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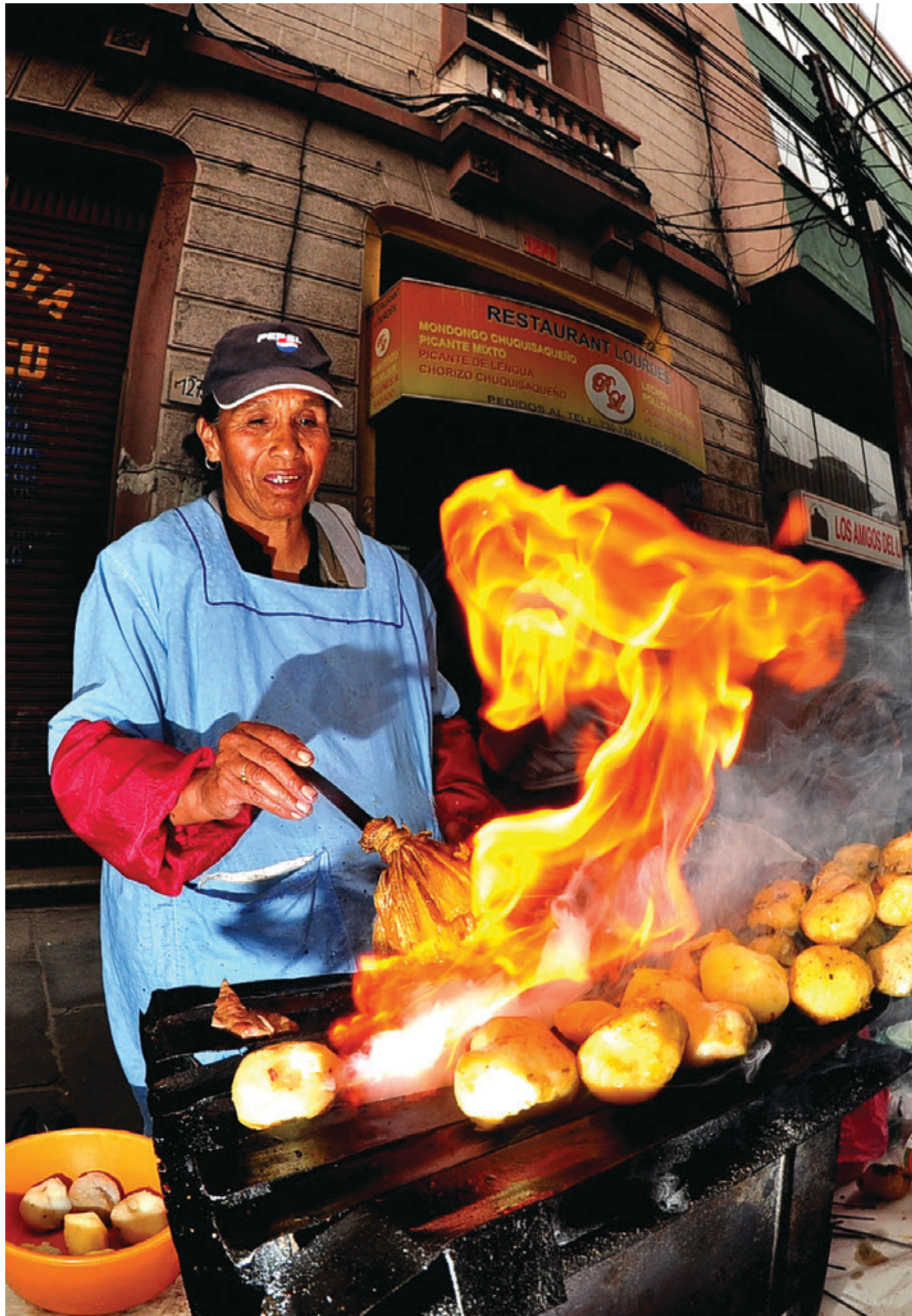
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ANTICUCHOS

PHOTO: CARLOS SÁNCHEZ NAVAS

This fiery cover is an ode to the legendary Bolivian street food known as anticucho. Essential and delicious, anticucho has found a special in the hearts of Bolivians and gringos alike.

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LOVE

PHOTO: CARLOS SÁNCHEZ NAVAS

Our issue back in 2013, centering on the topic of love, featured an image illustrating deep affection between two people. The connection of love is something we all strive for in our lives, whether between spouses, close friends, or relatives.

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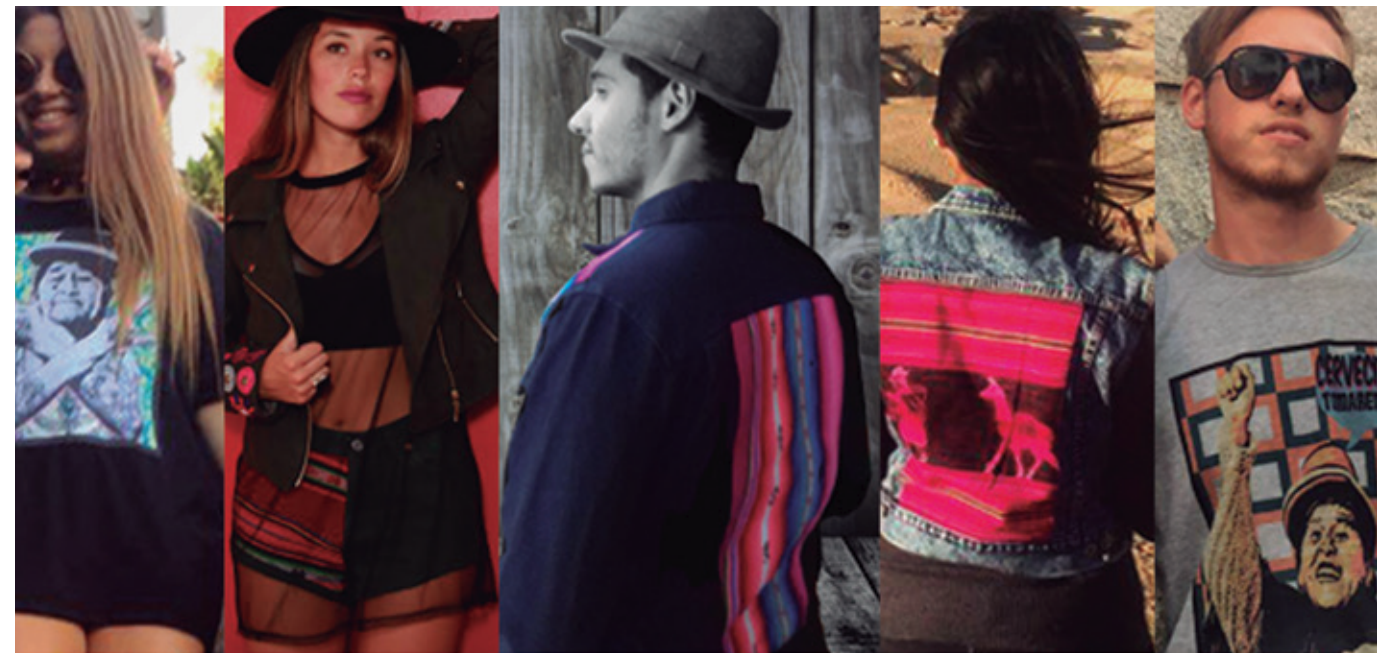
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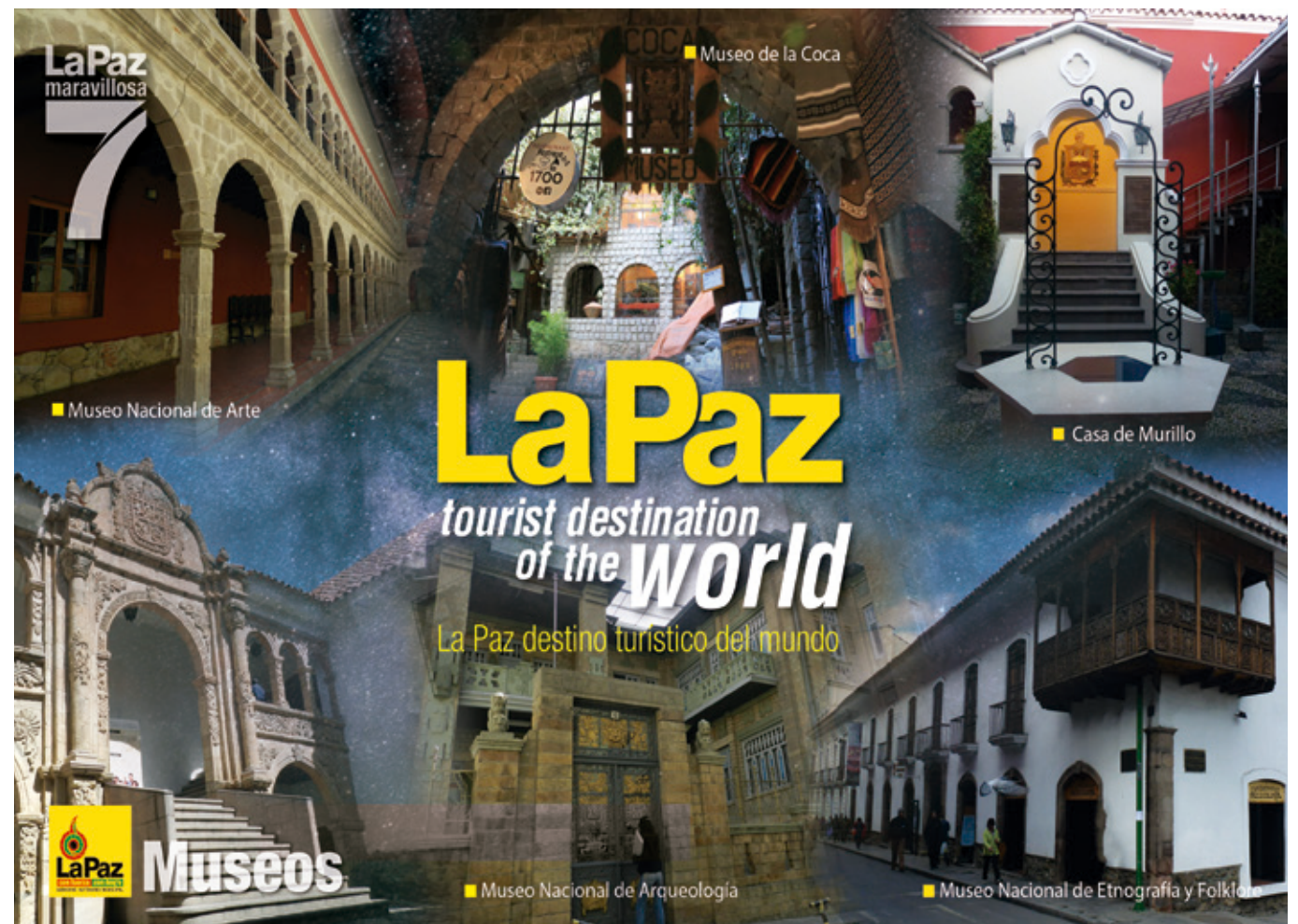
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Editorial #84: Connections

By: Caroline Risacher

The Andean cosmovision and Bolivia's latest constitution are centered around **suma qamaña**, or 'living well together' – the concept that one has to live in harmony with others and nature. This is strongly reflected in the socioeconomic structures which preceded the arrival of the Spaniards and that still survive today in the Aymara and Quechua notions of economic and social relations. **Ayni**, **mink'a**, **jayma** and **waki** are some of these concepts, which are based on solidarity, reciprocity and a tightly connected community in which everyone supports each other. *Ayni*, for instance, is an Aymara word that signifies giving to one in need, and receiving back when needed – 'the more you give, the more you have.' *Waki* implies complementarity: 'One lends the soil, the other the seed, and together something will grow.'

In Bolivia, sharing and being part of a community is essential; one doesn't only drink from one's own glass but shares it with the rest of the table; **api con pastel** is best enjoyed in the public square while sitting next to your friend, neighbour or complete stranger. When shopping at the market, the seller and customer refer to each other as **caserita/o**, creating an understanding, a complicity between the two that implies that each belongs. Even the street dogs seem to understand this; they band together in the streets of La Paz as if they were part of a family, sometimes going on dates, or talking a walk to the park with their friends.

Globalisation may seem like it could endanger this vision of the world, but the desire for social connection is one that is deeply embedded in our nature – not just Bolivians,

but humans in general. One can connect through one's art, or by helping another. In exploring this concept, in this issue we look at the NGO Pintar en Bolivia, which helps women who have suffered from abuse with art therapy to reconnect with their feelings. And we also learn about Natural Zone, Melissa Miranda's organisation that creates a space for young professionals to grow while at the same time being conscious and aware of nature.

If anything, the world we live in allows us to find even more ways to connect: Bolivia and Japan are celebrating a 120-year relationship, epitomised by Wayra Japón Andes, a band that performs songs that are a fusion of Japanese and Bolivian sounds. Bolivia and Germany have also recently signed an unprecedented agreement to exploit the country's lithium resources. And last month, Bolivia brought together 14 nations of South and Central America in the 11th edition of the ODESUR Juegos Suramericanos, during which over 4,000 athletes came to Cochabamba to represent their countries and unite fans in their love of sports.

And ultimately, that is what this magazine is about. Eight years ago, *Bolivian Express* was born out of a desire to reveal Bolivia to the world, to introduce an unknown, uncharted and wonderful culture to unsuspecting travellers. Eighty-four issues later, over 300 interns have walked through the doors of the BX house, and the programme has become much more than simply just a magazine. It's evolved into a family, a bridge between Bolivia and the rest of the world. It's a place where friendships are born and where lifelong connections are formed. It's a form of *waki*: Bolivia provides the stories, and our journalists tell them to the world, bringing some of Bolivia back home with them but also leaving something behind.

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



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Project Kallpa

THE ROAD TO STRENGTH IS PAVED WITH ART

TEXT & PHOTOS: MARION JOUBERT

Who are these young girls, sitting quietly around a table and drawing animals that represent them? Who are these teenagers or mothers who escaped their home and eventually reached this women's shelter?

It took a lot of courage for these girls to come to this women's shelter in Cochabamba and start a new life, away from violence. Once they arrive, however, they have no clue of how to pursue a brighter future. Generally speaking, they enroll in the shelter lacking self-confidence, not knowing what to do with their lives, and unaware of their rights and personal qualities. But above all, they arrive with a good deal of trauma after having suffered some form of violence.

The NGO Pintar en Bolivia helps them overcome the difficulties they are facing through art therapy. The organisation helps them express their emotions and also assists them in building up their self-esteem and visualise their life objectives. It helps them answer the following questions: What do I want? What do I need? Who am I and how can I reach my personal goals?

The woman prompting these questions is Lisan Van Der Wal, a passionate art therapist from the Netherlands who is full of determination to make her Kallpa plan successful.

'Kallpa' means strength in the Quechua language. This is what the association aims at: to empower women who have been victims of sexual, psychological and physical abuse. To give them the strength to be independent and to overcome their problems. 'That's why it is so important to give them a voice that they can raise,' claims Lisan. The goal is to help open their minds and lead them to a better future.

The Kallpa project consists in three sub-initiatives: the art therapy sessions, which take place on a weekly basis; the women empowerment days; and an annual exhibition that showcases the works of art that the girls have created.

The art therapy exercises take different forms depending on the skills of the volunteers who lead them. The week I visited Kallpa, the women were engaged in contemporary dance classes and drawing sessions, followed by a brainstorming exercise that helped them move forward with their therapy. The women empowerment days, which happen four times a year, focus on the girls themselves, on their life projects, and their hopes for the future. These days expand their horizons and give them the strength to do something worthwhile with their lives.

Lisan insists that the most important criteria for following the women's progress is not the quality of drawings they produce, but the evolution of their personal process as well as the meaning behind their crafts.

The activities the women take part in have different purposes. Some are meant to encourage the women to discover their qualities and gain self-confidence, such as the 'qualities cards' workshop, which also reinforces the group's social cohesion. In this game, the girls have to find three positive words that describe them. Then, one by one the women leave the room while those who stay choose three positive words or qualities that fit their peers.

Other activities, such as the 'heart full of feelings' workshop invite the women to express their deep emotions. In this workshop, the women are asked to write a list of feelings they are experiencing in their lives, and assign a colour to each emotion. Then, on a sheet of paper, they must colour a heart-shaped space with the colours that symbolise what they are feeling. Once this is done, every woman who is participating in this workshop receives an empty glass bottle, which they paint with the colours of their emotions. Then, Lisan tells them: 'We've worked on emotions, now I want you girls to go deeper: Which emotion is so intensely present in your heart that you can't even explain it? Write it on a paper and put it in the bottle so nobody can read it,' she says.

In order to end the difficult and painful exercise in a positive way, Lisan invited the women to take a flower and slip its stem into the bottle as if to close it with the petals. 'Your story is safe and belongs to the past now,' Lisan told the women at the workshop. The goal of the activity was to increase self-expression, and to create a feeling of unity and respect in the group that helps them verbalise their feelings.

Lisan believes that art therapy is much more successful than usual therapy with these girls because art is in their traditions. It seems much easier for them to talk through art than with direct words. 'Drawings are full of symbols,' she explains, 'that have their own separate language.'

'I have noticed that in Europe,' Lisan tells me, 'art is only for people that are really good in it. In Bolivia, however, there is a lot of handicraft, everyone can do it.' According to Lisan, art makes people think, learn, and express themselves. It can empower an individual. It is a solid tool for personal self-development and it can help us reflect on how people behave in real life. Thanks to the art therapy exercises, Lisan noticed the positive impact of art on the girls' well-being: 'They come from nowhere and I have seen



so much progress!,' she says. There is indeed research that suggests that art is effective in reducing psychological troubles.

These favourable effects of art therapy are evident in the Kallpa project, which is only one of several programmes lead by NGO Pintar en Bolivia. The association also promotes the 'Mariposa project,' which lends moral support to sick children as well as their mothers in the pediatric oncological department of the Viedma Hospital. This Mariposa project aims to reduce their

anxiety and make these young patients feel like children again. And last but not least, Pintar en Bolivia organises a project called 'Nice Sunrise' in collaboration with another NGO called Mosj Puchai. This initiative tends to children who have suffered severe burns in order to make them feel better and assist them in regaining their confidence.

'If I wanna do everything I have in mind, I should stay here for ten years at least. It's definitely possible to change things here,' Lisan says, when thinking about the future of her organisation. She has thousands of ideas on how to integrate art therapy in Bolivia and make it sustainable, but she remains realistic and goes step by step to develop them successfully. Next year, she plans to launch a new project with schools in Cochabamba because she has noticed that the problems her organisation addresses could be prevented with a better education. Lisan Van der Wall wants to create partnerships with schools in the city to develop art therapy for young students and their parents on social and hygiene issues. Her goal is to counteract bullying against sick children and to fight against racism and discrimination in general.

This strong and determined woman reminds me of one of the drawings I saw during the workshop at the shelter: 'Why did I draw a cat?' asked the artist. 'Because it is usually a nice animal, but when it has to defend itself, it doesn't hesitate to do so.' Both the girl and Lisan are like the cat in the drawing: they can be really nice and helpful, but are willing to use their claws to fight for what they believe in, for a brighter future for the girls through the means of art therapy.

You can reach Pintar en Bolivia at: www.pintarenbolivia.org and support them here: www.kisskissbankbank.com/%2Fen/%2Fprojects/%2Fpintar-en-bolivia-kallpa-project.



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 LA PAZ - BOLIVIA



THE EAT OUT LA PAZ FOOD FEST BRINGS MUSIC, MOOD AND MUNCHIES TO THE CITY

THE SEASONAL FESTIVAL IS REINVIGORATING THE FOOD SCENE

TEXT: ADRIANNA MICHELL
PHOTOS: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC, ADRIANNA MICHELL

On a sunny afternoon in the south of La Paz, visitors gather in Parque Bartolina Sisa in the Aranjuez neighbourhood. They've all been lured there by one promise: delicious food. Cuisines of different varieties, all interesting twists on classics from different cultures, are served to the bustling crowds. Tents and food trucks have been set up for the weekend – a visual reminder to the festival-goers to eat what they can now, because this weekend will soon be over and the trucks full of savoury treats driven away.

Festival attendees have co-organisers Micaela Molina and Catalina Roth to thank for the miscellany of food. The Eat Out La Paz Food Fest, now in its second year, has carved out a space for creative cuisine. The first of its kind in La Paz, the festival is slated to put the city on the map with food lovers at home and abroad.

The Eat Out La Paz Food Fest comes and goes with the seasons. Hosted once in the summer and once in the winter, it has grown from 40 to 60 vendors since it was founded. Originally set in a 1,200-square-meter car park, the event has expanded to permit 9,000 visitors this May. While the guests keep on coming, Molina and Roth are working hard to maintain an environment of healthy competition for the vendors. With 80 food purveyors at the previous Eat Out Festival, the duo learned that some weren't getting their dues, and they reduced the

number of participating businesses. Now the burger joints, crepe stands and coffee carts all get their fair share of attention.

The festival isn't just for the restaurant giants either. Small and large businesses alike mingle at the park, all equally enjoyed by festival-goers. There are no large chains present, as the organisers want nothing to eclipse the local businesses and their development. Similarly, the location itself has been given room to grow; the Eat Out La Paz Food Fest has given the once near-abandoned park new life.

Still in its infancy, the festival has room to grow, and Molina and Roth are ready for it. After working in the marketing industry, the co-organisers wanted to try something new. Experienced working with brands, they wanted to create an experience for the city of La Paz that also benefits food vendors. While showcasing local establishments, the festival aims to engage locals and tourists alike. 'La Paz is a place that has a lot of things to show,' says Molina. '[It] is very important to export what we have. And there are a lot of tourists who come to La Paz just to eat – foodies.'

It's clear that the organisers are keen to keep quality high and to mingle culture with food. The festival's recent iteration, its third appearance on the gastronomic scene, also featured a musical performance from Jimmy James, a drink garden, and a screening of the UEFA Champions League final; while the food



was what brought the guests there, the entertainment is what kept them.

While the festival-goers enjoy the event, the restaurants make it happen. The gathering allows businesses to grow and reach otherwise undiscovered clientele. Roth, offering a marketing perspective, says that the exposure is unmatched for up-and-coming eateries. 'They bring new dishes, new textures, and people approve or not,' she says. 'It's also a way for restaurants to renew themselves.'

Reflecting on past and future festivals, the goal is still the same for Roth: '[We] want to make a platform where there are different businesses – not only food, but music and atmosphere, and then do something different.' While cooking up an enjoyable environment for festival guests, the co-organisers are determined to showcase to the world

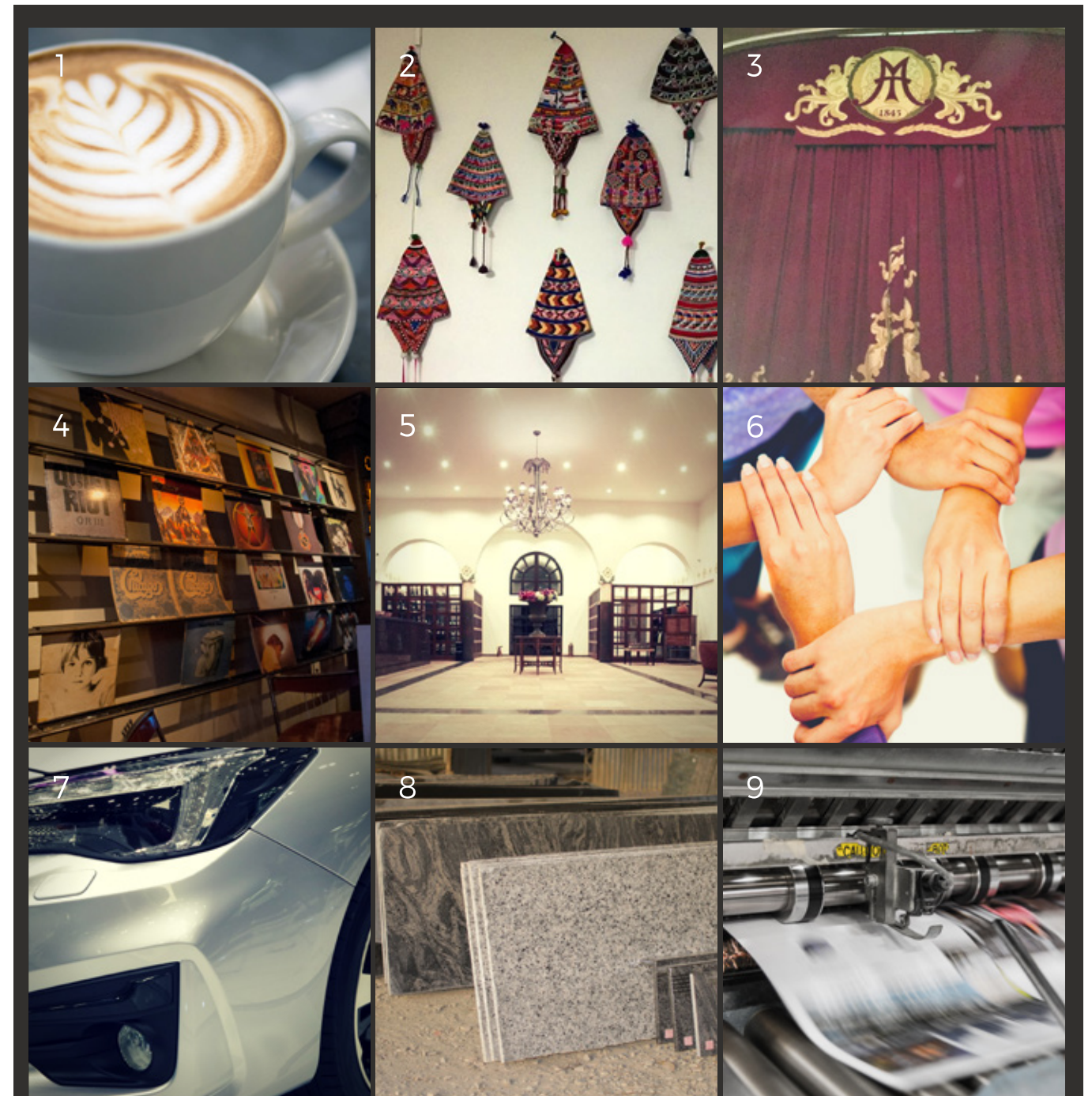
'LA PAZ IS A PLACE THAT HAS A LOT OF THINGS TO SHOW. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO EXPORT WHAT WE HAVE. AND THERE ARE A LOT OF TOURISTS WHO COME TO LA PAZ JUST TO EAT – FOODIES.'

—MICAELA MOLINA

La Paz's booming gastronomic scene. With creativity encouraged, the festival has seen fusion dishes that combine traditional Bolivian food with contemporary tastes. In order to settle the debate, Molina and Roth weighed in on which vendor was the festival's best. Both favoured Chanchos a la Cruz, whose staff came all the way from Tarija to exhibit their slow-roasted pork.

The organisers emphasise aesthetically pleasing stands that also adhere to their environmentally responsible standards. No plastic tables can be found at the venue, and no banners clutter the sky. The food has to speak for itself.

As festival-goers finish their drinks in the drink garden and begin to make their way home, they all have wide smiles and full bellies. The colourful garlands and lights have been dimmed, while the aroma of food, previously so fragrant, has faded away; the sun sets on the festival. Still, summertime will bring another gastronomic adventure.



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THE SECRET LIVES

OF BOLIVIA'S STRAY DOGS

TEXT & PHOTOS: ADRIANNA MICHELL



"DO YOU THINK THIS VOLCANO COULD ERUPT ANYTIME SOON?"

A FRIENDLY FACE ISN'T
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BASKING IN THE SUN,
AN UNBOtherED BOY.



THIS DESERT
DOG IS READY
FOR A DUEL
ANYTIME.
PICTURED HERE
WITHOUT HIS
COWBOY HAT

LUNCH
TIME.

Wayra Japón Andes

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE AND BOLIVIAN MUSIC FUSED TOGETHER

TEXT: OLLIE GOLDBLATT / PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

In 1899, Bolivia's first Japanese immigrants made their home here. Next year, 120 years later, this historical moment is being reflected in music. Wayra Japón Andes, a band composed of five Japanese men who migrated to Bolivia to learn and play Bolivian music, are the first group of musicians to combine the sounds and techniques of both countries.

Japanese interest in Bolivian music is nothing new; in fact, Bolivian bands have toured Japan since the 1970s, and all the members of Wayra Japón Andes were inspired to explore Bolivian music in their teenage years whilst still in Japan. Guitarist Hiroyuki Akimoto and **charanguista** Kenichi Kuwabara joined Andean music clubs whilst at university, and Kohei Watanabe and Takahiro Ochiai were exposed to Bolivian instruments – the **charango**, and **quena**, respectively – from a young age.

The music of Bolivia was the defining factor in these musicians' decision to migrate across the Pacific Ocean. Akimoto was enchanted by the culture upon arrival in Bolivia, and at only 18 years old he decided to remain for more than just the one year he planned on staying. 'After a year, there were a lot of things left to study, more to learn, more people to meet,' Akimoto says. 'So I called my parents in Japan, and I told them that I wanted to stay longer.' Kuwabara also arrived in Bolivia planning to stay only a year, in 2007, but was drawn back by the culture and ended up migrating permanently in 2011.

'I WANTED TO COME HERE AND LEARN ABOUT THE LIVES OF BOLIVIANS, HOW THEY LIVE WITH THIS MUSIC.'
—KENICHI KUWABARA



For the individuals within the group, the culture they are exploring goes beyond music. Akimoto arrived in Bolivia in 2000. 'I decided to come and see Bolivia with my own eyes, first only for one year,' he says. 'I listened to a lot of CDs of Bolivian music, and I liked the sound of the quena. There were some similarities with traditional Japanese music, and I have been playing it for the past 18 years.' Similarly, Kuwabara migrated to Bolivia to study the culture around the music. 'I am a charanguista, and in Japan I started playing,' he says. 'I wanted to come here and learn about the lives of Bolivians, how they live with this music.'

Wayra Japón Andes was formed in December of 2015. Before that, all members were in other bands playing traditional Bolivian music. Charanguista Makoto Shishido, who is based in Cochabamba, is a member of Los Kjarkas, the hugely popular Andean folk band. Other Wayra members have played with Anata Bolivia, Música de Maestros and Sumaq Wara – all traditional Bolivian music groups. Explaining how Wayra started, Akimoto says, 'We are Japanese residents; this is our experience – why not try something new? We decided to do a musical fusion, Bolivian and Japanese.' And it's a distinct combination. The Andean sounds of the quena (a flute-like instrument) and the charango (an instrument similar to a small guitar) are pleasantly complemented by the three-stringed Japanese shamisen to give Wayra a unique sound. Even the band's garb is a fusion: Japanese kimonos with **aguayo** embroidery.

Whilst the group's first album (Gracias Bolivia, released in 2015) contains mostly Japanese songs translated into Spanish, their upcoming second album (Viva Bolivia, to be released next year) introduces their experimental blending of Japanese and Bolivian sounds, and will include original songs. 'The second album has two original songs already, written by us. In the first album,

the ten songs are covers, with Bolivian rhythms. Some are anime and video-game themes: Dragon Ball Z, Super Mario Brothers – these are very well known in Bolivia,' Akimoto says.

Watanabe is optimistic about the release of the group's second album, mentioning the connection Wayra have made with the younger generation. 'Young people are not listening to folkloric music, but they like music from anime, and we play that so they like it,' he says. 'So we are doing fusion. Hopefully, they can get interested in traditional folkloric music in the future.' Ochiai exudes a similar sense of anticipation for the coming years, suggesting Wayra will look to combine Japanese and Bolivian cultures in more ways than just through music. 'In any case, we are going to keep doing music,' he says.

'And we also want to do something cultural between Bolivia and Japan – like ambassadors.'

Late last year, a Japanese tour allayed the band's concern about their fans' reactions to their new musical direction. 'We went on tour in Japan, in nine cities, and most of the rooms were full – they had about

200 to 300 people,' Akimoto says. 'And we were a bit worried because Japanese fans of Bolivian music have a certain image of the music that has to be like Los Kjarkas or Savia Andina. Our music is fusion, and it's very different when it comes to instrument, melodies, language. However, Japanese fans of Bolivian music and people who knew nothing about it liked it the same.'

The group are keen to express their love for Bolivia through music, rather than just a simple love for Bolivian music. Such emotion can be felt lyrically and melodically in the new original songs of Wayra Japón Andes, and it perhaps explains the success and popularity of the group. 'We are lovers of Bolivian music,' Akimoto says. 'Thanks to Bolivian music we have met here, and so we will dedicate our lives to the music.'

'WE ARE LOVERS OF BOLIVIAN MUSIC. THANKS TO BOLIVIAN MUSIC WE HAVE MET HERE, AND SO WE WILL DEDICATE OUR LIVES TO THE MUSIC.'
—HIROYUKI AKIMOTO



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NATURAL ZONE

TRAINING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN BOLIVIA
TO PRESERVE THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

TEXT & PHOTOS: KATHERINA SOURINE



For Natural Zone CEO Melissa Miranda Justiniano, the attainment of knowledge has always been at the forefront and heart of her endeavours. As a young woman joining the workforce, she found that her passion for learning and development, especially in relation to environmental conservation, was often held back by a repressive work climate for young professionals. Despite cultural setbacks, her motivation for becoming an entrepreneur with a higher purpose to benefit and conserve the environment, led her to push through the tumultuous path that ultimately birthed the organisation Natural Zone. 'My idea of entrepreneurship has been focused on finding a friendly environment for young professionals, especially women,' she says. 'Because at the end of the day, we are all equal. We only need the opportunity that allows us to demonstrate our abilities, as well as generate experience.'

As an organisation that emerged from a set of principles, Natural Zone tackles the ambitious goal of positively shaping the attitude and competency of young professionals in Bolivia, 80% of whom are women, providing them with opportunities to develop an understanding of environmental fields. The motto of Natural Zone, *Reintegrating you with our environment*, concisely summarises its objective. Its core value states that society as a whole, not only professionals who specialise in ecological topics, can and must develop an understanding of how contemporary environmental issues affect communities. Natural Zone emphasises each individual's personal role is in conserving the ecosystem we live in.

The organisation researches issues such as pollution treatment, biological diversity, technological development, and the socio environmental status of various Bolivian communities and then divulges its findings through workshops and other activities. 'We break the schema that this information exists only for scientists and we share with all to motivate people to want to know more,' Miranda explains.

According to newly-employed researcher Natalia Chacón Flores, the values on which Natural Zone was established have not been lost through its years of development. Chacón began working as an intern at Natural Zone last year and became an official employee in 2018, joining the team that has now expanded to five permanent staff members.

After attending a conversatorio held in the Natural Zone office in Sopocachi, La Paz, it became clear to me that Natural Zone thrives as a grassroots level organisation, which aligns well with their main objective. The workshop, facilitated by Chacón and attended by about ten people, began with a presentation outlining information on the topic of plastic, its role in Bolivia and its effect on the environment.

The group later split into smaller teams and discussed possible alternatives to plastic within frequently bought products, as well as ways to control the pollution of plastic materials in bodies of water. They then came together to assess the effectiveness of these alternative methods through the lenses of economic capability, available resources, and ability to be adopted within Bolivian society and culture.

Madelaine Guevara, a young woman who attended the workshop, explained the importance of being active





'WE BREAK THE SCHEMA THAT INFORMATION EXISTS ONLY FOR SCIENTISTS AND WE SHARE WITH ALL TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO WANT TO KNOW MORE.' —MELISSA MIRANDA JUSTINIANO, CEO OF NATURAL ZONE.

in learning about the environment for her career. After studying Chemical Engineering at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, she worked at the supermarket Ketal in the field of quality control. But since the field of engineering is so large, Madelaine Guevara believes there are opportunities to work in sub-areas such as petrochemical, industrial and environmental engineering. 'I think that Natural Zone has expertise in teaching about the environment,' she says. 'In Bolivia few institutions are dedicated to developing these topics.'

Some of the most significant obstacles Natural Zone faced in the onset was networking with professional organisations and providing information to the public. Alejandro Ticlla Espinoza, who introduced technological tools to the organisation has been pivotal in developing the business. He met Miranda in 2012, and they both quit their jobs in 2016 to launch the organisation. 'We decided we had to do things by our principles, our dreams and what we want to create,' Miranda explains.

Miranda praises the staff members of Natural Zone, explaining that the multidimensionality of their work demands individuals from a diverse range of fields who can work collaboratively. The diversity of the group ultimately benefits their training and workshop dynamic.

While technology has already played a pivotal role in making Natural Zone accessible to the public, according to Ticlla, it will continue to be instrumental for its future expansion. 'One of our goals is to reach areas of Bolivia beyond La Paz, like Cochabamba and Santa Cruz,' he says. 'Beyond providing our training, we want to encourage local research and the accessibility of free, public knowledge.' Although Bolivian society lacks motivation and access to local research, Ticlla believes there is opportunity for

development.

'Why not in Bolivia?', he asks. 'We can contribute many things. Bolivia is one of the most biodiverse countries in Latin America, so we have to take advantage of this in order to generate new paradigms in science.' Although Bolivia's diversity of communities and ecology can generate conflicting interests, Ticlla, Miranda and their team believe that Bolivia's resources hold great potential.

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A NEW GERMAN PARTNER FOR BOLIVIA

THE ONGOING QUEST FOR A LITHIUM-FUELED FUTURE

TEXT & PHOTO: ADRIANNA MICHELL

German company ACI-Systems GmbH has invested in Bolivia's lithium processing industry with hopes to cash in on the electric car boom. Bolivia's decision to partner with the foreign firm has raised doubts about whether the company can live up to its promises, along with concerns surrounding the environmental impact of extracting from the world's largest salt flat.

The nationalised Bolivian State Lithium Company (YLB) chose ACI-Systems to develop the industry in April of this year, turning down offers made by investors from China, Canada and Russia, who were also interested in the reserves. The \$1.3 billion investment will allow Bolivia to process lithium brine from the Salar de Uyuni and manufacture electric car batteries for European markets.

At least two subsidiaries of YLB came together with ACI-Systems to form a joint venture, in which the national company will maintain a 51% stake, thereby keeping majority control.

According to Juan Carlos Montenegro, the head of the Bolivian state owned company, ACI-Systems will produce lithium batteries in Bolivia as soon as 2020, with a projected \$1 billion a year in net profits. The plant is slated to initially produce 5,000 metric tons annually with future plans to scale up production.

This isn't the first time a lithium development project has been undertaken by a German company in Bolivia. The German firm K-Utec Ag Salt Technologies operated a lithium carbonate pilot project in Uyuni from 2015 to 2017. Still, compared to neighbouring countries like Argentina and Chile, Bolivian lithium development has been slow. In over nine years of extraction, Bolivia's operation has only managed to produce 10 tons of lithium monthly. The new partnership will substantially increase production capabilities and propel national economic development.

THE \$1.3 BILLION INVESTMENT WILL ALLOW BOLIVIA TO PROCESS LITHIUM BRINE FROM THE SALAR DE UYUNI AND MANUFACTURE ELECTRIC CAR BATTERIES FOR EUROPEAN MARKETS.

Juan Carlos Zuleta, a Bolivian lithium analyst, argues that Germany might not be the best partner. Zuleta argues that Germany lacks the technology to allow Bolivia to profit from its lithium reserves. 'It neither constitutes the most competitive country in the production and sale of electric vehicles,' he says, 'nor is it the best potential partner for Bolivia to develop its energy lithium value chain.' As Zuleta notes,

ACI-Systems has no previous experience in mining projects of this calibre or in manufacturing lithium cathode batteries. He cites the company's lack of international recognition, along with doubts about the profitability of the German market, as reasons to question the partnership's potential to create economic growth in Bolivia.

Yet, in a statement made to Americas Quarterly, ACI-Systems says that the Bolivian government never intended to find a company that was in the biggest markets. Instead, it was aiming to fill the gaps in its current value creation capabilities. The company promises to bring much needed infrastructure, including technology and job training.

The investment, while allowing for technological development, will also bring in 1,200 direct jobs to the country. If the deal lives up to its lofty promises, thousands of indirect jobs could also result from the increased lithium production.

While electric cars running on lithium batteries are an environmentally-friendly alternative to gasoline and diesel engine vehicles, the process of producing the batteries themselves isn't as green. Increased extraction from the pristine white flats will require vehicle traffic and a reliance on local water supplies as the process relies on evaporating water from the brine. Although the plant will not use local drinking water, its operation will require tapping into nearby source-water. In its statement to Americas Quarterly, however, ACI-Systems spoke up for the Bolivian government, emphasising their commitment to extract the resource in an environmentally-friendly manner.

As the Bolivian government and the German company try to ease concerns surrounding the potential for environmental degradation, indigenous communities situated in parts of Bolivia, Chile and Argentina known as the 'lithium triangle,' worry. But objections to salt brine developments aren't new, with the Washington Post reporting in 2016 one protester's statement: 'We don't eat batteries.'

With production ramping up, the environmental impact of mining the salt flats could be ignored. Following the lithium and electric car industry boom, desired jobs are expected to move into the area which may offset environmental concerns. As the lithium industry moves into Uyuni, only time will tell whether the German-Bolivian coupling will be fruitful.

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COCHA 2018 APATHY, PASSION AND THE CHALLENGE OF HOSTING THE JUEGOS SURAMERICANOS

TEXT & PHOTOS: OLLIE GOLDBLATT

For the first time since their inception in 1978, the Juegos Suramericanos are being held in Bolivia. The sporting event was created by the ODESUR (South American Sports Organisation) in 1976, with the aim of uniting South American countries in competition, and spreading Olympic ideals across the continent. Similarly to the Olympic format, the games take place every four years in various South American cities. After La Paz was the host of the inaugural games, Cochabamba won the rights to host the 11th edition in May 2016. Following years of investment and preparation, the games began on the 26 May.

In January of 2018 – a few months before construction for the games was completed – the hosting of the competition was estimated to cost 1.5 billion bolivianos, distributed across the construction of infrastructure, the purchasing of equipment and the training of the Bolivian team. Much of the investment was made by the Bolivian Ministry of Sports, although non-governmental aid also helped finance the event.

In previous editions, such as in Argentina 2006, Colombia 2010 and Brazil 2002, the nation that hosts the games has been victorious in the competition. Expectations

were high in Bolivia, following the monumental investment the country had made and the anticipation felt after the Olympic games in Rio 2016.

Upon first arrival in Cochabamba, I was struck by the lack of excitement regarding the games around the city. Sparse and lonely indications of the sports event created an eerie effect, whilst the floods of foreign fans I expected to see did not appear. This is partly due to the short history of the event, which is celebrating only its 11th edition, but also to the cultural approach to Olympic sports (barring football) in Bolivia.



'Franco, for sure,' said a couple at a racquetball match when I asked them which athlete they were most excited to see. Racquetball is Bolivia's best chance for gold in this year's games, as South American heavyweights don't invest heavily in the sport due to its lack of Olympic status. Bolivia's Conrado Moscoso won gold in the men's singles this year. Sebastian Franco, from Colombia, whom Bolivian fans were most excited to see, represented their biggest challenge. Whilst racquetball fans would understandably be excited to see the best in the business, the lack of a competitive attitude in Bolivian fans was surprising. I asked another fan in attendance

with his wife and four children which Bolivian athletes he was aware of: 'None that are any good!' he said. 'I enjoy watching the sports with my family, and my kids. The result doesn't really matter to me.'

Perhaps the root of the issue doesn't come from the attitudes of fans. Such apathy could be born from the uncompetitiveness of the athletes. During the male's volleyball Bolivia vs Argentina match, a mixture of Bolivian fans, drums and flags almost resembled footballing 'ultras.' As it became more and more clear, however, that the game would end in a Bolivian defeat, the ferociousness of their support slowly waned.

In contrast, Bolivian fans attended the women's basketball in masses, in which Bolivia was facing Chile for silver. The crowd of eager fans surrounding the stadium, unable to get in due to such a high demand, almost matched the number of fans inside the stadium. The energy they emitted as they watched their team storm to a comfortable win and a silver medal, suggests that a passion for sports is present in Bolivia and that fans will engage in sports in which Bolivia can challenge its South American rivals.

Raquel Justiniano, a member of the winning Bolivian team, shared her thoughts on the games: 'My experience in this competition has been very beautiful, we received a lot of support from Bolivian people, and it's something very positive for Bolivia's sports.' She attributed part of the success of the women's basketball team to the investment made in the country for the games, which allowed Bolivian athletes to train with a higher quality equipment and facilities suitable for an international competition. '[The standard of facilities] has improved a lot, we can see that they have worked with professional equipment of very good quality, that respects international standards. I hope they keep it for future tournaments,' she said. Most of the infrastructure constructed for the competition will continue to be used in the following years, and in this sense the Cochabamba games of 2018 could be a catalyst for a steady increase in the competitiveness of Bolivian athletes, and consequently fan engagement in sports.

'MY EXPERIENCE IN THIS COMPETITION HAS BEEN VERY BEAUTIFUL... IT'S SOMETHING VERY POSITIVE FOR BOLIVIA'S SPORTS.'
—RAQUEL JUSTINIANO, WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SILVER MEDAL ATHLETE



However, doubts remain regarding the effectiveness and appropriation of the Bolivian government's investment. One notable absence from the list of participating athletes this year is national judo champion Martín Michel. Michel who omitted himself from the games as a form of protest against the lack of government support for athletes following the Rio Olympics. 'After the 2016 Olympic games in Rio,' he says, 'I came back with the hope of receiving much more support, but none ever came.'

Michel hopes to represent Bolivia again in the future and has set his sights on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic games. This is why it speaks volumes that he has refused the opportunity to win on home soil due to the disenchantment with the Bolivian sports bureaucracy. The issues shrouding the current state of Bolivian sports appear to be largely financial: 'The government offered \$50 to cover my needs,' he tells me. 'But in judo it costs \$350 for a judogi, and we need two of them.'

This goes some way to explaining Bolivia's minimal haul of medals, as financially Bolivia simply can't match the investments made by Brazil or Argentina. Bolivian athletes instead must hope for external sponsorships to aid their cause. Michel recognises this, but he suggests that Bolivia misdirected the investment in preparation for the 2018 games. 'In Brazil, they invest \$40 million in Judo. In Bolivia, \$4,000. While the government is investing in infrastructure, the athlete is being abandoned,' he claims.

A greater focus on investment in Bolivian athletes, their equipment and their personal experiences would help prevent a feeling of apathy within Bolivian sports. However, a country usually enjoys the positive effects of hosting a major sports event many years after the event has taken place. The passion of the crowd of young girls sporting 'Cochabamba Judo' t-shirts whilst cheering on Bolivian female judo athletes resonated with me. The impact of the millions of bolivianos invested in the new judo arena will not be felt now, but rather in the years to come, for these young girls will now have access to greatly improved training facilities. Simply witnessing professional athletes representing their country will be an invaluable experience for them.

There is potential for improving this relationship between Bolivian sports and civilians. The foundations have been laid by the 2018 Juegos Suramericanos. Despite his harsh critique, Martín Michel shares this feeling of optimism and puts the emphasis on the authorities to dictate such an improvement: 'The authorities have to want it,' he says. 'The state can put some of the money and the rest can come from private companies. Together they can do very good projects.'

Only time will tell if hosting the 11th edition of the Juegos Suramericanos will stimulate greater engagement in sports within Bolivia. The necessary passion exists on all sides: from the volleyball ultras, to the Ministry's major investment. Bolivia will look to the 2020 Olympics and the 2022 Suramericanos to see such passion emerge and improve this year's mark: 34 medals, 5 of them gold.

'I WAS STRUCK BY THE LACK OF EXCITEMENT REGARDING THE GAMES AROUND THE CITY.'

REINALDO CHÁVEZ MAYDANA

COMBINING BOLIVIAN TRADITION AND MYSTIC SYMBOLISM,
THE ARTIST CAPTURES THE SUBLIME

TEXT: MARION JOUBERT / IMAGES: COURTESY OF REINALDO CHÁVEZ MAYDANA



How can three simple dots – two for the eyes and one for the mouth – express so many different emotions? You might ponder this question yourself once you take a close look at the artwork of La Paz artist Reinaldo Chávez Maydana.

His paintings catch my attention because of a particular facial expression I notice in many of them. I ask Chávez about this. He explains that the figures are whistling. 'They do it because they are happy,' he says. The paintings I'm looking at represent the traditional Bolivian **diablada** dance. But those three dots that enthrall me are taken from **El día de los muertos**, an event which takes place on 1 November. For this holiday, which honours the dead, bakers make bread loaves in the shapes of many different figures. As a child, Chávez thought these figures were alive, with three dots for the eyes and the mouth. Now he incorporates this technique into his art, separating the faces with a line. Why this division? Chávez believes that contrasts are everywhere. 'Night and day, good and evil, man and woman,' he says. 'This complementariness exists in human beings, in everything that exists in the world.'

Our conversation goes on, and we discuss his abundant use of symbols. The majority of them, Chávez says, come from iconic elements of Bolivian culture, such as the masks from the **morenada** dance. I look at his paintings and I think I see Bolivia's soul in them – and I'm apparently not the only one to notice this. Organisers have recently asked Chávez to create a 70-metre-long fresco for La Paz's iconic **Gran Poder** celebration.

But Chávez doesn't just borrow from Bolivian traditions; he's creatively inspired by many other things. He recently created a 40-part art cycle. His themes are various: pregnancy, women's sensuality, children, birds, landscapes and societal issues such as migration. He's inspired by anything that gives him an emotional response, which he transmits through his art.

Chávez says his mother introduced him to this 'magic world of colours' at the age of 7, and his style has never stopped evolving by what affects him in his life. Discussing his art, he says, 'You need to provoke something with your paintings. Art is not just about techniques or concepts, it's about emotions and feelings.' Chávez says it was difficult, after attending art school at the Universidad

Mayor de San Andrés, to break the rules he learned in order to be spontaneous in his work. His creative process is simple: He doesn't make any drafts, starting with a certain idea but remaining flexible with its execution. He might start to draw a couple, but if the shapes are different from his original idea, the painting could end up being a depiction of a child playing. He paints unpredictably, with passion. The strongest feeling which gives him inspiration to create, he says, is pain. 'When you are happy,' he says, 'your passions go in other directions, to other people and activities.'

But that doesn't mean he's sad while painting. As an example, Chávez says that when creating a folklore-influenced piece, he'll listen to traditional music and remember his grandfather, who used to dance at Gran Poder. He says he attains a feeling of freedom while creating his art. 'I paint what I want, what impassions me,' he says. 'I paint because I love it.'

Chávez paints first for himself, he says, not the individuals who buy his work. His fans are Bolivians, but foreigners interested in unique folklore souvenirs from Bolivia have also noticed him. His art has travelled the

world since 1998, with 30 exhibitions here and in the United States, Mexico, Argentina and Peru.

There's one piece, though, that Chávez will not sell, that he keeps for his gallery. From his *Flores desnudas* series, it's displayed at his gallery on Calle Sagarnaga. It explores folklore, sensuality, pregnancy and abortion, which is illegal in Bolivia.

Two figures, each depicted quite differently, dominate the painting. The first is a beautiful naked woman, exuding femininity and lost in thought. The other figure looks like a dangerous daemon, full of lust and looking like he wants to possess the woman. This painting, Chávez says, was inspired from stories about the *morenada*.

There's a tragic backstory to the painting. A year and a half after the painting was finished, the model who portrayed the woman died. Thus Chávez's creation has a tragic side, giving it more depth, and it's a way to pay tribute to his late muse. And it epitomises Reinaldo Chavez Maydana's style (even if he professes not to have one): a mixture of reality and imagination, while symbolising something deep and ethereal.

LA PAZ'S QUEST TO BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL FILM-SET LOCATION

TEXT & PHOTO: JACK FRANCKLIN



La Paz, a city known for its beauty and unique cultural traditions, is pushing to become a set location for international films. In the coming weeks, a meeting will be held in the Bolivian administrative capital which will see leading international filmmakers come to the city to discuss its potential as a setting for film production, with the aim of propelling it onto the international stage. The meeting has been organised by a Bolivian-based audiovisual company called Bolivia Lab which promotes the country's cinema presence to the outside world.

Indeed, there are many reasons to suggest that La Paz has the qualities to be a success in the film market. Claudio Sánchez, who is in charge of programming, distribution and exhibition for Cinemateca Boliviana, describes the city as having the perfect light

for making films. 'Light is a very important factor in filming,' he says, 'and La Paz has a certain type of light that is different. Here there is a light that not only gives you creative liberties, but also demands much less in terms of the need for artificial light.'

In setting out the advantages that La Paz has, Sánchez also recognises that, as with any city, it also has its drawbacks. He emphasises that productions need the knowledge of locals in order to discover filming locations and other amenities which would make filming in the city all the more special. Nonetheless, he explains that Bolivian and Andean culture is particularly welcoming to foreigners, and **paceños** would be amenable to guiding film crews around the city, overriding such concerns. Moreover, Sánchez notes that 'La Paz has a long cinematographic tradition. I bet you that if you go out at this moment

through the Prado there will be a film crew. No matter what happens today they will be filming.'

Other regions in Bolivia have had more involvement in the film industry, particularly Uyuni, which is the home to the magnificent Bolivian salt flats. But La Paz already has the infrastructure set in place to advance to the next stage of the cinematic industry. (For instance, new regulations make it easier for filmmakers to gain access to public services, such as the police or the firefighters.) However, Sánchez does acknowledge that La Paz is still only at an intermediate stage in its progress to become an influential location on the international filmmaking stage. But, however far off the city is from this objective, it is taking major strides to achieve this goal.

What is evident is that La Paz has a distinct culture, tradition and mythical essence that would benefit many filmmaking ventures. And the economic benefits that international film generates here will certainly be deserved and repaid in time, hard work and cultural influence when the film industry realises the exciting potential this wonderful city offers.



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GLOSSARY BX84

BolivianExpress Magazine



AGUAYO	Rectangular carrying cloth used in traditional communities in the Andes region. Aymara and Quechua people use it to carry small children or all kinds of items in it on their backs
API CON PASTEL	Hot purple corn drink accompanied with a cheese-filled pastry
AYNI	Andean concept of reciprocity. It's the act of giving to someone in need, and to be paid back in the future when needed
CASERITA/O	Someone selling something
CHARANGO	Small Andean stringed instrument of the lute family
CHARANGUISTA	Someone who plays the charango
CONSERVATORIO	Workshop
DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS	Day of the dead
DIABLADA	'Dance of the Demons', it's an original and typical dance from the region of Oruro in Bolivia. It's characterised by the mask and devil suit worn by the performers
FLORES DESNUDAS	'Naked flowers'
GRAN PODER	Religious celebration paying homage to El Señor del Gran Poder or Jesus Christ
JAYMA	Form of communal work in Andean communities, usually festive
MARIPOSA	'Butterfly'
MINK'A	Laboral contract, where payment can be in kind or in money, between two equal partners
MORENADA	Music and dance style from the Bolivian Andes characterised by a mixture of African and Indigenous elements
PACEÑO/A	From La Paz
PRADO	Main avenue in the centre of La Paz
QUENA	Traditional flute of the Andes
SUMA QAMAÑA	'Living well together', it describes a way of doing things that is community-centric, ecologically-balanced and culturally-sensitive
WAKI	Andean concept of complementarity

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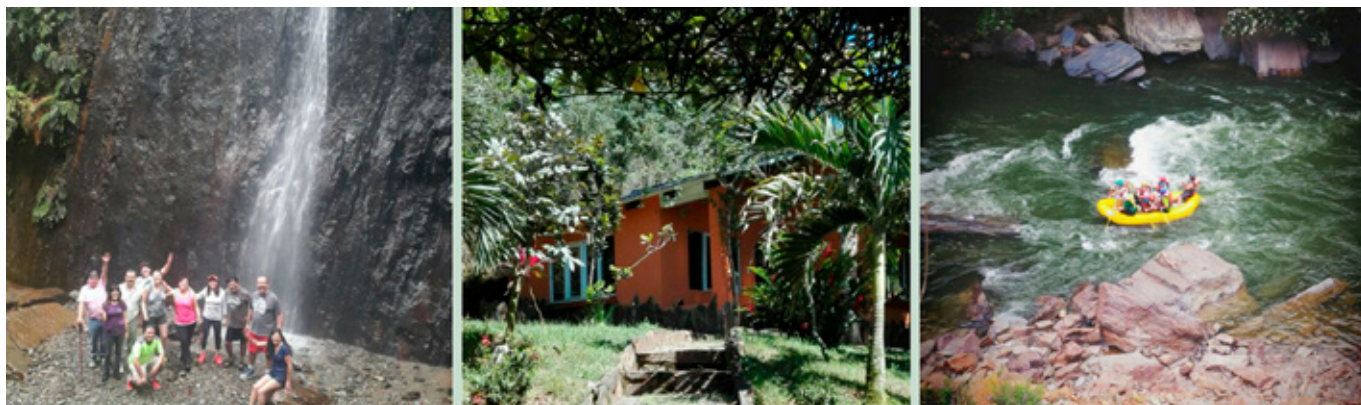
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