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Magazine

Design

#55

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EDITORIAL

BX 55: DESIGN

On a grey, windy morning in La Paz, I'm walking over to the local café in Sopocachi, thinking about coffee, art and aesthetics. Do I order an espresso, a latte or a cappuccino? Like identity and self-expression, the choices you make tend to reflect your own design aesthetic. I ordered the cappuccino.

'Design can be art. Design can be aesthetics. Everything is design. Everything!' said the late American graphic designer Paul Rand. Can graphic design embrace art and aesthetics, too? You decide. Walk to la plaza del estudiante and take a look at the giant Photoshopped billboard of the Pope, Evo Morales and el Illimani. Everywhere you walk, you see design, sometimes hidden in the form of efficient visual communication (and, sometimes, contamination).

Rand's claim that 'everything is design' may seem like a bit of hyperbole, but there is significant truth in those words. Design goes deeper than the visual and the aesthetic. Design is procedural, it is experiential. It is much more than the final visual result. An idea becomes a reality through actionable tasks and processes designed for optimal experiences. Here in the cities of Bolivia, centuries of urban and architectural design have created unique experiences and processes for those of us who inhabit this place.

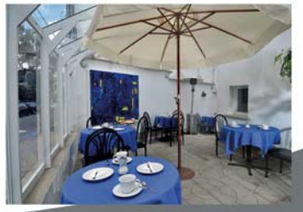
Good design can be sustainable and solve problems for communities. Fast-paced urban development in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra led city planners to prepare for exponential growth by designing four concentric 'rings'. Designer and architect Cameron Sinclair reminds us, 'When you design, you either improve or you create a detriment to the community in which you're designing.' What will urban planners implement next? The Bolivian Express will continue to report on and investigate the thriving future of Bolivia's economic capital and fastest-growing city.

American graphic designer Paula Scher warns, 'Be culturally literate, because if you don't have any understanding of the world you live in and the culture you live in, you're not going to express anything to anybody else.' This month our journalists are taking Scher's advice and experiencing Bolivia under the visual umbrella of design. If experience can be created, exactly how embedded is design within our collective Bolivian experiences? To what extent do we interact with design, art and aesthetics in our daily lives in Bolivia? Our team explores the creativity of textiles and masks worn at festivals; the visual significance of the **wiphala** flag; the architectural future of Santa Cruz; alternative material for musical acoustics; the artisanal flavours of craft beer; recycled and cultural street fashion; moveable parks; winding roads; historical architecture; and the printing process of magazines like the Bolivian Express.

If you ask Austrian designer and art directors Stefan Sagmeister, 'You can have an art experience in front of a Rembrandt… or in front of a piece of graphic design.' This issue is dedicated to all of the Bolivian designers who create these experiences for us to participate in, share and enjoy on a daily basis.

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

By Alexandra Meleán Anzoleaga



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Quality tradition

Máscaras & Tejidos

A VISUAL INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIGENOUS CRAFT ART OF BOLIVIA

TEXT: ANNA GRACE PHOTO: ANNA BELLETTATO

CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

The smell of freshly baked **salteñas** drifting through the plazas in the morning, the taste of the impressively spicy **llawja** drizzled over lunch, the sound of the same few endlessly played **reggaeton** tunes blaring from nightclubs – arriving in Bolivia is a veritable assault on the senses.

Yet what impressed me most of all were the sights. I'm not referring in particular to the natural beauty of the setting sun reflecting in the still water of Lake Titicaca, or even to the world-famous gleaming-white salt flats. No, it was the man-made sights that made the greatest impression on me. The **tejidos** sold by women in la **Feria** de El Alto contained an infinite variety of patterns, the meanings of which were incomprehensible to me. When in Potosí, I attended a street festival, where the vibrant, almost startling **máscaras** worn by participants were hard to forget. I set out to discover more.

PHOTO: ANNA GRACE

Back in La Paz, I sought out mask maker Andres Pari. Perched on wooden stools in his small workshop, half-finished masks staring menacingly down at us, Andres told me his story. Orphaned as a child, he earned a living learning his trade, working with different maestros, 'So that is how I learnt, little by little, like in school,' he says with a twinkle in his eye. A world away from my own schooling in England, the comparison seems incongruous. Yet I am beginning to discover that mask making is a trade, a skill to be learnt like any other.

Pari works predominantly with tin, using a mould to shape the material before marking it and cutting it down to size. Afterwards comes the colour: 'First we paint the inside in white and after we use the colours,' Pari says. 'That's how we do it. Others don't want it painted. It's up to the client.'

The festive use of masks in Bolivia dates back to pre hispanic times and differs greatly from the quotidian function of pre-colombian textiles. I went to Sucre to visit the Museum of Indigenous Art run by ASUR (Anthropologists of the Southern Andes). There, I spoke to Mercedes Renjel about textiles from the Quechuan communities of Tinguipaya, Jalq´a and Tarabuco.

They contained an infinite variety of patterns, the meanings of which were incomprehensible to me.

The birds, stars and suns which dominate the textiles from Tinguipaya, north of Potosí, represent the world above, or **janaq pacha**. In contrast, the textiles of the Jalq'a community, northwest of Sucre, are populated by unknown, savage animals and demonic deities called **supays** or **saqras**. These chaotic designs represent the depths of the interior world, or the **ukhu pacha**. Those made in Tarabuco, southeast of Sucre, depict the day-to-day life of inhabitants. 'You can see their daily life as well as their dances, rituals, games, work, farmland and animals,' explains Renjel.

The work of **tejedores** and **mascareros** may be unlike in many respects, but some comparisons can be drawn. Among the masks worn in the dance of the **diablada**, we encounter the **ángel** and the **diablo**, representatives of *janaq pacha* and *ukhu pacha*, respectively. These masks evoke figures not largely dissimilar from those seen embroidered on the textiles of the Tinguipaya and Jalq´a communities.

When leaving Pari's mask workshop, I ask him if there's anything else he'd like to tell me. He thinks for a moment: 'Something that I'd like to offer you?' I nod. '¡Trabajo!' We laugh. The work of these craftspeople is so highly valued by their respective communities, so deeply ingrained in their cultures, that the thought of a novice like me attempting to do it is, well, laughable.

OUR BRAND IS BOLIVIA

Branding the Plurinational State

TEXT: ANNA GRACE
PHOTOS: ANNA BELLETTATO

There's no doubt about it: we live in a brand-oriented world. Think fizzy drinks, sports shoes or mobile phones and it's certain a particular brand, logo or catchphrase comes to mind. 'A Coke please', 'I like your Nikes', 'I can't find my iPhone' – we may not always realise it, but often these brands have been so well crafted, so meticulously designed, that they become synonymous with the product itself. They become the product they are trying to sell. As capitalism continues to prove the success of well-designed branding, the market is expanding from simple products to people, to political campaigns, to entire countries.

Rachel Boynton's 2005 documentary, *Our Brand Is Crisis*, depicts the 2002 presidential campaign of former Bolivian President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada Sánchez de Bustamante (or Goni, as he is more commonly known). His successful campaign was orchestrated by the US-based political consultancy company Greenberg Carville Shrum (GCS), which designed a brand, a slogan and an image for its client, as if Goni were a product to be sold – and the Bolivian people bought it. Yet the documentary begins and ends with the protests and riots that led to Goni's resignation in 2003 and his subsequent exile in the United States. Boynton, then, clearly shows us that the trust a nation was led to invest in this particular product proved to be untenable.

So why is it, then, that a tactic so flawlessly executed with commercial goods can backfire so drastically with a different sort of product? Perhaps it's due to the fact that an inanimate, lifeless object is easy to control, to moderate. Once invested in, its quality is not likely to change. The same cannot be said for a person or – on an even bigger scale – a country. Yet the concept of **marca país**, of creating a brand for a nation, is one that has been developing for many years. *Ecuador ama la vida*, *Uniquely Singapore*, 'Jamaica: once you go, you know' and the more recent *Bolivia te espera*' are but a few examples of brands being pushed to generate tourism and increase wealth within respective countries.

I spoke to Oscar Salazar, creative director of the Factor H publicity agency in La Paz, to learn more about the importance of image design for Bolivia's tourism aspirations. 'For me, the nation brand would be the most important client that I could deal with,' Salazar tells me. 'Why do I say that? Because in a country like Bolivia, which has so much touristic potential, the nation brand becomes the possibility to change the future of Bolivia.'

I reflect on this. Undoubtedly, Bolivia has plenty to offer tourists. Yet many other countries in South America – neighbouring Peru, for example – generate much more money from tourism. I take to the streets of La Paz to find out why.

I talk to a range of tourists, from backpackers to volunteers to trainee teachers, yet only one had even heard of the phrase *Bolivia te espera*, and others were sceptical of the effectiveness of such publicity. Laurena from Switzerland says, 'I think friends or family or mouth-to-mouth publicity is more what I'd listen to,' whereas Cynthia from Canada talks about seeing a friend's pictures of salt flats on Facebook. Each tourist seemed to value word of mouth over all other forms of publicity, especially when the word came from the mouth of someone they know and trust.

Trust – is that not what all great brands are built on? Or at least, what all great brands are trying to create? Salazar explains that in order to reach its potential, a *marca país* depends on many factors: 'A nation brand alone is not enough. You need infrastructure, investment, active participation of the population.' In other words, what Salazar believes is missing is a unified, concerted effort behind the campaign. Like many other country slogans, this one could seem generic and universally applicable. For Salazar, it doesn't fully express what he feels his country represents.

Indeed, when asking what they knew of Bolivia before arriving, the tourists that I spoke to seemed to have little idea. Mountains, poverty, indigenous people – those were the most common answers. Some had heard of the salt flats, another had watched the famous Top Gear special, but none seemed to have had a clear idea of what made the country so special. In fact, many were surprised by what they found. Laura from Spain tells me, 'You certainly don't expect a lot of this country, but it's impressive.'

Unlike in the case of Goni, then, it seems that it's the brand, rather than the product, which is failing. So, what's the answer? Matt from England suggests the use of real people. Working in TV, he is cynical of highly stylised publicity videos. His friend Ian suggests it's a question of finding a way to make a country stand out. He gives a local example: 'You can do mountain biking anywhere else in the world, so why bother coming from the UK all the way to Bolivia, just to do a little bit of mountain biking? Well, you know, you brand it as "The World's Most Dangerous Road".'

Yet most of what Bolivia has to offer is truly unique, it's just a matter of showing it to the world. 'Bolivia has an essence, which has to be exhibited,' Salazar declares passionately. 'Bolivia has a unique quality. Its culture is alive.'

Come the end of October, another film bearing the title *Our Brand Is Crisis* is scheduled to be released. Based on Boynton's documentary, this George Clooney–produced blockbuster provides a fictionalised account of the Goni electoral campaign. Wouldn't it be interesting, I think, to have the Bolivian people's perspective of the question at hand? After all, it was their country that was affected.

Foreign marketing companies are brought in to design nation brands, too. I ask Salazar how he feels about this. 'So, you can see that Bolivia is a country that has a lot of essence, so do you need help to find the way to sell its essence?' he asks. 'Or do you need a group of people who can express it with love and care? You tell me.' The answer is obvious. Bolivia has all that it needs to attract tourists already: in its landscape, its culture, its history and its people. All it needs is a brand that will exhibit that. Or rather, it needs its brand to be exhibited. For our brand already exists; our brand is Bolivia.

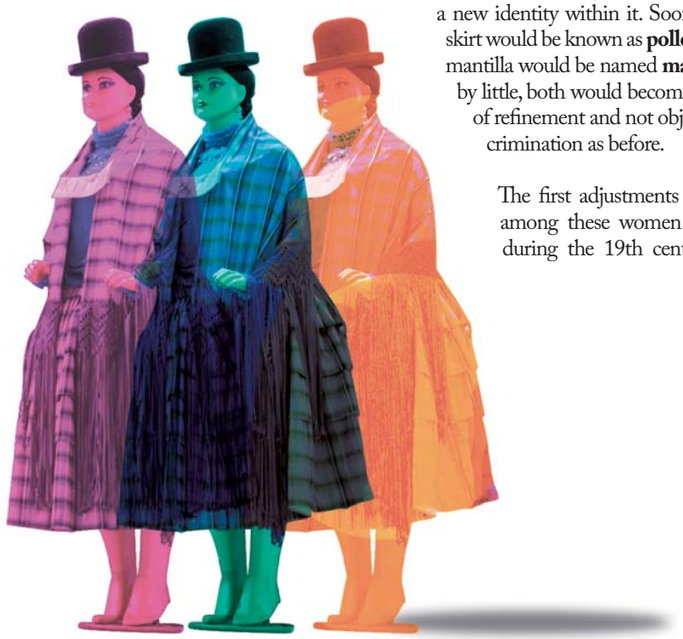
HAUTE COUTURE IN THE ANDES

Creating the Chukuta Fashion District

TEXT : VALERIA SALINAS MACEDA
PHOTO: IGOR VERA

Fashion lovers flock to Paris and Milan every day, and most are sure not to miss a visit to Montaige Avenue and the Quadrilatero D'oro to see the boutiques on the streets of Monzani, SantAndrea and Della Spiga. But what can such visitors do in La Paz? Which places would they visit to enjoy the most authentic fashion design of this city? Perhaps the best answer would be the '14 de Septiembre' neighbourhood. There you will find the '**Chukuta** Fashion District', made up of the streets of Santa Cruz and Max Paredes and Baptista Avenue. It is here where you will find the best in **Chola Paceña** fashion.

But what is *Chola Paceña*? Who creates the designs and fashion trends for this group? And who are the true Andean fashionistas of La Paz?



In 1781, when the revolution conducted by the Inca Túpac Amaru was calmed down, the Crown of Spain forbade the wearing of any attire associated with the Inca Empire. Indigenous people were to change their clothes to look like the Spanish **chulos**, or assistants to bullfighters, and chulas, or the wives of the assistants. **Chula** dress comprised a long, pleated skirt, a blouse and a mantilla with fringes. In this way, indigenous women were obliged to transform their appearance in order to be easily identified as 'not Spanish' for the society of the times. This was the beginning of what we now know as the *Chola Paceña*.

Indigenous women of the time quickly became the owners of this imposed apparel, and started to change it in order to find a new identity within it. Soon, a chula's skirt would be known as **pollera** and the mantilla would be named **manta**. Little by little, both would become emblems of refinement and not objects of discrimination as before.

The first adjustments in fashion among these women happened during the 19th century, when cholas decided to wear boots with heels like Spanish ladies did (later the *Chola Paceña* would change her boots for more comfortable shoes). Little by little, as these women began to climb social and economic ladders, they wanted to show their achievements through their appearance. Borsalino bowler hats were added to their attire as a sign of elegance, since these expensive accessories were imported from Italy. The women started wearing jewellery made of gold, and these earrings, rings, **prendedores** and **ramilletes** were the elements used to differentiate rich cholas from others ladies.

Luckily, the fashion of these cholas from long ago has survived, and has even evolved. Now it is modern, avant-garde, and has even developed its own trends. Since the beginning of the new century, a fashion industry has sprouted, and is growing at a morenada's rhythm. Nowadays, looking like a true *Chola Paceña* is not easy, nor is it cheap. These women can spend thousands of dollars on clothes and accessories, knowing they must turn to the best designers in order to look gorgeous.

They know that the best of these fashion artists are in the '14 de Septiembre' neighbourhood.

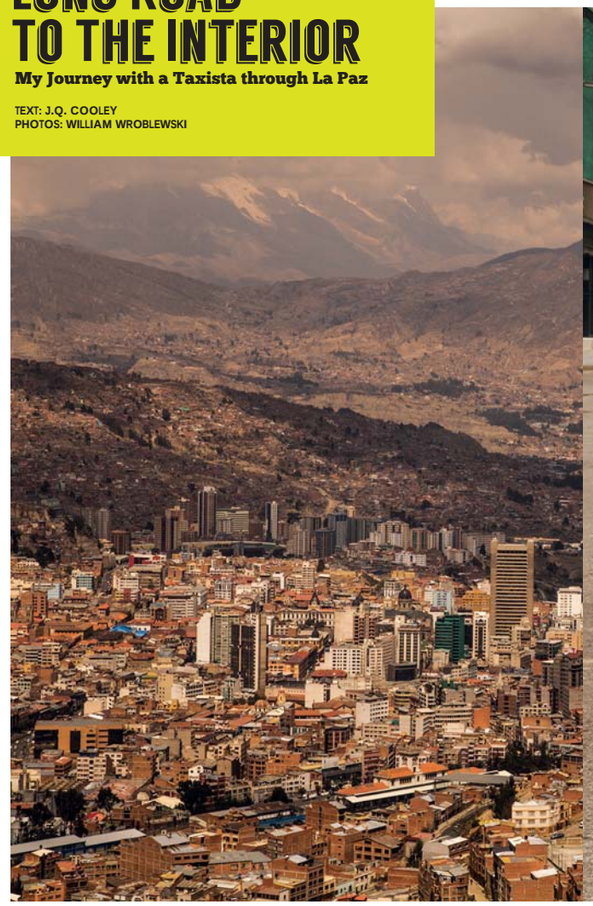
There they can find the best brands' boutiques, including 'La Orquidea', 'Danzart Verónica', 'Pollerería Primi' and others.

In this neighbourhood, you can find all components of *Chola Paceña* fashion, from fabric for *polleras* and *mantas* to Borsalino hats or jewellery. Taking a tour around these special and popular boutiques is obligatory if you are in La Paz to visit. Fashion lovers will see the 'Valentinos', 'Diors' or 'Dolce&Gabanas' of chola society, known by more indigenous names, such as 'Limachi', 'Cussi', 'Paco' and others, who are recognized as the creators of the authentic *Chukuta* fashion industry.

LONG ROAD TO THE INTERIOR

My Journey with a Taxista through La Paz

TEXT: J.Q. COOLEY
PHOTOS: WILLIAM WROBLEWSKI



'The secret to driving in Bolivia,' Edgar says, streetlights illuminating his smile, 'is thinking ahead.' At that moment, his eyes catch sight of a family of tourists that foolheartedly takes the initiative to cross a three-lane road. After thirteen years of driving a taxi in La Paz and El Alto, Edgar Ramos Calderon's steady hands keep the car perfectly straight as we lurch to a stop. Starting again, he chuckles and we crawl further into the heart of La Paz through its primary artery, **El Prado**, continuing our four-hour exploration of this intricate urban circulatory system.

The road system in La Paz is often without streetlights, street signs or enforced road rules; yet, the vehicles that clog its streets rarely collide with each other. Although their design might appear haphazard, the roads that connect the city's many **zonas** serve a necessary purpose for its bustling, expanding population: mobility. In a city with intimidating inclines, most find it taxing to get everywhere on foot.

Enter the **taxista**. Every day, Edgar, an eager conversationalist with tremendous patience and a laugh like home cooked dinner, drives the streets of La Paz 'for as many hours as necessary.' Subtly indicating the craftsmanship of professional drivers, he needs no map. He has no GPS to tell him exactly where a client's building might be, and the erratically-numbered addresses don't always help. Instead, he relies on a mental map of the city, built over his many years driving its **avenidas**, on a career of finding new ways to avoid traffic and get clients where they need to be as fast as possible.

The day before, I had asked Edgar to show me the city and all the ways he can navigate it. For as many hours as necessary. The sun slowly sets behind the tall buildings surrounding Plaza Avaroa as Edgar and I hustle to his taxi. He has parked it in the middle of the road to come fetch me from a café. Traffic dodged, butts in seats. I reach to buckle my seatbelt and notice that he does the same, in a rare instance of disaster-prevention that I hadn't seen a Bolivian driver exhibit until this point. We take off, cascading into the rush hour traffic like water. First destination: **El Cementerio**, an epicenter of city traffic and commerce. After a slow climb uphill, we reach the first of La Paz's many *ferias*, street markets that sell all manner of goods to the dense concentration of foot traffic surrounding our slow-moving taxi. Suddenly, Edgar makes an impulsive turn to the right, prompting the whistle of a traffic cop.

In an instant, all the traffic is gone, and Edgar comments on the grid-like design of these streets: parallel and perpendicular *avenidas* that can be used to navigate **El Centro** in any direction. 'Of course, if you get lost, just go downhill. Eventually you'll reach a plaza,' he says calmly as children dart in front of the car.

We wind further upward and the air becomes noticeably fresher. More stars are visible. We pass a patch of trees on the left, and Edgar tells me about the **monumentitos**, gravestone-like sculptures carved slowly over decades by stonemason families. Eventually we reach **Pura Pura**, the tiny forest that oxygenates the air in the city. From here, La Paz is a smattering of lights and winding streets in the valley below.

After a brief and seemingly frivolous rest stop, we begin our zigzag through *Villa Victoria* and descend to the centre of the city. Along the way, Edgar mentions the **madrugada** drunkards that dot the streets before dawn. He points at one street and then another, confidently declaring that he doesn't know their names. 'But I know how to get here,' he says, guessing he knows about 40% of all the street names in La Paz.

'It's the clients who have taught me most about these streets,' he explains, waving his hand toward the expanse of neon that awaits us at the bottom of the hill. In his thirteen years as a *taxista*, Edgar has driven through the many **villas** and **barrios** of La Paz, and has just as many tales to accompany them, including that of a phantom customer who disappeared from his cab one sleepy summer night. 'Poof! Gone,' he laughs, snapping his fingers. 'It was then I knew that I needed a break from seven-day workweeks.'

We hit traffic. The glowing, honking lights we saw from above now surround us as we roll along *El Prado*, the main artery of transit in the city. When we reach Plaza San Francisco on our way to **Zona Sur**, Edgar tells me a story about pigeons dirtying his customers' heads. Entering **Obrajes**, he laments the existence of condominiums and luxury car dealerships. Climbing up to the aptly-named **Alto Obrajes**, he points out an Olympic-sized swimming pool in the shape of a giant Pringle. From the window of the Edgar's taxi, I behold the city from a peak opposite of where we began in Sopocachi, as we continue what seems an infinitely wide circle around La Paz.

We hit cobblestone as the music hits my ears. In a small alley, a group of youths dances in unison to folkloric Andean music in front of an ice cream shop. As they practise their performance, a pack of shaggy, tongue-flapping wild dogs scurries around the car. Edgar muses on the respect he has for the city's many feral dogs, who, as he points out, 'have an instinct to cross at just the right time. They don't hesitate,' he tells me. And neither does he.

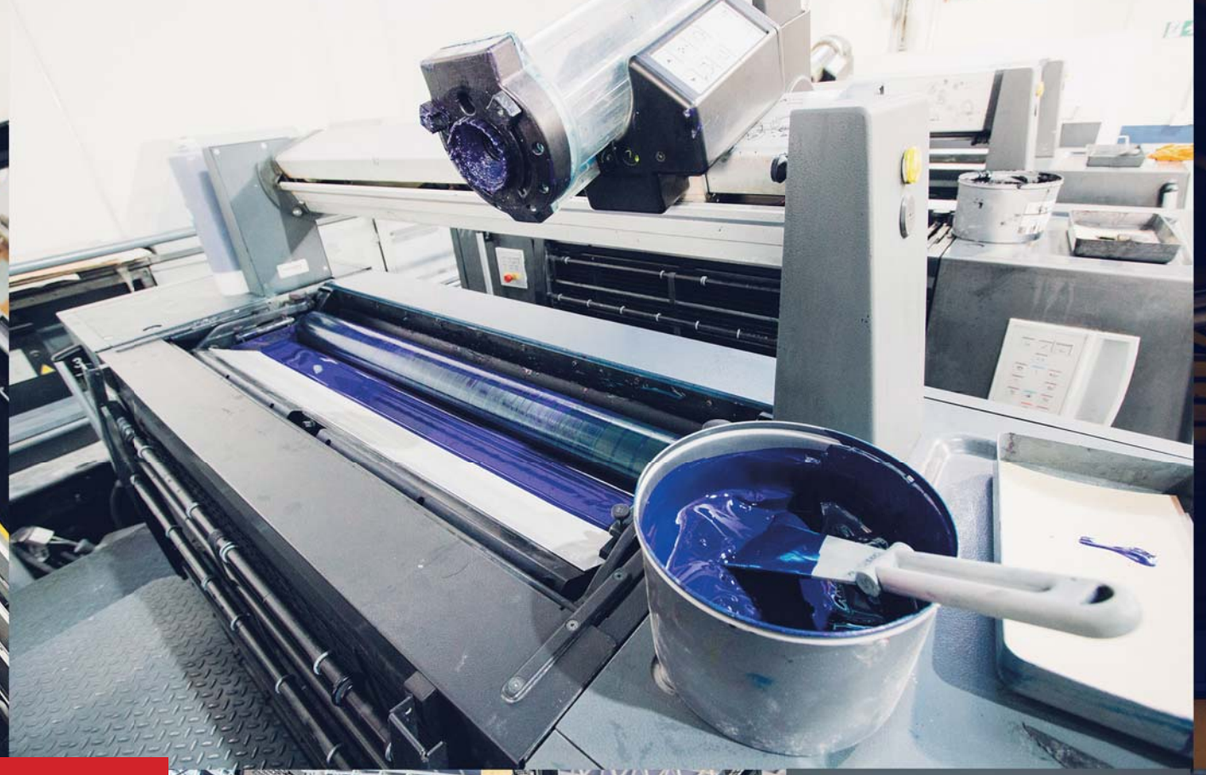
Edgar hangs a left, then a right, then another left, and suddenly we're back at the neon-lighted bridge we crossed some time before. I try, for a while, to figure out how he managed to avoid the bumper-to-bumper traffic of *El Prado* that we had squeezed through earlier to humour my curiosity. I attempt my own map of the streets from memory, but I fail before he calmly turns a corner and delivers the cab unto Plaza Avaroa, where our journey began. Dumbfounded, I stare at Edgar's face, which curls into a cheeky grin. He asks, 'Where next?'

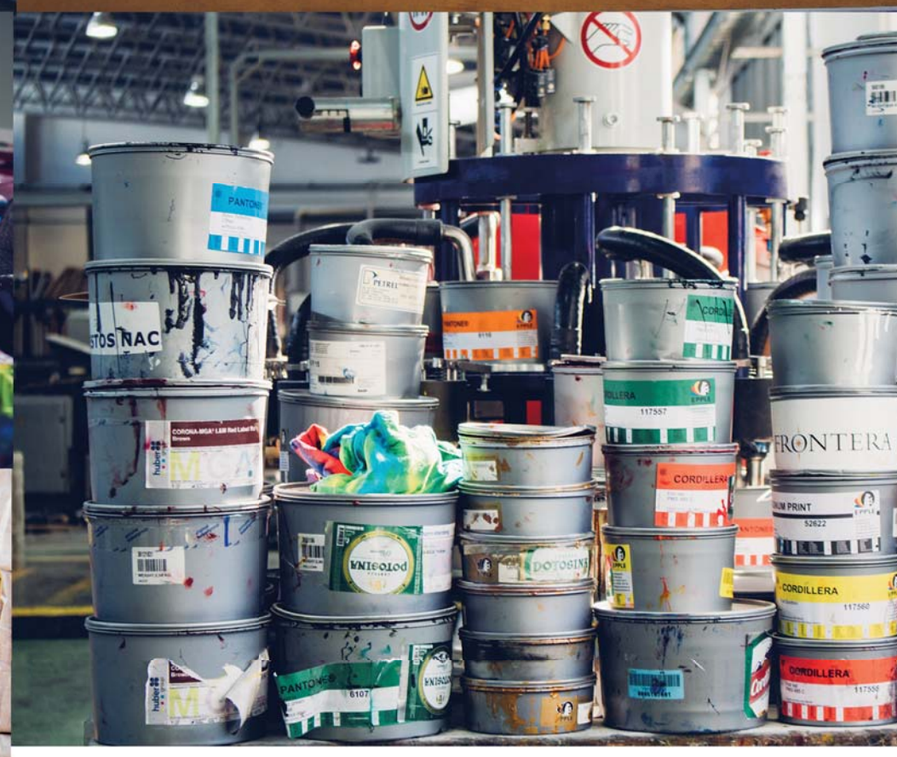
Edgar Ramos Calderon is available for hire for pickups and day trips in and around La Paz and El Alto. To request his services, call 65662889.

BOLIVIAN EXPRESS: PRINTED

An insight into how magazines go from PDF to published

TEXT: RAFAEL BERTOLI-MITCHELL
PHOTOS: ANNA BELLETTATO





Artes Gráficas Sagitario is a factory in La Paz that prints Bolivian Express. From pre-print design and blueprinting to UV-varnishing, we took a look at what goes on inside Bolivia's biggest printing house.

THE CITY OF
THE RINGS

Building the Future of Santa Cruz de la Sierra

TEXT: LILA ANDREA MONASTERIOS ESTEVES
PHOTOS: RODRIGO URZAGASTI

The city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in eastern Bolivia, is home to well over 1 million people, and is widely known as the economic center of the country. It is a city not shown in postcards, but whose contributions, both economically and culturally, are vital. And here, a better future is being built on a daily basis: according to the National Statistics Institute, 52% of the total area of Bolivia under construction is located in Santa Cruz.

Heat, blue sky, the boiling asphalt and a cool breeze that dries the sweat that falls from the forehead, we are at the time of year when winter still wants to exist. Yet locals know that in Santa Cruz, spring is eternal. Here, it is nearly always perfect conditions for exploration.

So you take your bike and pedal your way from the Villa Olímpica, a huge space where motocross and similar activities take place, along the 5th **anillo**, or ring, at the south of the city. A few short years ago, this spot was far away, a distant destination for those in the city center. Now, it is part of a usual route, and the streets surrounding it are paved. The lack of signs may be confusing, but you still manage to find the street name you are looking for in the stenciled signs that radio taxi drivers place on street corners. Here, if the municipality doesn't do such things, the people manage it themselves.

Santa Cruz has grown and continues to do so, as the **arenales** regions, or areas of sandy land, seem to migrate further and further outward. Where are they today? The ninth ring? That is almost Cotoca, to the east, at least 45 minutes by bus from the center.

Radials and rings create a system that any visitor to Santa Cruz should be familiar with in order to understand this city. Back in the early 1990s, this system exploded and expanded, growing until the fourth ring to the west side, where it collided with the Pirai River. Today, the city extends from the historic center, the Casco Viejo, to a ninth ring.

The first ring surrounds the Casco Viejo, and is about 12 blocks in diameter. A second ring surrounds the first at a distance of another 12 blocks away, and the pattern repeats to create a third inner ring, leaving some space for the third outer ring. A fourth ring is about another fifteen blocks out, and so will expand the city. Radials cross the city from north to south, from east to west, and all directions in between, like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. This patterned plan has been shelved, but remains as a sort of transit web.

The road is long, but you don´t hurry. Now you have to get to the other side of town, at least one hour of pedaling. But the city is flat, and the challenge is both exhilarating and comfortable. For many years the city only grew sideways, but along the way across town you can't escape the fact that something different is happening: the city is growing upwards. The gigantic **Palacio de Justicia**, once the only building piercing the skyline, is today accompanied by a dozen new buildings, particularly to the north, where you are headed.

Although traffic is rough and road safety education is lacking, bicycles have been taking over the streets of Santa Cruz. There is no design for bike paths, yet cyclists use the streets to move alongside cars and buses. Elsewhere this may not mean too much, but here it represents overcoming significant challenges to have commuters pedaling on two wheels on the city's roadways. There are no ups and downs, and with enough air to power the lungs of these bikers, many groups are being organized to ensure the rights of cyclists, and to include these rights in the urban planning.

To cross through the Casco Viejo is to experience the Santa Cruz of yesteryear in full conversation with the Santa Cruz of now. Despite a modern building boom in the 1970s, galleries, courtyards and **aljibes** of decades and centuries past have been recovered, and today remnants of the classic Santa Cruz style remain. Under the protection of the mayor, it is now forbidden to demolish or renovate these architectural artifacts without municipal permission.

The Catedral Mayor de San Lorenzo, with its elegant brickwork, recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary. Perhaps the most emblematic building of this city, it blends perfectly with La Pascana, a remodeled old building with exposed brick which houses a courtyard and a gallery.

This architecture represents a moment in history, and serves as a tangible reflection of a key concept important to any **cruceño** building an ideal home: no matter how much money is needed to invest, a home must have a barbecue and a social area. Although current trends can leave this colonial style to the aluminum minimalism and neo-rationalism popular with contemporary designers, some have managed to combine the galleries and courtyards of 500 years ago with modern design, retrieving some of the forms of the past to marry with future-forward aesthetics.

Places like the restaurant-museum *El Aljibe* remind us of the not so distant past, where the size of the *aljibe* determined the wealth of a family. And of a place where the food tastes like it was made by an elderly grandma who spent a lifetime here, a city that now has four huge shopping malls that seem to blend in more and more every day as the architecture in Santa Cruz modernises. The Ventura Mall is Bolivia's largest, and is home to CineMark and the Hard Rock Café. It stands in a neighbourhood almost reaching the Pirai River, an area that used to be considered the city limits of the 4th ring to the east, but that is now one of the more developed areas of the city. A bridge was built to cross the river nearby, and this area is where the rich captains of industry build modern business centers, luxury condos and even artificial beaches, equipped with electrically generated waves. Not many buses arrive here, as those who live and work nearby access the area with private cars. You, however, choose to arrive by bicycle, a routine performed by hundreds of cyclists every weekend.

Although there isn't even an avant-garde style generated by and for *cruceños*, there are colorful new buildings that arouse people's curiosity. One such building, the Omnia Lux, a brickwork tower, has gained recognition from the Faculty of Architecture of the UPSA (Universidad Privada de Santa Cruz), the top university in the city.

So what comes next for Santa Cruz? What is to be done with this merging of old and new architectures? As you finish your ride across this crowded city, maybe you would think that the old architecture of the past must retain its traditional essence and become the 'must have' of the new architectures emerging in this city that every day grows bigger and, like its citizens, becomes more cosmopolitan.

The author would like to thank Arch. Ernesto Urzagasti, Guillermo Mediana and Eliana Rivero for their insights and expertise in the research of this article.

ZEF

UPCYCLED ECO FASHION

TEXT: ANNA BELLETTATTO

PHOTOS: VALERIA WILDE

ZEF is a Bolivian fashion house that upcycles donated second-hand clothes. The items that aren't selected to be redesigned are given to local charities.

ZEF aims to produce high-quality, creative and eco-friendly clothing.

THE PROCESS

1. Recieving Donations

2. Clothing Selection

3.1 Unused clothes donated to charity

3.2 Selected clothes are redesigned

BEFORE

AFTER

MODEL: CAROLA VALDIVIA

6. Final Product

5. Dress rehersal

4 Dress making

HTTPS://M.FACEBOOK.COM/ZEF.CLOTHING

'La basura mata' – litter kills – is one of the most frequent slogans plastered on the walls of La Paz. For a city that is rapidly expanding, management of waste is a serious issue. **Paceños** produce approximately 560 tonnes of litter every year, all of which end up in the landfill of Alpacoma, the only dumpsite in the area. Experts predict the landfill site will reach full capacity in 20 years, hence the pressing need to find new ways to manage solid waste disposal.

In the last couple of years, management of litter – its recollection, disposal and recycling – as well as the safeguarding of the environment, have become priorities on the city council's agenda. In order to address these issues, the council is implementing an eco-friendly programme in La Paz in collaboration with Emaverde (Empresa Municipal de Areas Verdes), a local office in charge of managing parks and green areas in the city. The programme began with the construction of two factories that opened in 2014. One of them classifies waste and is located near the landfill of Alpacoma. The other is near the offices of Emaverde and produces an innovative recycled material, **plastimadera**, from the plastic waste collected at Alpacoma.

Plastimadera – or, 'plasticwood' – is recycled plastic (obtained from polyethylene and polypropylene) turned into boards measuring 2.55m by 1.25m. Its properties resemble those of wood, specifically its flexibility and resistance. Unlike wood, however, *plastimadera* is impermeable and inflammable, ecological and less expensive, making it a worthwhile investment. The *plastimadera* project is designed to reuse non-renewable resources consumed in the city, and reduce the amount of waste stored at the landfill.

At present, the plasticwood factory has not yet reached industrial scale, but it manufactures 100 boards daily. Engineer Nelson Nina Perez, head of *plastimadera* production, knows that the project only minimizes the problem of waste management in La Paz. However, 'in 10 years time,' he tells me, 'citizens in La Paz will lead a sustainable life only if recycling projects such as this one continue to develop.'

Nelson can barely hide his enthusiasm for his job as he shows me the different stages of the recycling process at the factory. After speaking to him, it's clear that the prime concern of the city council and Emaverde is establishing a culture of recycling among the population, something that's currently absent.

Only a few years ago, there was no specific treatment of litter in the city. This is still the dominant trenacross Bolivia. Citizens are sceptical about recycling in general, as well as about the ways in which it could solve the problems of an expanding community. Some have doubts about the process of recollection. They see dustmen collect trash and they wonder how it could ever be useful to separate plastic from paper or organic waste. Despite these recurring questions, students in La Paz are taught to recycle at school. They are given snacks on a daily basis, the waste of which is placed in appropriate bins.

Last year, the *plastimadera* factory produced 525 pieces of furniture, distributed to different schools in various districts. It's no accident that the chosen beneficiaries of the programme are the local schools of La Paz. The point is to show students that they are making a meaningful contribution to the recycling chain when they divide their rubbish at school. The cycle starts and ends with them.

'Citizens realise that something useful can be made out of their waste,' Nelson says, highlighting the role of the project in changing the mindset of the population. For Daniel Gustavo Cartagena, who works for the Department of Education in the city, local authorities must provide schools with furniture anyway, which is why the *plastimadera* initiative helps the council fulfill one of its primary tasks. They hope students will bring this lesson home so their parents will learn about the advantages of recycling with them.

Amanda Villca Beltrán works for the Municipal Secretary of Environmental Management, and confirms that the citizen response to the recycling project has been satisfactory thus far. Almost 35 tonnes of waste have already been collected this year. Throughout the week, locals can take their rubbish to 99 different recollection spots where plastic, nylon, paper, cardboard and batteries are collected separately. On Sunday mornings, 23 recollection points operate around the city. The goal is to reach 40 tonnes of plastic by the end of this year to produce furniture for more schools in the city.

The work done so far covers only a small part of the waste generated in the city, but the local council is working hard to promote similar recycling projects with other disposable materials. Everyone involved in the *plastimadera* project (from the city council to Emaverde's employees) strongly believes in what they are doing for La Paz.

I was expecting to see the same excitement for the project in the schools where *plastimadera* furniture has been sent. However, I was disillusioned when I learnt that one school was not actually implementing the program of recycling. The most challenging aspect of the project remains its implementation, which depends exclusively on the community's participation. The city council may develop methods of supervision, or put forward incentives to promote the recycling programme, but the main responsibility continues to be that of the citizens.

POP-UP COMMUNITY

The Miniparques of El Alto

TEXT: J.Q. COOLEY
ILLUSTRATION: OSCAR ZALLES

It's field trip day. The rare occasion when you and all your classmates get to leave the classroom and explore the world outside to learn from everything other than books and desks. You scramble up the wooden trunk of an elephant and your friends call to you from the disassembled bumblebee below that now looks like five blocks of astroturf.

On a pedestrian street near Mercado Satélite, the schoolchildren arrive like a flock of turkeys clad in sweater vests and khaki pants. Smiling, the flock scrambles into a line. Why? Because these **miniparques** are unlike any park they've ever seen. They're shaped like animals, and have wheels for traveling hither and thither to different parts of El Alto.

Gathered around are the brains behind these mobile structures of fun: the members of COMPA Teatro Trono, a grassroots organization that promotes education through theater in El Alto. Standing with them are their partners, American and Bolivian university students from the International Design Clinic (IDC), a self-identified 'guerrilla design' collective that promotes 'creative work with communities in need around the world.' Together, in July of 2015, they created a space of joy.

One third of El Alto's population is under the age of fourteen. According to the creators of Miniparques, most of the public spaces in the city do not cater to the imaginations of these playful children. Their idea was to create a park that did. The university students gave hundreds of children a blank piece of paper, encouraging them to draw the perfect park. The drawings had three elements in common: trees, the colour green, and some notion of a slide.

It took the team three years to build these **parks-in-a-cart**. The two organizations used traditional welding techniques and local materials to construct their colorful playgrounds. The green astroturf body of the bumblebee can be arranged into other shapes, including something like a tree. The elephant, with a trunk of pastel-colored wood, provides something to slide down.

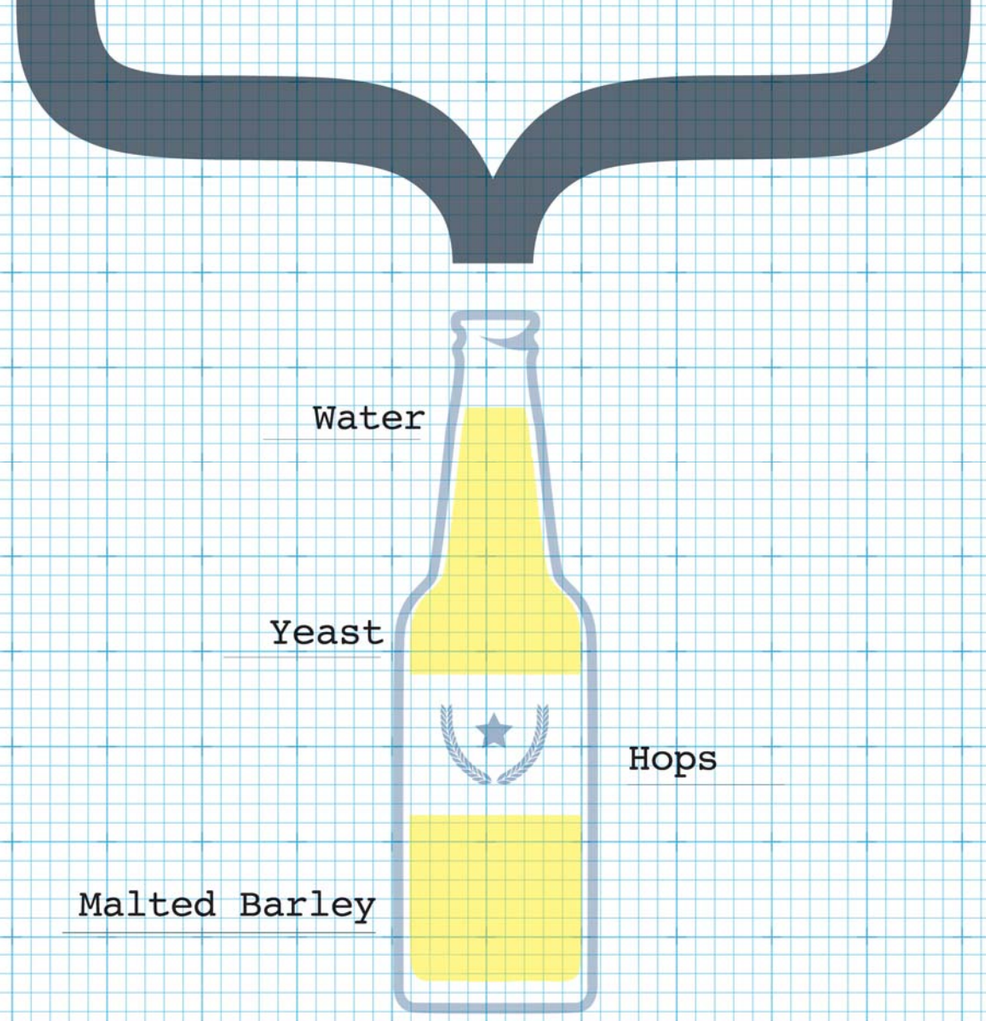
Ronald Grepe Crespo, a professor of architecture at Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo (UPB), worked with IDC on the project. 'Most children were so curious,' he recalls from the construction process, 'but the adults just kept walking. Kids would stop and ask questions, or try to play on the structures.'

When the parks were finally unveiled, one group of schoolchildren 'got in trouble with their teacher because they wanted to keep on playing,' Crespo tells me. The organizers observed that children love to climb on a slide, especially in 'the wrong direction.' The elephantine **tobogán** provides the most fundamental aspect of any playground — the thrill of climbing that which was not meant to be climbed.

It's Wednesday, midday. The sun is strong, but so is your imagination. You're a cowboy hot on the tail of a local outlaw, who in real life is your best friend, dressed like you, in school uniform. You run around, up and down the bumblebee's body, shoes clacking on the cobblestones. Above the hooting and hollering, you hear the call: '¡Niños, vengan aquí!' In an instant, the fun deflates. Your six-shooters disappear and you dismount your steed when you hear the threats of detention. Suddenly, the best recess of your life is over.

The importance of play in a child's life is difficult to overstate. For the lucky children who experienced the *parks-in-a-cart* in July, as well as for those of the future, these pop-up *miniparques* provide an innovative way to exercise, play pretend, and bring the community of El Alto together. Especially when elephants and bumblebees are involved.×

COMPA Teatro Trono continues to provide a safe space of learning for the children of El Alto, offering courses in mathematics and sciences to anyone committed enough to take three **talleres del teatro**, *which are workshops that encourage teamwork and bravery through theatrical creativity. Right now, the Miniparques wait to be unveiled for another group to play with. To get involved, search COMPA Teatro Trono on Facebook or visit their home of operations in El Alto, just blocks from Mercado Satélite.*



THE DESIGN OF FLAVOUR

Bolivia's Artisanal Beer Scene is Brewing

TEXT: RAFAEL BERTOLI-MITCHELL

A small, inconspicuous door at the end of Calle Belisario Salinas in Sopocachi leads into a dimly lit room resonating with the Beatles' greatest hits. Tubs of barley and aged barrels litter the shelves of Abbey Road, a bar that has been serving some of Bolivia's finest artisanal beer for over four years.

Something spectacular is happening here – a revolution, of sorts. Beer has been reinventing itself. Small breweries are refreshing, reviving and changing beer culture as we know it.

You'd have to go back 70 years to find as many breweries across the world as we have now. From Czech-style pilsners to peppy India Pale Ales (IPAs) and stouts, there's such an incredible variety that if you think you don't like beer, there's still hope. La Paz's craft brew scene is currently being proliferated by both Bolivians and expats, and the Bolivian mainstream lager is being shaken up.

The diversity of climate in Bolivia makes for an impressive variety of beers. In the fertile coca-growing valleys of the Andes, white beers prevail over the stiers of Cochabamba. In the tropical lowlands, high-carbonated beers give way to the wheat-heavy brews of Santa Cruz.

Jaime Andres Sánchez, the founder of Abbey Road, learnt his trade in Cochabamba and began making artisanal beer 10 years ago. He now sells beers from all over Bolivia, and continues to brew his own. 'I set out to produce artisanal beer as a completely different product,' he explains. 'There's much more flexibility with flavours and ingredients in craft beer. I was looking for something that could be enjoyed on the merit of its taste.'

> 'You mess around with recipes and different ingredients, and you can taste something completely new.'
> — Jorge 'Coco' Flores

Defining craft beer is infamously difficult. You can't restrict it to a list of ingredients or type of packaging. It's antithetical to rules, and any attempt to define it is a retrograde step. Craft beer's aim is the design of flavour; defining it will swap quantity for quality, and stifle innovation. It can only encourage a conservative mindset.

As the Bolivian gastronomy movement gains momentum, brewers have been rediscovering the roles that traditional ingredients can play. Multiple breweries offer quinoa (and even coca) beers, but the learning curve is still steep. Many of these still have the quality of experiments designed as novelty products for tourists.

I ask Jaime why he chose La Paz, a city with notably fewer microbreweries than its urban counterparts in Bolivia – Cochabamba, for example, produces more artisanal beer than anywhere else in the country. 'People are cosmopolitan in La Paz, so I thought I could introduce a higher-quality product without having to worry about branding,' he reveals. 'After all, I just want to teach people about beer.'

Indeed, educating people about the benefits of drinking craft beer is high on the agenda of its promoters. In Sucre, I spoke with Marcelo Villa Salinas, the owner of Goblin Cerveza Artesanal. 'The culture of artisanal beer in Bolivia is just starting,' he tells me, smoking a cigarette and sipping from an amber-coloured beer that he makes on site. 'We need to teach people about the brewing process to make craft beer more commercially viable.'

For Jaime, microbreweries are a fail-safe option for young entrepreneurs. Established companies teach new brewers the best practices to reduce spoilage, and unlike other industries, home brewing experience is enough to get started. With low operational costs, immediate sales and potentially lucrative margins, it's easy to see why the number of craft breweries operating in the U.S. has more than doubled in the past seven years.

The manufacturing process remains laborious, however. I meet with Jorge Flores, known by his friends as Coco. He's a budding brewer from La Paz who makes and bottles his own beer using online tutorials. 'For people with little experience like me, producing beer is not easy; it's a trial-and-error process,' he reveals. 'There are so many variables that you have to control: which malts you mix, the tonality of the beer, the type of yeast you use, the temperature during fermentation, the amount of gas you add to the liquid and the pasteurisation.'

Jaime also recognises the difficulties involved in homebrewing. 'The stability of the product and how it keeps is the hardest thing to control,' he says. 'When you make beer, you have no idea how it's going to turn out, and this is something you have to realise as a producer.'

In spite of the efforts of people like Jaime, Bolivia's artisanal beer scene remains underdeveloped. No one I talk to is able to give an explanation for the lack of hop cultivation or draught beer here. All three men are shocked when I tell them about the omnipresence of IPAs and taprooms in England.

Jaime acknowledges that the fight for craft beer in Bolivia has only just begun – teaching people to differentiate between a stout and a Paceña will take time. 'I'm slowly managing to teach people and get loyal clientele, but some people still come in asking for Huari and Corona,' he reveals. With mainstream lager sales taking 94% of the Bolivian market share in 2014 (and a monopoly on exportation), an age of exclusively artisanal beer-drinking seems a long way off.

Yet Jaime's passion for his product is infectious. 'I want drinking beer to be an experience,' he tells me. 'I'm selling a concept and showing people that they don't have to be scientists to make their own beer. Brewers are a community of people who want to try new things and share them with others.'

Marcelo sees that ground is being made. 'When I started, I could count the number of microbrewers in Bolivia on one hand – 90% of my customers were tourists,' he says. 'But now people are learning, and half of the people who come here are Bolivians.'

Globally, traditional low-cost beers are going out of style. According to Anheuser-Busch's own data, 44% of people between the ages of 21 and 27 have never even tried Budweiser. Dutch brewing company Heineken recently bought a 50% stake in US-based beer maker Lagunitas Brewing Co. to expand into the artisanal beer industry. Corporations are scared, and rightly so: the face of the industry has changed, and Bolivia seems to be moving with it.

A large part of craft beer's appeal is that anyone can have a go. 'Brewing's just like making a soup,' says Coco. 'You mess around with recipes and different ingredients, and you can taste something completely new.'

The future of Bolivian beer may not be blonde and bubbly, but it is bright. A new idea has arrived.

Abbey Road is located on Calle Belisario Salinas, on the corner of Andrés Muñoz in Sopocachi (two blocks up from Plaza Avaroa). It's open on Thursday and Friday from 7:30 pm to 1:30 am, and Saturday from 8:30 pm to 2:30 am.

To find out more about homebrewing in Bolivia, check out the Embracing Limitations blog at orientebrewolero.wordpress.com.

CERVEZA DRAFT
ABBEY ROAD, LA PAZ
'THE LEMONADE OF BEER': AMBER-COLOURED, HOPPY AND BEST-SERVED COLD.
ALCOHOL 5.0%

INDIAN PALE ALE (IPA)
CERVECERÍA GOBLIN, COCHABAMBA
TANNED, BITTER AND HOPPY WITH A FLORAL AROMA.
ALCOHOL 5.5%

ANDEAN BLACK
CERVECERÍA ALIMENTAL, COCHABAMBA
COPPER-COLOURED. FULL-BODIED AND HERBY: GOES WELL WITH FOOD.
ALCOHOL 5.0%

CHRISTMAS ALE
TEDS CERVECERÍA, SUCRE
THICK, BITTER AND STRONG.
ALCOHOL 12.0%

BUILDING THE HOUSES OF GOD

The Churches of La Paz

It seems almost every corner of La Paz is home to a church. An interview with Gastón A. Gallardo, Dean of Architecture at Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, opens my eyes to the history and design behind these incredible structures.

TEXT: HAZEL BROWNE
PHOTOS: HAZEL BROWNE AND WILLIAM WROBLEWSKI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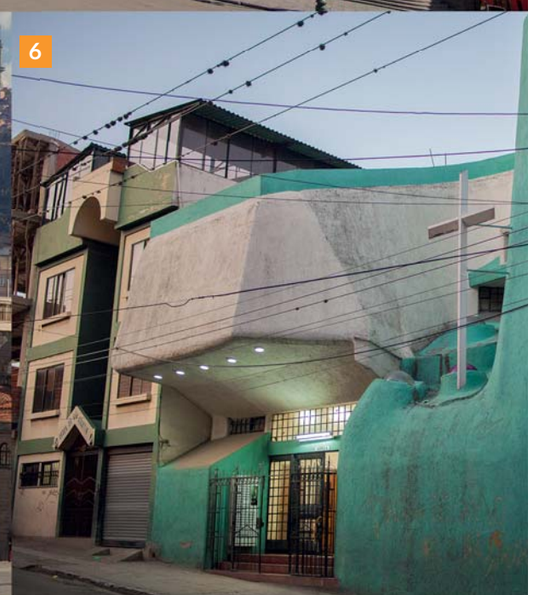
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1. IGLESIA DE SAN PEDRO

DATE COMPLETED: 1790
ARCHITECT: Unknown

On entering this church, the building seems strangely long and thin, a feature it retains from its Renaissance origins. The original church no longer stands, as it was burned down during an indigenous rebellion known as the siege of Túpac Katari. Perhaps the people who frequent the church are what gives it its charm. As I approached the building, I was greeted by a vivacious wedding scene, with a happy couple dancing to a full orchestra that included three guitars.

2. IGLESIA DE SAN FRANCISCO

DATE COMPLETED: Temple in 1784, tower in 1885
ARCHITECT: Unknown

You can't help but notice the gloom as you enter this magnificent church. Along the side walls, where windows would normally sit, are the statues of countless saints. The façade has a particularly impressive design, so intricate that the more you look the more you see. In a style is known as **Mestizo-Baroque**, it features bunches of grapes and grotesque humanoid faces that appear to spew vines from their mouths. Like in the case of San Pedro, the original San Francisco church no longer stands. Its original building is often cited as the oldest church in the city, but it was destroyed by severe snowfalls.

3. IGLESIA DE SAN AGUSTÍN

DATE COMPLETED: 1668
ARCHITECT: Unknown

Fresh flowers and plaques of gratitude adorn the various saints that line the walls of this church. Its exterior appearance, however, which is a twentieth century addition, does not give such a welcoming impression, with its discoloured plaster peeling from the walls and panels missing from the windows. This building is the only complete example of seventeenth century architecture in La Paz.

4. IGLESIA DE SANTO DOMINGO

DATE COMPLETED: Second half of the seventeenth century, main stone façade around 1760
ARCHITECT: The project was conceived by Francisco Jiménez de Sigüenza in 1609, the engineer Lanza remodelled the interior in the nineteenth century

The partially crumbling exterior of this church lends a certain authenticity to its seventeenth-century construction. As you walk through the gates, you are greeted by ladies selling beautiful jewellery and candles. The decoration of the main stone façade, with its various parrots, grape vines and pomegranates, is in typical Mestizo style, based around the motifs of tropical flora and fauna. The inside of the church is particularly attractive, though it's hard to pinpoint why. Perhaps it is the small organ placed proudly at the front, or maybe the vertical red and gold lines, decorating the pillars.

5. CATEDRAL DE LA PAZ

DATE COMPLETED: Inaugurated in 1925. It has been continually adapted, most recently in 1989 when the two towers were built.
ARCHITECT: Many architects and engineers intervened, but the original design was created by Manuel Sanahuja

'It's unbelievable,' Dean Gallardo tells me, outraged. 'The towers were supposed to be taller [than the dome], but they made them from a single floor because of a lack of funding.' To the untrained eye, this architectural shortcoming does not detract from the Catedral Metropolitana. Its beautiful stone pillars and huge doors are so artfully sculpted, that their engraved metal figures seem to come right out of their alcoves, forcing emotions onto the innocent passerby. The stained-glass window at the back depicts a group of people praying and a great light shining from angels in the sky. It strikes me at first that the people in prayer are all white-skinned, yet it is no surprise: the window was, after all, imported from Spain by the Europeans.

6. IGLESIA DE LA PARROQUIA DE SANTA RITA

DATE COMPLETED: 1970s
ARCHITECT: Peter Steffens

I nearly walked past this interesting building because I was expecting to find a traditional stone church. Though very small, what I found makes up for its size with its unique character. With lumps and bumps and a cross that appears to be hanging in mid-air, this irregular structure is coloured simply with white and turquoise. Inside, the most distinctive feature is a set of cylindrical lights built into the ceiling. One has the outline of a dove, the other of Jesus. This church was nothing like what I had expected, but I was captivated by its unconventional design.

THE FLAG OF THE PEOPLE

BOLIVIA'S SEVEN SQUARES OF MULTICULTURALISM

TEXT: RAFAEL BERTOLI-MITCHELL
ILLUSTRATIONS: MAURICIO WILDE

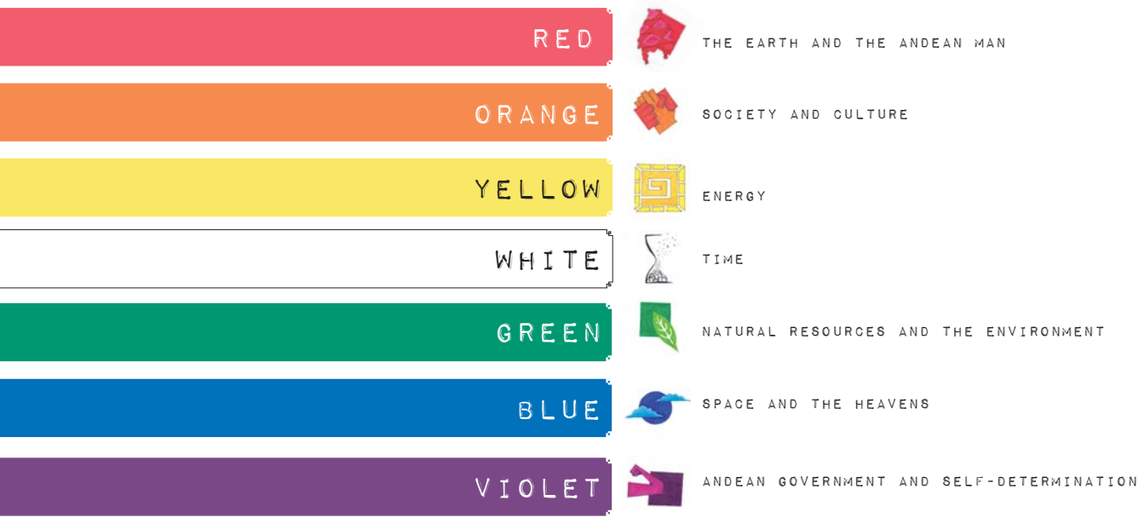
As I sat in the **teléferico** for the first time, slowly rolling up the valley to El Alto, a friend pointed out what we thought to be a multicoloured LGBTQ flag. Even the Bolivians that I spoke to were unaware of the banner's origins. Finding out its exact meaning would require a look back into history.

The **Wiphala** is a symbol of the Aymara people and emerged during the days of the Incan Empire, where it was a processional banner. It consists of 49 small squares in a seven-by-seven grid. The seven colours in the grid are representations of the rainbow, a theme that occurs repeatedly in Quechua and Aymara art and design. Arranged diagonally, each row and column is made of the seven distinct colours.

Four different *Wiphala* arrangements were used during the Incan Empire, representing the four Incan provinces. The colour of the longest diagonal line indicates which region the *Wiphala* represents:

White: Collasuyu (the southeastern province, representing the territories of Peru, Bolivia, and parts of Chile and Argentina)
Yellow: Cuntisuyu (the southwestern province, representing southwestern Peru)
Red: Chinchansuyu (the northwestern province, covering Ecuador, central and northern Peru, and southwestern Colombia)
Green: Antisuyu (the eastern province, made up of eastern Peru and part of Bolivia)

In recent years (notably the mobilisation of indigenous movements in the 1970s), the *Wiphala* has been adopted in neighbouring South American countries, and has become ubiquitous at pan-Andean public events and demonstrations. Bolivian President Evo Morales established the Collasuyu *Wiphala* as the nation's dual flag along with the previous red, yellow and green banner in the newly-ratified constitution. In this modern form, the seven colours of the *Wiphala* have acquired new meanings:

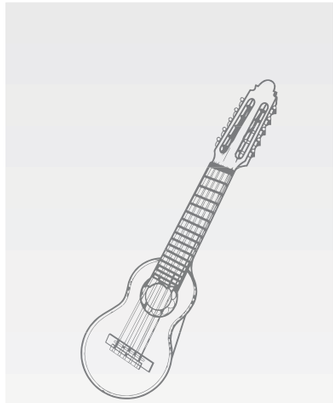


For more information about the history of Bolivia and the Incan Empire, see Waltraud Q. Morales' 'A Brief History of Bolivia'.

GLOSSARY

ARENAL - An extended area of land with a sandy surface, **ALJIBE -** Treadmill used to collect rainwater, **ALTO OBRAJES:** A neighborhood of La Paz located in Zona Sur, **ÁNGEL** - Angel, **ANILLO** - Ring, **AVENIDA -** Term for the primary avenues of automotive transit in La Paz, **BARRIO -** Neighborhood, **CHARANGO -** A small Andean instrument of the lute family, traditionally made from an armadillo shell, **CHOLA PACEÑA**- A woman of traditional dress from La Paz, the icon of the city; Mestiza woman, **CHUKUTA -** An Aymara word used to call people or things from La Paz, **CHULA -**The wife of a Spanish bullfighter's assistant, **CHULO -** Spanish bullfighter´s assistant, **CRUCEÑO -** Someone from Santa Cruz, **DIABLADA** - Dance of the devils, **DIABLO -** Devil, **EL CEMENTERIO -** The largest cemetery in La Paz; a landmark for commuting toward El Alto, **EL CENTRO -** The large downtown of La Paz that comprises the areas of Casco Urbano Central, San Jorge, Miraflores, San Sebastián, Santa Bárbara and Parque Urbano Central, **EL PRADO -** La Paz's main thoroughfare; also known as Avenida Principal, **FERIA -** A term for the ubiquitous streets markets of La Paz, **JANAQ PACHA -** World of above, **LLAWJA -** Spicy Bolivian salsa made with Bolivian hot peppers and tomato, **MADRUGADA -** The early hours of the morning, before and during dawn, **MANTA -** Article of clothing worn by Chola Paceña to cover her blouse. It is a rectangular piece of cloth and has fringes around, **MARCA PAÍS -** Nation brand, **MÁSCARA -** Mask, **MASCARERO -** Mask maker, **MESTIZO-BAROQUE -** An architectural style adapted by the locals from the Baroque ideas brought from Europe, **MINIPARQUES -** A name for the two pieces of playground art, **MONUMENTITOS -** Small, grave-like religious monuments located in Pura Pura, built over many years by families of stonemasons, **MORENADA -** Traditional dance of Bolivia that has cholas as main character, **OBRAJES -** A neighbourhood of La Paz, located in Zona Sur, **PARKS-IN-A-CART -** An alternative, endearing term for the mobile playground of El Alto, **PACEÑOS -** Inhabitants of La Paz, **PALACIO DE JUSTICIA -** Courthouse, **PLASTIMADERA -** Plastic wood, **POLLERA -** Pleated skirt worn by Chola Paceña, **PRENDEDORES -** A type of brooch to wear on the manta, **PURA PURA -** A small, high-altitude area with a forest created as a bulwark against air contamination in La Paz, **RAMILLETES -** A type of brooch to wear on the hat, **REGGAETON -** Latin American dance music with reggae and hip hop influences, **SALTEÑAS -** Bolivian savoury pastry, **SAQRA/ SUPAY -** A god-devil who inhabited the depths of the earth, **TAXISTA -** A taxi driver of La Paz, **TALLERES DEL TEATRO -** Workshops on theater production offered to the youth of El Alto by COMPA Teatro Trono which occur every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, **TEJEDOR -** Weaver, **TEJIDO -** Textile, **TOBOGÁN -** The common playground slide, **TELÉFERICO -** Aerial cable car transit system in La Paz, **UKHU PACHA -** World of below, **VILLA -** Similar to barrio, villa refers to small clusters of residential streets, **WIPHALA -** An emblem of squares, commonly used as a flag, representing some native peoples of the Andes, **ZONA -** Used to reference one of the seven urban zones of La Paz, **ZONA SUR -** Commercial and corporate hub of La Paz, 400 meters lower in altitude than the city centre

PHOTO: ANNA BELLETTATO



SOUNDS OF PAPER

Local luthier making recycled instruments

TEXT: HAZEL BROWNE
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'I don't like the felling of trees,' Adrián Villanueva says, as he shows me a selection of his creations: **charangos** made from recycled paper. Traditionally fashioned from armadillo shells, *charangos* are now more commonly sculpted from a single piece of wood, yet even this has an environmental cost.

Just a few streets from the general cemetery, Adrián leads me up the steps to his house and into the living room. The room is unmistakably that of a music enthusiast. A *charango*-maker for over forty years, Adrián has acquired a huge selection of vinyl records, books and posters which decorate every inch of the wall, displaying his love of musicians from all over the world. Many posters celebrate the musical achievements of Andean artists, but if you look closely you can even spot a small newspaper clipping of The Beatles.

When people think of *charangos* they tend to imagine a small, ten-stringed instrument made from an armadillo shell. Yet these instruments are incredibly varied in design. They can have any number of strings, they can be made from an enormous range of different materials and vary hugely in size, with the largest ever *charango* measuring more than six metres in length. On top of this, each luthier adds his or her own personal design to the instrument, be it engraved, burned or painted. *Charangos* are, therefore, as much works of art as the music they produce.

A trip to the Museum of Musical Instruments in La Paz shows the great diversity of these instruments, featuring a selection of the *charangos* that can be found throughout Bolivia. A whole room is dedicated exclusively to innovative musical instrument designs, with *charango* materials including condor chest bones, pumpkins and ox bladders. A particularly aesthetic *charango* replaces the traditional armadillo shell with a miner's hat. Several makers have added a modern twist, such as an electric *charango*, a light-up *charango* and even a charango fashioned from an old alcohol container.

Adrián tells me how he used to watch his father make musical instruments and – at the age of eight – was curious to learn. Yet it was this in combination with the ecological habits of his mother, who recycled wool to make ponchos, that sparked his unique idea: *charangos* made from paper. 'I feel moved,' he explains, 'because many people are destroying Mother Earth.'

He tells me that paper *charangos* are much harder to make than their wooden counterparts, but adds optimistically that nothing is impossible. Starting with a layer of paper on a wooden mould, Adrián adds alternate layers of paper and glue, until he has completed more than twenty layers. The *charango* is then left to dry in natural sunlight for at least a week. When the instrument is dry, a layer of varnish is applied to give a shiny finish. The resulting *charango* is as strong as any wooden or armadillo-shell variety.

Adrián's paper *charangos* take around two months to make, and each has a unique design on its back. Jaime Torres, a famous *charango* player; Doria Medina, a businessman; and Matilde Casazola, a Bolivian poet, are amongst those honoured to have their pictures plastered on one of Adrián's hand-crafted *charango*s. As well as paying homage to his favourite celebrities, Adrián uses recycled wrapping paper to create instruments with beautiful patterns from paper that would otherwise go to waste.

To broaden his forty years of experience as a luthier, Adrián is now attempting a paper violin and paper harp. But once he fashions these novel instruments, what's next? Adrián has two ambitious dreams for the future: to play in front of a crowd of 60 thousand at Wimbledon, and to create a documentary about his paper instruments, encouraging people to look after the environment.

'I want to win an Oscar for Bolivia,' he tells me, glowing with pride for his country. ×

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