BolivianExpress

Gratis

Magazine

ISSUE #

100

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#100

SPECIAL EDITION

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Editorial Team
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BX docunit
Changtse Quintanilla

Printing and Advertising Manager
Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic

Commercial Manager
Rodrigo Barrenechea

Coordinator
Wilmer Machaca

Social Coordinator
Renata Lazcano

Head of Production
Adriana L. Murillo Argandoña

Head of Design
Luis Aranda

Photography Instructor
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Journalists
Anneli Aliaga, George Fearnley, Renata Lazcano Silva, Rhiannon Matthias, Adriana L. Murillo A., Alexandra Melean, Lauren Minion, Marie-Eve Monette, Caroline Risacher, Silvia Saccardi

Our Cover
BX Team

Marketing
Rodrigo Barrenechea

Advertise With Us
rodrigo@bolivianexpress.org

Address
Calle Prolongación Armaza, # 2957, Sopocachi, La Paz

Phone
78862061- 76561628 - 70672031

Contact
rodrigo@bolivianexpress.org

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La Paz - Bolivia
December 2019

PHOTO CREDITS

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CHARACTERS

BX100

EDITORIAL 100

By: Caroline Risacher

SPECIAL EDITION

The *Bolivian Express* celebrates its 100th issue and tenth year this month. Over 300 interns have come to Bolivia to be part of the *BX* experience and left, we hope, with a better understanding of Bolivia and its culture. Some, actually, never left. We wrote about, among other things, chickens (Bolivians really like chicken), ice-cream vendors, **chullpas** (pre-Columbian tombs) and fat-sucking vampires roaming the **altiplano** (yes, that's a thing); we tried to explain local trends (there are so many vegan restaurants now!) and current events (where to begin?) as clearly as possible. There are some questions we were never able to answer, though. Is it spelled Abaroa or Avaroa? Where do taxis disappear when it rains?

This couldn't have been possible without the participation of the many interns who wrote for the magazine and gave it life. They've come from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Belgium, France, Ireland, Indonesia, Italy, Germany and South Africa, bringing some of their culture to Bolivia and taking back with them a taste for salteñas (because **salteñas** are, very objectively, the best). There was romance, a cat called Kandinsky, dog bites, roadblocks, a kitchen fire, a very long bus journey to Vallegrande, a few ghosts and an inexhaustible number of stories that never made it to the magazine's pages but are nevertheless a part of the *BX* experience.

Ultimately the *BX* was and is a human adventure. We wanted to tell stories about Bolivia but we ended up doing something better. Over the years we built a network of interns and contributors which now spreads all across the world, hopefully bringing some attention to Bolivia and all its wonderfully weird idiosyncrasies. This project started as a group of friends with an idea and it became a family with a home in Bolivia. In these uncertain times, there are few things we can be sure of, but regardless of what the future brings, the friendships and connections that have formed inside the *BX* house will remain, and we hope there will be many more to come with many more new stories to share. (And maybe, one day, we will tell you what happened on that trip to Vallegrande.)

To all the people who came to Bolivia to be a part of the *Bolivian Express*, to the photographers and illustrators, to the people who were interviewed and featured in the magazine, to our past and present team and to all our readers: thank you.

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

BX CHARACTERS

THE 100TH EDITION AND 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ***BOLIVIAN EXPRESS*** ARE DEDICATED TO OUR FOUNDER **AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE.**
WITHOUT HIM THIS ADVENTURE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

DIRECTORS

AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE
CO FOUNDER

Amaru founded the Bolivian Express back in 2009. He currently works for the Fundación Friedrich Ebert and is undertaking a PhD in Sociology at the University of Essex. Previously he was the director of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS) of the Vice Presidency of Bolivia and worked as professor in Cultural Interaction, Critical Thinking and Academic Writing at the Universidad Católica Boliviana. He was also a consultant on Internet and Politics for the UNDP. He lives in La Paz, Bolivia.

IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC
CO FOUNDER

'God, time flies. Ten years ago some Bolivian/ English / Irish / Serbian / Swiss kids got together to embark upon this unexpected life-experiment adventure. Now, after many memories collected, words crossed and written, faces, pictures and trips, *Bolivian Express* launches its 100th issue. Cheers to everyone who's been involved in some way or another with this life-changing experience, cheers to those who look for happiness and satisfaction in the small things in life, and cheers to those who appreciate the gift of sight and understand what this gift means. Live long!'

RODRIGO BARRENECHEA
DIRECTOR

'*Bolivian Express* represents, in addition to being a social entrepreneurship which contributed greatly to Bolivia, a whole decade of experiences with a team that became a family and that, to date, received more than 400 people from all parts of the world trying to show the magic of our country.'

Rodrigo Barrenechea is 30 years old. He spent more than 12 years dedicated to strengthening ventures in private and public enterprises. With a background in business administration, Rodrigo is also responsible for Social Innovation of the state through his work at the Ministry of Development Planning of Bolivia.

PARTNERS

SHAROLL FERNANDEZ
CO FOUNDER

An Aymara-Jewish artist born in La Paz, Bolivia, Sharoll co-founded the *Bolivian Express*. She's taught art history to student filmmakers, and her training in dance and literature allows her to combine her aesthetic proposal with cryptic metaphors, powerful movement and deep reflection.

JACK KINSELLA

'Back in 2009, before *Bolivian Express* had opened its doors to the public, we pitched ourselves to the world as 'Journalism, Adventure and Social Impact in Bolivia.' How true these words would end up ringing for me and for all involved! I look forward to the 100th issue.'

XENIA ELSAESSER

'I remember when Ivan called me and said, "So, do you think are we going to do this magazine idea? When can we Skype with Amaru and Jack?' It felt like a game. Now, ten years on, I've not been involved anymore for a long time. I'm in awe of the dedication and passion that's kept it going till 100, and so proud I was a small part of that journey. Well done *BX* teams past and present!'

EDITORIAL TEAM

CAROLINE RISACHER

Caroline first joined the *Bolivian Express* as an intern in 2012 and ended up staying there for a year. She came back in 2017 and became the editor-in-chief and co-director of the magazine.

MATTHEW GRACE

Matthew Grace has worked for the *BX* since 2012. He's written about foreigners behind bars, an isolated jewel mine on the Paraguay River and other subjects that make Bolivia such a fascinating country. He lives in the Bronx with his partner, dogs and cats when he's not exploring South America.

JUAN VICTOR FAJARDO

Juan Victor has worked for the *BX* since 2012 and is a journalist based in Caracas, Venezuela.

NIALL FLYNN

Niall was a *BX* intern in 2012 and has since completed translation and editing assignments for the magazine. He divides his time between the north of England and New York City, working as a freelance translator and interpreter for the United Nations.

WILLIAM WROBLEWSKI

Former editor-in-chief from 2015 to 2017, William is a freelance videographer and producer based in La Paz since 2013. He has produced work for Al Jazeera and AFP.

COORDINATORS

RENATA LAZCANO SILVA
SOCIAL COORDINATOR

Renata joined the *BX* Team in February 2019. She has a degree in marketing and logistics. Her curiosity and outgoing personality makes her enjoy working under the diverse world this magazine offers. She loves to dance more than anything in life and is currently fond of Ultimate, a non-contact, self-refereed mixed team sport played with a flying disc or 'frisbee'.

WILMER MACHACA
GENERAL COORDINATOR

Wilmer Machaca has been working for *Bolivian Express* for the last six years. Although his work is mainly administrative he also wrote several articles on Andean culture. The task he enjoys the most is to bring the magazines to his readers around the city. Wilmer lives in La Paz, he is a cyber-activist and a militant of just causes.

PRODUCTION

ADRIANA L. MURILLO ARGANDOÑA

Adriana is a literary journalism writer and Spanish teacher, started working at *BX* as a production collaborator in 2014, later became head of production in 2016 until now. From the first moment she fell in love with the magazine and its essence, for her it has been a magnificent journey with wonderful people and experiences will always remain in her memory.

VALERIA WILDE

Valeria Wilde was head of production for *Bolivian Express* between April 2014 and October 2016. She is currently an art director and costume designer for movie sets. She is also the creative director of her clothing brand ZEF Upcycling.

PHOTOGRAPHY / DESIGN

LUIS ARANDA

Luis has been in charge of the magazine's design since mid 2017, since then, he has enjoyed helping to evolve the already great *Bolivian Express* brand. He runs a web and graphic design studio called El Gran Poder Estudios since 2014.

MICHAEL DUNN CACERES

Michael Dunn is a photographer based in La Paz, he joined the *BX* team in 2010 as its graphic designer and photographer. He is also the art director of the magazine *Diafragrama* and creative director of *Cábala*.

ALEXANDRA MELEAN

Alexandra, 28 years old, is a *BX* alumni and ex-photography instructor. She is a photographer, graphic designer and marketing communications specialist. She co-founded two restaurants in La Paz (Popular and sister restaurant Ahijada Ajiceria). Her work has been published by the UN, the New York Times and CNN.

JOAQUÍN LEONI M.
JOURNALISM INSTRUCTOR

Joaquín Leoni M. worked for Bolivian newspapers *La Razón*, *La Prensa*, *Los Tiempos*, *El Potosí* and *Opinión*. He worked for the Bicentennial Library of Bolivia and has also been a press coordinator for Bolivia TV. He is currently a partner in SATVA S.R.L, a communication agency.

CHANGTSE QUINTANILLA
DOCUNIT INSTRUCTOR

Changtse, 19 years old, is a photographer and videographer based in La Paz, Bolivia. He is part of the sports marketing agency 360 Invictus and he is the docUnit instructor at *Bolivian Express*. He has worked for Nike, Toyota, Selina and Bolivian governmental agencies.

Special thanks to: Sara Shahriari, Sophia Vahdati, Anna Grace, Manuel Seoane, Hugo Cuellar, Pedro Pablo Siles, Jerusa Pozo, Virginia Tito Gutiérrez, Reynaldo González, Nicolás Taborga, Marco Tóxico, .

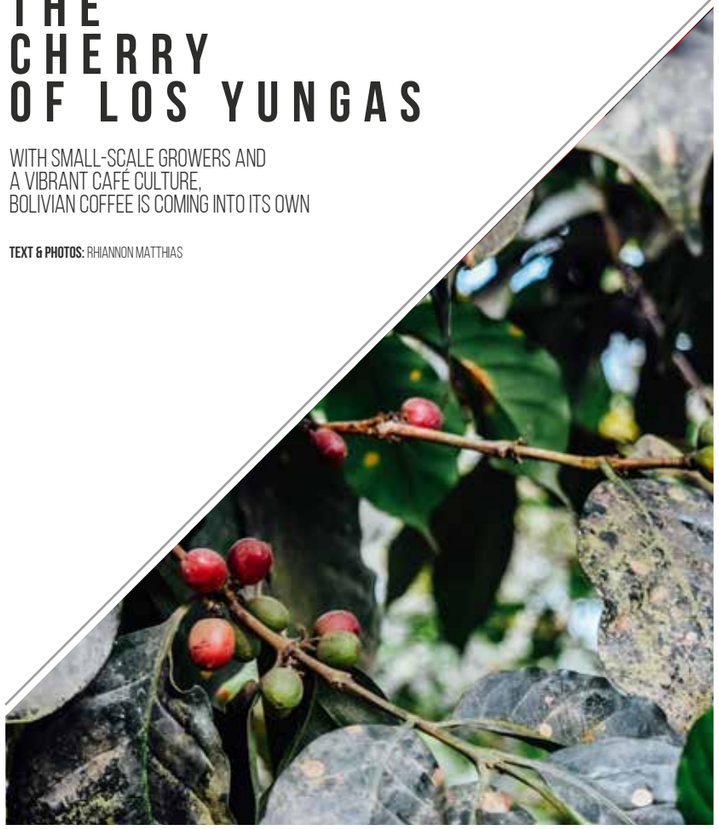
FOOD

BX100

THE CHERRY OF LOS YUNGAS

WITH SMALL-SCALE GROWERS AND A VIBRANT CAFÉ CULTURE, BOLIVIAN COFFEE IS COMING INTO ITS OWN

TEXT & PHOTOS: RHIANNON MATTHIAS



Millions of people around the world crawl out of bed each morning desperate for their first cup of coffee. Whether it's with an ink-black Americano, a frothy macchiato, an elegant café au lait or a cup of instant, we all have our own favorite brews, rituals and customs when it comes to getting our caffeine fix. This small cherry originally from the mountains of Ethiopia has gone from being a sacred and luxury product to the world's second-most sought-after legal commodity, transcending all class and cultural barriers. Coffee and coffee shops have become an integral part of urban living, evidenced by their omnipresence in 'good morning' posts on social media and the growth of local Bolivian chains such as Alexander, Copacabana and Typica (with the latter being voted the best coffee shop in South America by Big 7 Travel). In spite of recent changes, Bolivian coffee culture is frequently characterised by the popularity of imported instant coffee there.

The obscurity of Bolivian coffee is not a true reflection of its quality or potential; rather, it's largely due to the small scale of production throughout the country. 'We import something like three times the quantity [of coffee that] we export,' Fabio Arandia, one of the four founders of Café Typica, says.

'WHAT MAKES BOLIVIAN COFFEE SPECIAL IS ITS AMAZING SHARPNESS.'
—CAFÉ TYPICA CO-FOUNDER FABIO ARANDIA

Los Yungas, where the Amazon meets the **altiplano**, has the ideal conditions for traditional and organic coffee cultivation. The crop grows best in a shaded, humid environment – exactly like the conditions in the lush cloud forests of Los Yungas. According to Arandia, at least 60 percent of Bolivian growers stick to the traditional shade-grown method, with the rest adopting a mix of organic and semi-organic cultivation techniques. 'The absence of oxygen at altitude causes plants to grow more slowly, supposedly giving the beans a dense and rich flavour,' says Rene Brugger, the founder of the Munaipata café in Coroico. Brugger, a Swiss economist who founded the company in 2008, lived in Cameroon, Pakistan and India before he moved to La Paz in the 1990s to work for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. He quickly fell in love with Bolivia's snow-capped mountain peaks, which reminded him of home. His Finca Shanti (Peaceful Farm) plantation is set amidst a backdrop of breathtaking and seemingly endless green mountains that characterise the Yungas region. It is home to hundreds of arabica plants, various citrus trees and a few rescue dogs – a picturesque mini ecosystem in its own right that thrives to the rhythm of birdsong.

The birds and fruit trees don't just give the plantation an air of paradise, though: Birds provide natural pest control and, Brugger explains, 'the shade trees prevent soil eroson and provide natural fertiliser, and the shade also inhibits the ageing of the plants.' He says that the presence of fruit trees also enhances the aroma of the coffee, adding subtle sour notes or sweet and fruity notes. 'What makes Bolivian coffee special is its amazing sharpness. It has a sort of fruity kind of citrusy sharpness,' Arandia says. 'It's quite sweet as well. It has a very unique profile which changes depending on the variety. But generally, it has a very interesting and fruity profile.' As with any traditional coffee farm, the cherries at Finca Shanti are handpicked. The ripeness of the cherries is another decisive factor in the quality of a batch prior to drying or roasting. 'Lots of people say that coffee gives them acid, upsets their stomach or gives them anxiety,' Pascuala Huacatati, a worker at Finca Shanti, says. 'This is the result of unripe cherries being picked and making their way into the final brew.'

Whilst small-scale operations may allow for a refined and unique brew, shade-grown coffee is not without its limitations. 'In the shade, some pests and fungi develop better,' Brugger says. 'This is why some experts recommend sun-grown plantations, and some hybrids have been developed which thrive in the sun.' In 2013 an outbreak of leaf rust – a fungus which attacks the leaves of coffee trees and prevents photosynthesis – resulted in the loss of 50 percent of Bolivia's coffee crop. Heatwaves and droughts driven by climate change also undermine and threaten traditional coffee production. Other factors, like the country's geography combined with poor infrastructure that makes transporting the beans very challenging, inhibit the industry. Some farmers opt to grow coca instead, as it is a far less demanding and more lucrative crop which can be harvested several times a year. 'The problem is lack of incentive,' Agris Zogota, another Café Typica co-founder, explains. 'Growing and harvesting is an art form, and young people are migrating more and more to the city, and there is more incentive to grow coca for those in the countryside.'

Whilst much of the coffee produced in Bolivia is aimed at the international market, Brugger's focus is not to bring his product from Los Yungas to the world, but to bring the world of coffee drinkers to Bolivia instead. He focuses on the Bolivian market, rejecting the idea that his product needs to be shared or receive the seal of approval from the outside world. The hard work of producers like Brugger and their collaboration with local coffee houses is the key to transforming Bolivia's coffee culture. 'We need more cooperation throughout the industry, starting with the farmers, then the toasters and even the baristas,' says Typica's Arandia. 'That is the only way we can begin to compete with our neighbours.'

AHIJADA AJICERÍA

SOPOCACHI'S NEW BOÎTE FEATURES BOLIVIAN FOOD WITH A SPICY TWIST

TEXT: ALEXANDRA MELEAN
PHOTOS: MICHAEL DUNN

The Sopocachi neighbourhood's new kid Ahijada, or 'goddaughter' in Spanish, is the sister restaurant to the highly Instagrammable and hip Popular restaurant on Calle Murillo in La Paz's city center. Like Sopocachi, Ahijada has soul. She's an **ajicería** – a modern kitchen serving local dishes with Bolivian **ajís** like *aribibi*, *gusanito*, *chicotillo*, *chinche*, *dulce* and *locoto*, among others. Fresh **chicha**, or fermented corn juice, is shipped from the small village of Cliza, up in the golden high valleys of Cochabamba. There is a handpicked selection of natural wines from the Cinti Valley in the south of Bolivia and artisanal cider made in La Paz. The house specialty trout is prepared with a rainbow mélange of fermented *ajís* by partner and chef Limber Quispe, a 28-year-old Copacabana local. Ahijada *Ajicería* features a casual six-seat cement bar in front of a custom-designed open kitchen staffed with young Bolivian line cooks. Ceiling-to-floor windows give the 30-seat salon an airy, urban feel with a curbside Sopocachi street view. Quispe co-owns Ahijada with Juan Pablo Reyes, Diego Rodas and Alexandra Meleán, who previously founded the immensely successful restaurant Popular. The partners have been changing the restaurant landscape in La Paz since 2017.

Belisario Salinas 572,
Sopocachi
12:30-14:30,
Tuesday through Sunday
instagram.com/ahijada.ajiceria

A SLICE OF NAPLES IN LA PAZ

HOW BOLIVIA'S MOST AUTHENTIC PIZZAS ARE BEING MADE IN COTA COTA

TEXT & PHOTOS: GEORGE FEARNLEY

This year, the *Big 7 Travel* website ranked the pizza at La Paz's Imilla Alzada the sixth best in South America, making it arguably Bolivia's best. It is one of three establishments opened by Sukko Stach, who previously owned a wine bar, Hay Pan, and the Antigua Miami café, both of which he sold. The pizzeria has been open for six months now and has seen a steady increase in customer footfall as word continues to spread about its tasty slices.

Stach was seeking a means of selling his craft beer when he met Teddy Tantani, a professional baker since the age of 14 and gastronomy student at the Instituto Tecnológico de la Integración Boliviana. Stach stumbled upon the perfect location for a restaurant in Cota Cota in the south of La Paz and was inspired to open an eatery that doubles as both pizzeria and microbrewery. Everything on the menu has been fermented, including the pizza dough, beer, cider and wine. 'Imilla' is an Aymara word that translates as 'girl', while 'alzada' means 'raised' in Spanish. The name speaks to the yeast that is used in creating all of the items on the menu.

The dough-making process begins with the **masa madre**; a mixture of flour and water. No further yeast is added as it already exists naturally in the flour and air. Tantani takes care of the *masa madre*, allowing it to ferment for 72 hours before topping it with high quality ingredients from La Paz's popular Rodriguez Market and EcoTambo organic farmer's market. The cheese is sourced from elsewhere in the country, namely the municipality of San Javier, to the north of Santa Cruz. The pizza slides into a wood-fired oven at more than 400 degrees Celsius. At such a blistering temperature, it cooks in little over a minute, giving it a crispy crust and a soft centre. With their tangy home-made tomato sauce, the pizzas match up to the very finest on the streets of Naples. Stach's personal favourite is the 'Pizza de tomate', which is topped with three types of tomato, as well as garlic and oregano. The menu features classic combinations such as tomato, cheese and basil, as well as more unusual options such as pesto, ricotta and zucchini.

One thing the owner prides himself on is the diverse clientele the restaurant attracts. It initially drew in a younger crowd keen on sampling the beer, but families are now coming with young children and grandparents. 'I think the nice thing about Imilla Alzada is the diversity of the people it attracts,' said Stach. The restaurant is always trying to improve its menu by sampling new products and testing new combinations of ingredients. 'In the future, we would like to have a better relationship with our suppliers so we can offer even better producem,' the owner went on to say.

Each year Bolivians are drinking more and more cider, particularly at celebrations such as weddings and New Year's Eve. Stach is already producing small amounts of cider from apples grown in Cochabamba: 'I think we'll manage to sell 1,000 litres [this year].' Looking to the future, he hopes to buy land in Tarija to grow different types of apples and begin producing on a larger scale. Cider has greater potential in Bolivia as it can be made from 100 percent local ingredients, unlike those in beer which have to be imported. Stach anticipates that production will double every year and is hopeful that in seven years time, he will 'offer high-quality ciders in Bolivia that are known all over the world.'

R O O T S

BX100

MUNAY

outfit design

Linares #880 entre Sagarnaga y el pasaje Melchor Jimenez

Calle Linares #956 entre calle Sagarnaga y Viluyo

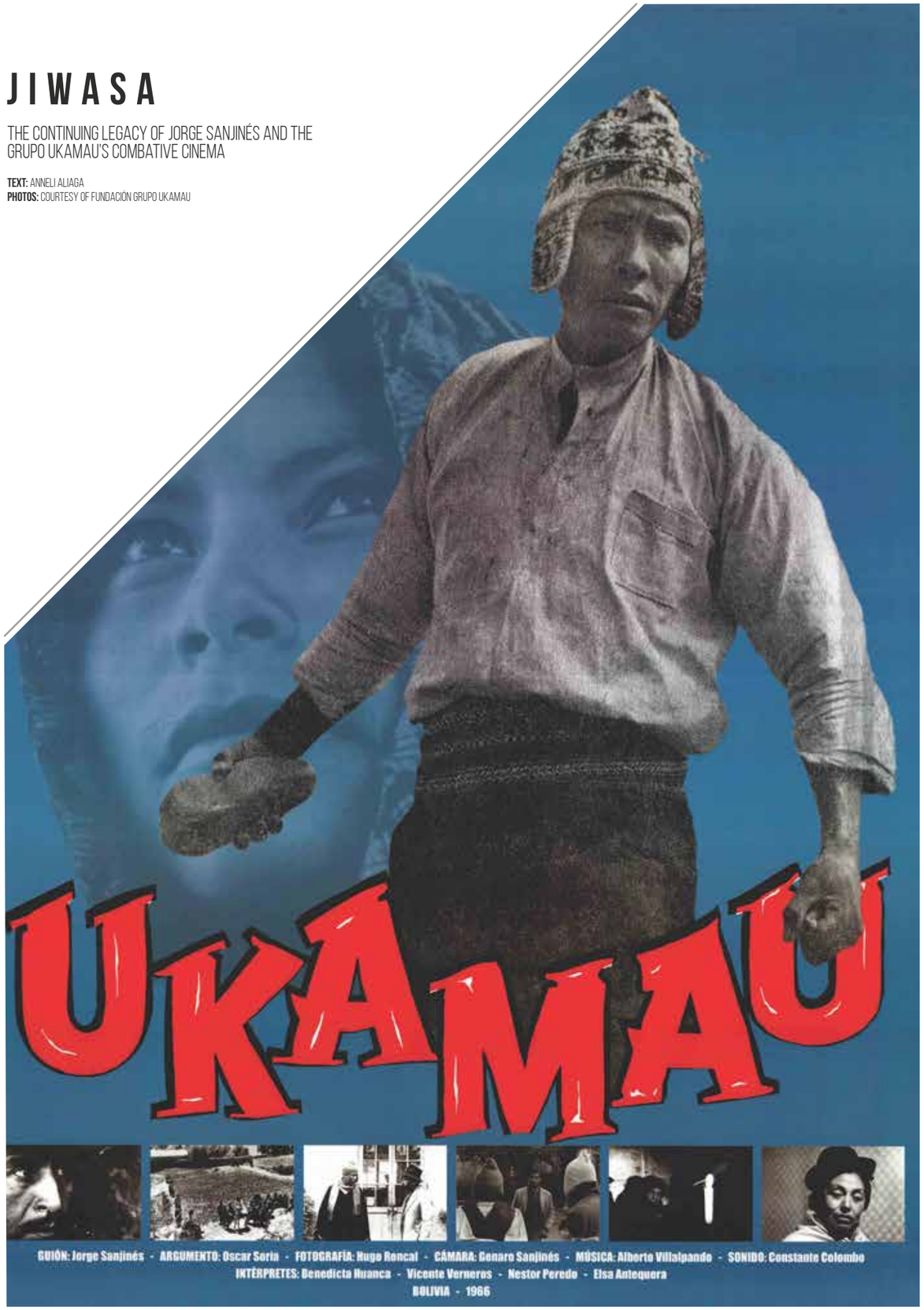
Munay outfit design

Munay (outfit design)

JIWASA

THE CONTINUING LEGACY OF JORGE SANJINÉS AND THE GRUPO UKAMAU'S COMBATIVE CINEMA

TEXT: ANNELI ALIAGA
PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FUNDACIÓN GRUPO UKAMAU



It is impossible to think and speak about Bolivian cinema without mentioning film director Jorge Sanjinés and the Grupo Ukamau, the cinema group he founded. Sanjinés's 1966 film Ukamau was the first feature-length Aymara-language film, and it lent its name to the group. In Aymara, **ukamau** means 'it's like this'. The word strongly resonates with the group's political Marxist commitment to exposing national socio-political realities to Bolivian citizens and fearlessly denouncing imperialist crimes against Bolivia's indigenous communities. César Pérez Hurtado, one of the founding members of Ukamau and the director of photography and camerawork for its most iconic film, *La nación clandestina* (1989), explains that Ukamau's films are a 'service to the country'. Sanjinés's devotion to and representation of the **cosmovisión andina** has made him one of the most celebrated patrons of the indigenous people of Bolivia.

What started off as a small gathering of Bolivian film intellectuals wanting to improve the social conditions of marginalised ethnic populations grew to become one of the leading participants in the New Latin American Cinema movement of the 1960s. This cinema movement was initiated in response to the extensive struggles associated with the underdevelopment that plagued Latin American nations. This revolutionary type of cinema used film as a political tool. It empowered popular sectors by giving them a platform and broadcast the injustices happening on the continent to other corners of the world. In the case of Sanjinés and Ukamau, their cinematographic and political agenda correlated perfectly with this movement's ideals. Sanjinés adopted an inherently combative social cinema to shape the lived realities of the Quechua-Aymara peasantry of Bolivia.

From the moment the Grupo Ukamau began producing films, such as *Yawar Mallku* (1969) and *El coraje del pueblo* (1971), its members sought to simulate a different point of view from that shown in mainstream Westernised cinema. Ukamau member Pedro Lijeron says that Ukamau's films presented 'a new point of view, of another world, to a universal audience.' In Sanjinés's films, heroes and protagonists are indigenous Andean people. When asked to summarise the philosophy of the cinema group, Pérez responds, 'We think of others before ourselves.' Lijeron simply says, 'Ukamau, junto al pueblo' ('Ukamau, with the people'). Both their answers confirm how Ukamau was created on the basis of defending those most in need and giving these sectors a voice and a space through cinema.

Unfortunately, Ukamau's films are extremely difficult to view on DVD or online. Sanjinés ensured that his cinema could only be watched at film screenings, as a collective experience. Ukamau's philosophy also revolves around ideas of unity and collectivity. Pérez describes the deeply fissured state that was Bolivia when the group was founded. 'Urban citizens and intellects used to speak about "Otherness"', he says. 'But I had to ask myself, "What is Otherness?" The truth was, it was the indigenous people that were forever living in marginality of what was happening in Bolivia.' Pérez feels that this segregation was unnatural to the native and modern cultures of Bolivia. 'In La Paz, we always speak in first person plural: iremos, nos tomaremos, etc. Always in plural,' he says. If Pérez were to reduce Ukamau's philosophy to one word, he says he would choose jiwasa, meaning 'we' or 'us' in Aymara. Ukamau's films are for, from and with the people of Bolivia.

It must be noted that the Grupo Ukamau's work and efforts are not stuck in the past. Its cinema lives on. Sanjinés and Hurtado are still active on the cinema scene and have been joined by a new generation of filmmakers to continue the legacy of Ukamau. Hurtado and Ligeron both agree that while the group is still devoted and committed to representing the popular sectors, it has opened up a new space for progress, one that simultaneously looks to the future and reflects on and analyses the country's past. The group's latest films, such as *Insurgentes* (2012) and *Juana Azurdu*y (2016), are feature-length dramas that draw on significant historical events and figures that allow Bolivians get in touch with their roots and understand their current realities. In a similar vein, the upcoming movie *Los viejos soldados* (due to come out in 2020) tells the story of a friendship between an indigenous Aymara farmer and an urban white Bolivian during the 1932–35 Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay. Ligeron also comments on how important it is that Ukamau has opened up a new space for dialogue and filmmaking by inaugurating the Escuela Andina de Cinematografía. Sanjinés started the school for aspiring filmmakers to create audiovisual material in order to 'collaborate towards the construction of a more democratic and participatory society.' The director and the Grupo Ukamau have had an unprecedented positive social effect on improving the lives of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia, and their mission is still not over.

SIMÓN BOLÍVAR: AN EXTRAORDINARILY PROFUSE MAN

EL LIBERTADOR AND HIS DESCENDENTS

TEXT: ADRIANA L. MURILLO A.
TRANSLATION: SILVIA SACCARDI
IMAGE: PICTURE PAINTED BY EPIFANIO GARAY 19TH CENTURY

The founder of Bolivia and one of the most relevant figures during the South American wars of independence, Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar Palacios Ponte y Blanco (or more simply Simón Bolívar) is known worldwide for being one of the finest soldiers of all time and a grand statesman. Born into nobility and dying ill and poor at the age of 47, he wrote the 1826 Constitution of the Republic of Bolivia. Preferring to be known as '**El Libertador**' and rejecting the title of emperor, he helped create **Gran Colombia**, a short-lived state comprising much of northern Latin America that lasted for only 20 years due to each region's competing interests. But Simón Bolívar left an important legacy, as he is considered the liberator of five nations.

During his life, Bolívar had many followers, admirers, enemies and opponents. Some admired his accomplishments and his military leadership, but at the same time he was ruthless, with a commanding personality, according to the 1828 book Memoirs of Simón Bolívar, written by General H.L.V Ducoudray Holstein. Furthermore, in P. Pruvonen's 1858 book Memorias y Documentos de Memorias del Perú, Bolívar's relations with women are described in detail. Bolívar had a wife, at least four longtime lovers, including the Ecuadorian revolutionary Manuela Sáenz, and at least 47 mistresses.

Oftentimes, a great man's legend hides many shadows as well. Bolívar was a warrior, with a great fighting spirit, but he was also a haunted man. The novel that describes his heartbreakingly human side is Gabriel García Márquez's 1989 novel *The General in his Labyrinth*. In it, the last days of Simón Bolívar are recreated – his illnesses, his flaws, his agony and his death.

The late Bolivian scholar Edmundo Murillo Costas, a man whose eyes would light up with every book or photograph that contained Bolívar's image, knew these two sides of Bolívar. He proposed that Bolívar is the most important symbol of freedom and the figure of South American independence. He admired the path of this hero, visionary and brave fighter, but he didn't disregard Bolívar's womanising ways – and he also claimed to be his descendent.

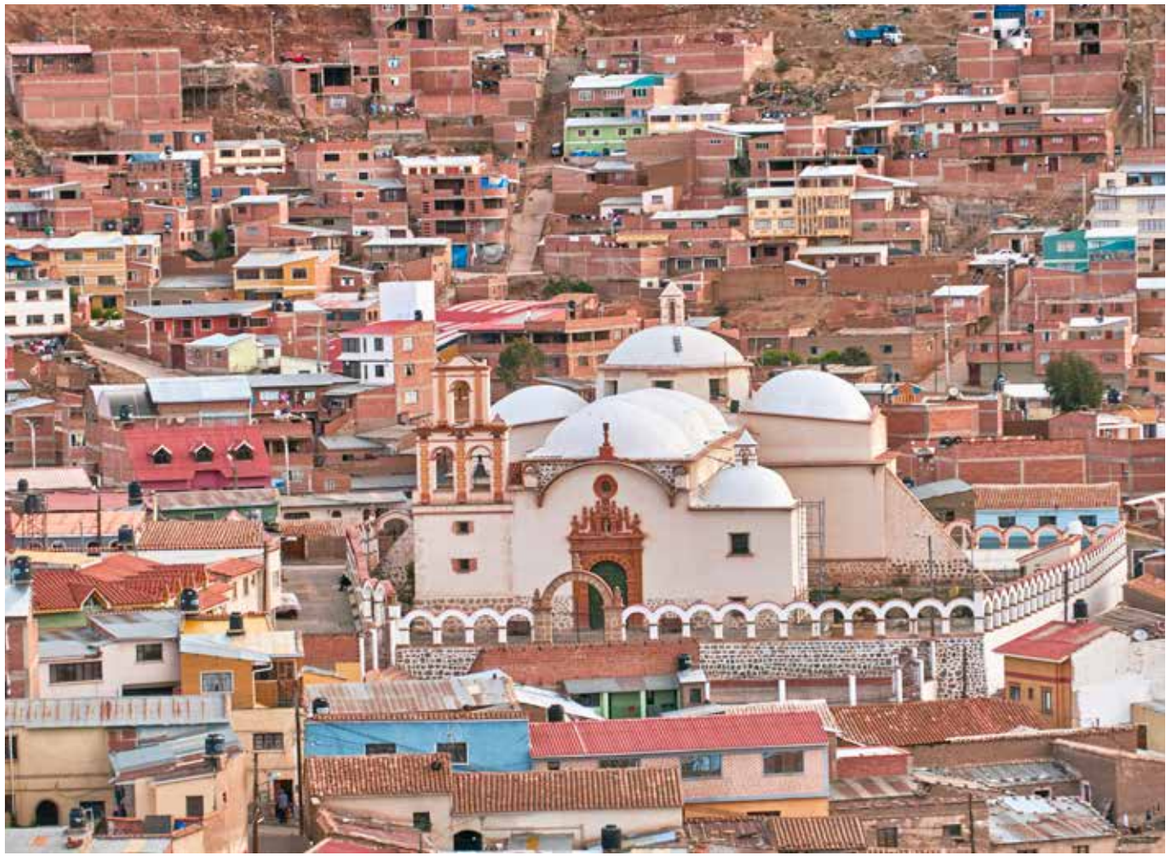
Many authors and experts of Bolívar's life, such as Luis Eduardo Pinto, who works as a guide at Bolívar's final resting place, the Quinta of Saint Peter of Alexandria in Colombia, claim that El *Libertador* was unable to have children because he suffered from a genital condition known as orchitis. However, throughout the land in which Bolívar explored and waged war, there exist allegations and claims from Bolívar's purported descendents – and Bolivia was no exception to *El Libertador*'s amorous adventures.

In 1825, the year of the country's independence, Bolívar paid a visit to the city of Potosí and ascended Cerro Rico, the Mecca of Spain's South American empire. There, he apparently met a woman named María Joaquina Costas, who alerted him about a possible assassination attempt against him. She helped him escape, and from there a romance was born, recounts Teresa Campos Costas in an article in the newspaper *El Potosí*. Campos refers to a book, *La Sangre de Bolívar* en Bolivia, by Juan José Toro, in which Bolívar's accomplishments are proudly related. Toro says that a child was born from Bolívar and Costas's relationship, José Costas, and that a birth certificate was found in the town of Caiza in the department of Potosí. Two names appear on the birth certificate issued by the church: mother María Joaquina Costas and father Simón Bolívar. Toro argues that the child was not recognised because Bolívar did not want his enemies to find out about his son, but there is no proof to back up this statement.

Other well-known authors, such as Lucas Jaimes and Luis Subieta Sagárnaga, had already made reference to Bolívar and Costas's purported love child; however, it was not until Elías Costas told his story to the historian Humberto Iporre Salinas that the possible bloodline of Bolívar in Bolivia was made evident. Edmundo Murillo Costas, one of Elías Costas's children, was aware of this story, but he did not make it public. Maybe deep down, Murillo knew that looking for fame through Bolívar's bloodline was not what he wanted to take from *El Libertador*, but instead he wanted to keep with himself Bolívar's spirit and courage, and in fact be proud of his mother's surname, Hortensia Murillo, putting it before his surname Costas. In this way, as Edmundo Murillo did, I also prefer to remember Bolívar as brave, strategic and providential. He died banished from his homeland, and although he was an extraordinarily severe man, his image as liberator remains omnipresent in the history of South America.

POTOSÍ: THE SILVER CITY THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

TEXT: ADRIANA L. MURILLO A.
PHOTOS: GONZALO CÁRDENAS



'I am Rich Potosí

Treasury of the world

King of the mountains

And envy of Kings.'

Motto from Potosí's coat of arms, granted by Emperor Charles V

That is how Kris Lane begins his book, Potosí: *The Silver City That Changed The World.*

According to old tax records, Potosí was the epicentre of silver mining between 1545 and 1810, with nearly half of the world's silver originating from Cerro Rico in the first one hundred years of it being extracted there. The Spanish believed that there was so much silver to be found at Potosí that they could build a silver bridge from there to Spain. Miguel de Cervantes also immortalised the city in one of his most notable works, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, coining the expression 'Vale un Potosí', meaning that something is worth a fortune.

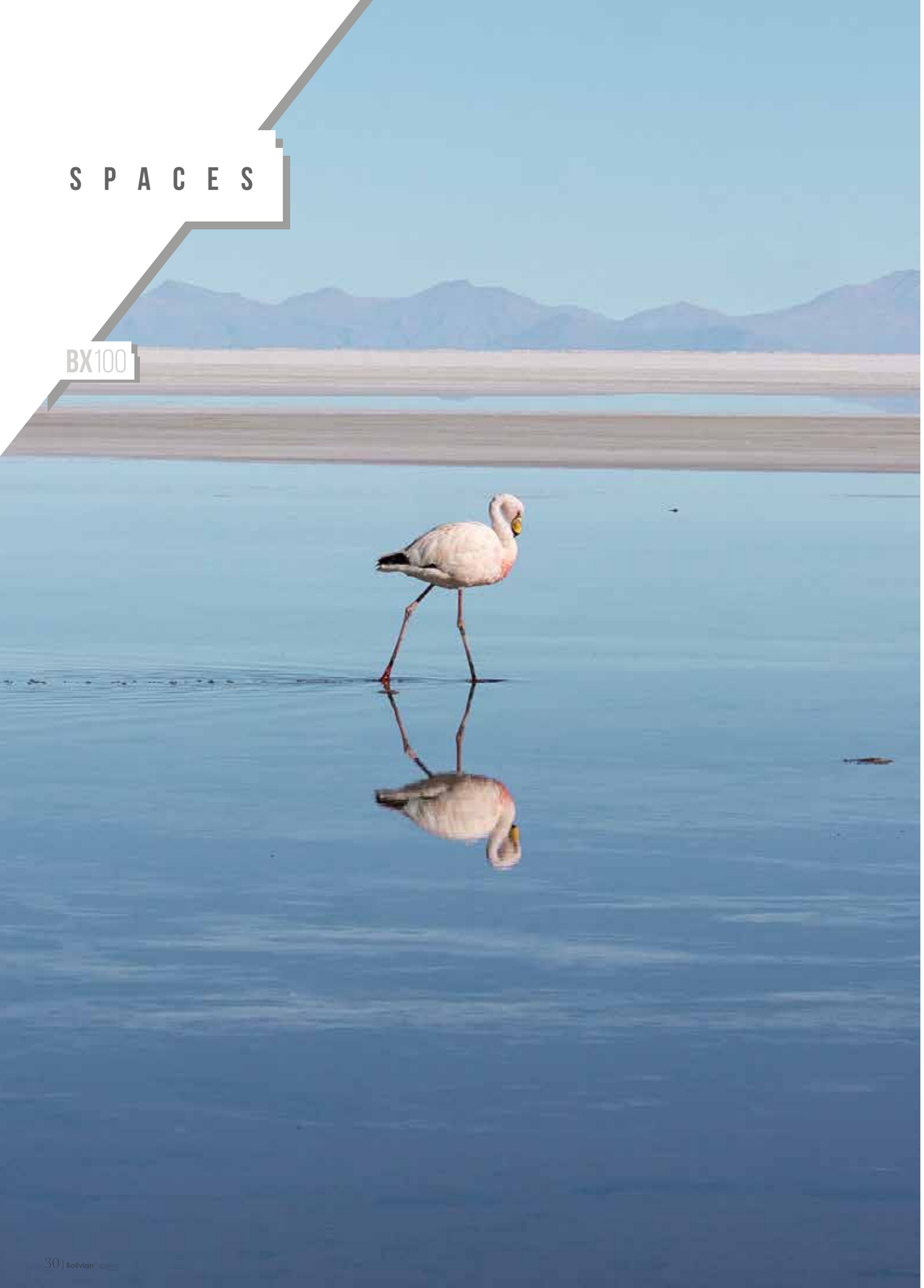
There are various perspectives from which to tell the story of Potosí, from looking at the bare facts to critically analysing the events that took place there. In his book, Lane manages to combine those different points of view to unravel the history of the **Villa Imperial**. He delves into the daily lives of Potosí's inhabitants and uncovers the relationship between the city, its mines and the rest of Bolivia, as well as its wider impact on the world. Lane's book takes us on a detailed and fluid journey from an era of bonanza and boon through to its subsequent decline. Potosí was one of the richest and largest cities in the world at the time, but its opulence would inevitably lead it to overindulgence and ultimate ruin.

Having grown up listening to his grandfather's stories of working the mines of Colorado in western United States, Lane immediately felt at home in Potosí when he first visited in 1995. He unveiled his book on 24 July in Sucre, Bolivia, at the tenth International Congress of the Bolivian Studies Association.

What Potosí represents for Bolivians is complicated, Potosí represents a city trapped in its history. It is a city that was rich but and that is now poor. There is more in Potosí then the mine tours, which can sometimes be exploitative of people's sufferings, Potosí has much to offer in terms of touristic and cultural sites. 'We have all been touched by its silver and thus we are all implicated in its tragedies as well as its triumphs. If **potosinos** can help visitors to see how much Potosí's reality is simply a reflection of their own realities – as a result of early globalisation - then something has been accomplished,' explains Lane.

Therefore the contribution of this book is crucial to understand this analytical and objective perspective. *Potosí: the silver city that change the world*, does not intend to change what the mining industry represents for the city, but offers readers the opportunity to judge for themselves. 'My main contribution, I think, is to emphasise the enormous significance of Potosí in world history as a producer of silver but also to show how the *Villa Imperial* was a great consumer of global products and a magnet for global migration,' said Lane.

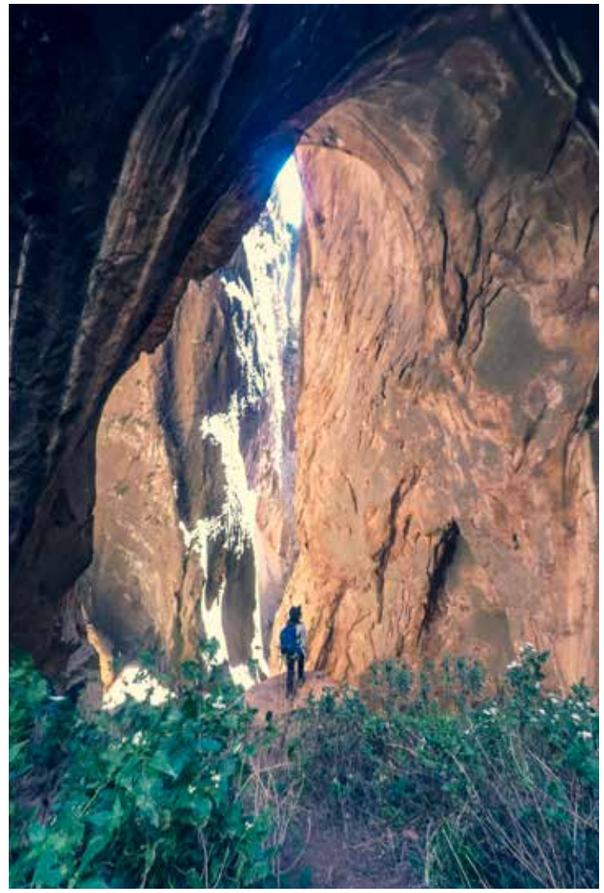
Bringing together all of those elements was not easy, but Lane does an excellent job of depicting a clear and compelling story. The silver mountain and the city of Potosí still have much to tell.



VALERIA DORADO

Explorer during the weekends and full time manager during the week. Valeria Dorado is passionate about travel and photography. In 2017, she started her blog 'LaLibelle', to document her travels and to show Bolivia through her eyes. Born in La Paz, Valeria wants to inspire Bolivians to leave their comfort zone, explore and learn more about their own country.

Instagram: @lalibelle



Awqani caves, La Paz, Bolivia.

Eduardo Avaroa Andean Fauna National Reserve. Potosí, Bolivia.

Municipality of Vacas, road to an Inca cemetery.
Cochabamba, Bolivia.

JUAN PABLO CRESPO ROCHA

Dr. Juan Pablo Crespo Rocha is an avant – garde medical doctor, who obtained his degree from UNICEM, UMSS and SOBOMETRA. He is a nature lover, passionate about photography and traveling. His love for the worldview of the andean peoples, made him to collaborate in a law to regularise the exercise and practice of traditional Bolivian ancestral medicine. He currently lives in Cochabamba.

Instagram: @jpgringorocha

Link of the biological corridor Amboró-Madidi.
Cochabamba, Bolivia.

RODRIGO CONDORI

Rodrigo Condori, 20 years old, born and raised in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Rodrigo started being interested in photography when he was 17, after attending a documentary photography workshop. This led him to appreciate the culture and beauty around him and to want to capture everyday moments while exploring urban and rural landscapes.

*Instagram: @rodrigocondori_*

La Paz, Bolivia.

Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Samaipata, Bolivia.

PETER RIOS

Peter Rios is a Bolivian photographer and audiovisual producer based in La Paz. Passionate about visits and production trips to the countryside in all regions of Bolivia in search of the reunion and union with the roots of this multi-diverse land full of culture and history.

Instagram: @peter_rios_photo

San Ignacio de Velasco church. Chiquitania. Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Details from the San Ignacio de Velasco Church, Chiquitania, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

JOSE LUIS SIFUENTES

Jose Luis Sifuentes, 30 years old, born in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. He enjoys travelling and is an amateur photographer when he can take some time off from his commercial engineer career.

Instagram: @jlsifuentes

Cathedral of Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Río Piraí, the iconic river and a popular spot for ***cruceños****. Santa Cruz, Bolivia.*

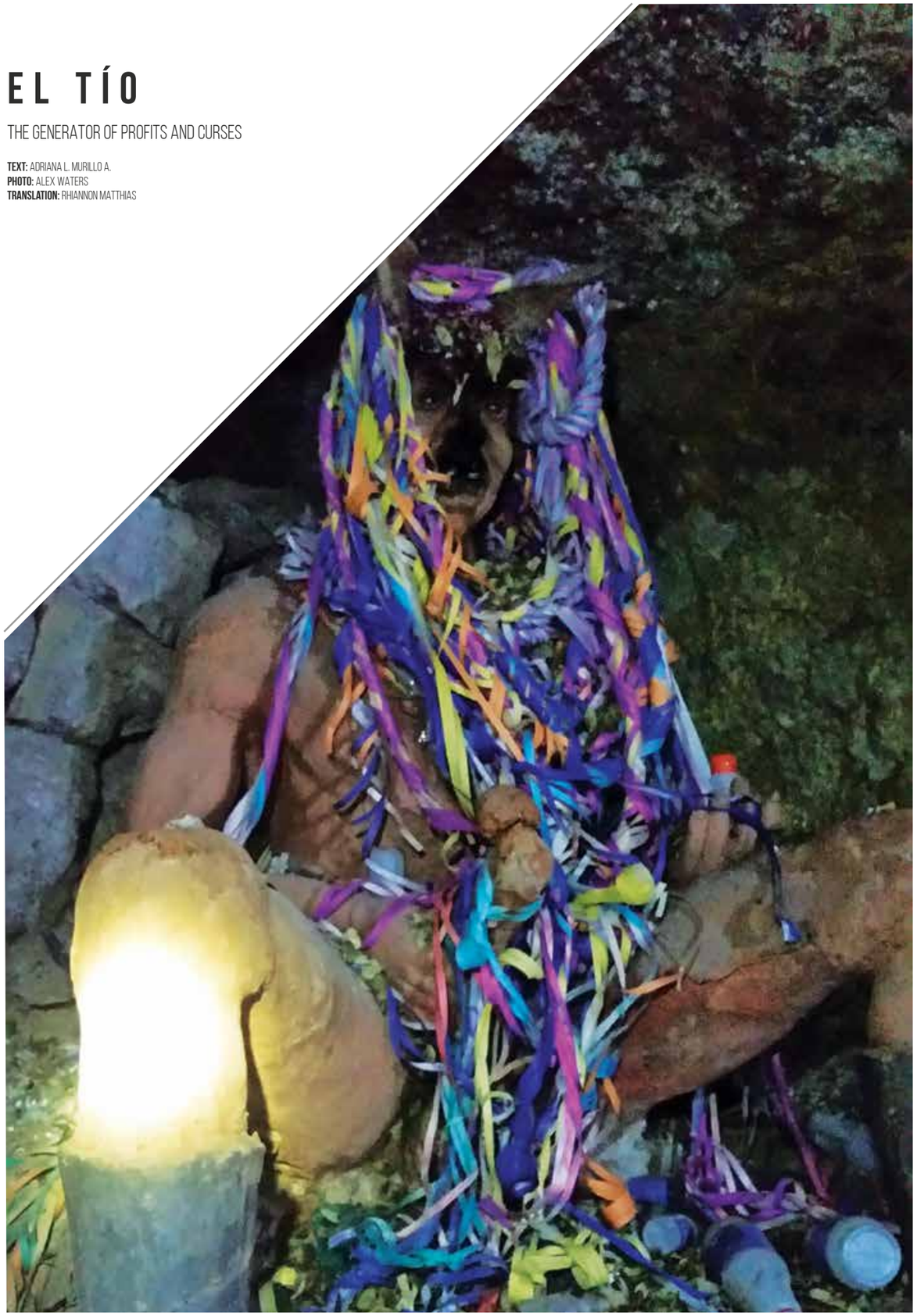
UNDERWORLDS

BX100

EL TÍO

THE GENERATOR OF PROFITS AND CURSES

TEXT: ADRIANA L. MURILLO A.
PHOTO: ALEX WATERS
TRANSLATION: RHIANNON MATTHIAS



At over 4,000 metres above sea level, Mario sits opposite **El Tío**, deep in thought. With the little strength he can muster, he lifts one last handful of coca leaves to his numb mouth. He is cold to the bone, his skin shrinks, and he longs for answers, as images of his four children and partner run through his mind. He is overwhelmed by helplessness and blinded by woes, and he pleads for supernatural powers to intervene and perform a miracle. Before exiting the mine, he chews on his last mouthful of coca and leaves behind a lit cigarette for *El Tío*. Making his way out, he feels a faint touch on his back. He turns to see two beefy red hands offering him fresh green leaves, and he accepts without hesitation. In *El Tio*, he sees a benefactor. They start talking; they share an affinity with each other. *El Tio* tells Mario that he has watched him work tirelessly for years but for little reward, and so he offers to help him.

This is the story of Mario Llanque – a 36-year-old miner who shared his tale with me as we chatted on the hillside of Cerro Rico in Potosi. He is unwavering in his belief that *El Tío* is real, and that when the miners need him, he is there to help them.

El Tío de la mina is undoubtedly one of the most photographed, written about and decorated figures within the collective imagination of western Bolivia. According to Catholic Christian religion, Lucifer was once God's favourite angel, but upon revealing his true self, he was banished to the depths of hell. Then there is the legend of the indigenous God, Wari, who is said to have entered the underworld to watch over the spiritual realm of **ukhu pacha** ('underground' in Quechua). Indigenous groups believe Wari to be a guardian of our world, drawing syncretic parallels with the reign of Hades over the kingdom of the underworld in Greek mythology.

According to writer Carlos Condarco, 'It is believed that the name '*tío*' was introduced between 1676 and 1736. Using the Spanish word for 'uncle' to indicate kinship and closeness, the **mitayos** sought to establish a family bond with the deity dawned in their minds. Victor Montoya reflects that same idea in his book, *Cuentos de la mina* (Tales from the Mine) - a collection of 18 stories based on the exploits of *El Tío* – and in his other book, *Conversaciones con el Tío de Potosí*.

Whatever the origins of *El Tío* may be, his presence and significance to the miners are tangible and real. He is the generator of profits and curses. Llanque understands that the precious metal in the mine does not belong to him and that he must ask permission to extract it. The miners believe that the devil owns their souls, and they enter into a pact with this ambivalent being of good and evil. Statues of *El Tío* can be found at every entrance to the mine, some intricate and others rustic. There he sits with an erect penis, horns, big eyes, a goatee, mouth wide open to smoke his cigarettes and arms outspread to receive offerings. Draped in paper streamers and covered in confetti, he sits with the miners and their visitors, awaiting gifts of coca and alcohol. 'Only when the devil is generous do we receive a good lode of silver and walk out of here alive. You shouldn't fear *El Tío*, because if you do he kills you and eats the miner's soul', says Miguel, a 14-year-old who featured in the 2010 documentary La mina del diablo (The Devil's Mine).

The terrifying image of *El Tío* of the mines takes on many different forms and is one of the main protagonists during carnaval. Hundreds of dancers dress up as devils and demons and jump and dance in the streets alongside jucumaris (Andean bears), toads, lizards, angels and **china supay** (female devils). Vindicating their respect for *El Tío*, they attain a magical realism that is both paradoxical and everyday.

THE KHARISIRI OF THE ALTIPLANO

A HISTORY OF COLONISATION, REPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION MANIFESTS ITSELF AS A MYTHICAL BEAST

TEXT: CAROLINE RISACHER
ILLUSTRATION: HUGO L. CUÉLLAR @HUGOLCUELLAR

The **kharisiri**, also known as the *khari-khari* and *lik'ichiri* in Aymara and the *ñak'aq* and pishtaku in Quechua, is a fat-stealing mythological figure whose hunting grounds are the Bolivian and Peruvian **altiplano**. He (or she) is a frightening creature commonly associated with outsiders and strangers. Traditionally, a *kharisiri* would assume the guise of a foreign or religious person; in the present day, a *kharisiri* could be anyone who doesn't fit into a community. Because the origin of the myth dates back to the time of the conquistadors' arrival in the Americas, it has come to represent the asymmetries of colonial power in Bolivia's history and the exploitation suffered by the indigenous people. There is more to the *kharisiri* myth, though, and not just as a symbol. The *kharisiri* is also a portent of its time, a monster who, by looking like us, never looks the same, and attacks without warning, leaving no trace. Through the *kharisiri* myth, we can learn much about a history of indigenous persecution but also much about ourselves, as the *kharisiri* – or the myth of the *kharisiri* – is still very much alive today.

For indigenous people living on the **altiplano**, the *kharisiri* is not just a figure from a scary children's bedtime story like the Spanish boogeyman *sacamanteca* ('fat extractor') or a pop-culture icon like the seductive blood-sucking vampire. In this region of the Andes, the *kharisiri* is perceived as a real threat whose attack can cause a deadly affliction if not treated promptly. Remedies for this *kharisiri* disease aren't uncommon, though, and can be readily purchased in popular markets like the **Feria 16 de Julio** in El Alto. There's no need to visit some shabby back alley, as the medicine is easily available. What's more, when I went to inquire about the symptoms and cures for the *kharisiri*-afflicted condition, vendors would emphasise the urgency in taking the medication. The worry in their eyes revealed a genuine fear that went beyond pure financial motivation.

People's beliefs about the *kharisiri* myth vary in details depending on which country and region a person is from. For instance, the Peruvian *pishtaku* is known to instantly kill its victims in order to steal their fat immediately, whereas in Bolivia, the death of the **kharsuta** (the *kharisiri*'s victim) can take from a few days to weeks after the attack. The victim sickens and, without the correct treatment, slowly dies. Additionally, descriptions of the *kharisiri* change according to historic period and region to fit a more localised and contemporaneous version of the Other.

A *kharisiri* is human in appearance, but some believe he or she can, at times, shapeshift into a dog or other animal. *Kharisiri*s attack most often at night, and they are especially active in August, the month in which offerings to **Pachamama** and the **achachilas** – the male mountain gods – are made. In Aymara, August is called *lakraniphaxi*, 'the month with a mouth', and it is charged with strong mystical energy.

The *kharisiri* targets people in their prime – attacks on children or elderly people are rare – as it seeks to extract the most life force possible. Using dark magic, the *kharisiri* ensures that the target is asleep, possibly by calling out to the victim's **ajayu** (soul). Using a small device called a maquinita, the *kharisiri* extracts fat or tallow from somewhere around the victim's kidney. No mark is noticeable until after the victim's death. The kharsuta will then wake up with no memory of the attack and will slowly die if left untreated.

After the *kharsuta* dies, the fat is infused with mystical power, and the *kharisiri* sells the precious substance to the highest bidder. Potential buyers are the **cha'makanis**, a specific class of Aymara ritual specialists associated with the dark arts and the Catholic Church. The fat is used to make candles, soaps and sacred oils. It can also be used to grease machines such as mining equipment and church bells. Alternatively, as part of a perverse, dark cycle, the tallow can also be sold back to *kharsutas*, who can recover their health using the healing powers of the fat.

In Bolivia, *kharisiri*s can be found throughout the *altiplano*, from Potosí to Puno; however, the region around Lake Titicaca, especially near the town of Achacachi, is a known *kharisiri* haunt. I was even told that if I were to visit some of the places known to be frequented by *kharisiri*s (which I won't reveal here), I should eat and wear abundant amounts of garlic, which poisons human fat and would protect me from a *kharisiri* attack.

According to all the vendors and healers questioned on the subject, if a person is assaulted by a *kharisiri*, they will start developing a fever and stomach ache in a matter of days. These symptoms, despite being quite vague, should warrant a visit to a **curandero**, **yatiri** or **amauta** (different types of traditional Andean healers), who will diagnose and prescribe treatment for the victim. Doña Juana, a *curandera* based in the La Ceja neighbourhood of El Alto, told us about her daughter who was attacked by a *kharisiri*. After her daughter reported the usual symptoms, Doña Juana took her to a *yatiri*, who diagnosed the *kharisiri* disease by holding the young woman's wrists and feeling the blood flowing through her veins. Doña Juana's daughter was then cured after taking the medicine.

If a person is believed to be suffering from the disease, they should be treated quickly and, ideally, without their knowledge. 'Drink the medicine and you will be better,' explained a lady selling a 50-centilitre bottle for 50 bolivianos. 'You have to drink it within one day and in three gulps.' The lack of a label on the bottle made it look like a home-brew product of questionable origin. According to the people selling it, the medicine's ingredients include, but are not limited to, **wayruro** (a type of bean), placenta, communion wafers and numerous herbs. The drink's smell is not too pleasant (but not horrible either). It's unclear how the patient can be compelled to drink this concoction without questioning why or realising what it's for, but we were assured that it works better that way.

The bottled version of the cure is fairly accessible, but there exists a more traditional and less practical method to cure a *kharsuta*. For this remedy, a black animal is required, ideally a sheep but a chicken or dog will do. The animal is slaughtered and then bled above the victim who is then healed by the blood of the sacrificed animal. There is also a special diet to follow, where specific foods – rich in fat – are to be consumed. Again, how to convince someone to partake in this ritual without telling them why is beyond the scope of this article.

Nowadays, a *kharisiri* can be anyone, male or female. They are known to target sleeping passengers traveling alone at night. Because the *kharisiri* is human, he or she can be anyone, and anyone can become a *kharisiri*. In the past, *kharisiri*s were closely associated with the Catholic Church, and, like vampires, could turn other people into *kharisiri*s. Now, according to anthropologist Alison Spedding, there are stories of schools, not necessarily linked to the Catholic Church, where men and women can study the *kharisiri* craft.

As for the fat itself, it has a strong significance. Blood can also be stolen, but tallow is the most rewarding substance, especially the hard fat located near bone that can be used to make candles. Generally, in Andean societies fat is considered to be 'central to human life, as a life force and as a means of communication through offerings with the spirits,' as noted by anthropologist Andrew Canessa. Canessa attributes the importance of fat, as opposed to blood, to its visibility in daily life, because it is used for cooking and for transforming aliments, and as a way to assess the health of an individual. Fat, usually llama fat, is used in ceremonies as a powerful offering to Pachamama and other deities, and there is little reason to doubt that it was an important substance in pre-Columbian times. What's more, **Viracocha**, the Inca-god creator, literally means 'fat of the lake [Titicaca].'

Historically, Europeans from the 15th to 17th centuries also believed human fat to have healing properties. The Spanish conquistador and chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo recorded how the fat of indigenous people was used to treat wounds. His commander, Hernán Cortés, supposedly caulked 13 boats using the fat of the dead. These stories must have struck terror in the native communities' consciousness, and it is not hard to imagine how the figure of the *kharisiri* took shape in the consciousness of the Aymara and Quechua populations who were under the heavy yolk of the Spanish invaders. We may never know with certainty what the pre-Columbian beliefs were regarding *kharisiris*, whether or not the creatures were even known to exist before the arrival of the conquistadors. But we do know that the *kharisiri* is a syncretic entity comprising elements from two vastly different societies that took hold in Andean communities and has survived until today.

The *kharisiri* myth is still very much alive in the 21st century, adapting and evolving with the times. Originally described as a priest or a monk carrying a bell, the figure morphed into any 'gringo' traveling alone on the **altiplano**. In some places, international NGOs have been asked to leave communities because of the fear of *kharisiris*. However, today anyone, no matter his or her ethnicity, could be a *kharisiri*. But the idea of the Other remains, and someone accused or suspected of being a *kharisiri* is usually someone who doesn't quite fit into the community. The *kharisiri* is still the outsider, but it has morphed and is not always quite so 'white' anymore.

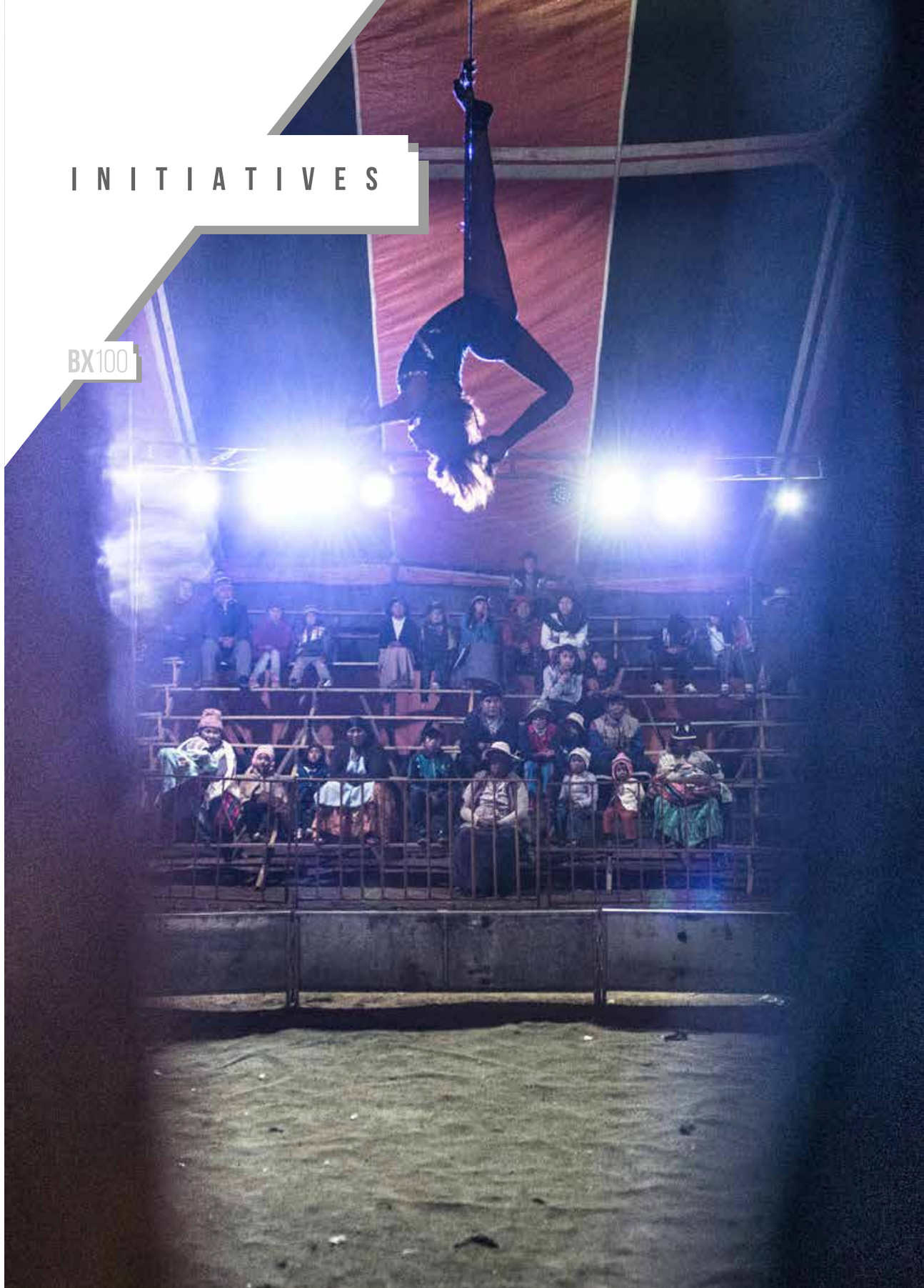
The *kharisiri* is also up to date with current technology. The device used to extract the victim's fat was once described as a needle or a small bell; now it's commonly believed to be a 'little machine' made in Germany or Japan. Doña Juana described it as a type of cellular device – the apparition of the *kharisiri* app for phones doesn't seem too far away.

The long-lasting legacy of the *kharisiri* myth can be attributed to historical reasons and viewed as a scar left by colonisation, the horror of the indigenous overcome by a wave of oppression, death and slavery at the hands of the ravenous Europeans transformed into a physical monster that still haunts the *altiplano* today. The fear of the *kharisiri* represented a fear of the conquistador and a fear of the Catholic Church. Then it turned into the fear of a foreigner and now a fear of the outsider. What hasn't changed is that the *kharisiri* exists outside of the Andean **cosmovisión**; it is not a mythological creature belonging to any of the three levels that comprise the world in that belief system. Mostly it defies the fundamental principle of reciprocity that is central to Aymara and Quechua cultures. **Pachamama** gives and receives; the collective must share its resources with all, and the balance of reciprocity and negotiation must always be respected. In fact, following this understanding of the world, stealing is one of the worst crimes that can be committed.

*Kharisiri*s exist outside of this balanced notion of the world – they take and give nothing back, defying the laws of the universe. Similarly, when the conquistadors arrived, they too behaved in a way that was foreign to the concept of universal balance. The *kharisiri* exists as a manifestation of this imbalance, a rationalisation for the existence of a group of people who don't respect the laws of nature and shouldn't be able to exist. Which is also why *kharisiri*s tend to become more active during times of hardship such as famines or epidemics. For instance, in 1991, a cholera epidemic hit an area south of La Paz, which was followed with an increase in reported *kharsuta* cases and of people accused of being *kharisiris*. It helps explain unfairness and imbalance and provides a convenient scapegoat. French anthropologist Gilles Riviere reported a lynching in 1983 of a presumed *kharisiri* in a small community near Lake Poopo, in which the condemned man had bought a small truck but didn't share it with the rest of the community and wasn't contributing as was expected of him.

There may be no one wandering the *altiplano* at night and stealing human fat – we certainly couldn't find any information on where human fat could be purchased, and no one could explain specifically what sort of spells are performed with it and to what purpose. But this doesn't mean that the *kharisiri* – or at least the spirit of the *kharisiri* – is not real. The *kharisiri* is an external powerful figure who steals (exploits) the vital resources of people and uses them for mysterious reasons. Based on these characteristics, the conquistadors themselves were *kharisiris*, and any person coming to extract precious resources – ore, food or even knowledge – for their gain alone is a *kharisiri*. The silver extraction from Cerro Rico in Potosí, the death of tens of thousands of people in the mines and the destruction of a land are all symptoms of a *kharisiri* attack.

Nowadays, anthropologists, scientists, journalists and influencers can be thought of as the modern-day version of the *kharisiri*. The *kharisiri* is more than a scary fairy tale; it's a reflection of the fears of an oppressed people. By representing what the Other looks like, it informs us on what is considered part of a group and how that group sees itself. As Canessa observed, the *kharisiri* is 'a powerful image of the Other, which constructs the identity of those who aren't Other.' The *kharisiri* is a symptom of a disease that Bolivia has suffered from since colonial times. How the *kharisiri* keeps evolving or if it disappears one day from the collective imagination will reveal precious information on the state of Bolivia as a postcolonial society. Until then, the kharisiri is also an opportunity to reflect on our actions and on how what we do impacts others. The distinction between *kharsuta* and *kharisiri* is not visible anymore, and we can all become one or the other.



BOTANIKA ECO COSMÉTICA

BEAUTY FROM *PACHAMAMA*

TEXT & PHOTO: RHIANNON MATTHIAS

Grooming is an essential part of our daily ritual. But in spite of the attention we pay to our appearance, we often think little about the chemicals we are expose ourselves to or the indirect effects they have on our health and the environment. Lorgia Lina Mercado Figueredo, a La Paz native and the founder of Botanika Eco Cosmética, one of a handful of organic beauty-product companies that have sprung up in Bolivia in recent years, describes herself as having always been a nature lover, but her first business ventures had nothing to do with **Pachamama** or cosmetics. In fact, she studied psychology and worked a corporate job for much of her 20s. It wasn't until she was pregnant with her son that she became concerned with the complex names on the back labels of the beauty products she used. 'When you're pregnant, you want to do whatever is best for the baby,' she says. 'You take care of what you eat and avoid anything that's harmful to you and the baby. I began to take an interest in the products I was using on my hair and my skin because they are absorbed and become part of your body, and are ultimately passed on to the baby.'

Since founding her company in 2014, Mercado's mission has been to promote sustainable and affordable beauty products – a task that is not without its challenges here in Bolivia. The country's biodiversity is an unbeatable advantage when making organic products. Many native plants and herbs from the **altiplano** and the Amazon (acai, cat's claw, cocoa) have important medicinal properties well-known to indigenous people. Many of the herbs used in Botanika's formula are grown just outside of La Paz, in Achocalla, ensuring their organic status. Mercado's brand is 'proudly Bolivian', drawing on the long-lost beauty rituals and knowledge of previous generations. The company's *Rescatando nuestros raices* (rescuing our roots) campaign aims to revive and revamp the beauty rituals of indigenous women using locally sourced ingredients to recreate conventional beauty products.

Botanika's **collpa** shampoo is a solid rocklike product that contains naturally occurring salt deposits, a formulation that has been used by Aymara women for generations. Unlike conventional shampoos, it is free from artificial and harmful chemicals like parabens, foaming agents and synthetic fragrances. Botanika also produces **sajrañas**, plant-based brushes used by Aymara women that are renowned for their gentleness. Unlike plastic combs, *sajrañas* don't snag or tear hair, and they are alleged to have magical properties. 'There's the belief that when a woman is afraid at night, or during a difficult birth, holding on to her *sajraña* gives her strength,' Mercado says. 'There's a lot of rich culture and history that we have lost over the years. Fortunately, people have really taken to the campaign. The best part is that it enables people in these small, rural communities to keep making them.' Botanika's lip products carry the delicious, sweet smell of **copoazú**, a superfruit from the Amazon rich in oils, which prevents drying and repairs damage caused by UV exposure. All colouring is naturally derived using plants like **airampu** to give the lipstick red pigmentation as opposed to using heavy-metal based colouring.

Botanika now has eight points of sale in La Paz and is expanding to other cities in Bolivia. It hasn't been an easy journey for Mercado, in part due to the challenges that come with juggling motherhood and running a business. She single-handedly makes Botanika's products in her home lab and has yet to open up her own store because of the expensive rents. Mercado's biggest challenge, she says, is competing with the cosmetic giants that dominate the Bolivian market. They are able to draw in millions of consumers thanks to huge advertising budgets and clever marketing, as well as their ability to mass-produce and transport their merchandise across the country at a low cost. 'It is about changing people's habits,' Mercado says of the challenge. 'A lot of people base their choices on costs, and that can mean whatever is cheaper or the opposite – some people spend lots of money on branded products but they don't understand what goes into them.' Mercado also organises and hosts workshops to teach attendees how to make a variety of organic products, empowering others with the same knowledge that has changed her life and allowing more people to take part in Bolivia's organic future.

STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

ECOTOURISM IN BOLIVIA: BRAND OR OBJECTIVE?

TEXT: LAUREN MINION
PHOTOS: LAUREN MINION

Ecotourism is a sector that has undergone considerable development in Bolivia since 1999. For many, it is not only a form of income but a way of life. With this in mind *Bolivian Express* reached out to two ecotourism projects located in the Beni department of the country, at the gateway to Madidi National Park and protected area.

We spoke with Pedro Macuapa, owner of the Berraco del Madidi tour company which organises rainforest tours deep within Madidi National Park, and Gueider Gonzales, a Spanish- and English-speaking tour guide working with the Canopy Villa Alcira tour group, located just outside the entrance to the park. Our objective was to delve deep into the concept of ecotourism in Bolivia and find out more about what the projects mean to the people involved.

Following the United Nations' International Year of Ecotourism in 2002, the National Committee of Support for Ecotourism was founded in Bolivia. The Committee defines ecotourism as 'recreational activities that promote learning and introduce people to national protected areas under norms that reduce the environmental and cultural impact of travellers and generate economic benefits for the community while valuing local cultural traditions.'

Bolivia is one of the top 15 most biodiverse countries in the world. It is home to 36 distinct ethnic populations and has an altitude variance ranging from 6,500 metres to less than 100 metres above sea level. Many communities living in the most biodiverse and environmentally unique areas of the country have recognised the potential gains of informing tourists about their lifestyles and the virtues of breaking any associated cultural taboos.

Pedro Macuapa of the San José de Uchapiamonas indigenous group first developed an interest in tourism after observing the industry in Peru. He informs us that it is 'through tourism that the people of the indigenous community express themselves and demonstrate their customs and traditions.' He goes on to describe 'ecotourists' as people who are 'investing in the conservation of their destinations of choice.' Macuapa says that the 'conservation of natural resources so as to ensure their sustainability has always been a top priority for [indigenous communities].' In order to minimise their environmental impact, members of the Berraco del Madidi community strive not to 'disturb the surrounding organic environment by means of sound pollution or uncontrolled deforestation.'

Gueider Gonzales of the Tacana indigenous community works with Canopy Villa Alcira tours, who offer various packages and activities centred around Tacana identity, including community visits, traditional jewellery-making, forest walks and canopy zip line tours. Gonzales believes that the key difference between ecotourism and traditional tourism lies in their respective objectives. 'Ecotourism,' he says, 'is more centred around the conservation of flora and fauna by acting in a more friendly manner around nature in protected areas.' In order to limit their carbon footprint, the Tacana emphasise 'the importance of the community's natural resources' when educating their children, so that they learn to respect the environment around them and pass that knowledge on to future generations.

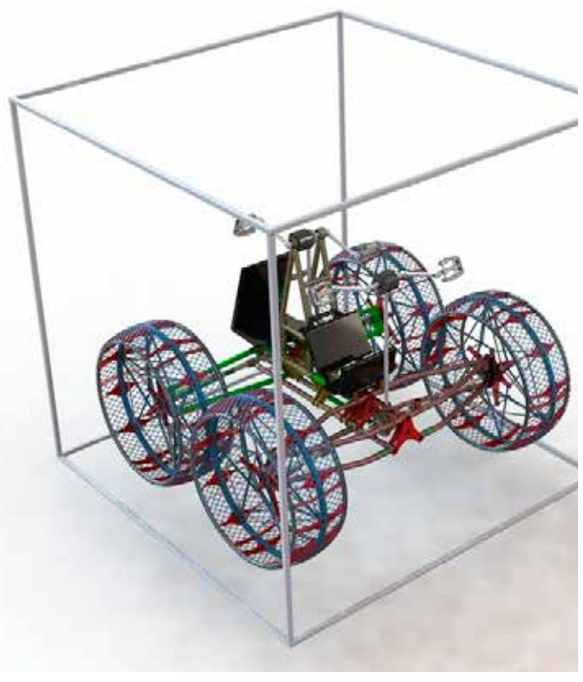
The ideals attached to ecotourism in Bolivia are certainly adhered to when it comes to projects such as the Canopy Villa Alcira and Berraco del Madidi tour companies. However, ecotourism is difficult to monitor on a national level, especially given the lack of concrete government laws on what constitutes an ecolodge or ecotour. Any legislation that does exist is barely enforced. The ambiguity surrounding the term ecotourism weakens its meaning, damaging the industry as a whole and leading to problems such as a lack of trust between tourists and agencies and difficult advertising.

Ecotourism in Bolivia remains an industry with much potential, but its definition is ambiguous under current national legislation. More work needs to be done to enable community groups to discuss laws and decide how best to implement them, in line with their traditions. Macuapa and Gonzales work for tour groups that represent just two examples from amongst a multitude of admirable community-run ecotourism projects, which offer an exciting and very personal alternative to traditional tourism.

YOUNG SPACE SCIENTISTS LEAVE THEIR BOOT PRINTS IN ALABAMA

BOLIVIANS DEMONSTRATE THEIR TALENT AT INTERNATIONAL NASA COMPETITION

TEXT: GEORGE FEARNLEY
PHOTOS: COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL SPACE EDUCATION INSTITUTE



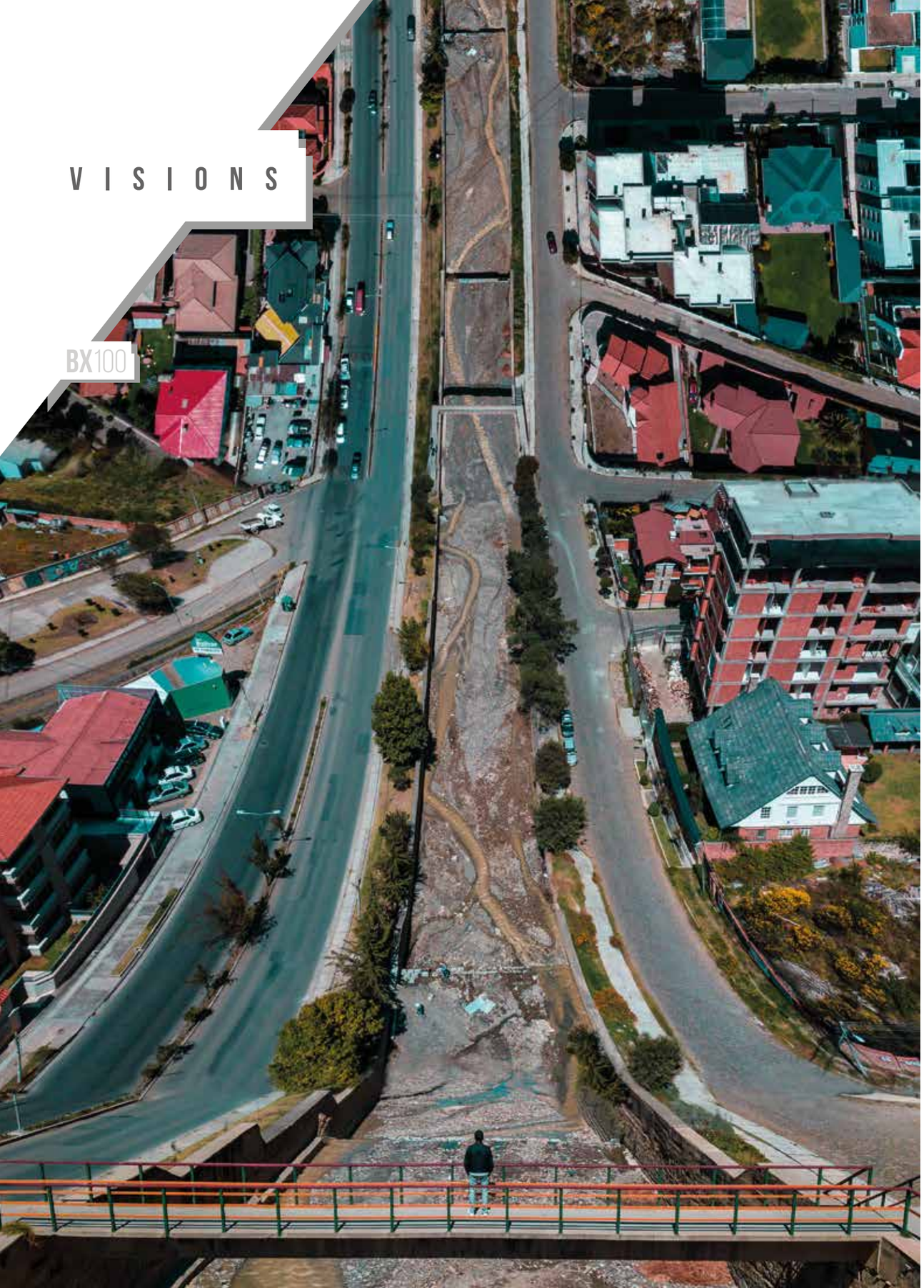
In 2017, NASA, the US space agency, stated its aim to put 'the first woman and the next man' on the Moon by 2024. This would be the first time in 52 years a person would leave their boot print on the Moon. That programme is named Artemis after Apollo's twin sister in Greek mythology, a nod to the previous lunar exploration programme that landed the first man on the Moon. The mission is seen as a stepping stone to inhabiting Mars one day.

But the challenges ahead are tough and plentiful. To inspire students to think about and work on these obstacles, each year NASA hosts a competition called the Human Exploration Rover Challenge at the Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. The challenge asks students to design and build a human-powered rover, or 'moon buggy', capable of traversing a simulated extraterrestrial surface. Teams are required to carry out tasks like those faced by astronauts on previous lunar missions, within a time limit that simulates the limited oxygen supplies that astronauts have on the Moon. This year four Bolivian teams entered. Additionally, three young Bolivian women were part of an international team from the International Space Education Institute in Leipzig, Germany. One hundred teams took part in the competition, with a record number of entries from countries outside the United States, totaling 11 in all.

Alina Santander, Valeria Burgoa and Cristina Santander were part of the international team that went on to win the top prize in the high-school division. Alina Santander and Burgoa helped build the moon rover, while Cristina Santander worked on telemetry. Even today, the physical sciences are dominated by men; in this regard, these young women from Bolivia are showing the rest of the world how its done. 'I can weld, I can cut metal, I can do all this stereotypically manly stuff,' said Alina Santander. One of her personal goals is to get more women interested in science by delivering talks on the subject and teaching about its relevance. By the age of 18, she had already given two TED Talks encouraging people to engage with science. After participating with the International team from Germany in 2017, she decided it was time for Bolivia to be represented in the competition. She collaborated for a year with the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz to achieve one of Bolivia's first-ever entries into the competition in 2018. That year, another team entered from Santa Cruz.

Economic hardship is a problem commonly faced with science projects in Bolivia. But '[Bolivians] can use our creativity to make the same things with a smaller budget,' said Alina Santander. To make the best of their limited finances, the team from Viacha (a small city just southwest of La Paz) innovated in every way possible. Their novel rover design caught the attention of other participants and NASA engineers attending the event. 'They had never seen anything like it,' explained the team's mentor, Alvaro Flores. And even though they took part in the high-school category, where participants can be as old as 18, team members were between the ages of 12 and 15. The rover's wheels were 'inspired by the Eygptian pyramids' and made from rubber rather than steel, allowing the rover to move smoothly over rough terrain. Over the years, Flores has collected hardware and built a laboratory in his home where his team went to build their rover and prepare for the competition. He is also looking to inspire the next generation of Bolivian scientists.

After the competition, NASA official Bob Musgrove spoke of how 'the creativity, skill and resourcefulness demonstrated each year on the rover course are the very traits that paved our path to the Moon in 1969.' With such talent, perhaps it will be an astronaut with a Bolivian flag attached to their spacesuit among the first to leave a boot print on Mars.



ANTES DE QUE NOS OLVIDEN

FIGHTING AGAINST A BROKEN SYSTEM

TEXT: ANNELI ALIAGA AND MARIE-EVE MONETTE
PHOTOS: MARIE-EVE MONETTE AND ARCHIVO PÁGINA SIETE

On the 25th of November every year since 1981, Bolivia participates in the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. In recent years, Bolivia has progressed towards achieving gender parity in many respects. In the realm of politics, UN Women praised how Bolivian women occupied just over 50 percent of the country's parliamentary seats in 2018, representing the third-highest percentage across the globe. More generally, the ratification of Law 348 in 2013 promised to protect women from the threat of violence.

However, despite an array of social policies, legislative actions and the inclusion of female voices in politics, the national statistics of gender-related violence remain critically high. Fabiola Alvelais, author of '*No Justice for Me*': Femicide and Impunity in Bolivia, claims that 'Bolivia has one of the highest rates of gender-related violence in all of Latin America.' While citizens are starting to see improvements in gender equality in politics and the workplace, the home remains one of the most dangerous spaces for Bolivian women.

The Harvard Law School's Human Rights Clinic estimates that seven in ten Bolivian women suffer from some form of physical violence, and that in the majority of these acts the perpetrator is a romantic partner or a man living under the same roof as the victim. Alvelais explains that for women who seek legislative justice for gender-based discrimination and abuse, the success rate is extremely slim. Abusers are rarely prosecuted, and Alvelais estimates that only 4.7 percent of reports of violence against women are brought to Bolivian courts. Furthermore, even when brought to trial, the cases are economically and psychologically taxing, and can be up to 15 to 20 years before a verdict is reached. These statistics of course do not consider any unreported incidents or cases of psychological, sexual or economic abuse.

BOLIVIAN FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS HAVE BROUGHT ATTENTION TO AND DEMONSTRATED AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE FOR MANY YEARS.

Bolivian feminist organisations – including Aquelarre Subversiva, Mujeres Creando, Warmis en Resistencia, Feminismo Comunitario Abya Yala, Ni Una Menos and many others – have brought attention to and demonstrated against gender-based violence for many years. Several of these organisations have created important spaces for epistemological exchanges among women of all ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, races, religions, sexualities and genders. As many participants of these movements are indigenous women themselves, they understand the complexity of feminism in Bolivia and recognise its inherent intersectionality. Deconstructing social, political and culturally ingrained systems in Bolivian society such as the patriarchy and **machismo**, as well as combatting the injustices behind the racial and class hierarchies, are included in regional and national feminist agendas. Many of these movements have a powerful online presence. Their Facebook pages and websites are often interactive safe spaces where women can share their stories and discuss the changes they would like to see in Bolivia. Many also use art as a tool to incite discussion and societal transformation, ranging from performance and street to written and (audio-)visual arts.

Both men and women are also calling upon the arts to denounce gender-based violence in Bolivia. Since film has been and will continue to be a tool for protesting against injustice and demanding societal changes, Bolivian filmmaker Italo B. Velez decided to stand in solidarity with Bolivian women and write the script for *Antes de que nos olviden* (*Before We Are Forgotten*), a medium-length film that will be produced with the support of the internationally acclaimed Fundación Grupo Ukamau – an organisation initiated by the Grupo Ukamau cinema collective – and director Jorge Sanjinés in the hopes of opening spaces for dialogue and reflection about feminicide and the delay of justice in Bolivia.

Antes de que nos olviden tells the story of two sisters, Maurin and Luisa, who after the murder of their mother are forced to live with their uncle, Vicente. Due to their precarious economic situation, Maurin has to work daily at a market in La Paz. Vicente takes advantage of her absence to sexually abuse Luisa, who, unable to bear the assaults any longer, takes her own life. When Maurin learns the reason behind Luisa's death by suicide, she presses charges against her uncle. However, despite Vicente's guilt and Maurin's best efforts, the corrupt justice system ensures that the trial lasts for more than 15 years. Maurin, gravely affected by the turbulent trial that lasts for so long, may have to make a heavy and difficult decision.

Although *Antes de que nos olviden* is a fiction film, it unfortunately reflects the sad reality too many Bolivian women still have to face and survive on a daily basis. By November 20th, 2019, the number of women victims of femicides in Bolivia had already reached 103. According to the Observatorio de Género–Coordinadora de la Mujer, a Bolivian digital platform that shares information about women's rights and the abuses of these rights, 13 women were victims of sexual violence daily in 2018. Maurin and Luisa's story may be fictional, but it seeks to reflect this reality and spark dialogue about what is required to put an end to gender-based violence in Bolivia.

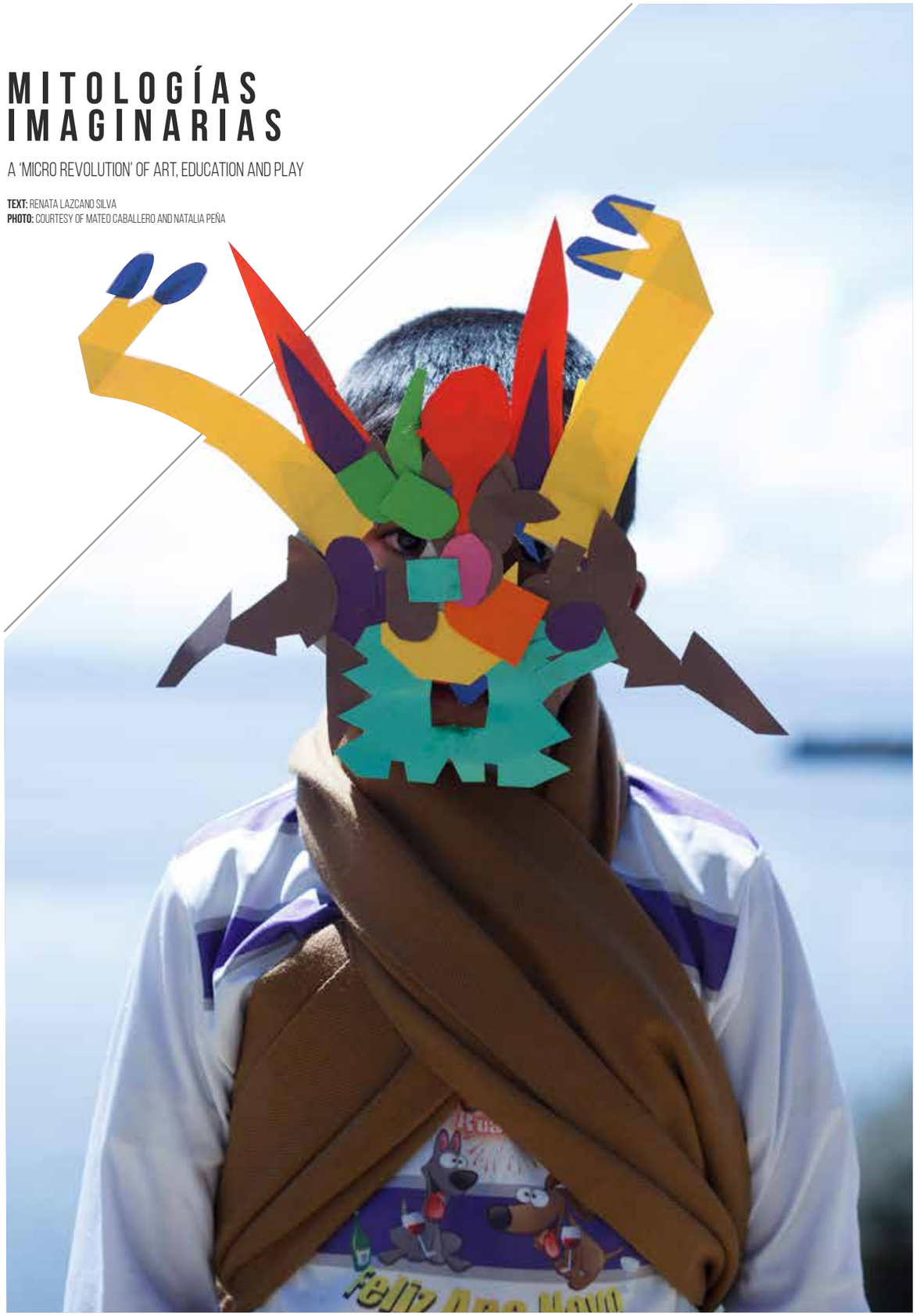
While Bolivian women have become increasingly empowered over recent decades, respect for women's rights should be a cause common to both women and men, and men should support the ways in which women are building their autonomy, requesting that their rights be respected and demanding justice. For Italo B. Velez, men need to actively participate in this dialogue, in the destruction of prejudices and the eradication of patriarchal structures and models. To this end, the Antes de que nos olviden team has joined forces with the organisations Feminismo Comunitario Abya Yala – a Bolivian collective that believes in intersectionality, fights for decolonisation and challenges the patriarchy while promoting the Bolivian-Andean 'Good Living' way of life that pursues harmony and balance in all things – and the aforementioned Observatorio de Género. As a result, the film *Antes de que nos olviden* will be used, after its release, as a starting point for community dialogues organised together with these organisations.

The *Antes de que nos olviden* team is currently raising awareness about about their film, designing their first crowdfunding campaign (due to launch in 2020) and applying for filmmaking grants from Latin America, Europe and the United States. In order to share information about gender-based violence in Bolivia, and to build a community dedicated to eradicating this violence through film, they have created a Facebook page (@AntesdequenosolvidenBolivia) and designed a trilingual site for the film (www.antesdequenosolviden.com), both of which they invite you to visit.

MITOLOGÍAS IMAGINARIAS

A 'MICRO REVOLUTION' OF ART, EDUCATION AND PLAY

TEXT: RENATA LAZCANO SILVA
PHOTO: COURTESY OF MATEO CABALLERO AND NATALIA PEÑA



José imagines an animal that is a mixture of fox and eagle (11 years, Challapampa)

This story begins in 2018 at 4,100 metres above sea level in the small town of Challapampa, on the Isla del Sol on Lake Titicaca. Mateo Caballero, a photographer, visual artist and musician, and Natalia Peña, an artist and teacher, met a woman there who said that her community was waiting for their ispayas to pray in order to solve a dispute they had with the Challa community, on the north of the island. The **ispayas** are the children of the community, and the adults hoped that they could come up with a solution with their prayers to nature and the elements.

The fact that the adults would look to their children's wisdom for a solution to a problem they couldn't solve themselves was fascinating for the two artists. An idea sparked in their minds. 'We had to somehow get closer to this knowledge,' Caballero says. 'And the most fabulous tool to approach children's wisdom is art.' For Peña, art and education are the salvation of the planet. 'Art is a fundamental tool for knowing oneself, for life,' she says, 'art not only as a subject in the curriculum, but also as a methodology to learn and teach from creative thinking.'

Thus, by combining the powerful tools of art and education, the Mitologías Imaginarias (Imaginary Mythologies) project was born. 'The objective is to use art as an excuse for children to make new characters, new mythologies, and, through them, to soak up their wisdom,' the couple says. With the cooperation of the director of the local school in Challapampa, Caballero and Peña started the project in April 2019, spending a week with 15 girls and boys between 8 and 10 years old.

Mornings were spent at the school, with the couple reorganising the classroom to create a space to break up the routine of a traditional class. Caballero and Peña started the kids off with meditation to help them be present and mindful of their surroundings. Then came art – crafts, paintings, storytelling and more. The children created imaginary characters using masks they constructed and other crafts. In the afternoons, the children went on different excursions, and Caballero and Peña listened to them and learned about the plants, animals and local myths that the children shared with them. 'It was deliciously tiring,' the couple says.

The workshop went beyond arts and crafts. It followed five stages: story, collective fabulation, exploration of the territory, reimagining of characters and imaginary mythologies. The children learned to use critical thinking to analyse the 'why' of their own creations. Once their characters were ready, pictures of the 'mythological' creatures were taken, with the children receiving a copy. The couple also recorded the entire project using video and photography.

Six months later, in October 2019, Caballero and Peña headed to Chicaloma, a village in the Yungas region, to start their second adventure. They adapted the workshop for 20 children of the same age, and there was a presentation of the children's artwork at the end of the programme. Peña says that the long-term plan is to continue traveling and connecting with more children and communities. The masks, characters, photographs and videos are elements that allow them to show children's realities and to learn how their stories are told. The future objective of the project is also to generate change through the teachers as well, because they are the ones who are teaching the children.

Peña calls this project a 'micro revolution.' She and Caballero aim to provide a play space for children where they can learn, through art and education, that it is possible to emotionally connect with what they are doing. Peña and Caballero say that the most moving aspect of Mitologías Imaginarias is how they connect with many different people, and the realisation of how generous human beings can be when they are given the opportunity to share. For them, Mitologías Imaginarias is a project with a life of its own, born out of love and the desire to do something, little things, to generate changes little by little.

To learn more about the project visit the Mitologías Imaginarias Instagram profile @mitologiasimaginarias.

Teamwork, taking the town in Chicaloma. (From left to right: Josías, Nadir, Ángel, Jhael, Emely, Alexandra and Ramiro)

TODOS SANTOS EN BOLIVIA

TEXT: LAUREN MINION
PHOTOS: LAUREN MINION AND GEORGE FEARNLEY

People celebrating Todos Santos, their bags filled with offerings of bread, flowers, and other delicacies.

Amongst the many Bolivian sacred celebrations is **Todos Santos**, which lies on the first and second of November every year. Despite adopting its name back in colonial times from the Spanish equivalent, the Bolivian festival maintains many of its original Andean rituals and traditions. According to Andean beliefs, death is not an end to life, but more a transition to eternal existence.

During this event, Bolivian families return to the rest places of their beloved family members and prepare exquisite food and offerings, all of which carry much significance. With this in mind, *BX* decided to show the vibrancy of the event through a series of photographs to demonstrate the thought and care that goes into this unique and sacred event.

Wooden ladders are available throughout the La Paz cemetery so that family members can access the rest places of their family members and keep their shrines up to date.

People walk by sites containing ashes of the deceased. Momentos and flowers are placed behind the glass doors to pay homage to loved ones.

***Tantawawas** are sold at many market stands and supermarkets in the lead up to Todos Santos, they are to symbolise family members that have passed away.*

Elsa Condori, 52, and Jaqueline Condori, 17, produce hard boiled sweets in the shapes of ladders and baskets to symbolise the gateway between those who have passed away and their living relatives, and the goods that both parties carry. Elsa's grandmother used to work in La Estrella a former famous sweet factory in El Alto.

Faces for tantawawas can also be bought at many markets all over Bolivia, for when family members would like to bake the bread themselves.

LAS ÑATITAS

TEXT & PHOTOS: SILVIA SACCARDI

Offerings to the ñatita include candles and cigarettes and they are often adorned with floral crowns.

The festival of 'Las Ñatitas' is a tradition celebrated throughout the Bolivian Andes on the 8th November every year. The word **ñatita** loosely translates to 'little nosed' and refers to the skulls that are the protagonists of this celebration: in La Paz's general cemetery, skulls are dug up from communal burial grounds that will later be given a new home. These skulls are lovingly decorated and adorned with offerings such as cigarettes, alcohol, coca leaves, flowers, candles and other gifts to commemorate the life of the family member that the skull represents. Every year, families flock to cemeteries with their skulls to sit around it and pray. The ritual of giving gifts to the skull is said to bring good luck and happiness. It is assumed that the festival dates back to the ancient empire of Tiwanaku, when skulls were preserved to call for rain in times of drought. To this day, people are proud of the skulls that they decorate.

The festival is a day of celebration where cemeteries are lit up by the colourful adornments.

Praying to the ñatita is said to bring good luck.

The celebration is both solemn and festive.

LA PAZ'S FOUR-LEGGED RESIDENTS

BOLIVIAN STREET DOGS AND THE DOUBLE LIVES THEY LEAD

TEXT: SILVIA SACCARDI
PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HOCICO SPA & APLAB (AMOR POR LOS ANIMALES BOLIVIA)











One of the first things that surprised me when I came to La Paz was the vast array of dogs roaming the streets. These furry inhabitants vary in appearance; some are scruffy whilst others wear fashionable fleeces. If you are wondering how a street dog can wear clothes, it might be worth mentioning that some of these dogs live double lives. They are 'semi-housed', meaning that have a home and a place to sleep at night, but are left to roam the streets during the day. The Bolivian Ministry of Health estimates that for every four Bolivians, there is one semi-housed dog. This figure excludes pets that live exclusively at home and stray dogs that live exclusively on the street. Naturally, this leads to problems such as the overpopulation of dogs, the spreading of disease and unwanted canine confrontations. Scavenging for food, getting into fights and sleeping on the side of the street all form part of the daily routine of a **paceño** street dog, whether or not it has a home to return to at night.

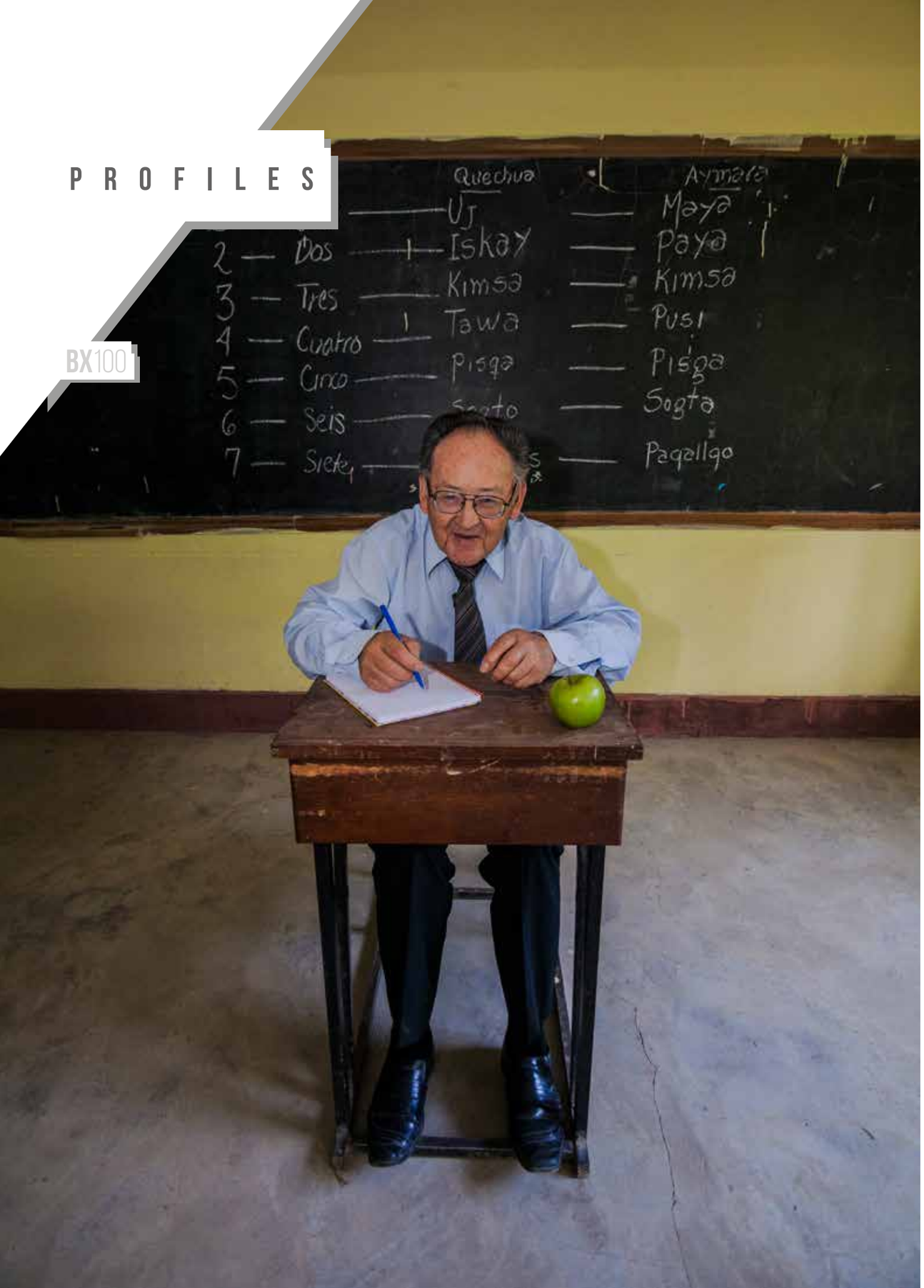
There is a culture of keeping dogs as pets in Bolivia, but, according to Amor Para los Animales de Bolivia (APLAB) co-founder Ana Serrano Revollo, many owners lack the knowledge of responsible ownership. 'People don't know 100 percent how to look after a dog like they should look after it,' she says. 'Nor are they aware of vaccinations that keep them healthy. There are many families and many people that don't take their dogs for a walk with a collar or a lead, and they think that vaccinations are only against rabies, but they are not aware of other vaccinations that are necessary.'

The combination of unvaccinated, unsterilised dogs together with the relaxed attitude to leaving dogs on the streets is a recipe for the spread of disease and unwanted litters, considering that of the 2.2 million dogs that live in Bolivia, 40 percent of them can be found on the streets. Some veterinarians organise initiatives to combat this. Serrano says that APLAB 'does contribute to controlling overpopulation, despite it not being our responsibility, through sterilisation campaigns [and] humanitarian education, and we influence with political lobbying so that laws can be enforced.' Veterinarian Andrea Molina Vargas emphasises the importance of educating pet owners. In order to do this, Molina's clinic, Hocico Spa, organises various talks with owners about the benefits of sterilisation so that pet owners are more aware of the problems associated with unneutered pets. Additionally, most vet practices also offer sterilisation programmes to lower-income families who otherwise could not afford the surgery: 'We carry out operations at a reduced price so people with low incomes are able to access the treatment,' Molina says. 'This is important, as in recent years there has been a notable increase in the abandonment of pets.'

The Bolivian government has also implemented a yearly rabies-vaccination programme. In a country that continues to report cases of rabies (in 2017, eight fatal cases of human rabies were reported in four different departments of Bolivia), it is vital to keep the situation under control. Serrano, though, is sceptical of the campaign's effectiveness. 'The truth is that I don't know how much of a benefit it has had, how many animals have been accurately vaccinated, and, equally, it's quite worrying that we continue to have cases of rabies and, worse so, human cases of rabies,' she says. However, Serrano says the programme's intentions are worthy. Green ribbons are used to identify dogs that have been vaccinated, but the method is not full-proof as the ribbons are easily lost, leading some canine patients to being treated twice while others are not treated at all.

Despite the large number of street dogs in Bolivia (according to the Bolivian Ministry of health, 300,000 street dogs were reported in La Paz in 2017), attitudes seem to be changing. In the past, a dog was seen as nothing more than protection, but now around 70 percent of Bolivian pet owners consider their furry companions to be part of the family. Dog fashion is also popular in La Paz, especially in the colder months when owners love to wrap their dogs up in fashionable jumpers.

It is clear that Bolivia is no exception to the idea that dogs are a man's best friend, but what cannot be ignored is the growing street-dog population which is abetted by the relaxed attitude people have about leaving their pets on the streets. Ultimately, the spread of disease is thankfully being controlled by vaccination schemes run by independent vet organisations and the government. The same goes for sterilisation, which is the only humane way to prevent overpopulation. Whether a pet, a street dog or somewhere in between, all dogs deserve to be healthy, clean and nourished.



GUNNAR QUISPER, *TATUISTA*

THE TATTOO ARTIST BRINGS THE AGE-OLD ART FORM TO MODERN LA PAZ

TEXT & PHOTOS: RHIANNON MATTHIAS

Gunnar Quisper, a **potosino** keen on changing ideas around tattoos, says that 'tattooing is above all an ancient and timeless art form. Most tattoo artists are professionals with an arts background.' Quisper studied art in school, but it wasn't until he moved to Amsterdam that he developed an interest in body art. But he doesn't always display his own tattoos, as in Bolivia they are often associated with prisoners, gang members and a variety of negative personality traits. So he covers up his body art a majority of the time.

Tattoos are part of some indigenous cultures in the Chaco region of South America, a vast, hot and humid tract of land that straddles the area where Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina meet. Indigenous men can be seen sporting faded number tattoos commemorating their time in the national service. 'Back in the day, it was really tough, and surviving was a miracle in itself, for this reason, they tattooed the number of their regiment on their body,' Quisper says. His Gunn Art Ink tattoo shop, on Avenida Illampu in a slightly rundown part of La Paz, is a sleek, eclectic space with an amazing view of Illimani and **La Casa del Pueblo**. 'I chose this location because I love the idea of attracting different kinds of people to an area like this,' he says. The shop's red walls are decorated with **diablada** masks, some of Quisper's paintings, and awards and souvenirs from the various conventions he has attended and hosted. He's proud to represent Bolivia wherever he goes, and he's hosted conventions in which guests included internationally acclaimed artists.

Quisper specialises in realistic tattoos, a style which aims to replicate the proportionality and detail of photos. 'Tattoos cure ailments of the soul,' he says. 'They can help someone to translate what they feel on the inside to their outside. Generally, I tattoo people with a past that they want to leave behind, they want the weight to be lifted off their shoulders.' His clients entrust him with their bodies and their stories, making the average tattoo session a modified therapy session.

JUAN CARLOS NAVI YUCHINA: KING OF THE JUNGLE

TEXT & PHOTOS: SILVIA SACCARDI

Together with his father in the 1980s, Juan Carlos Navi Yuchina happened upon a dishevelled Israeli tourist lost in the jungle. Together, they would go on to instigate the now booming ecotourism industry in Rurrenabaque and the Bolivian Amazon. Having witnessed the rise of ecotourism from its very inception in the Bolivian jungle, Juan Carlos has developed a deep knowledge of Parque Madidi and its myriad flora and fauna. He belongs to one of four indigenous communities that live within the national park: the Comunidad San José. His extensive knowledge about plants with medicinal qualities, poisonous insects, fishing techniques, building rafts, mimicking birdsong and navigating the network of paths through the seemingly impenetrable foliage is enough to astound anyone who meets him. Having worked for a total of four tour groups, he is currently with Berraco del Madidi, which offers sustainable, high-quality tours that venture deep into the jungle, teaching visitors about survival there from the comfort of their ecolodge, which is complete with living area, kitchen, chef, shelter, tent, bathroom and shower. Creepy crawlies are an added and unavoidable bonus.

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A GUIDE?

I was part of the initial process of establishing the ecotourism industry in the Madidi jungle, but when I found out that many skilled workers had decided to move on to other companies, I felt I needed to come back in order to bolster the business.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ANIMAL IN THE JUNGLE?

The king of the forest: the jaguar. I have spotted them on no less than seven occasions in my lifetime.

HOW DO ECOTOURISM COMPANIES HELP INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES?

Companies with a community focus aim to protect the environment, because, coming from indigenous communities ourselves, we are aware of the importance of the forest. The forest is a source of medicine, materials for building houses, and food. Ecotourism was created with the aim of generating sustainable work within the community. So, community-based companies help to provide education and health care to the benefit of all within the community.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE WORK YOU DO?

I love being a guide. I have learnt so much and developed my understanding so that I can pass on my knowledge to guests that come and stay with us.

WHICH TRADITIONS ARE YOU KEEN TO PASS ON TO THOSE WHO VISIT MADIDI AND TO FUTURE GENERATIONS IN THE COMUNIDAD SAN JOSÉ?

I believe that cultural traditions should be passed on to younger generations so that they do not feel lost. For example, there are certain traditions in my community that other communities do not share and vice versa, such as traditional music and dance. Other than that, we must preserve the artisanal character of the things we make and do. We also have an opportunity to share our customs with tourists who come here, and I believe it is important that visitors discover the differences that exist between our respective cultures.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE MEMORY FROM YOUR YOUTH?

I have never been lost in the jungle, but there was one incident when I was 18 years old. Given the little experience I had, I somehow lost track of time. I had been chasing animals and trying to hunt them when I suddenly realised it was too late to get back safely. I thought through my options and decided that the best thing to do would be to climb a tree and wait for dawn. Luckily, my father and great companion came looking for me, and eventually I climbed back down as I could hear him calling me. That was an unforgettable night from my youth. But those are the sorts of things you need to learn to be able to make yourself stronger and survive in the forest.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WE HAVE LOST FROM LIVING IN THE MODERN WORLD?

There are many things I could mention. On the one hand, the technology revolution has provided many benefits, but on the other hand it has done damage to humankind. You might even say that humans have created their own poison. I remember a time when, in my community, people would grow sugar cane and make honey from it (miel de caña). Nowadays, the modern world has invented a machine to make the entire process easier. People have become used to that and no longer have the desire to work or secure their futures or even prevent illnesses. The modernisation of the world has meant that younger generations have adapted badly; they choose to achieve things quickly and easily, but that comes at a cost.

FINALLY, WHY ARE THE FORESTS IMPORTANT?

The forest is important not only to indigenous people but to everyone around the world. It serves us in many ways, from the oxygen we breathe to the water we drink. Not to mention that the forest has the potential to feed us and provide materials to live.

ARTE DE FUEGO

MARIO SARABIA'S CERAMICS

TEXT: ANNELI ALIAGA
PHOTOS: LOURDES GIMENEZ AND MARIANA REQUENA

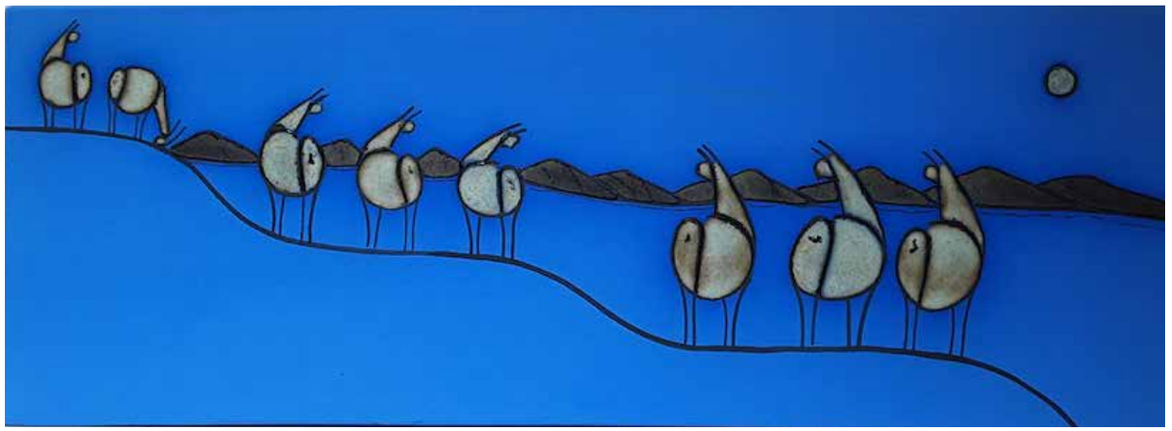


Image 1

‘El espíritu de los Andes…Bolivia’ (‘The Spirit of the Andes… Bolivia’), an abstract stone sculpture of an Andean figure, located in the **Valle de la Luna**, was recently vandalised during the violent political conflicts of this month. Mario Sarabia, the artist who created the sculpture, had gifted it to La Paz, his home and city of birth. He lamented the unjustified and unnecessary destruction of an artwork created on the basis of Andean beauty, cultural fusions and ideas of unity.

The internationally recognised ceramist started his artistic career in the United States and has exhibited his art in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, England and France. Sarabia has a worldwide reputation and a well-connected international network, but at the end of the day, he prefers to reside and work in Mallasa, a quiet residential neighbourhood in the southern suburbs of La Paz. ‘Mallasa is the place where I have the privilege to live, where I’ve had the privilege to watch my children grow up, where I have the privilege of working and creating, where I’ve had the privilege of sharing my workshop with many artists and ceramics students,’ he says. Sarabia’s workshop is in his back garden. It houses a display of his most classic pieces of pottery: vases, tiles and ceramic plates. His artwork is also displayed and sold in his shop in the San Miguel neighbourhood in La Paz’s Zona Sur district.

Sarabia was enrolled in a museum-studies degree in the United States, when he was introduced to pottery on one of his courses. He says that ‘from that moment on, I decided that using clay as a form of artistic expression was what I wanted to devote the rest of my life to.’ Sarabia believes that there was no other possible profession for him, aside from maybe being ‘the lead singer in a rock band’. When asked about the inspiration behind his love for ceramics, as opposed to other art forms, he says that pottery encompasses all of the principals of the fine arts. ‘In ceramics you have to mould, paint, sketch, and sculpt,’ Sarabia explains. All of these artistic elements unite to subsequently face what Sarabia refers to as la prueba del fuego – ‘the fire test’. Pottery is an art controlled and formed amidst flames.

The aesthetics of Sarabia’s colourful and intricate artwork is complemented by the meaningful philosophies and inspirations behind the pottery. Sarabia finds beauty in his surroundings. His portfolio lives and breathes the scenic Andean geography and landscape. Quite literally, Sarabia uses a unique form of clay that originates from the valleys and **altiplano** that surround La Paz to create his ceramics. The Andes are also embodied in his art through his iconography, which depicts Andean animals such as llamas, alpacas, condors, guanacos and vicuñas. ‘These animals existed in this land long before the Bolivian man did,’ Sarabia explains.

Sarabia believes that no part of Bolivian history should be ignored, and that aspects of Bolivia’s colonial past form an integral part of the nation’s identity. These ideas are reflected in his pottery, which displays the syncretism and fusion of Andean and Spanish culture in both art form and content. Image 1 illustrates the archetypal Andean landscape: llamas grazing before a mountainous backdrop. While the content may be quintessentially Andean, Sarabia explains that the ceramic piece would be described as an azulejo, a decorative tile form deriving from the Iberian Peninsula. ‘Azulejos arrived in South America during the Spanish Conquest [in the sixteenth century],’ says the artist. A more explicit Spanish reference can also be seen in Image 2, an artwork titled ‘Condor-toro’ (‘Condor-bull’). The ceramic form of a Spanish bull is built using smaller and more subtle Andean imagery and symbols: the bull’s horns are outlined by the figure of a flying condor; the bull’s face is a **keru** (a ceremonial Inca vase); the bull’s tail resembles a serpent, an ancient Andean deity; and the bull’s body is shaped by the Andes mountain range. Elements of Spanish and Bolivian geography and mythology are interwoven in this artwork to illustrate the idea that previously colonised nations have complex cultural identities built on fusions, appropriations and indigeneity.

Sarabia believes that the future of his art ‘lies in the hands of art itself. The spirit of art will guide me to where I need to be’. Yet one thing is certain, the Andean landscape has always been and always will be his favourite muse.

PAST INTERNS

NICK SOMERS

January - March 2015
January - June 2017
'Nothing has had a bigger positive impact on my life than the two periods in 2015 and 2017 I spent with Bolivian Express in La Paz. Aside from the wonderful experiences and memories as well as the friends for life I made there, it allowed me to grow as a photographer. I wouldn't stand where I do today without the work I did for and thanks to the people from Bolivian Express.'

GABRIEL DEASY

February 2018
'I think that the Sajama National Park is probably one of my favourite places in South America. I had a lovely time in Bolivia travelling and writing for the Bolivian Express and I hope to come back one day.'

SOPHIE HOGAN

January - April 2017
'I was fresh from spending six months in Brazil, so Bolivia was another culture shock altogether. While I'd wanted to write for a magazine since, well, forever, and Bolivian Express gave me the opportunity, I was slightly terrified of the idea of doing it somewhere so different from home. But even from my first week in La Paz, the mood of the people struck me more than anywhere else I'd been. It almost said, 'let's get on with life, and grab it by the horns, whatever happens.' I like to think I'd adopted that mindset.'

CHARLIE BLADON

September - December 2017
July 2018
'I enjoyed two lovely stints with the Bolivian Express. First time leaving with a family to return to and second time knowing that I'd be welcome with open arms to such a warm and open country. The BX opens you up to these once in a lifetime experiences and I'm forever grateful for it. Here's to many more.'

ALEXIS KING

February 2019
'I will never forget the people I met and the opportunities I had as an intern at Bolivian Express. It was great fun and an incredible experience, in particular being given the freedom to pursue the projects I wanted to. I have to say when I arrived, I never thought I would have the chance to interview someone like Felix Patzi, then Governor of La Paz and lesser-known presidential candidate. But this is just a small part of the brilliant work that BX does. It was clear that featuring in the magazine has a real impact on people's lives and raises awareness of different issues across Bolivia.

Thank you again to the team for making me feel so welcome and all your help. Congratulations on the 100th edition!'

KATHERINA SOURINE

May - July 2018
'When I remember my time in Bolivia, the most striking memories are always the conversations I had with proud Bolivians. People were eager to tell their personal stories, history of the country, the diverse nature, the culture. I think it is a beautiful reflection of a place when its people have so much warmth to share. I also miss the **choripanes**.'

ANNELI ALIAGA

September 2019
'Bolivia has become a second home for me. The Bolivian Express programme encourages and inspires interns to pursue their interests. I've personally loved exploring more about Bolivian cinema and art. It's also a brilliant opportunity to get feedback on your articles, both in terms of content and style. The internship's flexibility also allows plenty of time for travel around this beautiful country.'

GEORGE FEARNLEY

September 2019
'Being an intern at Bolivian Express gives you the opportunity to get articles published and live in a vibrant country with a sense of security. Having a press pass gives you access to interesting people you wouldn't otherwise have the chance to meet. The one on one spanish lessons organised with the institute were a personal highlight. Without language there is no culture!'

LAUREN MINION

September 2019
'Writing for the Bolivian Express gave me the opportunity to really delve into Bolivian Culture during my time there. Not only was I more aware of cultural events and happenings in the country (in search of article ideas), but I also had the chance of meeting so many more Bolivian people through interviews and classes with the magazine. The internship was an unforgettable experience for sure, and I'll remember how much I learned and my breathtaking travels forever.'

SILVIA SACCARDI

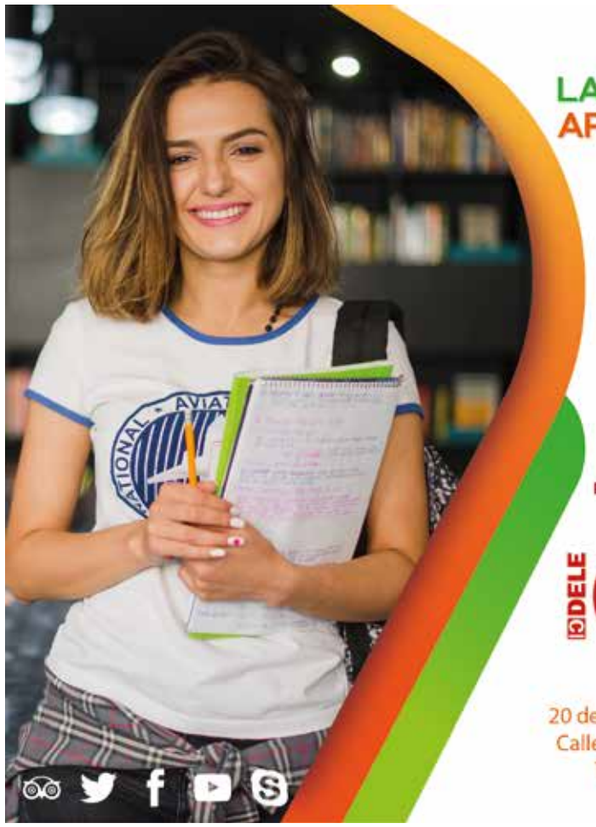
September 2019
'Being part of the Bolivian Express experience has been amazing. I would not have learnt nearly as much about Bolivian culture had it not been for the articles I have written. My Spanish has vastly improved due to the Spanish lessons and travelling across Bolivia. Although my time is nearly up here, it is hard to imagine going back to a place without chaotic micros, colourful markets and hills that take your breath away both because of the views and the altitude. Above all I will miss the kindness and warmth of Bolivian people.'

RINALDA AAY

September 2019
'My time with the Bolivian Express has paved the way for me to spend time in and learn about a beautiful country full of rich cultures, wonderful people and beautiful scenery. It has been a great opportunity to explore my own interests in a Bolivian context, and has allowed me to dedicate time to writing, researching, interviewing and learning Spanish. Above all else, it's an experience that I'll never forget.'

RHIANNON MATTHIAS

September 2019
'I came across Bolivian Express in my final year of university thanks to a sign I saw from the corner of my eye in the language department. I've always dreamt of living and working in South America and interning with the magazine has been a great way to dip my toes in. It has given me such great insight into Bolivia, journalism and most importantly- myself. I definitely see myself coming back to Bolivia and feel so grateful to have come across many of the people I did.'



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GLOSSARY

ACHACHILAS	Ancestral spirits and protective parent from the mountains
AIRAMPO	A cactus seed that also gives an intense red color
ALTIPLANO	High Andean plateau
AJICERÍA	Place where spicy food is prepared and sold
AJÍS	Chili peppers
AJAYU	Energy – what we sometimes call 'soul' – that drives us
AMAUTA	Andean wise man
CHA'MAKANIS	Dark priest
CHICHA	Macerated drink made of corn that is consumed in different places of the valleys and the highlands of Bolivia
CHINA SUPAY	Female devils from a traditional Andean dance
CHORIPAN	Chorizo sandwich
COLLPA	Handmade shampoo
COPOAZU	Tropical rainforest fruit related to cacao
COSMOVISIÓN ANDINA	Andean worldview
CURANDERO	A traditional native healer
CRUCEÑO	From Santa Cruz
DIABLADA	Typical dance from the region of Oruro in Bolivia characterised by the mask and devil suit worn by the performers
EL LIBERTADOR	The Liberator, refers to Simón Bolívar
EL TÍO	'Uncle'
EL TÍO DE LA MINA	'The Uncle', is believed in Cerro Rico, Potosí, Bolivia as the 'Lord of the Underworld'. El Tío rules over the mines, simultaneously offering protection and destruction
FERIA 16 DE JULIO	Large market held every week on Thursday and Sunday in the La Ceja neighbourhood of El Alto
ISPAYAS	Refers to the children of a community in Andean culture
JIWASA	'We/us' in Aymara
KHARISIRI	Mythical creature who is believed to attack travelers in order to steal their fat
KHARSUTA	Victim of the kharisiri
KERU	A ceremonial Inca vase
LA PRUEBA DE FUEGO	'Trial by fire'
MACHISMO	An attitude, quality, or way of behaving that agrees with traditional ideas about men being very strong and aggressive
MASA MADRE	Sourdough starter
MIEL DE CAÑA	A type of syrup that comes from sugarcane
PACHAMAMA	Mother Earth
PACEÑO/A	From La Paz
POTOSINO/A	From Potosí
SAJRAÑAS	Plant-based brush
TANTAWAWA	Sweet bread shaped and decorated in the form of a person/animal who passed. Traditionally made on the Day of the Dead in Bolivia
TODOS SANTOS	Day of the Dead
UKAMAU	'It's like this' in Aymara
UKHU PACHA	The inner world
VALLE DE LA LUNA	Moon valley, located south of La Paz
VIRACOCHA	God and the creator in pre-Inca and Inca mythology
WAYRURO	The red and black seed of a plant (Ormosia coccinea) that grows in Latin America and is said to bring good fortune and love
YATIRI	Aymara medical practitioners and community healers

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le dió fama
a Bolivia.
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nuestro Singani
nos reconocen
por el ORO.

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Un reconocimiento a la calidad
y el sabor de nuestro Singani
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