extienden y alimentan.

Con dos o más satélites se enfrenta al bullicio de almas interminables al mediodía. Con descaro tienta a sus víctimas, atraídas por su plumaje neón y ronco cantar. "Llamadasaun, Llamadasun"

Y pasos apresurados no se dejan esperar. El chalequero accede a toda demanda recitada en dígitos, que para él son poemas y canciones. Su danzar es promiscuo, su agilidad delirante. Sus ojos vítreos se esconden bajo la sombra de un gorro gris de tela. Y como agujeros negros, sus oídos esconden la dicha y desdicha de infinitas conversaciones, a Bs1 el minuto.

THE MAN WITH THE CITY ON HIS BACK

TEXT: WILMER MACHACA
PHOTO AND TRANSLATION: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

APARAPITA IS THE NAME GIVEN TO THE HUNDREDS OF MEN WHO CARRY HUGE LOADS FOR A LIVING ACROSS THE CITY'S MAIN COMMERCIAL ARTERIES. WILMER MACHACA TALKS TO TWO DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF THESE PERSONAGES TO UNDERSTAND WHETHER THERE'S A FUTURE FOR THIS MYTHICAL URBAN CHARACTER.

The Max Paredes macro-district without a doubt contains some of the clearest displays of La Paz's character and spirit. It not only feeds from a living past, but continues to renew itself without losing its essence. In this economic quarter of the city, life begins at early hours of the morning and ends with the first lights of dawn.

The variety and volume of commerce in the Max Paredes is unrivalled across La Paz. Streets such as Huyustus, Graneros, Garcilazo de la Vega, Isaac Tamayo, Tumusla, Eloy Salmon, Rodríguez, Churubamba and Gallardo offer us everything from clothes, electrical appliances, food, animals, stationery, hardware and medicinal remedies.

These districts bring idiosyncratic order to the chaotic panorama which pervades across this part of the city
Its streets are populated by several illustrious characters: food ladies, peddlers, chalequeros, **anticucheras,** knife sharpeners, **pajpakus**, and aparapitas.

The mythic aparapitas have served as an inspiration to many. There's a museum that carries their name, and through the prose and poetry of Jaime Saenz they have become immortalised in the popular imagination. David Mondaca later transported them to theatrical plays, and even the local band Atajo wrote about their sorrows in their songs.

As a paceño born and raised in this cold and noisy city I have always naturally cohabited with these characters without reflecting on them or their historical significance. Through reading Sáenz I learned about this underwordly inhabitant of the city, often caught in the twin vices of alcohol and coca. Saenz believed the aparapita held the key to understanding the true spirit of the city. Today, I don't believe Saenz's representation of the aparapita represents him well.

Behind them are the long distances they had to travel with heavy loads on their backs. Today, the cargadores, as they are also known, are organised in fixed shifts and places, where their services are sought. Their routes have been shortened, not only in length but also in number. Their way of working has been transformed by wheeled carts which have lightened the burden of the loads they have to carry.

I met with Don Lucio Quispe Mamani, a 65 year-old Achacachi native who works on the Pasaje Ortega, where he has been working for over 40 years; longer than any of his fellow aparapitas.

During my visit to Max Paredes I was able to see three types of aparapitas: those who are contracted by merchants to move loads from and to their stalls in the mornings and evenings; those who stay near the shops throughout the day, carrying furniture or heavy electrical appliances for customers to taxis and trucks; and those known as runners, who accompany shoppers throughout the market as they collect various goods.

Those in the first category make up the majority, perhaps due to the stability of their employment. They are organised in syndicates and take part in various challenges and football championships against aparapitas from other streets.

> **He defends himself with his occupation, and doesn't depart from this independence. He only works when he feels like it and so long as he has gathered enough money for liqueur and coca, he doesn't care about the rest. He remains, ensconced against a wall, turned into a prince with his rope and carrying-cloth on his side, his only possessions. He watches life from afar, and he chews, and chews the coca.**
>
> **~**
>
> **He is considered a larva, an isolated phenomenon en route to disappearance, engulfed by progress, or who knows why. Necessarily a typical example of underdevelopment, but by no means a parasite.**
>
> **~**
>
> **A figure emerges suggesting contradictory readings, of abandon and destruction, of calmness, death, joy, arrogance and humility.**
>
> ***FRAGMENTS FROM JAIME SAENZ - EL APARAPITA DE LA PAZ (1968)***

I also met Severo Catari Vilca, a 42 year old aparapita from Provincia Omasuyos who worked in Mercado Rodriguez for 20 years and has been at Pasaje Ortega for the past 5 years. As Don Severo tells me, they have also united to conform a communal organisation to let and sublet storage depots. The rent per load is Bs 5, and that each aparapita is in charge of around 50 of these. The cost to carry a load from or to the depot is Bs 3. Severo is currently responsible for carrying 30 of these, but points out that some reach 50 to 70, adding that "knees and lungs" are the main mechanism used to understand one's limits.

Severo is a short-statured Aymara with a sturdy build. As one of several siblings, he arrived in the city at the age of 17, driven by the poverty his family was going through in his community. He worked for a time as a plasterer but his main activity has always been carrying loads. He only works as an aparapita during the early mornings and late evenings, seven days a week without a rest. He spends the hours in between working in his locksmith's shop in El Alto, a responsibility he shares with his brother.

Severo is now married and has two sons. After working in the area for several years, he found a spot for his wife in Mercado Rodriguez. Severo reflects on how things have changed in his line of work, not just due to the carts, but with the presence of security guards who are paid by stall owners to guard their goods throughout the night, meaning they don't have to transport their wares to or from depots, and therefore don't need to hire aparapitas. Their number has been reduced from 50 down to 20 in the Pasaje Ortega, something we see repeated across all commercial arteries. As Don Lucio points out "now everyone wants to leave their **bultos**". The wooden stands and **chiwiñas** are being replaced by metallic structures and in some cases have been turned into closed booths.

Neither Lucio nor Severo are optimistic regarding the future of their occupations. They know that in some moment their services will become redundant. Don Severo tells me that several merchants on the Calle Ortega hired him to modify the structure of their stalls from wood to metal; perhaps ironically Severo himself has contributed to the disappearance of the job which has given him so much in his life. There's a question mark over the continued existence of this local character; it's likely the next few years will either see a disappearance of deeper transformation of their jobs towards further opportunities to renew themselves.×

THE CEMETERY SINGER

TEXT AND PHOTO: RYLE LAGONSIN

Fabián Luizaga's repertoire consists of various kinds of boleros, **huayños**, Christian tunes and even waltzes. Among the most popular requests he receives are 'El Llanto de Mi Madre', 'Mi Querido Viejo' and many other similarly heart-wrenching songs.

Locally, his line of work is known as 'servicio de canto funebre'. For this guitar-wielding man of the La Paz General Cemetery, singing to the deceased is only one part of the job. Singing for the mourning is, arguably, a more important role he fulfills.

'These songs make the family cry. When I sing these songs, they remember their loved ones. They think about the person and they cry', Fabian Luizaga says, laying his guitar on a bench and sitting down. 'It is important to take out your grief. Do not keep it in, because those bad feelings can have bad effects on one's health.'

Luizaga is no stranger to death, having seen family and friends of his die through the years from various causes. Singing, he thought, could be a way to help people cope with losing loved ones. It didn't hurt that the job paid a good sum either. A former police officer, he found the opportunity to make a living off elegies and dirges sixteen years ago on All Saints' Day. 'I saw everyone singing at the cemetery', Luizaga says. 'It seemed to be a good kind of job'.

Working eight hours a day and earning a monthly average of around 2,100 bolivianos, he is able to support his family with what he gets from this occupation—importantly his 31-year-old daughter, who is studying social communications at university. And although his own singing group, Grupo Nostalgias, performs other song services for many other kinds of occasions, 52-year-old Luizaga sees himself continuing his cemetery job for a very long time.

'I earn more with this job than in the police. And besides, I have a great faith in God, and I believe I show it by doing this', he says. 'I will sing for the families. I will sing for their dead until I no longer have a voice.'

PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC