BolivianExpress

Gratis

Magazine

Directors: Amaru Villanueva Rance and Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic. **Partners:** Jack Kinsella, Xenia Elsaesser, Sharoll Fernandez. **Editorial Team:** Sara Shahriari, Matthew Grace,Juan Victor Fajardo. **Web and Legal:** Jack Kinsella. **Printing and Advertising Manager:** Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic. **Commercial Manager:** Rodrigo Barrenechea, **General Coordinator:** Wilmer Machaca. **Head of Production:** Valeria Wilde. **Production Team :** Claudia Mendez Sanabria, Adriana Murillo Argandoña, Franz Schollaert Paz. **Domestic Coordinator:** Virginia Tito Gutierrez. **Design:** Michael Dunn Caceres. **Journalists:** Niamh McIntyre, Giselle Storm Hyam, Christy Callaway-Gale, Eve Young, Lulu Shooter, and Shirin Vetry **Our Cover:** From Waska Tatay series, photo Raphaël Verona and Thomas Rousset. **Marketing:** Xenia Elsaesser **The Bolivian Express Would Like To Thank:** Don Carlos, Muenala, Ecuador, Antonio Paredes Candia, Alexandra Meleán Anzoleaga, Adrian Villanueva Quisbert, Jorge Derpic, Monica Velasco Bacarreza, and Colectivo Sinmotivo. **Advertise With Us:** ivan.rp@bolivianexpress.org. **Address:** Calle Prolongación Armaza # 2957, Sopocachi, La Paz.. **Phone:** 78862061- 79658778 - 70672031 **Contact:** info@bolivianexpress.org

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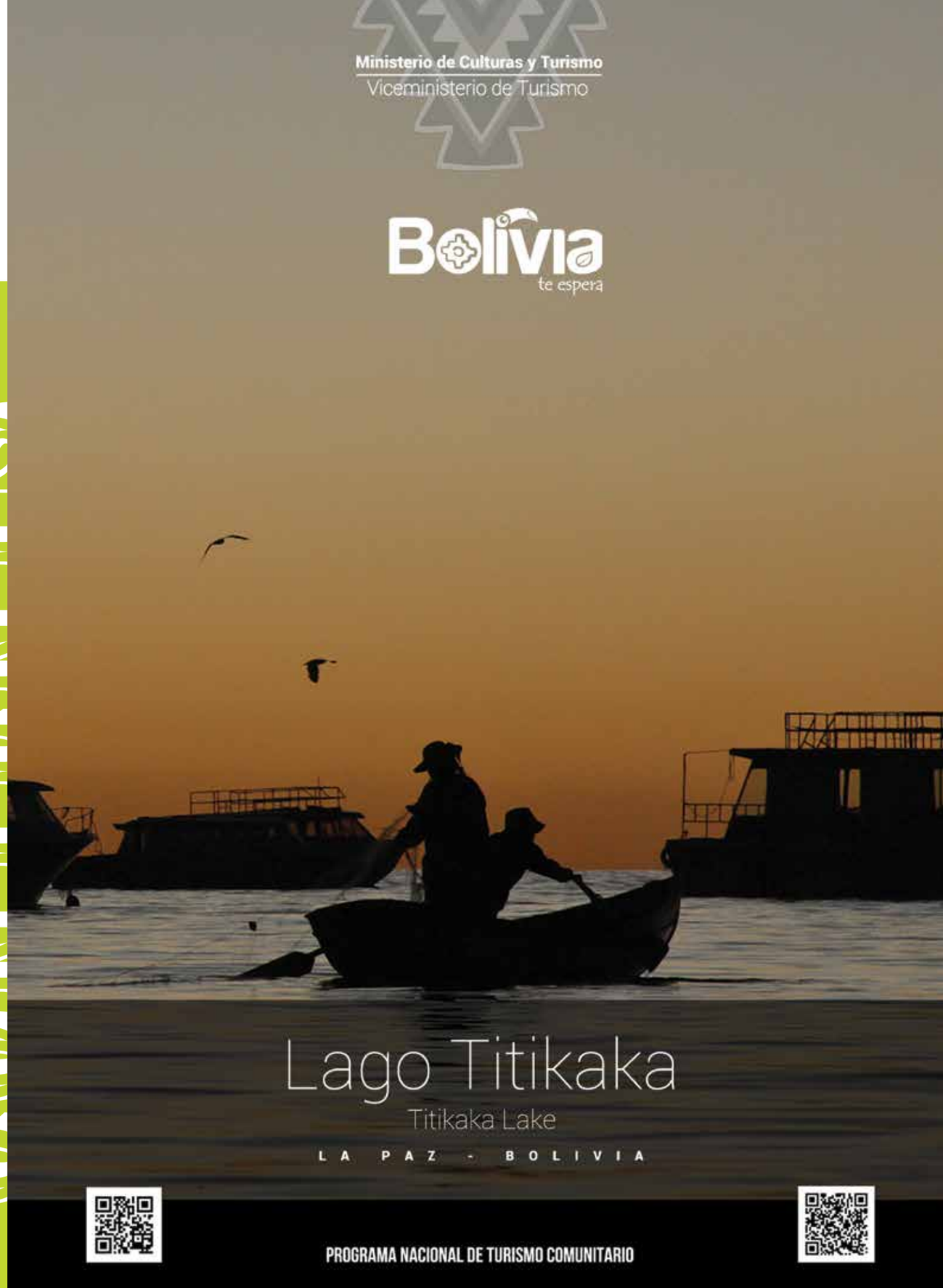

Lago Titikaka

Titikaka Lake

LA PAZ - BOLIVIA

PROGRAMA NACIONAL DE TURISMO COMUNITARIO

EDITORIAL

This month's writers for the Bolivian Express chose 'through the looking glass' as the theme that unites the issue. It's an idea well-suited to this remarkable and complex country, where we need to travel beyond assumptions and the easily-perceived surface of life to begin understanding everything from work to play to technology to fantasy.

In July, the Bolivian government reversed the numbers on the clock tower that stands over the Plaza Murillo, one of La Paz's iconic public spaces. It also reversed the hands of the clock so that they run anti-clockwise and christened the new timepiece the 'Clock of the South'. While at first glance this may seem odd, if you spend a moment thinking about concepts of time, nationality and where the traditional timepiece was born, the idea shifts from strange to fascinating.

Likewise, our reporter working on the issue of child labour found her assumptions challenged as she was pulled back and forth between dramatically different points of view on what is best for working children. The Bolivian government recently approved a new law that allows people as young as 10 to legally work across the country, sparking outcry from some international and national organizations that see it as damaging to children's rights. On the other hand, a nationwide organization of working children and teens hails the legislation as a positive step toward improving their working conditions and their lives.

In this issue we're also looking at events that are shaping and changing the Bolivian reality through the looking glass of technology. This year Bolivia launched its first satellite, began a program to distribute free computers to tens of thousands of high-school students, and kicked off a an election season where social media holds an unprecedented place in the campaign process. At the same time, many people across the country have no access to Internet, a situation that highlights the radical and multi-faceted shift that technologies bring to each person and community they touch.

So come with us as we watch the clock, step across unassuming thresholds into unexpected spaces, ponder the apocalypse and examine what unites fantasy worlds across cultures. You may find that what you thought you knew is just a small part of the story.

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

By Sara Shahriari

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FACTORIES IN EL ALTO:

CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVE WONDERLANDS

EL ALTO IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING CITIES IN BOLIVIA IN TERMS OF POPULATION, ARCHITECTURE AND IDEAS. LULU SHOOTER DISCOVERS THAT THERE'S MORE TO LIFE WITHIN THE CLOSE-KNIT NEIGHBOURHOODS THAN MEETS THE EYE. A STORM IS BREWING.

PHOTO: EVE YOUNG

Children and free-range chickens play in the front yard. Through a low, corrugated iron doorway comes the sound of a luthier's workshop. Wood knocks against hollow wood, and someone is furiously sanding. Somewhere in El Alto, this is the entrance to a factory owned by the Orosco Claros brothers, Stiven and Gustavo. The building is also their home. Inside, it's small and dimly lit; wooden skeletons lean against the wall and fretted necks are lined up along the workbench.

They are making guitars. The production line appears chaotic, but it soon becomes clear that the organization is in fact meticulous. It has been streamlined and improved over the past ten years, since Stiven and Gustavo started their business. It takes between 40 days and eight months to produce a guitar at their workshop: A top spec instrument can cost up to Bs. 5,000.

Regardless of price, even the cheapest instrument receives the same level of care and attention as the most expensive one; whether it is the three-quarter size model, popular with John Lennon-channeling travelers, or the full-size bespoke classical.

Across town, on the first floor of a red-brick house, René Acarapi Choquetarqui leans out of the window and waves me up. His family produce guitar cases, confining their chickens and dogs to the ground floor. René sketches out designs whilst his wife, Eleuteria Cuentas Herrera, works at the sewing machine. For seven years, they have produced a steady ten guitar cases every two days. They could make more – more cheaply and more quickly – but René and Eleuteria are proud of their handmade goods and value quality above quantity.

Neither household could run their business successfully without the support of the surrounding community. They sell their products in la Ceja, a central neighbourhood described by one of La Paz's residents as the 'Piccadilly Circus of El Alto'. They also rely on word of mouth. Although the Orosco Claros' brothers have had internet access in their home for more than a year now, they only use it to source obscure machinery and spare parts.

So how do these businesses function within the community? Is there a lot of competition between similar enterprises? 'No', answers Maximo Quispe Ticona, conflict secretary of FEJUVE El Alto, the community organization facilitating life in the city's 14 districts. When I visited the offices, he explained to me that El Alto is largely formed of migrants from the countryside who bring with them complementary skills in textiles, carpentry and machinery. The businesses thrive because they feed into one another.

Not only do urban businesses reflect rural skills, they also showcase a neo-Andean attitude to the work-life balance. René moved from the countryside to El Alto in the 1980s, and brought his work ethic with him. He and Eleuteria make no distinction between labour and leisure, working from eight in the morning until nine at night. From Monday to Saturday? 'Lunes a Sabado', he confirms. They occasionally take breaks to eat and watch TV. Work is their life. As you hear a guitar picking out the chords of *A Hard Day's Night*, you realise the Beatles had no idea what they were talking about.

In El Alto, completing the family home is second to running the family business. If you walk down a road in El Alto, you'll be struck by the number of half-finished buildings you'll see, often without roofs. The initial installation of amenities, such as electricity, gas and water, demands a lengthy registration and taxation process. People often have little money left over to dedicate to further renovations. As a result, building is an open-ended affair. Who knows how big the family will get and how successful the business will become? Will it ever be finished? Good thing Beatlemania in El Alto provides a never-ending market for new guitars in new guitar cases.

Life in El Alto is evolving as the current crop of youngsters fuse the influences of rural life with the gritty experience of the city. Some, like Stiven's ten and eight-year-old boys, have already started picking up their parent's trade, learning how to make guitars. Others are part-time minibus drivers, shop assistants and construction workers. There are also those following an academic pathway, and René's daughter, Laura, is not set to carry on the family business but become a teacher: 'I like Physics', she says. New skills + traditional skills + a good education = a whole new Wonderland. ×

QUINOA:

From Staple to Super Food

TEXT: EVE YOUNG
PHOTO: PABLO PANIAGUA *(COLECTIVO SINMOTIVO)*

The United Nations declared 2013 the International Year of Quinoa. But why bring this superfood to the public consciousness for just one year alone? Quinoa, a grain once used as a commodity by Bolivians, is now worshipped by health lovers in the Western world. I set off to investigate the properties of this super-grain, and exactly how it came to claim that year in the limelight.

I meet with research scientist Guillermo Tapia, who has studied the grain extensively, to discuss all things quinoa. He delves into the depths of the biochemical composition of quinoa, and it's clear from the outset he's the man in the know. This small grains is brimming with every nutrient imaginable—antioxidants, anti-inflammatory phytonutrients, omega-3 fatty acid, alpha-linolenic acid, healthy fats, vitamin E, and everything from copper and zinc. Tapia also points out that in addition to eating the plant as grain, it can also be used to produce **leche de quinoa**, essentially quinoa milk (the Andean equivalent, perhaps, of soy milk).

Andean Valley S.A, a quinoa production plant situated in El Alto, prides itself on the organic royal quinoa product it provides. The rise in demand for quinoa has seen this company grow from a backyard in the south of the city to an international plant with its first exports to the United States in 1998. Seven years ago, Andean Valley could source a 46-kilogram bag of quinoa for the mere price of US$20. Today, that same amount of quinoa goes for US$300. It's not enough for this ever-expanding empire to source sufficient amounts of quinoa from the original 21 farming families that it used to in 2001. More than 450 families within a 200-kilometre radius of Uyuni, in the southern **altiplano**, are now involved in gathering this grain for the company. What's to explain the surge in popularity of this Andean staple?

'Clean' and 'raw' foodstuffs have become increasingly popular in the Western world. Quinoa, with its high nutritional value, has even become trendy in certain circles. It's the main ingredient in English model and nutritionist Danielle Copperman's newly launched breakfast option Qnola. Back in Bolivia, though, Andean Valley also produces quinoa breakfast cereal, along with quinoa pizza, burgers, pudding, flan, and the company is testing new recipes for quinoa brownies and pancakes.

Javier Fernandez, CEO of Andean Valley, has another theory about the popularity of quinoa. He asks me if I know what **la encefalopatía espongiforme bovina** is. '¿**Vacas locas**?'—mad cow disease? Since 2007, mad cow disease and the avian flu diminished consumer desire to eat certain meat products. In 2009, swine flu reached pandemic status. So, was the quinoa trend born more from a need for an alternative to meat than it was a simple desire to find healthier food? Quinoa, with its superfood status, may well be the only grain that can be considered a viable alternative to animal flesh. And its ability to grow in the barren conditions of Bolivia's southern **altiplano** render it unlike any other.

For now, Andean Valley is working to develop technologies and provide harvesting machinery to its farmers in order to maintain its sustainable, organic product. Even as quinoa production in Peru is growing, Fernandez and his company hope to keep the grain quintessentially Bolivian, purchasing from the burgeoning family farms in the high *altiplano*, whilst still conserving its organic ethic. ×

BUILDING WONDERLAND

Bolivian Express investigates El Alto's revolutionary computing plant

TEXT: CHRISTY CALLAWAY-GALE

Engineers in white lab coats, students in crisp Quipus shirts and new laptops, fresh from the Quipus computing plant: this was the scene inside El Alto's **polideportivo** the morning of the 31st of July. 'We are in a new era', President Evo Morales announced to thousands of young faces, and, looking around, I believed him.

The Quipus plant, estimated to cost a whopping $60 million, opened in May this year, just five months after Bolivia's first satellite was launched. Churning out 800 laptops a day, it appears to be a modern, technological wonderland, plonked down amongst the adobe homes of El Alto against a backdrop of the Andean mountainscape. To dole out 116,000 laptops— and that's just this year— to secondary school students in both rural and urban areas seems like an ideal political, educational, and economic vision to present just months before the next general election. But how does Evo's computer Wonderland converge with the real world of Bolivia?

The detail of this technological dream is, to be fair, impressive. Each computer will be equipped with a camera; shock protection from drops of up to a metre; resistance to water damage if a child's juice accidentally makes its way onto the laptop's surface; safeguards against theft from schools; a temperature sensor; and both chemistry and physics apps to improve scientific literacy. It's all put together by 60 technicians trained in China. My first thought: where can I get one?

In fact, according to state news sources, Bolivians should be able to get their hands on similar laptops from the same plant this October for 30 percent cheaper than equivalent computers on the market. Meanwhile, the student laptops, which cost $410 each to produce, are being given out for free. Far from being a dry political promise that will shrivel and fade into the background with winning election ballots, the plant actually physically exists and has delivered— it is tangible proof that the government is taking this project seriously.

Verónica Orozco, a student from Colegio Ayacucho in La Paz who will benefit from the Quipus project, remarks that she and her fellow students can 'find out more information about the topics they study in the classroom by having access to laptops in school', especially as she doesn't have a computer or the Internet at home. Her classmate, Daniel Aguilar, says the computer training the Quipus project will offer 'will make it easier to get a place at university'.

Am I being sucked into Evo's Wonderland, or is this project actually starting to sound viable and no longer a far-fetched political punt?

I remember Rafael Correa's similar project in Ecuador, the **revolución ciudadanía**, that included donating computers to schools in rural communities. Having spent three months in an indigenous community near Otavalo last year, I witnessed some of the issues of implementation firsthand. Despite the Internet access being described as '**un milagro**' by one member of the community, only one computer was in use. The other two lay untouched beneath a blue tarpaulin, awaiting repair.

Andy Creadore from the Phoenix Projects in Ecuador comments on these maintenance problems: 'it was very difficult to maintain the computers in good condition with so much dust and wind where rural schools are situated'. According to community leaders, viruses, prevalent in the local Internet cafés, would also infect school computers via flash drives. Zoë O'Connor, head of the Phoenix Projects, vouches for the situation in two other communities in the north of Ecuador: 'there were three providers of hardware (the government, the national Internet provider, and the electricity company) who would come independently to resolve issues. Rarely did all the parts work together'. Although in Ecuador Creadore hedges that there 'might have been a way to contact the Ministry of Education and report a failure', the support systems were scarce.

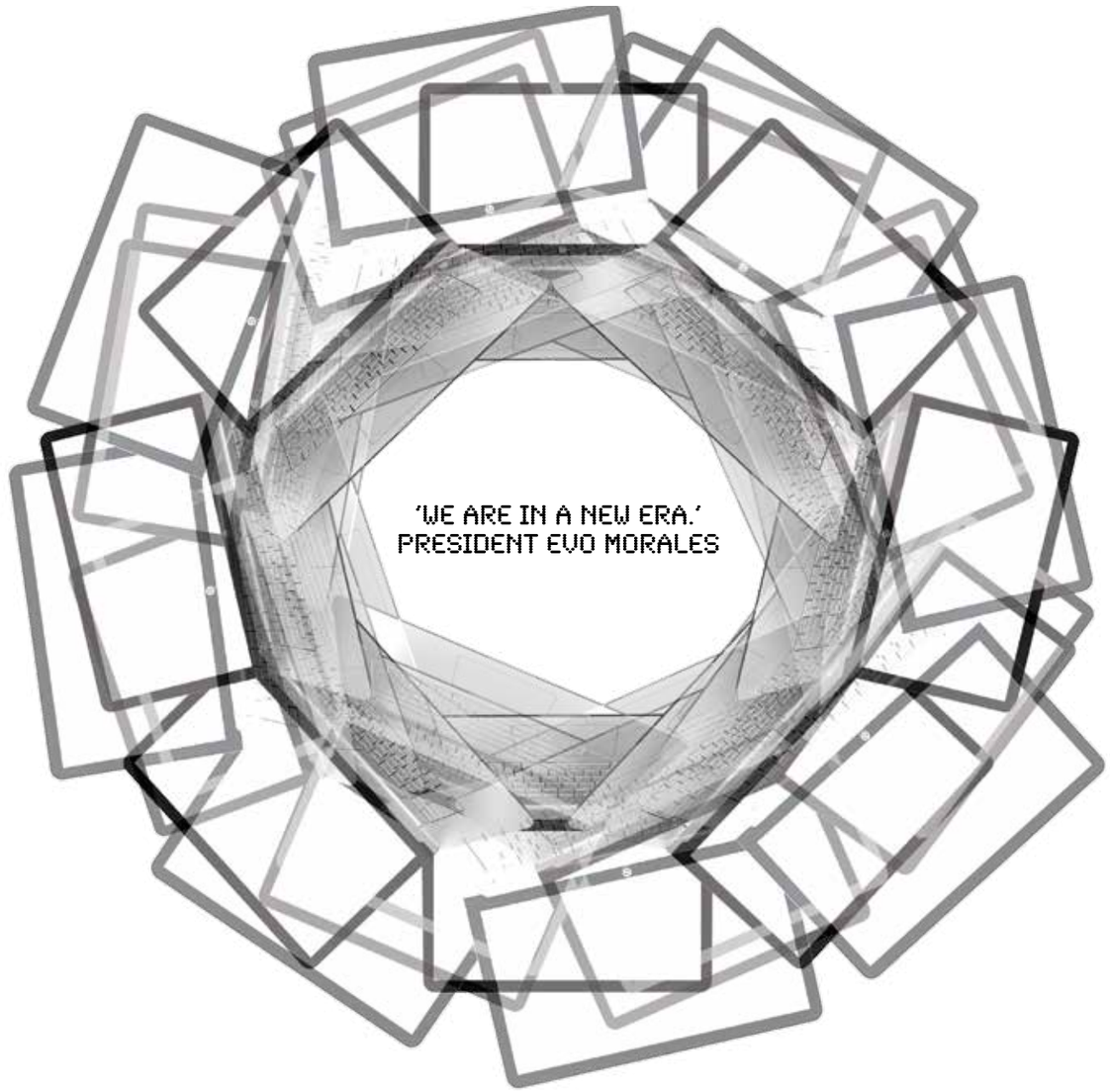
These testimonies start to reveal the diverse challenges the Quipus project will face. Whether the laptops are deep in the Amazon jungle, 4090 metres high up in Potosí, or in the urban environment of La Paz, the students' needs and the maintenance demands will be varied.

The practicality of how to use the laptops also poses a problem for the project if it pans out anything like it did in Ecuador. Creadore says that 'the majority of the community did not know how to use the Internet or the computers and required assistance to complete tasks'. The Bolivian Ministry of Education's computer courses for teachers seems necessary then, reflecting O'Connor's final words on the matter: 'training, training, and more training'. Although Mario Mamani, the headmaster of the Colegio de Ayacucho, describes the Quipus project as 'a tremendous step forward', he also attests that since 2012 there have only been three training days for their teachers: 'the

government has to continue intensifying the training programme for teachers… The project lacks greater implementation of the technology'. Anticipating my next interview question, he expresses some concerns over the students having access to social networks in the classroom. However, student Aguilar affirms that it is a matter of the students' self-discipline: 'if they want to play online games or educate themselves, it is their choice'.

I leave the building where the boss of Quipus resides, having been once again refused an interview. But as I emerge into the modern-traditional hybrid that is La Paz—**cholitas** jumping onto moving buses, high-tech security banks next to currency exchanges popping up on street corners—I start to think about the project again. Is the reality of its implementation even what I should be concerned with? Yes, its feasibility is important, but perhaps its symbolic worth is just as valuable. Alongside the heritage-preservation image sold to the gringo tourists that flock to La Paz, Evo's plugging of a modern image that stands up to the Western world suddenly seems vital. An engineer from the Quipus plant, Frank Mizelada, stresses the importance of this dual image: 'We don't want to lose our culture; it is our identity, but we want to expand our horizons'. The Quipus project proclaims that 'Bolivia is a modern country too', and one that also has heaps of historic culture at that, not a combination every 'modern' country can boast of.

Tupac Katari, both the name of the Bolivian satellite and of an 18th century indigenous leader, combines Bolivia's past and technological future. Just so, the name Quipus refers to both the ancient Andean written language that communicated concepts through a series of knots on strings, and the revolutionary computer company. Within their names, the satellite and the plant embody Evo's creation of a new image of Bolivia that combines the country's heritage with its forward-thinking future. ×



EL CEMENTERIO

A short story by Lulu Shooter fusing Andean legends and English West Country roots. Is the grass always greener in your imagination?

PHOTO: ALEXANDRA MELEÁN ANZOLEAGA

'You're doing it wrong, María!'

'This is exactly right, **estúpido**. You just add water,'

The cemetery's bustle worried Cachorroz's sleep like a puppy chewing on its mother's ear. He reluctantly got up, and peered into the neighbouring crypt. The pigs were arguing about the best way to make **barro pastelero**. Cachorroz turned tail and pounded down the cemetery steps two-at-a-time.

Every day, Cachorroz escaped the cemetery to find his family's fortune. Every night, before bed, his little brothers and sisters would take his empty paws and follow him down the rabbit hole of his imagination.

'In Coroico's cloud forest, there flows a sacred river called Quri Wayq'u,' he began. 'I was admiring the banks' pink flowers when all of a sudden I heard some splashing. You'll never guess what I saw. Some bright blue fishes were beckoning me into the deep water. I jumped in and there, shining amongst the snakes and stones, was an ametrine gemstone . I grabbed it. It's worth loads of bones.

'Suddenly, more seahorses than you can imagine plunged out of the darkness and headed straight for me. We tumbled down the river in a frantic scrum, and everything around us blurred into a dark midnight sky. Praise Inti, a reed wrapped around my ankle and held me fast. The seahorses were swept away in the maelstrom. Inti came to me in the form of a vulture, and carried me back to La Paz.'

Once he'd finished his story, Cacharroz curled up on top of the pile of sleeping puppies and plunged further into his dreams.

*

María, I'm asking you,'

'Potato is the missing ingredient!' Cachorroz watched the pig try and reassure her partner. She clamped a wooden spoon between her teeth and frantically stirred a smelly mess.

One of the puppies began chewing his tail. He whipped around.
'Tell us a story, Cachito!'

Cachorroz met the blue, blind eyes tracking him.

'You won't believe your...' he paused, '... Ears. Early this morning, I jumped on a minibus and headed for the distant Andes. I saw a pack of llamas wearing socks on their ears and hoped they'd trade me a pair for a story. I'd just taken a deep breath when suddenly a chinchilla hopped out from the belly folds of a sleeping llama. Instead of being content and warm – he was *crying*!

'"Why are you crying, chinchillasito?" I asked.

'"Ere!" The chinchilla told me his story in a ridiculous country accent: "We was just mindin' t'condors t'other week when some 'orrible rats from t'city came over on one of 'em tourist busses. We eat 'em cactuses, right? They're great: thirst quenchin' 'n' loads of vit's 'n' min's. 'Ere, these rats ate our 'ole plantation! We've not got nothin' to eat now! They keep takin' our burrows 'n' all,"

'Those countryside chinchillas needed a helping paw from a tough city pup like me. Back at his burrow, you'll never guess what we saw: All the rats were sprawled on boulders clutching at their bellies and moaning. They'd eaten the *whole* cactus, spikes and all! We grabbed some sticks, and chased those blighters off the premises,'

Cachorroz tore his eyes away from the setting sun, and surveyed the puppies. The youngest were snoring whilst the eldest were restless still, barking at shadows. *At least they share my imagination*, he thought, looking around the bare crypt. Tell us another one, Cachito!'

Cachorroz looked around for a bone.

'This is the last attempt, alright?' Came a cry from next door.

'The kantuta flower saved **mamá's** life. Now it's going to save my **barro pastelero**,'

María's experiment gave him an idea. His grandmother had once told him the legend of the kantuta flower, and now he could really impress the puppies with his own rendition.

'Alright you lot,' the puppies gathered round. 'Have you ever heard of Santa Cruz? I was sunning myself with the sloths in the city's main square when I got chatting to a toucanita. She invited me back to her nest. Lucky me, right? No. It turned out she needed help settling a dispute between two families. Well, I was too young for her anyway…

'When we arrived, two royal toucans were embroiled in a duel. They squawked and flapped their battle cries, and darted at each other like hummingbirds. A second later, we watched their dead bodies crashing down through the trees. In the silence, I began to howl. And you'll never guess what happened next. The branches began to absorb our tears, and suddenly the royal nests reached out and intertwined. Creepers knotted together and the bows of the trees became one. The families' kids dubbed the formation a toucan temple to preserve the alliance. Obviously, yours truly is now the temple's top dog,'

The last word was barely audible, as Cachorroz slipped into a deep sleep.

*

On the third night, Cachorroz was late back to the crypt. The puppies were waiting for him, eavesdropping and whispering.

'I've got it!'

'Got what, María?'

A delicious smell drew the puppies' noses to the pig's crypt. A fine **barro pastelero** sat glistening in the sun.

'Would you like some?' María spied them, 'I found a gas heater and remembered I needed to cook the cake! You need water, potato, kantuta and Inti's breath!'

The puppies wagged their tails and edged closer, when suddenly Cachorroz exploded into the crypt knocking buckets flying and petals sailing.

'You'll never guess what happened in La Paz!' He didn't wait for an invitation to begin. 'We thought those red orbs floating above the cemetery were dragons, but they're actually flying minibuses! I flew across the city. A little bird drew alongside me and told me they're called the 'Tele-frío'. I got off the minibus and visited our aunt's new litter in El Alto. They were clustered around a glowing book. It whirred and whined when suddenly their faces appeared within its pages. Apparently someone's built a giant spiderweb across the world. You can climb across it and read a book about *anyone*. I think the spider decided to call it the 'in-telaraña', or something stupid. Well, this morning someone had climbed across the spiderweb and told our cousins about *another* flying minibus which could take you all the way from El Alto to the stars! I know the city like the back of my paw, so I set off to find it. You'll never guess what happened next.

'Around the corner of the Multifunctional there was a ladder with a little pod hovering above it. I jumped inside and in my haste, the ladder fell away. The pod floated towards our ancestors, and I was surrounded by a darkness dotted with magic spheres. I drifted in the direction of an emerald blue one. It was even more beautiful than the ametrine gemstone! The pod started rocketing towards it, and, I'll admit, I got a bit scared. I closed my eyes until the door swung open and I was back in El Alto.'

'**Caca**,'

'No, it's true! It really happened!'

Chanchitoz, who lived next door, had been listening the whole time.

'There's no way you jumped on the Teleférico, surfed Facebook and launched the Bolivian satellite all in one day. Only in your Wonderland, Cachito,'

'Go out and see for yourselves!' Cachorroz laughed. The reality was so much better than even he could have imagined. ×

'We watched their dead bodies crashing down through the trees. In the silence, I began to howl. And you'll never guess what happened next.'

'Which way should I go?'

'It depends on where you want to go...'

Bolivian Express offers you six alternative forms of escapism from the real world.

ILLUSTRATIONS: OSCAR ZALLES

RIBERALTA 5

As soon as you are tired of shivering in the La Paz cold, pack a small backpack and go to the main plaza in Riberalta. After a morning of travel, you will find yourself basking in the sun and, after renting a motorcycle, riding around and around the main plaza. Join people of all ages and ride around in circles as you familiarize yourself with the people and restaurants in downtown. As soon as you feel comfortable, line up next to another plaza-circling motorcyclist or a car blasting the latest hits, and chat about town gossip or the tastiest restaurants. Imagine the wind in your hair, pleasant company at your side, and warm Amazonian weather. If you really want to escape, go to Riberalta.

CHOLITA WRESTLING 6

If you've had enough of real people, then head to El Alto on Sunday for the cholita wrestling show. Dive into the fantasy world of black and white characters where the good guy, or girl, always wins. After the first fight, you'll be so engrossed in the panto-mime that you'll have forgotten about the cold concrete slab beneath your bottom, and the fact that you've only got one more toilet pass left. The orange peel flying through the air provides the perfect tunnel vision keeping your eyes trained on the glamrock stars strutting about the stage, and your mind off work on Monday morning.

EL CAMINO DE LA MUERTE 4

If you're looking for candid kicks, head to the top of Camino de Los Yungas and rocket down this rickety road all the way down to Coroico. Faded by the fog and glistening under the morning dew, no one wants to come into contact with the 600 metre drop that hovers to their left. If your heart still holds its pulse, there's even the opportunity to zip-line over the death valley canyon, just so you can relax after a tough cycle.

ROUTE 36 2

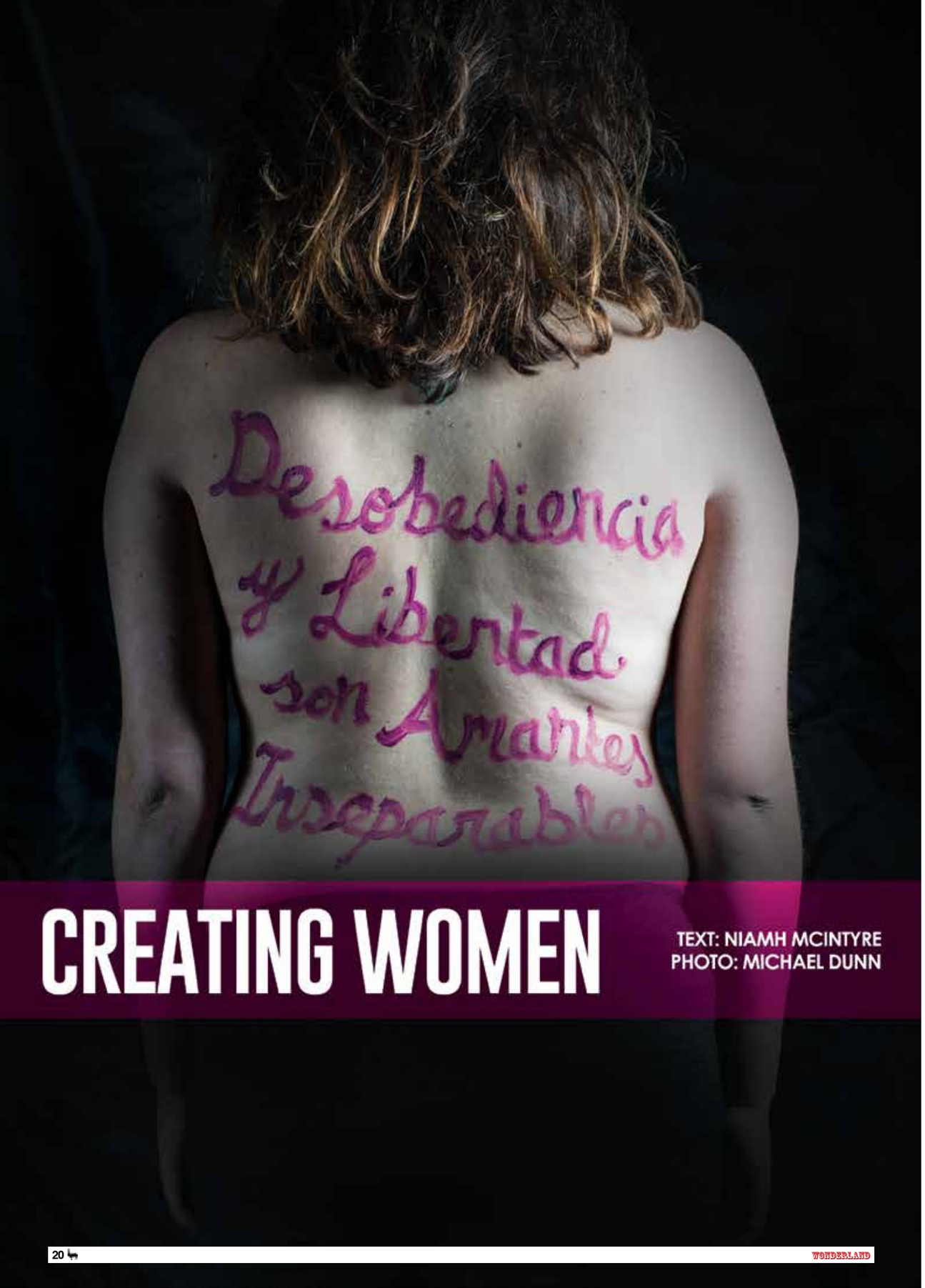
In a hidden location, known only to a clandestine ring of taxi drivers, lurks the infamous Route 36. Backpacker destination su-preme, it has all the theatrics expected of an illicit cocaine bar, complete with shifty door men and formidable metal shutters. In a dingy, egg carton-lined room hordes of gringos collect in this cocaine-fuelled confessional to snort, drink and solve the majori-ty of world issues. You have been warned...

GOLD 1

Tired of 2014? Step over the neon-illuminated threshold of Gold and transport yourself back to an era of shoulderpads, Pac-Man, and questionable hairstyles. Follow Debbie Harry's lead from the many video screens which surround the brightly lit, mirrored dance-floor, dance the night away to los 'Gold Classics', and leave your inhibitions back outside on calle Almirante Grau. Regret nothing.

ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM 3

Plunge into the dark exhibition room of the Ethnographic Museum of La Paz, filled with ceremonial masks, and undergo the 'transfor-mación del individuo en un personaje diferente'. Against the background of sinister, spirit-like laughter blaring out from the walls, sets of bulging eyes trace your path around the carnivalesque parade scene. Continue the soul-searching journey in the caves of the 'Cami-nantes en el Tiempo' and visit the hand imprints of past identities. Emerge and evaluate your sense of self.



CREATING WOMEN

TEXT: NIAMH MCINTYRE
PHOTO: MICHAEL DUNN

It is almost impossible to spend time in La Paz without encountering the work of *Mujeres Creando*. Even if you don't go out of your way to visit their headquarters in *La Virgen de los Deseos* or if you miss the daily broadcasts of Radio Deseo, you will be confronted by their graffiti on the streets. It is easily distinguishable from the usual political slogans in both content and style.

Phrases like *No quiero ser magnífica, no quiero ser reina, quiero ser libre y plebeya* (I don't want to be great, I don't want to be a queen, I want to be free and plebeian) loom large on the walls of Bolivian cities in the signature cursive script of this radical organization.

So, who are *Mujeres Creando*? What kind of anarcha-feminist society do they strive to create? Why is their existence necessary in Bolivia today? In the context of our Wonderland issue, I set out to ask Julieta Ojeda, who is one of the main activists in the organization, what an ideal society would look like for her.

We don't believe in a utopia, Julieta says, at the start of our conversation. *We believe in the here and now… We want to struggle here and now.*

We want to create a society without military violence, she continues, *with freedom for our bodies, with sexual freedom. As a grassroots organization, we are forming cooperative groups against the hegemony of capitalism.*

Despite the group's idealism, for *Mujeres Creando* theory is less important than action. In fact, direct political action is an inextricable part of anarcha-feminist philosophy. *The Organization* rejects all forms of mainstream politics as well as the structures of representative liberal democracy. For this reason, they see no choice but to be active and to find alternative ways to organize individuals.

According to feminist Writer Anavel Simotas: *anarcha-feminism teaches that the individual has the power to affect their own life, and that women can take direct action on a micro and macro level to transform lives around the world.* This is a view that drives *Mujeres Creando's* programme of direct action.

We are a movement without the desire to build a political party, without dependency on the state. We are creating our kind of politics… We entirely reject this upcoming election, which ignores grassroots groups like our own, Julieta Ojeda told me.

If anything emerges from our conversation, it is that *Mujeres Creando* is primarily focused as an organization on responding to the needs of individual women in Bolivia. *We are active in providing day care and legal advisory services,* Julieta explained, *we work with housekeepers and prostitutes.*

Why do they do it? I ask her. What sort of discrimination do women face in Bolivia today? According to Julieta, the issues that give purpose to the movement are the continued criminalization of abortion; structural homophobia; the incidences of violence against women; and the political power of the Catholic Church, which extends far beyond ecclesiastical activities.

Not every women's organization in Bolivia would agree with *Mujeres Creando*. Although there are many prominent issues which remain to be discussed within the country, such as the gender pay gap and the devaluation of women's labour (problems which, obviously, are not unique to Bolivia), some groups believe that much progress has been made for their cause under Morales' leadership. The government, for example, recently passed a law against femicide that carries a 30 year penalty for the perpetrator. This is a move that many groups welcome, because it signals for them that the government is making a serious effort to curb violence against women.

Julieta, however, is quick to dismiss this landmark event as tokenism: *'The law against femicide exists to defend women,'* she concedes, *'but it has a lot of contradictions with other laws. It's there but it doesn't work in practice'.*

That said, Bolivia is one of the few countries in the world that can boast gender parity in its government's cabinet. Women's issues here often exist in contradiction. While women currently cannot choose to have an abortion, there have been recent improvements in local laws that improve the lives of women who need one. Doctors are now allowed to determine the need for an abortion in cases of rape or life-threatening circumstances. Before these changes to the law, only a civil judge could legally grant this right, forcing many Bolivian women to turn to illegal —and often highly dangerous— abortions.

Is this really what progress looks like? Julieta asks, alongside the members of *Mujeres Creando*. Is the end-goal of women's liberation to force a change in legislation?

Without a boss or a traditional hierarchy in the organization, *Mujeres Creando* strives to reach beyond the channels of a representative democracy. Its members watch over a programme of consciousness-raising campaigns and direct action from their own Palace of Government at *La Virgen de los Deseos*. Their aim is to struggle for the voices of women and homosexuals and non-binary individuals. And the streets of La Paz are their chosen arena. These women reclaim public spaces through protest, performance and, most crucially, graffiti.

They are activists, though, not only artists, Julieta explains. Graffiti is *a creative intervention, a different kind of struggle.* It is the way in which marginalized women can place themselves loudly, visibly, at the centre of Bolivian society.

As I leave *La Virgen de los Deseos*, an unconventional Wonderland, a **cholita** comes to pick up her child from the day-care centre that operates in the building. The walls are decorated with a mural in celebration of working mothers, entitled Mi **mamá** trabaja. The scene, which would be mundane in any other scenario, is in this case subversive, even radical. This is precisely how Mujeres Creando aims to undermine the Bolivian state: by creating cooperative organizations that serve the daily needs of marginalized women.

We are NOT interested in being part of the government, Julieta says. *Governments, laws and societies always make the same mistakes. We prioritize the needs of women.*

TEXT: GISELLE STORM HYAM
PHOTO: VERÓNICA M. AVENDAÑO

On Tuesday the 15th of July, surrounded by hundreds of children, Vice President Álvaro García Linera signed new legislation making Bolivia the nation with the world's youngest legal working age. Children as young as 12 can now be legally employed, and those as young as 10 can be self-employed, as long as they are enrolled in school and have parental permission.

This new law has sparked international outrage and widespread criticisms of the Bolivian government—human rights groups are up in arms and the International Labour Organisation's minimum age convention has been quite brazenly disregarded.

The new law comes as a shock to most of the Western world—it seems backwards, plunging Bolivia into some morbid Dickensian era where child labour is normalized and wide-eyed Bolivian children are exploited and abused, the entire cast occasionally breaking into heartfelt songs about **la vida maldita**.

From within Bolivia, however, there is a very different argument to be heard and understood before a chorus of shoe shiners cancans across centre stage. When signing the bill, the vice president announced that 'this is a law that has the right balance between reality, rights, and international conventions'. This word 'reality' has been thrown about a lot over the past couple of weeks; it encapsulates a belief in the 'Bolivian reality', separate from the West and global policies, and this 'reality' is at the heart of the new law.

I asked 15-year-old bricklayer Eddy to explain this reality. 'Bolivia is different', he says. 'It is a necessity for children to work at a lower age. Children are working all the time'. UNICEF estimates that between 500,000 and 800,000 children are currently working in Bolivia, and in a country where rural families earn an average of US$0.60 a day (as of 2011), there is logic in Eddy's argument. But still, this seems to me a slightly fatalistic view on things, and Reid Maki, the child labour coordinator at the Child Labour Coalition (CLC), agrees. 'The rationale that we should legalize child labour at young ages because a lot of children are working and will continue to work in Bolivia is a horrible idea', Maki argues. 'Bolivia should continue the difficult struggle to reduce child labour instead of waving a white flag and surrendering'.

Jenny Miranda, the former head of the Bolivian Union of Child and Adolescent Workers (UNATSBO), explains that 'society is always against children working because [society] is so far from the reality'. For Miranda, and many of her peers, child labour is seen as a necessity for the children to sustain themselves and their families. It is a choice between working or slipping further into poverty. At least by legalising child labour, children will (in theory) have the rights and legal support they need.

Jo Becker, the advocacy director of the Children's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, spoke to me about the potential normalisation of child labour. She coins the new code as 'legalising exploitation' and argues that it 'sends a strong message that child labour is acceptable'. She believes children who have refrained from doing so in the past will now work and this will 'continue the cycle of poverty'. However, from what I learned about child labour, it's about as normalised as it's ever going to be. If you were to approach the average shoe shine boy on the street and ask him his opinion on the new law, in all likelihood you would be met with a blank stare followed by an enthusiastic offer to polish your unpolishable trainers. The very concept of child labour being detrimental to society is a non-starter, and the legality of it is neither here nor there.

The question that remains is that of the future. Becker sympathises with the current situation of working children, yet she describes the new law as a 'short-term solution' which 'in the long term is unsustainable'. Maki of the CLC takes a similar stance, arguing that working children will 'lose more than they gain' and that work 'must be restricted to protect the education and development of teen workers'. The argument that resounded between both of them was about the long-term effects on working children and Bolivia as a country. The new law does mandate that children must be enrolled in school before they can work, but it is unclear how this will actually be enforced. 'Studies show that children who work are less likely to do well in school', Becker says.

I asked Miranda, formerly of UNATSBO, about how she thinks working from such a young age affected her education. Her answer shocked me.

'If I didn't sell as much as I was supposed to, I wasn't paid', she said of her experience as a child labourer. 'I would get no breakfast, no money for transport; they wouldn't let me go to school'. With the new law, employers have to ensure that children are going to school, and if not, those children will have legal support and the right to complain. 'We are giving kids a voice', Miranda explains. By working at such a young age, she says, children have a better understanding of the value of money and that of hard work. If anything, it is motivation to work harder, to provide a better future for themselves and generations to come. 'It is a painful reality', Miranda says, 'but now with the new law our rights will be respected'.

It has to be kept in mind though that UNATSBO and its members, numbering around 15,000, comprise a minority within the child labour field. A homeless child who lives on the street is in all likelihood going to be more concerned about getting by day to day than going to school. However, according to a study by Human Rights Watch, one in seven children in Bolivia will not complete primary school, and in rural areas there is an average of only 4.2 years of education, so maybe the new law (if properly enforced) requiring children to be enrolled in school will prove to be beneficial.

It was an odd process talking to all of these people, as each of their arguments is so powerful and makes much sense. I spent the entire process swinging back and forth between the morality and rationality of Maki and Becker and the practicality of Eddy and Miranda's harsh realism.

Only time will tell how effective the new law will be, as the Bolivian legal system is not known for its efficiency and it is still unclear exactly how enforcement will be carried out. But the new law signifies a change. Miranda says that 'before we were invisible', but now the new law at least recognizes child labourers and will give them legal standing and a support network within the framework of society. It is not necessarily a long-term, viable solution, but there is a bitter practicality to the law. Within Bolivia there is a hard reality of children working and this new law marks a change and a recognition of that reality, making the issue of child labour visible and real. ×

BIENVENIDO A RIBERALTA

A short story about a boy from La Paz going to the Amazon for the first time

TEXT: SHIRIN VETRY
FROM WASKA TATAY SERIES, PHOTO RAPHAËL VERONA AND THOMAS ROUSSET.

The landscape below the plane came alive. Illimani's snowy peak had transformed and descended into a land of greenery. From the sky, Nacho noted the Beni River thriving between the trees in the Amazonian jungle. Just before landing, houses emerged around the airport forming Riberalta. That morning, Nacho left the bustling streets of a cold, pot-like city. Now, he found himself landing in a small town two hours away that measured fifteen blocks across.

He stepped off the plane and basked under the sun. His shoulders eased back into the thick Amazonian air. A small drop of sweat slid down the back of his neck and his stomach began to grumble. Apart from the dried fruits on the plane, Nacho had not eaten anything on the flight from La Paz to Riberalta. His mind momentarily wondered to the world of sweet juices he entered.

'**Bienvenido a Riberalta**.' That's what the pilot had said over the muffled speakers. Now the flight attendant smiled at him in her tight baby-blue skirt, men in orange jackets waved at him as they guided him to the cement-covered awning some metres away, and children screamed it at him as they ran towards their loved ones.

Under the crowded awning, his La Paz jeans and button-up began to feel heavy. He reminded himself that this is what he wanted: To escape the ache in his bones from the cold. He smoothed back his sweaty hair. The ice cream man blew his horn, and Nacho began to walk through the chattering families, looking for the baggage claim in the small covered area. Soon, the humidity moistened his torso and arms, making them stick together. As he rolled up his flannel sleeves, he swatted a mosquito on his arm. People had warned him of the malaria and yellow fever in the jungle. A mother and her teenage daughter watched him swat the small insects and smiled at him as though reassuring him of his safety. *Bienvenido a Riberalta*, the mother and daughter said, with their smile.

Everything felt hot: The sun, the air, the warmth between families. It was as though the heat itself had melted the community together and energized the world into a land of plants bursting through the pavement and people laughing between the welcome hugs. Nacho continued to search for his luggage through the heat. Eventually, a policeman pointed him towards a fenced-off area. Confused, he advanced. A lady in heels and a pink silk shirt was the airport's baggage claim.

This is my country, he thought. Spend two hours on a plane and the outside worldshifts from cement towers and alpaca sweaters to motorcycles circling a square and açai berry-stained teeth.

Bienvenido a Riberalta, she said as she chit-chatted and handed each person their luggage in exchange for a purple airport ticket. Nacho thanked the woman and began his search for a taxi outside.

The sun shone over the grassy fields that surrounded the airport. An assembly line of motorcycle taxi drivers called out to the **paceño**. Without thinking, Nacho handed off his backpack to a middle-aged moto-taxi driver. The man plopped the bag in front of him and attempted to balance the bike as Nacho fumbled his way on. On his left, Nacho noted a grinning Cristiano Ronaldo holding up a cup of Herbal Life on a billboard. He smiled up at his self-proclaimed twin, who welcomed him to the Amazon. *Bienvenido a Riberalta*.

The motor revved and wind began to cool the sweat in Nacho's hair. The motorcycle eased forward on the dirt-smoothed roads and past lines of houses. Fruit trees peeked out from backyards and beckoned Nacho to try the fruit. *Bienvenido a Riberalta*. He breathed the humid air, sat up straight and smiled at the passing girls on motorcycles.

After dropping his backpack off at his hotel, Nacho walked a block towards downtown Riberalta. Four large busts, a toucan-shaped payphone, benches and teenagers in uniforms marked the perimetre of the plaza. Nacho thought back to his time in high school walking around the squares in La Paz with his friends. None of the teenagers here wore sweaters like he always wore over his uniform in La Paz, but they all mirrored the same flirtatious pokes he gave girls and the crowd he formed with friends around benches.

Across the street from the plaza, on every side, stood small restaurants and ice cream shops. Nacho slapped another fly away from his face and eventually made his way to the nearest restaurant: Açai Mania.

While waiting for his açai smoothie, Nacho looked out at the square. From his spot on the corner, he counted the number of times the same trio of teenagers rode their motorcycles around the square. Like in a carousel, the three rode side by side, singing along to music from an iPhone and chatting as they rode in circles.

No one honked or cut each other off. People of all ages circled the centre of their city over and over. Old couples sat in comfort as they made their rounds. Small children snuggled between their parents and reached out to imaginary beings floating in the Amazonian wind.

The waitress appeared with the drink and Nacho stirred the unfamiliar beverage as he watched people circle the plaza. He took a sip of the purple smoothie and thought, *this is my country. Spend two hours on a plane and the outside world shifts from cement towers and alpaca sweaters to motorcycles circling a square and açai berry–stained teeth.*

He hummed the tune of La Paz… *Lindas montañas te vieron nacer*… He sipped the Amazonian fruit drink… *El Illimani tu cuna meció*… He watched the three boys ride next to each other… *Y la kantuta su alma te dio*… And eased into his warm chair on that hot day by the plaza… *Kollita tenias que ser.*

Bienvenido a Riberalta, he thought. Tomorrow, he will begin to explore the other side of his country. ×

TIME DIFFERENCE

TEXT: NIAMH MCINTYRE
ILLUSTRATION: VALERIA WILDE

At midnight on the 21st of June this year, Bolivians witnessed the end of time as they knew it. In an unprecedented event for the country, they observed the reversal of the most visible clock in La Paz, which has since become known as the *Reloj del Sur*. The clock stands tall, overlooking the Plaza Murillo from the legislative palace, and it is a symbol of a larger ideological project in Bolivia.

While standard clocks mimic the movement of the sun across a sundial in the northern hemisphere, the hands of the *Reloj del Sur* reflect the movement of the sun in the opposite direction. Simply put, this is a clock that runs counter-clockwise.

According to Felix Cárdenas, who is Evo Morales' Vice-Minister for Decolonization, the reloj exposes the way in which time, far from being abstract or universal, is a social convention, governed by history, place and nation. The *Reloj del Sur*, he says, proves that *Nada es universal. Nada es absoluto*.

Media outlets, however, in Bolivia and elsewhere, have covered the birth of the clock with some derision and several local politicians have been critical of the project. Norma Pierola, for example, who is a member of the Chamber of Deputies in Bolivia, accused the government of attempting to change 'the universal laws of time' with its novel clock. But this, it turns out, is not far from the government's intention. In fact, the reloj is inextricably tied to the government's programme of decolonization, which promotes the revindication of historically repressed Bolivian identities.

According to the Vice-Minister, the clock is not an innovation but a return to Andean values. 'It is immersed in a movement that is not a creation of Morales or Foreign Minister Choquehuanca', he said. 'We are simply making visible what has always existed'.

The reloj, the wiphala, and the promotion of the coca leaf are all part of Bolivia's decolonizing mission. This is why the Vice-Minister insists that the clock must be seen in the context of the broader political aims of the Morales administration. Cárdenas speaks of vivir bien, of Pachamama, and of dismantling patriarchal institutions. 'The clock is just one part of a whole conjunction of themes', he explains. 'If you only see the clock going backwards you're not seeing anything'.

Cárdenas has a point. Perhaps there is more to the clock than the hands running backwards. 'In the Aymara language there is no future', Cárdenas tells me, 'Their language says that you have to look back to go forward'.

According to an anthropological study by Rafael Núñez, professor of Cognitive Science at the University of California, San Diego, the Aymara are the only documented case of a culture whose language conceives of the past as being in front of the subject, and the future behind, because the future is something that cannot be seen.

'The clock is just one part of a whole conjunction of themes. If you only see the clock going backwards you're not seeing anything'.

We teach children to 'tell' the time as if time were inflexible and rigid like the multiplication tables. There is clockwise and then there is counter-clockwise. On closer inspection, though, these distinctions are often completely arbitrary.

'What cataclysm in the universe caused the 1st of January to be the New Year?' Cárdenas asks, provocatively. 'Time', he concludes, 'is a continuous discussion'.

Indeed, time has always had multiple meanings. It is a force whose complexity cannot be repressed by the imposition of one authoritative way of perceiving over another. The Aymara demonstrate that although time appears to surround us completely, it is at least partly, a subjective experience and a sensory illusion.

Pitting the *Reloj del Sur* against traditional, Eurocentric means of telling the time exposes how politics can determine our temporal reality. This is a view that Vice-Minister Cárdenas stands by as he passionately explains the political impetus of the clock project, 'We have always been told that the United States is the world. Now we are thinking that the world might be Bolivia'.

This intersection of the political and the temporal, which goes some way to explaining the hostility to the government's initiative, is not a uniquely Bolivian phenomenon. As Norma Pierola points out, it is possible to see the clock merely as 'a crude imitation of the Jacobin calendar'. The main difference, though, is that while Robespierre and his fellow revolutionaries imposed the use of a new system of time upon their countrymen, in Bolivia no-one will be forced to adopt the new system.

In the late 18th century, the leaders of the French Revolution declared the dawn of a new era in France with a calendar that began on the birthday of the First Republic. The goal was to produce a potent symbol of a regime that preached complete cultural transformation. But the new system of time failed in its enforcement, given the reluctance of the French to adopt the revolutionary calendar. Is the *Reloj del Sur* destined for a similarly tragic fate? Or will it have a lasting impact?

'We don't need the liberté, egalité, fraternité of the French revolution', Cárdenas says. 'We're talking about our own constitution, which says Ama Sua, Ama Llulla, Ama Quella (do not steal, do not lie and do not be lazy)'.

Some people in La Paz share Cárdenas' enthusiasm. 'The reloj is a symbol of our difference' one woman said. 'It's a symbol of Bolivia'. Others, however, as the chimes of the clock echoed in Plaza Murillo, were indifferent towards the *Reloj del Sur*, simply saying 'no es importante'. For them, the reloj is a largely symbolic gesture.

And I would agree. However, sometimes symbolic gestures are important, as important though, the reloj is a testament to what is happening in Morales' Bolivia. It is bold and controversial. It encourages nonconformist, creative ways of thinking; it is an interrogation of all that seems 'universal'. For Cárdenas, as for Choquehuanca and for Morales, the reloj indicates that, in Bolivia today, plurinational, indigenous, 'Nothing is normalized'.

THE ART OF MARCELO SUAZNABAR:
APOCALYPTIC SURREALISM

TEXT: NIAMH MCINTYRE

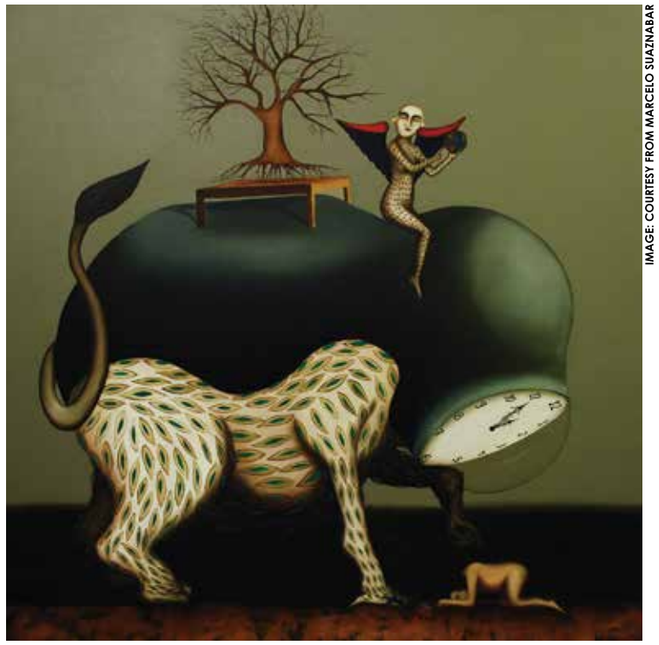


IMAGE: COURTESY FROM MARCELO SUAZNABAR

A first encounter with the work of Marcelo Suaznabar is equally fantastical and unsettling. Angels playing instruments cavort with mermaids and naked women, a chaotic and sensual experience. However, the dark side of the carnival soon emerges from the vibrant scene. The clock, the focal point of *El Macabro Paso del Tiempo* (The Macabre Passing of Time), reads: *el tiempo se acabo y ya nada podemos hacer* (time's up and there's nothing we can do). An angel and a beast cling to the edge of the Earth, suspended above the unknown. We are, in fact, spectators of the Apocalypse, in which *The Lord will be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution* (Thessalonians 1:7–10).

As a young man, Suaznabar was captivated by the religious art of Potosí and his native Oruro. Although he was schooled at the Catholic University in Santiago, Chile, and left Bolivia for Canada in 2001 for greater artistic opportunity, these early influences permeate his work. The **barroco Andino** and the wild, austere landscape of the **altiplano** interact with the visual plenitude of the Northern Renaissance and 20th century surrealism.

If Marcelo's work constantly employs traditional apocalyptic imagery, it is not a purely aesthetic choice, or a mystical indulgence. The artist is always concerned with transposing this traditional imagery of damnation to shock people into an acknowledgement of the imminent collapse of a world devastated by industrialization and global warming, a state he describes as '**condenación moderna**'. 'We should think of our modern damnation as a mirror, which allows us to realize the general disorder of our endangered planet', Suaznabar said. His apocalypse is purposive and didactic: 'If we create a global collective consciousness… We could extend the existence of the world for future generations'.

'In my paintings, clocks are subjective, and point the observer to a static or frozen moment…in their memory, a final warning, a kind of agony which may be reborn as hope'.

The juxtaposition of Apocalypse and modernity appears everywhere in his paintings. Barcodes replace mouths. The centrepiece of *Alegoría* (Allegory) is hemmed in by vignettes showing factories, melting ice caps, and deforestation.

It is clear, then, that Suaznabar's work is moral and allegorical. But the relationship of surrealism and pragmatic politics has always been fraught and complex. This relationship is the subject of Andre Breton's 'What is *Surrealism?*', which describes 'a certain immediate ambiguity contained in the word surrealism… Which, on the contrary, expresses a desire to deepen the foundations of the real, to bring about an even clearer and at the same time ever more passionate consciousness of the world perceived by the senses'. Breton also claimed that the perfect surrealist act would be to walk into a crowd and start shooting.

Marcelo himself alludes to the paradox of evoking the dream to deepen our understanding of an urgent political reality: 'Personally, I am sceptical about politics. But what interests me is surrealism's transmission of images of situations of discord, elevated to the dream-state, can generate a political discourse of protest'. Marcelo and Breton both synthesize elements of the dream and realism to force us to meditate deeply on our own reality and change the way in which we perceive it. However, while many early 20th century surrealists jubilantly celebrated the end of civilization, for Suaznabar, in the 21st century, the real prospect of the end of civilization is much more distressing.

I asked Suaznabar, prophet of the Apocalypse, if he thinks there is any hope for the future, or if, as we have already seen, **el tiempo se acabo**. 'I would like to be optimistic on this issue… But I fear deforestation and pollution of the environment is irreversible', he said. However, the very existence of Suaznabar's art, by creating a discourse about destruction, speaks of the possibility for change. 'Of one thing I am sure', he said, 'that uncertainty will always exist and we will never completely understand our actions'.

FROM WASKA TATAY SERIES,
PHOTO RAPHAËL VERONA AND THOMAS ROUSSET.

THE CREATION OF LITERARY WONDERLANDS: TRENDS AND TENDENCIES

TEXT: CHRISTY CALLAWAY-GALE
FROM WASKA TATAY SERIES, PHOTO RAPHAËL VERONA AND THOMAS ROUSSET.

From C.S Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* through Cortázar's *Axolotl,* supernatural worlds are in abundance in literary works. But what makes a literary wonderland tick? If we take a look at British and Bolivian creations, what do we find underlying them all?

Alice goes down the rabbit hole and through the looking glass into a parallel world where all norms are discarded. Likewise in the Bolivian legend *La Laguna Dorada de Corocoro* (The Golden Lagoon of Corocoro), the reader is drawn into the depths of a lagoon and out the other side to the *Ciudad del Encanto* (Enchanted City), a metropolis made of gold and silver not meant for human sight. Like other literary worlds that only make themselves known to the lucky protagonist, be it Alice, the Pevensie family in *Narnia*, or the first-person narrator in *Axolotl*, the Enchanted City rises from the depths once a year during the **luna menguante**. Those fortunate enough to see it fall in love with its beauty. Inevitably, by dangling marvelous, imaginary lands in front of the reader's eyes, the story hints at the possibility of escaping the chains of reality and fuels the appeal of the other world.

The inhabitants of these worlds are familiar too. *La Laguna Dorada de Corocoro* gives us giants, who have built the Enchanted City. Ring any bells? Alice both shrinks and grows, not always of her own accord. She also has to deal with the blurring of human-animal forms. The Caterpillar is a visual paradox, a human encased in caterpillar-like exterior, and babies in the story have a tendency to turn into pigs. In the Bolivian legend *El Bufeo* (The Dolphin) a couple bathe together against the rules of their religion. They are punished by turning into human-fish hybrids, while in *Axolotls* (Salamanders) the human protagonist moves imperceptibly from the outer-side of the fish tank to within an Axolotl fish itself.

Animals with human personalities and special powers roam free. I'm thinking of the Cheshire Cat now: he's mischievous with a grin that gives him away, and he conjures up a good disappearing act— his head, bodyless, hovering above the Queen of Heart's croquet pitch— hovers in my own mind. The chinguero bird from the Bolivian *Cuentos de Pájaros* (Bird Stories), shares the Cheshire Cat's **gusto por el chisme**, snooping around and antagonizing other characters by spilling their innermost secrets— the stuff of playground nightmares. Meanwhile, the **duende juguetón**, a playful spirit, has perfected dissolving into thin air over the many years this legend has been whispered.

Behind the vibrant stories we've already been introduced to is the key factor of mistaken identity. Look no further than the **conejitos**, in *Cuentos del Conejo* (Rabbit Stories), who disguise themselves to trick their predators, the foxes. Although we might rush to associate the White Rabbit with his infamous obsession with time, his confusing Alice for his maid drops him right in the centre of the identity question. He drives Alice to lose her sense of self: 'I knew who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then'.

It seems we have a series of transformations then: Real worlds to fictional worlds; growing and shrinking; human-animal conversion; appearances, disappearances; and identity makeovers. These transformations, just like the fictional wonderland that ignores all human limitations, appear to be ignorant of the boundaries between oral and written literature, the ancient and the modern, the Western and the South American. Or perhaps 'boundaries' is the wrong word. Maybe these supernatural worlds present us with a united human imagination, making any talk of boundaries just fuzzy stuff. Now who's the one imagining things?

GLOSSARY

ALTIPLANO	High plains
BARROCO ANDINO	Andean baroque
CONDENACIÓN MODERNA	Modern damnation
LA VIDA MALDITA	Damn life
EL TIEMPO SE ACABO	Time's up
POLIDEPORTIVO	Sports centre
REVOLUCIÓN CIUDADANÍA	Civic revolution
UN MILAGRO	A miracle
CHOLITA	Indigenous woman
LECHE DE QUINOA	Quinoa milk
LA ENCEFALOPATÍA ESPONGIFORME BOVINA	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
VACAS LOCAS	Mad cows
LUNA MENGUANTE	When the moon is in the process of disappearing
GUSTO POR EL CHISME	Enjoys gossip
DUENDE JUGUETÓN	Playful goblin
CONEJITOS	Little rabbits
ESTÚPIDO	Stupid
BARRO PASTELERO	Mud cake
MAMÁ	Mum
CACA	Poo
TRANSFORMACIÓN DEL INDIVIDUO EN UN PERSONAJE DIFEREXNTE	The transformation of an individual into another character
CAMINANTES EN EL TIEMPO	A walk through time
BIENVENIDO A RIBERALTA	Welcome to Riberalta
PACEÑO	A man from La Paz
EL CAMINO DE LA MUERTE	Death road

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