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MAMANI MAMANI

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La Paz – Bolivia, September 2010



## Editorial by Lorange Dao and Andrew Cummings

We've chosen to begin this issue with an article that describes one journalist's wander through artistic La Paz, transforming its streets and squares into the aisles of a gallery and rooms in a museum, because that's precisely what this issue is: an 'artistic wander' of sorts. This month, every Bolivian Espresso (n. person who works at the Bolivian Express) has been sent on a journey through the city sampling all the creative canapés it has to offer. Along the way, we've crossed paths with all sorts of artists, from street jugglers and sculptors to experimental hip-hop dancers and amateur cooks (given the theme, permit us some artistic license: they're known as the culinary arts, after all). We're also publishing the first in a series of articles about how it feels to be a foreigner living in Bolivia, starting with a brief overview of a peculiar flavour of Spanish spoken on the streets of La Paz. The subject of this month's centre-spread, the internationally-recognised Mamani Mamani, has generously offered to design our front cover: un niño condor, as young as our very own Bolivian Express. "The young condor," he explains, "should learn poetry, songs, and dances"; for Mamani Mamani, it represents the arts. Three months on and we're still finding our feet, but with a little support, we hope to take flight like the condor fledgeling on the cover – across Bolivia and across continents.

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

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Look for the shamrock

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It's barely my second day in La Paz and my priorities have become apparent: mustering enough oxygen to find my way around, and simply surviving the shooting ranges that are **paceño** zebra-crossings, which may as well not be there. To get from my accommodation to anywhere of note I have to take my life into my hands at least three times, and as a tall blond gringo it's Christmas come early for the **trufi** and **micro** drivers who see this is as a perfect opportunity for some target practice. With survival in mind, and the fact that I was still desperately trying to feign perfectly good health in the face of altitude-induced dizziness, headaches, total loss of appetite and exhaustion after any kind of exercise, I had given little thought to my work commitments and the artistic theme of the September issue.

Keen to impress on my first day at the Bolivian Express, I nodded enthusiastically at the opportunity to write an article on Bolivian artistry whilst privately feeling at a complete loss as to where to even begin. I took a gentle meander through the Sopocachi streets in an attempt to conjure up some inspiration. It transpired that I needn't have worried, as before as I could say Mamani Mamani I stumbled into a completely open and free art exhibition a few footsteps

away from the Sopocachi district. The small gallery (which featured such classics as 'tree stump made into a face') couldn't have been more inconspicuously-placed, and yet it was a perfect introduction to contemporary art in La Paz. I recommend you begin here, too (gallery of the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes "Hernando Siles", calle Salinas). My Lonely Planet reliably informed me that the next most obvious place to continue my artistic quest would be the Museo Nacional de Arte, situated just off the plaza Murillo and widely regarded as the centre of Bolivia's artistic high culture. Feeling the need to get my 10bs worth I decided to apply myself to the task in hand, and actually read the pamphlet which accompanied my ticket. I first scanned the upper floors of numerous paintings by anonymous artists (understandably so given the dubious facial characteristics in some of the works) before heading down to check out the heavily-hyped Marina Nuñez del Prado exhibition. I was most impressed. Her sculptures were a far cry from the frightened-looking fish with the dodgy eye in the Sopocachi exhibition, and yet the links were there for even my untrained eye to see: it was easy to appreciate the celebration of indigenous Bolivian women and

culture in her work, characteristic of the **indigenismo** movement. Even the highly vigilant security guard, keen to catch any misdemeanour, took time out from his busy post to proudly describe the sculpture of the Andean woman before me.

The museum – both the building and the works inside – was undoubtedly a good starting point to gain some artistic bearings in La Paz, but perhaps the walk back from the Plaza Murillo best encapsulates why La Paz is such a melting pot of artistic activity. Murals line the streets, art exhibitions spring out from nowhere, restaurants with enthusiastic owners are decorated from front to back with paintings and murals alike. Even students patrol the streets with their work in an attempt to make a quick buck and spread the word of their talents. Namás Té (Zoilo Flores, 1334) or Etno Café (calle Jaén, 722), for example, offer more than just good food and drink: an eclectic variety of paintings can be found herein, of the Illimani mountain in particular. You really don't need any artistic background or knowledge to appreciate what La Paz has to offer, and whilst the museums offer an insight into Bolivian art past and present, the best examples are perhaps found out and about in the city itself – which is itself a post-modern masterpiece of sorts.

## A WONDROUS WANDER THROUGH LA PAZ : AN ERRANT GRINGO'S ARTISTIC PURSUITS

**Text: Jack Brooker**



The **Malabaristas** are not to be found labouring discontentedly behind a substandard bar. No, they ply the traffic lights of La Paz, entertaining the motorists with all sorts of mischievous antics, from juggling knives, balls and dancing with poi (rope with light material attached to either end) to riding unicycles. The traffic light's sudden switch to red is their 'curtain up', their moment to manically dash into the middle of the road like a crowd of bouncy, impudent children. In a flash they have hailed us from atop their unicycle, thrown ten thousand knives into the air (and caught them all), and before we know it are smilingly at the car window, hands outstretched for a monetary reward. An astounding routine, and completed so smoothly it seems all too easy.

We're lucky enough to meet two of them in the Plaza Avaroa: Carlos, 34, from Columbia, and his girlfriend Michelle, 24, from Austria. Just as Carlos' broad smile erupts through his thick beard, his curly hair permanently puffs out from beneath his hat. Michelle, meanwhile, sports elegant dreadlocks and three face piercings. As they spend most of their time outside they both wear warm and comfortable clothes. We invite them to one of the local bars to have a beer and a chat.

Carlos and Michelle met in Venezuela, where they started performing together. They've performed their way around South America for seven months and now they're in La Paz, moving on in a few weeks before Michelle returns to Austria in January, where she will continue her studies in

# MALABARISTAS

## We meet the street artists of La Paz

**Text: Sarah Lund, Erick Trillo**

agriculture. "My parents don't know I'm doing this," she explains, "because they wouldn't approve." Carlos, on the other hand, worked as a craftsman before he became a travelling juggler, his profession for the last four years. The balls he uses are made of plastic and are filled with **alpiste**; they're quite worn and have been repaired numerous times with duct tape.

"I was nervous the first few times I performed because I wasn't very experienced," he tells us. "I didn't really connect with the audience or have fun with them, which obviously makes it more difficult. Interacting with the audience is very important when it comes to entertainment."

At the start of any performance Michelle feels a little nervous, as she explains: "I never know how people will react when I'm performing my show, which involves dancing with the poi I bought in Austria. On top of that, I'm not from South America so the cultural difference makes me feel a little bit insecure too".

"We work every day on a different schedule to get money for food and for our accommodation in hostels," they explain. "On average we earn about 60bs an hour, although the most Carlos has ever earned is 130 Brazilian Reales (about 530bs) in an hour and a half." The malabaristas

are also at constant work to improve their skills. By keeping close contact with other performers they learn which cities are best to perform in, and what new tricks are being tried. We're curious about where they find the time to rehearse. They tell us that they don't get to practice much beforehand, but as soon as the light goes red it gives them a rush, like an actor acting out a soliloquy alone on stage. "Everything depends on the red light", they say, which can last for anything from 20 seconds to 2 minutes. "To perform in a shorter period of time is more preferable", Carlos explains, "because then the audience doesn't get bored."

"The audience here in La Paz is nice," they continue. "They applaud us and appreciate our art, so it's easier to earn money here. The people are open-minded and smile much more compared to the audience in Brazil." The impression these people give is not of starving beggars but wandering adventurers. The hippie-lifestyle suits them: they see the world, pay their way and meet interesting people through their art. Their only responsibility is to pay for their bread and a roof for the night, usually a hostel. "The best thing about being a malabarista?" Carlos ponders, "Meeting people that appreciate us for who we are, and not just as performers."

Photo: Michael Dunn



# SCULPTURE VULTURE

**Text: Andrew Cummings - Images: Emma Hall**

Contributions: Niall MacCrann, Tanja Roembke & Sharoll Fernandez

Scavenging amongst the houses littered about the Miraflores area of La Paz, you might come across the **Escuela de Escultura**. An annexe of the **Academia de Bellas Artes** devoted solely to sculpture students, you'll know this place as soon as you see it from its rather interesting entrance. Intrigued, we go inside to find out a bit more about studying sculpture in La Paz, and are more than a little surprised at what we see: a heap of dilapidated sheds masquerading as workshops, wooden pyres carpeting the ground, and unfinished sculptures sadly surveying the wreckage like disappointed Greek statues. But why 'surprised'? Well, the

Academia's main site – though hardly an example of cutting-edge architecture – is certainly no bombsite, and a palace compared to the sculpture school; on top of that, Bolivia has churned out a fair few talented sculptors in the past fifty years or so, including María Nuñez del Prado. So why does the prime site for the study of sculpture in Bolivia's capital get such sore treatment?

"We don't get enough support from the government or from the Academia proper," Blas Calle, a teacher at the escuela, tells us. "We have enough money to buy some materials, such as clay, but most of

the time we just have to find it wherever we can get it – we melt keys to get bronze, for example, or we find bits of tree on the street. It's ironic, because Bolivia is so rich in wood, but it's all exported so there's none left for us." Transport of materials is the key issue, though. "There's just not enough money," one student tells me. "Once, we found about fifteen tree stumps, and we had to carry them all the way to the school on our backs."

It seems, then, that the students are very dedicated. "It's their passion," Blas says. "They work until nine at night, even when they don't have

to. We spend time here, we have parties here. We even made the sheds here ourselves. It's like a family." Even so, they haven't got much to look forward to when they finish their degrees: at the end of five years – including two preliminary years at the main academy before specialisation – the students don't receive any qualification whatsoever. Blas continues: "I worry about what they're going to do after they finish. Some teach; some go onto other schools or colleges; but nothing's certain."

"At the main academy, things are generally quite different," a painting

student tells me; "barely anyone ever turns up." But that's not the only difference: at the sculpture school, student Eliana Bustillo explains, teaching is much more practical than theoretical. "It's hands-on from day one."

And all of this practice pays off. It's easy to see from the sculptures dotted around the school – wooden Christs, bronze women, metal angels – that these students are no amateurs. A sculpture exhibition, which takes place at the main academy shortly after our trip to the sculpture school, proves to be extremely popular; "I'm very happy with the turnout," says

Eliana when we bump into her there. The sculptures on show are truly amazing, and the throng of admirers at the exhibition certainly knows so, too.

Despite this, things aren't really looking up on the financial front for the Escuela de Escultura. But there's something about the clutteredness of the place, the passion of its students and the quality of their work, that makes me really like this place. It seemed like the disappointed sculptures were starting to see the bright side of things too. As I was passing through the exhibition I could have sworn one of them winked at me.



Above (from left to right): Agar, Raul, Jose, Alison, Eliana  
Below: Blas

## Eliana

**Where would you like your art to take you?**

"I'd love to participate in international fairs and exhibitions as a cultural exchange; here there's little opportunity to make yourself known."

## Blas

**Why is sculpture so important to you?**

"Sculpture is the air I breathe. Sculpture is life, and without it, I'd feel impotent, inert."

## Alison

**Why sculpture, and not painting, for instance?**

"I like working in three dimensions – I think it's more expressive than other art forms."

## Raul

**What does 'sculpture' mean to you?**

"Sculpture is fluidity: it can go up, down, and all around. Above all, it's a strong invasion of space."

## Jose

**What are you working on at the moment?**

"I've been working on a stone sculpture for the last two weeks. For me it's a way of venting about my problems."

## Agar

**Do you have a coherent style?**

"I like to create fantastical creatures, like pixies or dragons. People generally like what I do – I think it's because it captures their imagination."



# PLAINATIONS A PUBLIC OF BOLIVIA

THEY'RE ANNA KUNTZ AND DYKUN RAPP  
MOTO - CARRIZOS - 2010-2010



If you're like me, when someone mentions hip-hop your mind will be inundated with images of bling, fast cars, and jeans swinging super low with knees struggling to keep them from falling to the ground. Or perhaps you'll think of Tupac Shakur, bandanas and gangs - granted, all valid associations. Now spin the record back a few centuries to the Colonial era, add some panpipes, and imagine yourself in a place where Túpac is the name given to an indigenous rebel leader, and not a best-selling, prison-dwelling East Coast MC. This is hip-hop, Bolivian style.

Just as a hip-hop subculture helped black Americans from every NY burrough to protest against social injustices and white supremacy in the 70s and 80s, young Bolivians are challenging cultural colonialism and the oppressive influence of Western capitalism by the means of rhythmic, defiant raps. Despite strong influence from U.S music imports and shared aesthetic ideals with their American counterparts (such as ill-fitting clothing), 'Bolivia has its own battles to fight,' shout the **hip-hoperos** from the Casa Wayna Tambo, the epicentre of hip-hop culture in La Paz.

'Wayna Tambo' roughly translates from the Aymara as 'meeting place for youths', and indeed its goals can be summarised as the unification of young people combined with the preservation of their indigenous heritage. Since 1995, Wayna Tambo has been a cultural epicenter for **Alteño** and **Paceño** youths. It is here that rap - in both Aymara and Spanish - has carved out a haven for itself and is one of the

prime exports of the centre's radio station and magazine. This very unique tutelage includes rapping workshops, studio time, hip-hop festivals, and interactive lectures about social and political issues affecting young people. This proactive program of urban culture promotion was spearheaded by the late Abraham Bojorquez, one of the most notorious figures in the Bolivian hip-hop scene to date and member of the El Alto based group 'Ukamau y Ké'.

Inspired by the rebellious raps that resounded from the overpopulated, poverty-stricken Brazilian slums of his youth, El Alto-born Bojorquez encouraged a branch of particularly Bolivian hip-hop, initially bustin' out rhymes in Spanish, Aymara, Quechua, Portuguese and even English in order to shake up the political, economical and cultural climate of his homeland. The addictive hooks and blunt, daring lyrics of Ukamau y Ké propelled the group to instant popularity among the younger generations, while the use of indigenous instruments, traditional dress and Aymara drove many older listeners to melancholy tears (eat your heart out, Vanilla Ice).

Bojorquez even impressed President Evo Morales with his urban rhymes, and was invited to perform at a government event celebrating the construction of new homes in El Alto. Surprisingly (and perhaps even admirably), despite this gesture of approval from the country's supremo, Bojorquez turned Morales down - opting instead to honour previous commitments with aspiring rappers in Cochabamba. This unerring

commitment to the causes of his peers and Bolivia's younger generations, partnered with his refusal to be at the beck and call of the government, is an attitude also echoed by Ukamau y Ké's "Medios Mentirosos", a biting denunciation of the political propaganda and apparent lies fed to the Bolivian public by its own media.

Tragically, Bojorquez died last year at the age of 26 after being hit by a bus on a dark El Alto street. However, his widespread appeal, catapulted by collaborations with artists such as Manu Chau and Dead Prez, fuelled by his sizable back-catalogue, and propelled by his commitment to the dispersion of Bolivian hip-hop (both inside and outside the country), has ensured that in Bolivia hip-hop is still very much alive today. And hip-hop doesn't stop outside of La Paz and El Alto: record releases and anti-racism events have also taken place in Santa Cruz, Sucre and Tarija. This subculture can be seen, heard, worn and danced all over the continent, with facebook groups and sites such as epicentrourbano, com promoting and showcasing rap, breakdance, music, cinema, graffiti and fashion - all with a hip-hop slant. These movements and collectives are living proof that young Latin-Americans in impoverished urban areas are capable of positive self-expression - a far cry from the stereotypical path of delinquency which the media often uses to stigmatise them.

The Bolivian rap/hip-hop revolution is loud and clear: its MCs refuse to be silenced or censored, speaking out against the political game which continues to marginalise them, and discussing everything from AIDS and coca to **machismo** with their beat-driven lyrics. To give but one example, female hip-hop artists Sdenka Sucho Cadena and Carmen Rosa Alarcón Mamani construct their message around the egalitarian ideal that "we're all human beings" in order to advocate gender quality and prove to young girls that they can carve their own paths. In this way (and countless others), young Bolivians seek to balance the artistic demands of taking part in popular culture movements sweeping the globe whilst honouring their commitments to their ancestral indigenous identity. Not to forget they must constantly guard against the danger of letting their dreams be hijacked by the deceptive pursuit of an American dream. As Abraham himself declared: "We can't - and don't want to - talk about the same things as American rappers". Through hip-hop, bolivianos are changing the record.







It seems, then, that the face of hip-hop – at least in Bolivia – is changing (see article opposite). To investigate this a little further, a few of us took a trip to an incredibly obscure-sounding 'experimental hip-hop' dance workshop in the Zona Sur. In a word: what?

As it happens, experimental hip-hop is just taking off in Bolivia (but apparently not the rest of the world). We weren't there to actually take part in the workshop; instead, we had come to interview the choreographer of 'The Marionette Show,' a new dance extravaganza that combines hip-hop with various other styles (hence 'experimental' hip-hop). "The Marionette Show' was originally performed by dance group Expression in South Korea in 2006," Marco Olaechea explains, "but we've shaken things up a little bit. We've added a new style based on hip-hop and geometrical shapes, with a bit of tap dance and waving."

So what's 'The Marionette Show' about? Well, as Marco tells us, the main message is that no matter how old you are, you have to hold onto your imagination. Seems like a strange message to communicate through hip-hop. "Hip-hop is an attractive, universal language, so there are plenty of people who want to get involved," says Marco, and looking at the people who've turned up to the workshop, that sounds about right. "For

me, hip-hop has always been a way to express love, to create art through love. It doesn't have anything to do with the violence and aggression it's often associated with."

"A lot of thought has gone into the show: it's been in my mind since at least last September," Marco continues. "Actually, seven years ago I came top of a reality show dance competition, and got to stay in Chile for four months. There I met Vanessa – who helped to organise this show – and it's been our dream to share the stage ever since." Sadly we were unable to interview any Chileans as they were all suffering from an unfortunate bout of altitude sickness during rehearsals, but Marco assures us that there are plenty more of them – including principal dancers Claudio and Leticia. Speaking to Marco, it's clear that he and the rest of the team are very dedicated – for one, Marco funded the production almost entirely by himself – but how does 'The Marionette Show' hype match up to the performance on stage?

After trailing through wind and rain to the Zona Sur, discovering that the same tickets we had booked had also been sold to another group, and relocating to the illustrious row Q (right in the back-left corner of the theatre, in case you were wondering), we were finally ready to see the spectacle La Paz

had made it so difficult for us to enjoy. And we were pleasantly surprised: the show was essentially a remixed version of the film *Amélie*, and by 'remixed', we mean replacing all the characters and the story with a bunch of scantily-clad breakdancers backed by a Yann Tiersen soundtrack trying to find a girl who is, coincidentally, named 'Amélie'. The quality of the dancing, children and adults alike, was impressive, particularly a scene featuring dancers suspended from pieces of cloth. Through 'The Marionette Show', we finally learnt the true meaning of experimental hip-hop (maybe someday you will, too). We can only hope that the show's six-year-old star – who has been practising yoga since she was three and wants to be a dolphin when she grows up – appears on stage sooner rather than later (I don't know about you, but I'd be interested in seeing a dolphin attempt experimental hip-hop. Give it a few years).

"FOR ME, HIP HOP HAS ALWAYS BEEN A WAY TO EXPRESS LOVE"

# MAMAMI MAMAMIA

Waiting ages for an interviewee to turn up for the second (yes, second) time isn't exactly my idea of fun, but when said interviewee one of the most famous artists to come out of Bolivia, I'd happily while away my hours admiring alpaca jumpers and investigating Machu Picchu tours on the Sagarnaga until he arrives. The work of Mamani Mamani – who goes by the name of 'Roberto' (or 'Robertito') to his nearest and dearest – is instantly recognisable. Waiting outside a shop of his, filled as it is with Mamani-brand paintings, mugs, postcards, and the like, I can see why. It's the colours: similar to the Andean flag, barely a single one goes unused. But what to expect from such an artist? One of those eccentric, new-age types, with garish clothes to match his personality? The beret-wearing, drum-tapping, turtleneck-sporting variety of artist, maybe?

The man who eventually greets me isn't exactly what I expected (granted, my expectations were allowed plenty of freedom given the time I was left waiting). For starters, he's rather small. His voice is soft and quiet, and he sits with his hands clasped in front of him on the table; every aspect of his appearance, his body language, suggests someone distant but gentle. In a nutshell, he gives the impression of someone humble and serious; the look on his face gives me the impression he knows some very profound, important secret. Here's what we got to talking about.

**BX:** To begin with, have you ever actually studied art?

**MM:** No; I studied agronomy and law. I think of art as a vocation rather than a profession. I've always had this artistic being inside of me; my first drawings were with charcoal my mother provided me with, and since I was very young I've been painting on whatever I could get my hands on – be it newspapers or bits of card. When I was fifteen I won my first competition, and at eighteen I won the Premio Pedro Domingo Murillo – a very important prize in Bolivia which opens a lot of doors.

**BX:** Would you define yourself as self-taught, then?

**MM:** I don't really like that word. Everything I needed was already inside my head, a part of my being, inherited from my parents and their parents. I didn't 'teach' myself anything.

**BX:** Do you admire many Bolivian artists? If so, which ones?

**MM:** Antonio Mariaca immediately springs to mind; I've always had his work in front of me. Gil Imaná is another influence, and Fernando Montes too – I stayed with him in England. I shared the Pedro Domingo Murillo Prize with Oswaldo Guayasamín, an **indigenista** artist I admire; I've also had the fortune to meet and talk with Victor Delfín, a Peruvian artist. My true masters, I think, are the **ceramistas** of Tihuana-naco, the **tejedores** of Nazca, all the artists of Pre-Columbian culture. These influences provide an interminable source of inspiration for me.

**BX:** How would you define your artistic trajectory?

**MM:** My art comes from the Aymara world, so it shares the same ideologies – harmony with nature is certainly

very important. My art comes from my heritage, from what my fathers and grandfathers thought, believed, and experienced. I've spent a lot of time outside of Bolivia and Latin America, though; I've spent year each in Japan, France, and Germany, and travelled around exhibiting my work. All of these things have nourished my work. For me, though, the departure point is the most important, and so I've returned here, to my homeland, to my roots. My art is like a table presenting offerings to the Pachamama, the sweet offerings of colour. My art is a thank-you to this land, to these mountains, and to these gods.

**BX:** You mentioned ideological battles ('luchas ideológicas'). Can your art be linked with any particular political or cultural ideals, then?

**MM:** Not strictly. My art is linked more to culture, the deep roots of ancestry, of pride, of identity, of this magnificent culture we all inherit. My work doesn't subscribe to a political ideology or party.

**BX:** In a nutshell, how would you describe contemporary Bolivian art?

**MM:** There are movements, but ultimately every artist works in his own space. We all have our own things to say and our own ways of saying them. You've got to remember that Bolivia is culturally very diverse: it's made up of more than forty different nations, each with its own codes and symbols. Here, art sprouts from the skin; there's no need to subscribe to movements, really.

**BX:** Do you think contemporary art in Bolivia is accessible, or is it something that can only be appreciated by a cultural/social/intellectual élite?

**MM:** Art has always seemed to attract an élite, because that's how the market works. I'm trying with my work to

'socialise' art a little bit to break this artistic trend, and I think it's working. I've designed **cholita** shawls, post-cards, calendars, and the like (which has attracted some criticism). But if a person can't buy a picture for five million dollars, why can't they buy a postcard for five bolivianos? I want my art to be for everyone. It's one of my main preoccupations.

**BX:** Would you consider commercialism a problem with Bolivian art today?

**MM:** A good work is good wherever it is in the world. If it's good, people will pay for the work. I think it's the challenge of the artist to transcend the commercial aspect of art. If someone makes a work of art just to sell it, they don't have much life in them, and it's life that sells.

**BX:** What's your favourite colour?

**MM:** I'm a colourist, I work with colours. Someone once said: Mamani Mamani put colour into the Andes. For me, colour is life. Strong colours combat bad spirits; they help us through the darkness. Each colour has its strength. But the colour that always features in my work is yellow... For me it represents energy, the aura of beings. It's the colour of strength.

**BX:** What's your favourite film?

**MM:** Yesterday I saw a Turkish film. That could be my favourite. It was about a modern, fatalistic love, and it had good music. I like those European films that aren't commercial. They can feed your soul.

**BX:** Morenada or Caporales?

**MM:** Morenada. It's a manifestation of the community, and it's more intimate, more about blood and skin.

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The evening after the interview, I go to an exhibition of Mamani Mamani's; if it were an album, it would be his 'greatest hits'. The venue – Café Campanario, just off the Sagarnaga – is sleek and shiny, with canapés and glasses of wine on offer, and the people there match it. It seems that any viewing in the Café Campanario isn't going to be for the masses and, whether he likes it or not, Mamani Mamani has become something of a cult figure amongst the Bolivian middle-class – it is art, after all. Little by little, though, it feels like he's winning the battle against an elitist conception of art.

# 15 FERIA INTERNACIONAL DEL LIBRO LA PAZ



TEXT: LORANGE DAO

The 15th International Book Fair (or 'Feria del Libro') in La Paz took place from 18th to 29th August. This year's main theme was 'Celebremos la Bibliodiversidad' ('Let's Celebrate Bibliodiversity'), but a huge part of the fair was also dedicated to youth.

The Feria del Libro in La Paz reminds me of the Belgian book fairs I used to visit as a child. Although most of the books and stands are local and the feria itself relatively small, the book fair in La Paz has the same kind of atmosphere: people wandering from stand to stand,

all year to each buy a book during the fair. Friday 27th August was the appointed day for the pig's fateful slaughter: the children broke their bank and went to various stands where they were offered special prices for the books they wanted. This initiative promotes reading and teaches the children to economise.

But this year's main theme is a proud 'bibliodiversity' which, as the president of the book fair Ernesto Martinez puts it, centres on "the possibility to access books written in Spanish, Aymara,

an impediment to reading, these are also a valuable part of bibliodiversity. Evidently many visitors concur; indeed, many multimedias were sold, including e-books - some of them being accompanied by a traditional book - virtual reads which are increasing in popularity since the printing costs for real books are much higher than producing multimedias such as audio CDs. But with the production of e-books in Bolivia come some hefty obstacles: along with Chile, Bolivia is one of the few countries in South America where books are taxed on purchase, and huge charter

'La lectura nos lleva donde  
nuestros pies no pueden ir'  
(Reading takes us where our feet cannot go)

seeking out both tasty finds and old favourites, discovering new wonders and delving into personal interests. Also, many visitors are children, to whom this year a whole area has been dedicated: 'la Feria del Libro Infantil y Juvenil'. This special area is divided into five zones where workshops, books and short movie presentations are to be sampled: myths and legends; fantasy, fiction and adventure; suspense and terror; comedy; and environmental and cultural diversity. One of the aims of this year's feria is to encourage literacy amongst children, so for the fifth consecutive year, children from **el comedor** Wisllita came to the fair with a collective piggy bank where they'd been saving money

English, Quechua, French, Guaraní, books written by men, women, Bolivians or foreigners, industrially-produced or handcrafted books, books which approach various themes and interests, books for adults or kids... All kinds of books."

This so-called 'bibliodiversity' is attributable both to the lexically abundant collection and the activities at the fair, which this year include anything from workshops and conferences to book presentations and more political talks. Martinez's perception of bibliodiversity also encompasses new technologies and the way they affect reading and the circulation of literature: although often deemed

fees have to be paid to import books.

In spite of such impediments, this year's fair has been a great success, and the increasing number of visitors proves that higher prices and new technologies do not stop people from reading: the 2010 fair was graced by 77000 visitors, 7000 (11%) more than last year. "I strongly believe that we've fulfilled the two main goals we'd assigned ourselves as regards the International Book Fair in La Paz," says Ernesto Martinez at the feria's end: "to celebrate the fact that in Bolivia, we can access an enormous range of books and gain new readers."

\*This message was stuck onto the children's piggy bank.

# CHAIRO

Text: Camile Reltien



Gabriela (the Bolivian Express's favourite Swede – not the vegetable, mind you) hates to cook, but on a whim decided to go on a cooking class and invited some of us to come along. Over the next few months, the Bolivian Express will publish recipes for each of the meals we cooked, along with a few interesting facts.

Having no idea where the class would take place, I obediently followed Gabriela to our final destination: the Instituto Don Bosco. It's not the sort of building where you'd expect to find a fully equipped kitchen: the halls are tiny

and dark, and the paint is gently peeling off the walls. However, opening the flimsy wooden door, we found ourselves in a vast, industrial-looking kitchen. Here could be found everything under the (culinary) sun: five heavy-duty ovens, pressure-cookers, many large pots and pans, plastic measuring cups, three wooden church benches and three long metal tables, to name a few. One of these tables was piled with all the ingredients we would need; time for the class to begin.

## CHAIRO

Recipe of the month: Chairo. 'Chairo' means 'soup' in Aymara, and it's a meat and vegetable stew typical of La Paz. Originally developed by **campesinos** working far from home, chairo contains Andean vegetables such as chuño and is flavoured with oregano and hierba buena, an indigenous variety of mint. Chuños are freeze-dried potatoes laboriously produced following an ancient pre-Inca process, and originally found at Tiwanaku. Potatoes are left outside at night to freeze then exposed to intense sunlight and trampled to remove the water. (Unfortunately we make no promises that no chuños were harmed in the making of this stew).

## INGREDIENTS:

- 6 pieces of pork
- 1 small piece of chalona (dried sheep meat)
- ¼ cup of wheat
- ½ cup of green peas and peeled beans
- 1 finely-chopped onion
- 1 finely-chopped carrot
- 1 heaped tablespoon of chopped celery leaves
- 1 heaped tablespoon of chopped parsley
- 1 large branch of mint
- ½ cup of cooked mote (freeze-dried corn)
- 1 cup of finely-chopped and soaked chuño
- 3 finely-chopped potatoes
- 1 bag of chicharron de cerdo

## PREPARATION

Boil two litres of water, and once it's boiling add the meat, chalona, vegetables, herbs and wheat. Let it cook for an hour or more. If a lot of water evaporates add more.

Once the meat is done add the salt and the grated chuño. Once this is cooked

add the potatoes and the mote. Serve with a large spoonful of finely chopped parsley and mint on top. You can also add some chicharron de cerdo

**if it suits!**

# Killer Spanish, innit?

Text: Anthony Moore-Bastos

Arriving in El Alto or La Paz knowing some standard Spanish - be it from Spain or Latin America - may prove insufficient to communicate with many locals. Paceño Spanish has been promiscuously cohabiting with both Aymara and Quechua for centuries in culturally accepted '**concupinatos**' without ever really getting married. Hence, the Spanish spoken by many Alteños and Paceños has kept a strong indigenous pronunciation, syntax and lexicon. In recent years, English has also been invited into this ménage à trois in certain circles.

Paceños are proud of the kind of Spanish they speak yet this

of this city into music styles, food, sports, arts and nightlife. There is, however, and as I will go on to explain, some common ground shared by most paceñ@s. Here we go, an idiosyncratic list, in no particular order.

Chupar (to binge drink), farrear (ditto), chela (beer), quivo (money), amanecerse (get drunk till dawn), amolle/vaca (contribution toward the alcohol), chaqui (La Paz's

(nasty foul - football) bombazo (mortally potent goal kick), chacharse (to skive), chanchullo (cheat notes for exams), chape (French kiss), tope (ditto, lips only, no tongue), prende (one-off kiss, groping optional), tire

# YAAAAA

Spanish differs from one generation to another as well as between areas of La Paz: Zona Norte, Zona Central and Zona Sur. **Castellano** Paceño can also be divided into groups according to status, occupation, gender and ethnicity but it's equally possible to cluster jargons

hangover), mi ñato/a (my boyfriend/girlfriend), ¿Ubicás? (do you get it?) ¿Cachas? (ditto but blue-collar), ¡De bolas! de one/ A y B (get into something without further ado), sips/nops (yes/no), aps (won't tell ya!), quete (mind your own business), normal (fine), suave (alright, cool) finde/fincho (weekend), faulazo

(one-night stand), ¿No ve? (innit?), o sea (like), webon/huevón (idiot), combo/combito (any hard liquor bottle and soft drink or juice mixed), pucho (cigarette), maldito (sick/cool), aflojar ('to loosen', meaning whether sb might be willing to have sex), calientahuevos (hussy/tease), ley (cool), de onda (cool), de la puta (cool), jodido/denso (fucked up!), viejo (mate), chango/men (bloke), cuate (friend), taxibola (leg it out of a taxi without paying) ring raja/dindon raja (to ring on someone's doorbell and run away; no, it's not immature in the slightest), waso (ill-mannered/



foul-mouthed), hueco/a (airhead), pichanga (very easy), duro (difficult), verga, pija, mula (drunk), condor (very drunk, as in you look like a condor when two of your mates are carrying you home, your feet dragging behind you with both your arms flung around their necks).

And now onto YAAA!!! Nobody seems to know where the devil YAAA!!! came out of. YAAA!!! is a La Paz phenomenon, a one-off rollicking yell uttered after an incongruous joke which, when joking in

ple in with centripetal force, forcing them to yell Yaaaaaaaaaaa...!!! in unison. It's really bizarre. This yell of sorts can be used in a joke as a baton in a relay race and simply means 'I'm taking the piss/I'm kidding' as in 'Me han tratado de cogotear anoche...YAAA!!!' ('I was almost robbed

Llocalla (child in Aymara): ¿De dónde eres gringuito? (where are you from gringo?+diminutive)  
Gringo: London.



Paceño slang, can trigger a yaaa-loaded verbal meltdown for all parties involved. Creating both a vicious and virtuous circle, it becomes a verbal black hole that swallows peo-

and beaten to death in a taxi last night...YAAA!!!'). The YAAA!!! usually allows the joker to laugh at his joke before the rest does, making him look ridiculously immersed in a self-deprecating soliloquy but also making it clear that he wasn't speaking in earnest about the ridonkulous thing he said in the first place. The other Yaaa?, the quiet one, means 'really?' but it also has a 'blimey!' air. For example:

Llocalla: Yaaa?

In a future Bolivian Express issue I will take you deeper into this lexical jungle, battling with increasingly obscure Bolivian slang including Castellama, which is the Spanish spoken in El Alto and the periphery of La Paz.

Una producción de Utopía Film

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Dámaso E. Delgado Guillermo Viscarra Fabre José María Velasco Maidana

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ESTRENO 23  
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**ANDEAN**

**TRANCE:**

**AN**

**INTERVIEW**

**WITH**

**DEEP SOUTH**

Viejo Jo, also known as Ricardio Prudencio, is a well-known Bolivian DJ harbouring an obsession for Andean Trance music. Bolivian Express journalist William Barns-Graham caught up with him this month to quiz another artist about his musical experiences in Bolivia and beyond...



Deep South, also known as Ricardo Prudencio, is a well-known DJ harbouring an obsession for Andean Trance music. Bolivian Express journalist William Barnes-Graham caught up with him in July to quiz another artista paceño about his musical experiences in Bolivia and beyond.

**BX:** Firstly, is there a club night that you DJ at or go to regularly?

**DS:** Not really... there are several night clubs in La Paz, but none of them are my style. Traffic, in the Avenida Arce, is the best one, I think. I DJed in Cuzco last week, and in a couple of weeks I'm DJing at a big Andean Trance festival on the Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca. Lots of international DJs are coming!

**BX:** Sounds fantastic! So how did you get into trance?

**DS:** I started when I was 17 years old. I went to Cancun on vacation, and visited an electronic club. That night my life found its purpose: I said, "I should be a DJ!" Since the very first beat I heard I knew that trance was for me and straight away I contacted Erofex and Reika, DJs in the electronic scene, and they introduced me to the party scene. Since 2004 I've been a part of Neurotrace. It's a collective that organises parties, both indoors and outdoors. I have a book with all the flyers of parties I've played in it, and since 2004 I've collected more than 100 different flyers.

**BX:** Wow. To have been doing it for so long with such success would suggest that there is a bit of a trance scene in Bolivia; is this so?

**DS:** Well, the scene is small but strong. There are other trance DJs here, mostly in La Paz, which is the capital of trance. In Cochabamba and Santa Cruz the scene is mostly house music, techno, or minimal. You also get a lot of foreigners in La Paz, who are massive fans of the trance parties we hold, and the paceños themselves are big fans too.

**BX:** That's not surprising since trance has remained strong in Europe. So, if I wanted to go to a good trance night, where would you recommend?

**DS:** There are a few trance nights at Traffic, mostly progressive stuff. On Thursdays you can find progressive trance in La Luna bar. Every couple of weeks we hold a big party a little outside of the city, indoors or outdoors, because there's a law that lets us go on until after sunrise! In the city you can't legally party later than 4am. It's like a festival – you can camp with a few friends, party, and then come back to the city.

**BX:** Awesome, will look out for that while I'm here. Do you have a particular type of trance that you play or listen to?

**DS:** My style's psychedelic trance, but I love to listen to all styles of electronic music – chill out, drum & bass, down tempo, progressive, minimal... All styles have their good music, and I believe that there's one perfect song for each hour and place and moment.

**BX:** Do you have a perfect song that you always like to listen to or play?

**DS:** Yes – I have my favourite artists, and all of these artists make music that invoke different feelings. It's very sentimental music – it can make you cry on the dancefloor! – but it's a soul-cleansing experience. You know that a dj is like a shaman of the new generation?

**BX:** It certainly seems like that when I'm listening to a

good one.

**DS:** When everyone is dancing to the same beat, with this music, you usually dance alone, and everything disappears for that moment, all your concerns, all your worries, all your problems... I love that moment, I live for that moment. Of course, many people think that electronic music is for drugs, but I hate when that environment turns beautiful dancing into shit. There's no drug like the drug of music one might say. Hell yeah!!

**BX:** Do you feel that drugs in clubs are a big problem?

**DS:** You can always count on the music to take you out of this world. I'm part of a group that's organising a big music festival in La Paz in October called Samhain festival. It's going to be 3 days, in a castle in the jungle of La Paz. Here we're trying to change people's point of view of partying. We have lots of different workshops and ecological trekking; we teach people to love mother earth, to recycle. Hopefully we will have 1000 people this year and our goal is to show everyone that you can party and have fun without those powerful and sometimes really harmful drugs. It's a very difficult thing to do but we try... And we're starting with ourselves! Haha!

**BX:** Do you think that trance is surely going to grow in La Paz thanks to initiatives like the Samhain festival, then?

**DS:** Yes. I think that trance culture is growing very fast: there are more and more people at trance parties every time. Hopefully we can set a good example and teach other organisers how to really make a festival – it's not for money that we do it, it's for the feeling throughout and at the end. Trance is a lifestyle, and we need to take our lives far away from all dark things, dark people, dark thoughts, and start respecting our body, which is the biggest present we have.

**BX:** Do you feel that some of the older Bolivian music might be lost because of the new electronic movements that we are witnessing?

**DS:** Some music is meant to disappear, I think, but the real ancestral music will never be lost. You still get songs from 10 or 15 years ago on the radio. Though electronica might be the future of music, the roots will always be here, and folk music will always be precious to the people here. Their minds might not yet be ready to make the transition to electronic music, but someday they will be... The younger generations seem to like

#### A few of Ricardo's recommendations:

- **U-Recken - Holly Waters** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrAvb-8cQX0> (psychedelic)
- **Liquid Soul - Desire** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7E2EYXU-Ypw> (progressive trance)
- **Claude Vonstroke - Who's afraid of Detroit?** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmup8AofWnw> (minimal)
- **Shpongle - Shpongolese Spoken Here** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Shi9tR3GhM> (chill out)
- **Urucubaca - ContraCultura** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oV9zHsYZuVU> (psychedelic)
- **Penta - Robot Poetry** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ff5Mr\\_9NmUI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ff5Mr_9NmUI) (night trance)
- **Chris Rich - The Domino Effect** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxSb5ilASJM> (dark trance)

**Text: William Barnes-Graham**

# GLOSSARY

ACADEMIA DE BELLAS ARTES

Fine Arts Academy

ALPISTE

Birdseed

ALTEÑO

Citizen of El Alto  
Relating to El Alto

CAMPESINOS

Countryfolk

CASTELLANO

Spanish

CERAMISTA

Potter

CHICHARRON DE CERDO

Pork Scratchings

CHOLITA

Female City-Dweller  
Wearing Traditional Attire

COMEDOR

Dining room

CONCUBINATO

Cohabitation

ESCUELA DE ESCULTURA

Sculpture School

HIP-HOPEROS

Those Who Practise Hip-Hop

INDIGENISMO

Art Movement Celebrating Indigenous Culture

INDIGENISTA

Relating To Indigenismo

MALABARISTA

Street Performer

MICRO

Public Minibus

MACHISMO

Chauvinism

MORENADA/  
CAPORALES

Types Of Folk Dance

PACEÑO

Citizen Of La Paz,  
Relating To La Paz

TEJEDOR

One Who Weaves Or Knits

TRUFI

Public Taxi, Taxibus



¿QUIERES PRACTICAR INGLÉS?  
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