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What started with a failed constitutional referendum that would have allowed President Evo Morales to run for an additional term in 2020 and closed with an ongoing nationwide water crisis gripping rural and urban areas nearly equally, 2016 has been a very interesting, and some would say critical, year for Bolivia. And as the year comes to a close, we all are taking the opportunity to take it all in, and to wonder what it all has meant and what the future may hold. This year, if anything, has taught us that sometimes changes signify growth or improvement, and sometimes they signify deterioration or regression. But in either case, the process is both exciting and challenging.

We have accomplished a lot at *Bolivian Express* over the past year. We trained 40 journalists from seven countries in the past 12 months, and have opened more doors to collaborate with incredible writers and artists from all over Bolivia to help us share this amazing country with our readers. We launched our first book, *Bolivia Out of Sight: Postcards from the Unreported*, and are currently hosting a related photo exhibit at Ciclik, a café/restaurant in La Paz's Sopocachi district. We've maintained relationships and created new partnerships with businesses and organizations all over the country, all vibrant collaborators who play an important role in making this publication what it is. So we want to take the opportunity to say 'Thank You!' to all our writers, designers, collaborators, advertisers, partners, and readers for everything you have done with and for us in 2016. We would not be here without you!

For many, a new year marks a time of change, of promised improvement. And we at this publication see this time of year the same way. This issue of *Bolivian Express* is our final one for 2016, with our next publication hitting the streets in mid-February 2017. By that time, you will see many changes to the magazine. The team is currently working on reimagining who we are, what we are about, and what we have to offer. Today, some details are uncertain, but we will be excited to unveil a renewed organization, an invigorated publication, and an expansion of the larger *Bolivian Express* network that will allow for new ways to engage with the community around us.

In 2017, we will be different. We will be bigger. We will be better.

In the spirit of the impending renewal that comes at the end of every year, and in honour of changes coming ahead for this publication, this issue of *Bolivian Express* focuses on this idea of 'metamorphosis', of drastic and lasting change. This month, our contributors explore changes in society in the face of global challenges: how Bolivia's water crisis has forced its urban inhabitants to adjust to a new reality of rationing and uncertainty; how Latin America's push for energy development is affecting communities in the Amazon located at the sites of large hydroelectric projects; how the significance and value of natural spaces reach new levels of importance as new species are identified and catalogued. We learn about the constant reimagining of icons, from generational perspectives on the significance of Che Guevara to modern artistic interpretations of Bolivia's **cholitas** through new tattoo styles. And on more personal levels, we explore the redemption of young people who have turned away from a life of delinquency to create a better world for themselves and others, and a man who has taken on a superhero-like alter ego to use satire and sarcasm to ignite political discussions on social media.

These are just a few examples of change that you will find in the pages of this issue. And the variety of topics we address here clearly show that metamorphoses can happen in variety of ways, from how someone sees themselves in the world to the restructuring of national and international power structures. Hopefully the process brings positive change, like a classic image of a caterpillar emerging from its chrysalis as a beautiful butterfly.

So at the end of 2016 and the dawn of a new year, join us with this issue of *Bolivian Express* as we celebrate the joy and complexities of the process of perpetual rebirth. ◊

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

By William Wroblewski
and Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic



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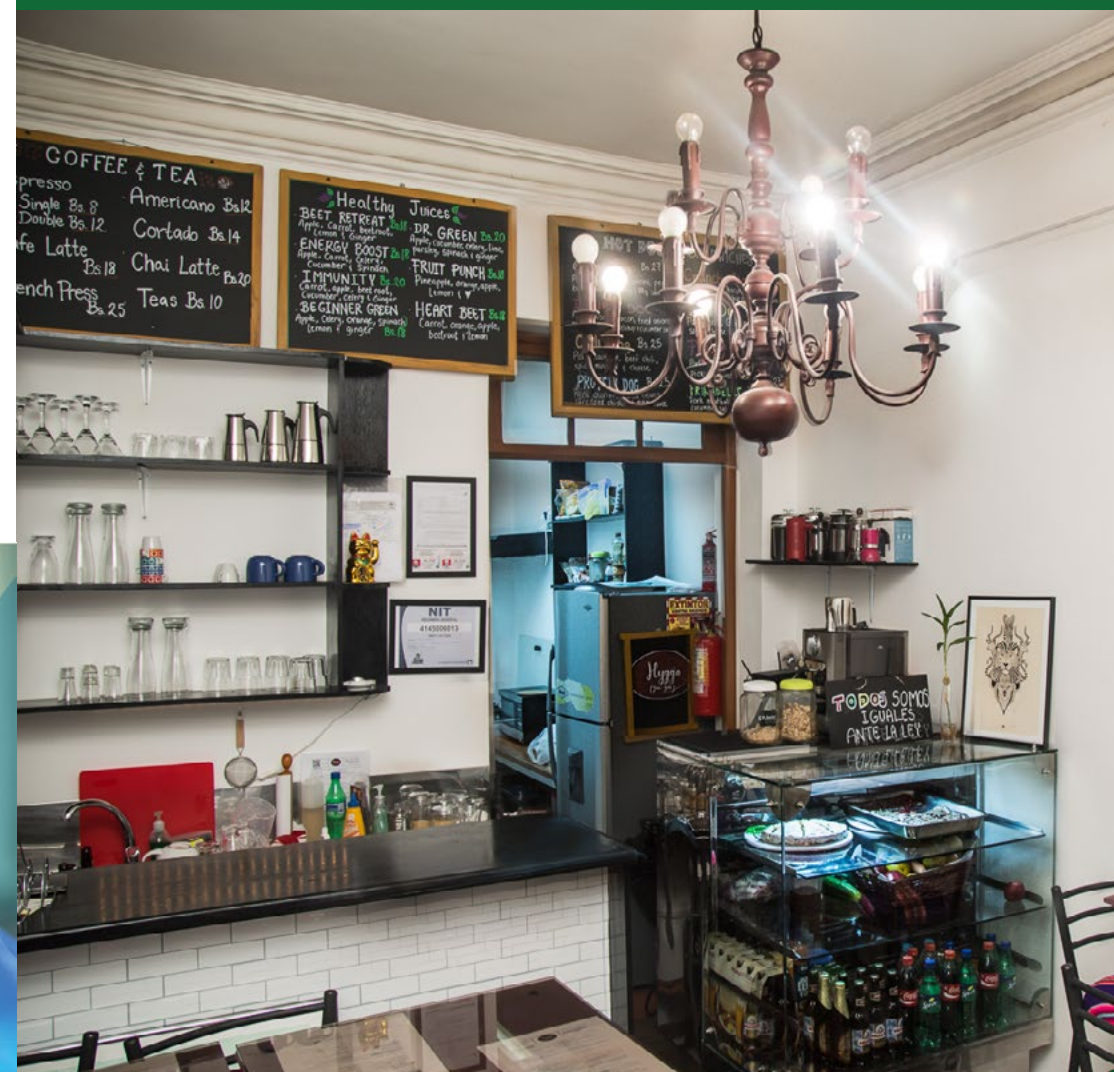
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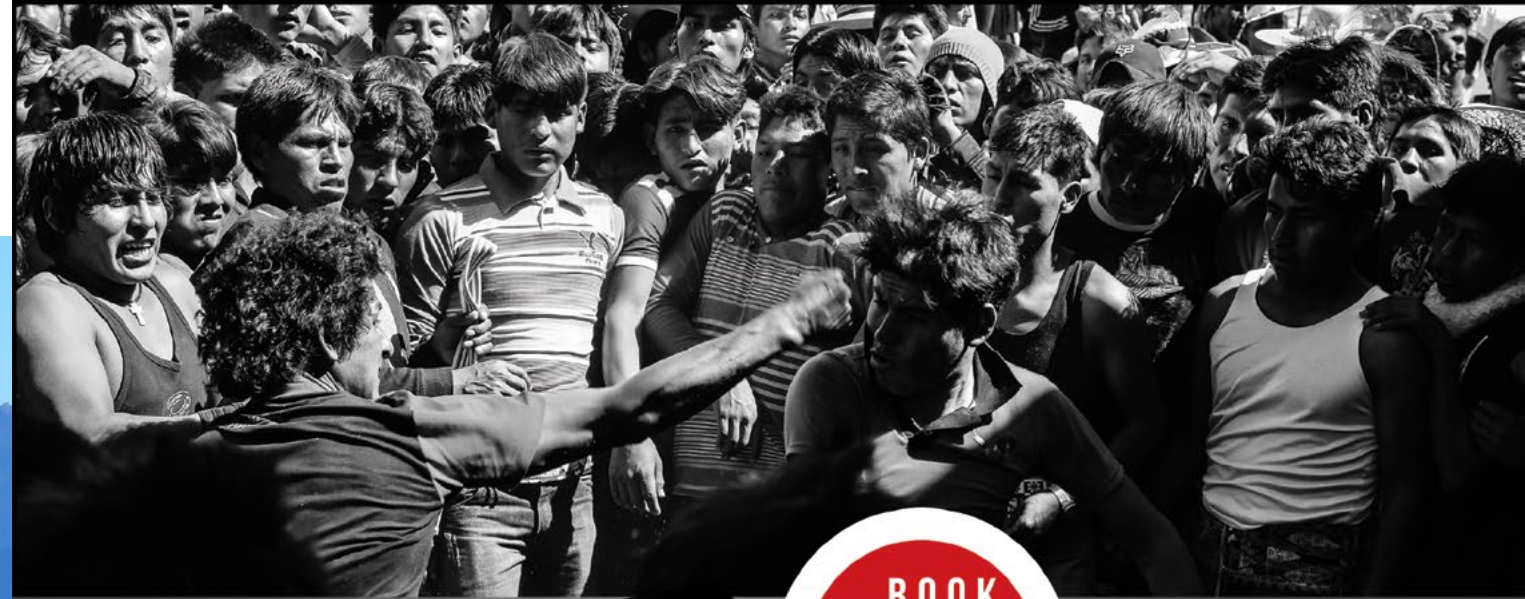


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HUMOUR WITH A PURPOSE

LAS MENTES OCIOSAS AND THEIR BRAND OF MUSICAL COMEDY

TEXT: ELEANOR HENDERSON
 PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

The Palacio de Comunicaciones in La Paz is not as imposing as a theatre can be. Imagine your high school auditorium with improved seating and a sound booth. When Las Mentas Ociosas took the stage, however, they transformed the space into a highly professional venue. It didn't seem like this short performance would be as outlandish as their social media presence would have one believe, but within minutes, robots were carried onto the stage and Las Mentas Ociosas took form. The brevity of the act didn't detract from the hilarity of the group. As the show came to a close, one of the characters, like a madman, screamed to the object of his affection:

'You know that I want you, and you know that I need you. I want it bad, your bad romance!'

To put these remarks into context, the group was performing Lady Gaga's Bad Romance, which gave way to Miguel savagely screaming the verses. In their performance, they transformed a tale of loving someone who is bad for you to that of a psychotic man's obsession with an unknowing individual. Ending the show was the chaos of the quartet's lingering harmonies, Miguel's psychotic laughter, and the audience's guffawing.

Las Mentas Ociosas are unlike any people I've ever seen, let alone any musical group. They are wonderfully and unequivocally weird. The members, Pamela, Miguel, Carlos, and Mauricio, are undoubtedly talented musicians, but what makes their act so unique is their unabashed sense of humour.

When talking with Pamela and Miguel

about their act, it becomes clear that skits of this nature are a core component of their performance. They perform popular songs by western artists and twist the story into something completely different. They often take it even further and use the original lyrics and melodies of the songs, but transform their meaning by modifying the context. They tell a love story between Batman and Robin with songs by the Mexican trio Pandora, or that of Mr. and Mrs. Claus with tunes by the Argentine duo Pimpinela.

Their performances are silly, but serious. 'Music is so rigid,' Pamela says. 'We like to be rigid, but play with it. You can't joke about music: A major has to sound A major, but, what we do is we joke around it. We are silly, so our performance is silly.'

Beyond the self-deprecating fat-jokes that Las Mentas Ociosas revel in during the act, the quality of their performance comes through in the near-perfect harmonies and in the message behind their humour. When Pamela performs Beyoncé as an aria, she not only levels opera with pop music, but she also performs a rather brilliant adapted piece of music.

This is all tied into what the group calls 'Responsible Comedy'. Their performances often address contentious aspects of society, namely gender, identity, and politics, without attacking or disrespecting specific individuals. One of the groups most dynamic performances is 'Disney Halloween', the tale of a serial killer who hunts women, told through Disney showstoppers. One character asks: 'Where will I hide the body?' and the rest of the group responds with a chorus of, 'Under the sea, under the sea.' In the show's grand finale, the heroine, originally depicted as weak and intellectually inept, kills the man and saves the day. The goal of this kind of performance is to create discussion amongst the audience regarding things like gender and the socio-political landscape of La Paz.

Music with such a level of consciousness is rare in popular culture. It is clear that Las Mentas Ociosas take pride in their brand of lyric-dependent music, hoping to remind people that music isn't just for dancing. In many ways, they achieve this. They get the audience to question the fixed norms of society whilst being entertainers, not teachers.



LANGUAGES ///// IN ///// CONTACT

CODE-SWITCHING BETWEEN
AYMARA AND SPANISH
TEXT AND PHOTO: JET DE KORT



In the blazing sun, about 150 inhabitants of Wichi Wichi, a village on the banks of Lake Titicaca, gather at the local **plaza**. Every Saturday the townsfolk come here to discuss local issues. '¡Pido la palabra, pido la palabra!' (I want to speak, I want to speak!) calls a resident. He raises his voice, demanding attention to express his opinion on the topics discussed in this week's meeting. When it is finally his turn, he stands

up and starts his dialogue in Spanish: 'Compañeros y compañeras de nuestra comunidad, es tan importante que...' (Ladies and gentlemen of our community, it is important that...). I miss the rest, because he continues in Aymara, an indigenous language spoken by over two million people in Bolivia.

This phenomena is called code-switching, and it occurs when a speaker alter-

nates between two or more languages. Some of the attendees of the municipality are bilingual speakers, and they sometimes use elements of both Spanish and Aymara when talking. Rosalia Mamani, 51 years old, is fluent in both languages, and splits her time between Wichi Wichi and El Alto. She mainly resides in the city, but has a passion for the countryside and its people because of her **campo** roots. As a result, she alternates between

the two places every weekend and, consequently, between Aymara and Spanish. 'In El Alto I speak Spanish more often, because not everyone speaks Aymara, and in the countryside it is the other way around – there the majority speaks Aymara,' Rosalia explains. 'But sometimes I unconsciously mix between the two languages when conversing.'

I observe the people at the *plaza* in Wichi Wichi and listen to the conversations of Rosalia and her friends. I try to detect when she switches between Aymara and Spanish. With older people, she mainly speaks in Aymara. I don't understand much of their conversations, but occasionally she drops some Spanish

Bolivia, multilingualism is well-represented. There are a lot of people who speak another indigenous language besides Spanish,' Yapita says. In general, the Bolivian society is 'Spanishised', but in rural places such as Wichi Wichi, indigenous languages are still widely spoken, especially among the older generation.

Maruja Mamani was born and raised in Wichi Wichi. Her generation is much more accustomed to speaking Spanish. 'Initially I only spoke Aymara, because of my parents,' Maruja says. 'When I was of age to go to school, I learned how to speak and write in Spanish.' When she texts her friends, she always writes in Spanish, 'simply because I never learned how to write in Aymara,' she explains. Still, Maruja often uses Aymara because her grandparents never went to school and only know basic Spanish. In order to communicate with her family members, she must speak Aymara. Occasionally, however, her knowledge of the language is inadequate; instead she uses a Spanish word.

A pure language doesn't exist, and every language has adopted words from other languages. Yapita explains this as the metamorphosis of language. 'Words have a lifecycle; they are born, live, and die,' he says. 'Languages are in contact with each other, which influences their vocabularies.' This also applies to the following example given by Yapita; words like cable car and cell phone didn't exist in some indigenous languages. Therefore the Spanish words **teleférico** and **celular** are transformed into their Aymaran counterparts: *teleferico* – without accent – and *celulara*.

This is an example of differences in phonology. 'Aymara doesn't have accents, therefore the movement of the tongue is different; in Aymara it goes down, while it in Spanish goes up,' Yapita explains. As a result, sounds in Aymara are more monotone because there is no stress on any particular syllable. In Spanish, accents are essential; words can lose the definition when not pronouncing them properly. 'For example, when demanding someone to sit down, one would say *siéntate!*' Yapita says. 'Speak-

ers of Aymara often don't pronounce the accents when speaking Spanish, because they are not accustomed to its added value.'

Another common mistake made by Aymara speakers in Spanish is the use of the wrong article. 'They can't help it, because Aymara doesn't distinguish between masculine and feminine words,' Yapita says. Additionally, word order is different; Aymara sentences start with the subject, followed by complements, and finishing with verbs. 'These differences in grammar often cause confusion, especially for bilingual children in primary school,' Yapita says. 'They are just learning how to read and write, and don't identify the differences in grammar between the two languages.'

'SOMETIMES I UNCONSCIOUSLY MIX BETWEEN THE TWO LANGUAGES WHEN CONVERSING, THIS GOES SPONTANEOUSLY.'

- ROSALIA MAMANI

Yapita also encountered cases in which speakers of Aymara literally translated their words into Spanish. 'They say: *estoy en aqui* (I'm in here), which is incorrect Spanish, it should be: *estoy aqui* (I'm here). But it makes sense in Aymara, because the Aymaran equivalent could be translated this way,' he explains.

In Wichi Wichi, I try to recognize the examples given by Yapita. My knowledge of Aymara doesn't reach beyond the basics I picked up during my stay in Bolivia, so I find it hard to tell when the languages are in contact. I'm not a linguist, but I detect some language borrowing. An older **cholita** stares at me, and chuckles to her neighbor. They speak in Aymara, but one word I do understand: **gringuita**. Their curiosity cannot withhold them from talking to me. While having an **apthapi**, one of them says: 'Amiga, *tomate estito!*' (Friend, take this!) I take a **chuño** from the mound of potatoes laid out on an **aguayo**, and analyse the words she uses to invite me in the sharing of food. Shouldn't it be Amiga, *toma esto?* Almost unrecognizably, she transformed one short sentence into an Aymara-inflected Spanish one. This linguistic metamorphosis, although far from orthodox Spanish, was easily understood to my ears. ♦



EL GATO NEGRO

THE CARETAKER OF CIVIL SOCIETY

TEXT: ADRIANA MURILLO
IMAGES: COURTESY OF CHICHO SERNA

He is an ordinary guy who wears a hat and a black mask to express his critiques of the government and society. When he speaks, his words are heavy with irony. Nightly surveillance through social networks has allowed him to denounce abuses of power by politicians, bad social behavior, corruption, or simply promote a good attitude. In one post, he writes, 'The horn, the world's fastest and cheapest intelligence test,' in reference to the chaos and traffic of

the streets of Santa Cruz. He informs people of what is happening in the city through funny photos and memes instead of traditional reporting.

Here, Fede Morón shares his story and tells us about his transformation into the Black Cat.

Fede was born in Santa Cruz. He studied advertising and currently works as an independent publicist in a creative laboratory and is responsible for edu-

cational campaigns on social networks. He is also the creative director of Revolución Jigote and the Black Cat Workshop, where he produces his books and other personal projects.

'It took me several years to realize that I'm not a fan of advertising... I hate advertising,' Fede admits. 'But I use that hatred as a creative resource in my work. Basically everything that is unfair or or disrespectful bothers me. When I see things that other people overlook or do not want to see, it makes me say critical things.'

Fede found his voice through the personification of the Black Cat. 'I learned to use the black cat to play, to have fun, to hide or amuse myself, to be semi-hidden,' Fede explains. 'As a boy, I gave myself this nickname because I had a fascination with cats, in particular with black cats.'

His personification of the black cat is accompanied by a hat and a mask. For many people, he has become an opinion leader. His posts are very popular and his faithful followers constantly share and re-tweet the messages of this character. 'Somehow you can say I am an opinion leader in social networks, although I do not like the title,' Fede says. 'Basically, I say things that many people have thought or have been close to thinking.' In this way, he presents hilarious images by twisting and playing with words.

Fede has published two books. His first one was published in 2012 and is called, *The Statures of The Black Cat: Statures of a Bolivian in Facebook Times*. The sequel came out in 2013, under the title, *The Statures of The Black Cat II*, and he is working on a third publication to be released at the Santa Cruz book fair next year.

'I do not consider myself a writer. I consider myself a **loquito** with two books,' Fede laughs. 'In these books are the statuses or comments that I've made on social networks. What I basically did was take different pieces of news or events and publish about them, using black or absurd humour and sarcasm. I think that humour is the concrete way to talk about serious things, and that's why I use it a lot.'

The Black Cat intends to spread courage to the people so they can become socially conscience of their city and its authorities. He complements Fede Morón not only as an alter ego, but also a vigilante.



PRESENTA:



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CASCADA BOLIVIA

ecology vs development

THE STRUGGLE OVER THE DAMS IN THE BENI RIVER

TEXT: JET DE KORT
PHOTO: THERESA EDWARDS

On a humid and sunny day I traveled back from Madidi National Park on a wooden boat to the town of Rurrenabaque. The muddy Beni River streamed calmly towards the park's gateway to the Amazon, occasionally interrupted by various rapids. Halfway through the trip, the boat driver slows down, gazing into the distance. I see barbed wire strung across the width of the river coming closer. To my right, the riverbank is teeming with people, holding up banners with bold slogans such as: '¡No a las represas, si a la vida!' (No to the dams, yes to life!)

Through the month of November, the El Bala Strait, located in Madidi National Park, was host to several indigenous communities protesting against the plan to construct massive hydroelectric dams in their rivers.

Miriam Pariamo, vice president of the Center for Indigenous Women of North La Paz, explains the nature of **la vigilia**. 'The government thinks it can just interfere in our territory, but we do not accept this,' she says. Pariamo's legal claims are based on Article 30 of the 2009 Bolivian Constitution, which recognizes right to autonomy and self-determination of indigenous nations as equal of that of the State's justice system. The government, however, has yet to consult local communities on its plans to construct the dams. 'We have been living here for centuries and the rivers belong to our territory,' she says.

Many opponents of the dam believe the project will have devastating human and environmental consequences. According to the Fundación Solón, an organization that analyzes environmental issues, 1,931 square kilometers will be flooded, equaling five times the surface of La Paz. It will transform the surrounding environment, destroying one of the most biodiverse places on Earth. The foundation estimates that as a result, 4,000 people will be displaced from their homes along with the species that live and grow in the area.

Pablo Solón, director of the foundation and an environmental specialist, says: 'The idea for this dam already has been on the table since 1958, but until today it has never been realized.' Last year, however, the National Electricity Company of Bolivia (ENDE) commissioned Geodata, an Italian engineering company, to conduct a study on the construction of hydroelectric dams in the Amazonian-based Beni River. In August of this year, the Geodata team finished its study and proposed a design that includes the construction of two dams, one at El Bala and the other at El Chepete. 'It is the largest energy-related project in Bolivian history, but, surprisingly, the plans have never been officially released for the public,' says Solón.

In an interview with Abya Yala, a Bolivian television station, engineer Eduardo Paz, who is the executive president of ENDE, elaborated on the government's plans. 'Bolivia needs electricity like any other country in the world,' says Paz. 'The dams will produce 3,700 megawatts per year, which is more than we use in Bolivia. They will not only serve the Bolivian people, but will also be beneficial to our economy.' The project is destined for exporting electricity to Brazil through a pipeline that will run across the country, from Rurrenabaque to the Brazilian town of Cujabá, 1,500 kilometers away.

In the interview, Paz says that the dams will only affect the area minimally. 'It will only have an impact on 1.9% of the protected area and not the previously proposed 16%. We don't want to harm the people there. We have taken them into account in our studies,' he says. Moreover, the government calculates that the dams will create 60,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Solón questions the data and information released by the government, and claims the cost of the pipeline is not included in the budget proposed by Geodata. '6.3 billion dollars are estimated for the construction of El Bala and El

Chepete alone,' he says. 'The investment for this project is incredibly large. It exceeds the country's total external debt.' According to Solón, in a country like Bolivia, it is neither profitable nor viable to undertake the risk of such a large investment. 'It is important that we as Bolivians participate in the discussion. The project doesn't only mean a catastrophe for the Amazon. In the end, we are the ones who are paying for it,' he says.

The government plans to begin constructing the dams in 2017 and to complete them by 2024. Nonetheless, they will have to deal with Pariamo and her fellow protesters to execute the project. So far, the protesters have managed to expel the Geodata engineers from the area and to hold the strait of El Bala for several weeks. Pariamo pledges to 'keep on fighting until the government puts its plans aside.'

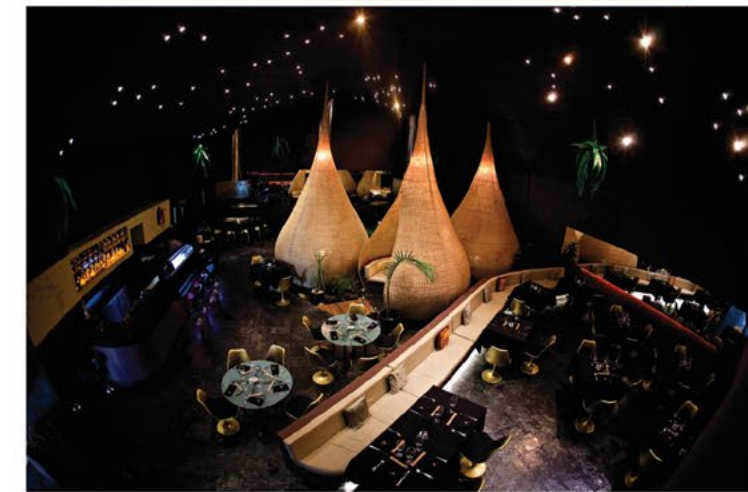
'WE WILL KEEP ON FIGHTING UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT PUTS ITS PLANS ASIDE.'

**- MIRIAM PARIAMO,
CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN OF NORTH LA PAZ**

The economic costs of energy are high, but with the construction of the dams the people at the Madidi National Park will also pay a price. The flora and fauna of the Amazon will be lost, people's ways of life will disappear, and a portion of "the lungs of the world" will be destroyed. To prevent this, it seems the people at El Bala will raise their voices and defend their rights to protect **Pachamama** to the bitter end.



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CHE PANTOMIME

THE SING-ALONG STORY OF THE
MARXIST GUERRILLA

TEXT: ANGUS MCNELLY ILLUSTRATION: HUGO L. CUELLAR

In the auditorium of Bolivia's Central Bank in La Paz, a **cumbia** star leads a sing-along to a pop song whilst children wave flags and tail colourful ribbons across the room. Their movements are military in style and a sense of unease takes over as I watch twenty children punch their hands with intended menace.

Welcome to the Bolivian Anti-imperialist Youth, where children perform a musical interpretation of the life of Che Guevara, complete with a dance troupe.

The Bolivian government chose to mark the 50th anniversary of Argentine Marxist guerrilla's arrival to Bolivia with the performance. Although the story of Ernesto Guevara, known more commonly as "Che", has undergone many changes since his death, this show may be one of its most surreal interpretations.

The musical presents Che not as a Marxist who took on the armed struggle of the global revolutionary vanguard, but as

a commodity, an icon, a bastion of consumerism, whose face can be found on countless products, including t-shirts that are touted in London, Berlin, and the 16 de Julio market in El Alto.

Che entered Bolivia in 1966 to wage war against the military dictatorship of René

Were song and dance the best way to commemorate this revolutionary leader?

Barrientos. He embarked on a unfruitful guerrilla campaign in the east of the country, before being captured and killed in October 1967. The Bolivian Communist Party and a smattering of mining leaders – including Federico

Although the story of Che has undergone many changes since his death, this show may be one of its most surreal interpretations.

Escóbar Zapata – supported the campaign, but it never fully captured the imagination of the Bolivian working class. After his death, however, Che was turned into a revolutionary figure who fought to emancipate the Bolivian people from capitalism and oppressive dictators.

Through this interpretation, Che became a symbol of resistance and hope. His ideas penetrated the resistance to the dictatorships of the 1970s and galvanised the masses who helped bring democracy back to Bolivia. His visions were present in the infamous battles of Black October in 2003, where the Bolivian population rose up against the government and unceremoniously deposed the neoliberal orthodoxy; it was a moment that transformed Bolivian politics and eventually led to the election of Evo Morales. The influence of Che's image extends to the offices of prominent government officials. His quotes are etched on the walls and desks of government ministries. This explains why a government-sponsored show about his life would be in order, but does not justify the form of Che's latest incarnation.

A group of mostly children marched onto the stage carrying the Bolivian flag and the **wiphala**. They started to dance and prance as *cumbia* star Monica Ergueta, dressed in a skimpy khaki outfit, sang along to the revolutionary song, "Hasta Siempre" by Nathalie Cardone. The effect was bizarre. Why was there such a show of nationalism at an anti-imperialism event? Were song and dance the best way to commemorate this revolutionary leader? It was, in my mind, ridiculous.

The adaptation, however, stuck in my mind, so maybe it was somewhat successful. The point of the event was to engage the Bolivian youth in politics and to teach them lessons from the past. Although they probably won't forget the Che of the show, will they remember the revolutionary Che? Will they understand the reasons why he came to Bolivia? Will they recall the ideals for which he fought?

In transmuting historical figures – in changing water into wine, Martin Luther King into a peaceful protestor who always respected the rule of law, Nelson Mandela from a Marxist guerrilla to a patron of human rights, or Che into a comic figure – we lose the historical lessons that their actions hold. We lose the context, their drive, and most of all the revolutionary content. World-changers become little more than a face on a t-shirt or a pantomime hero waving a flag.

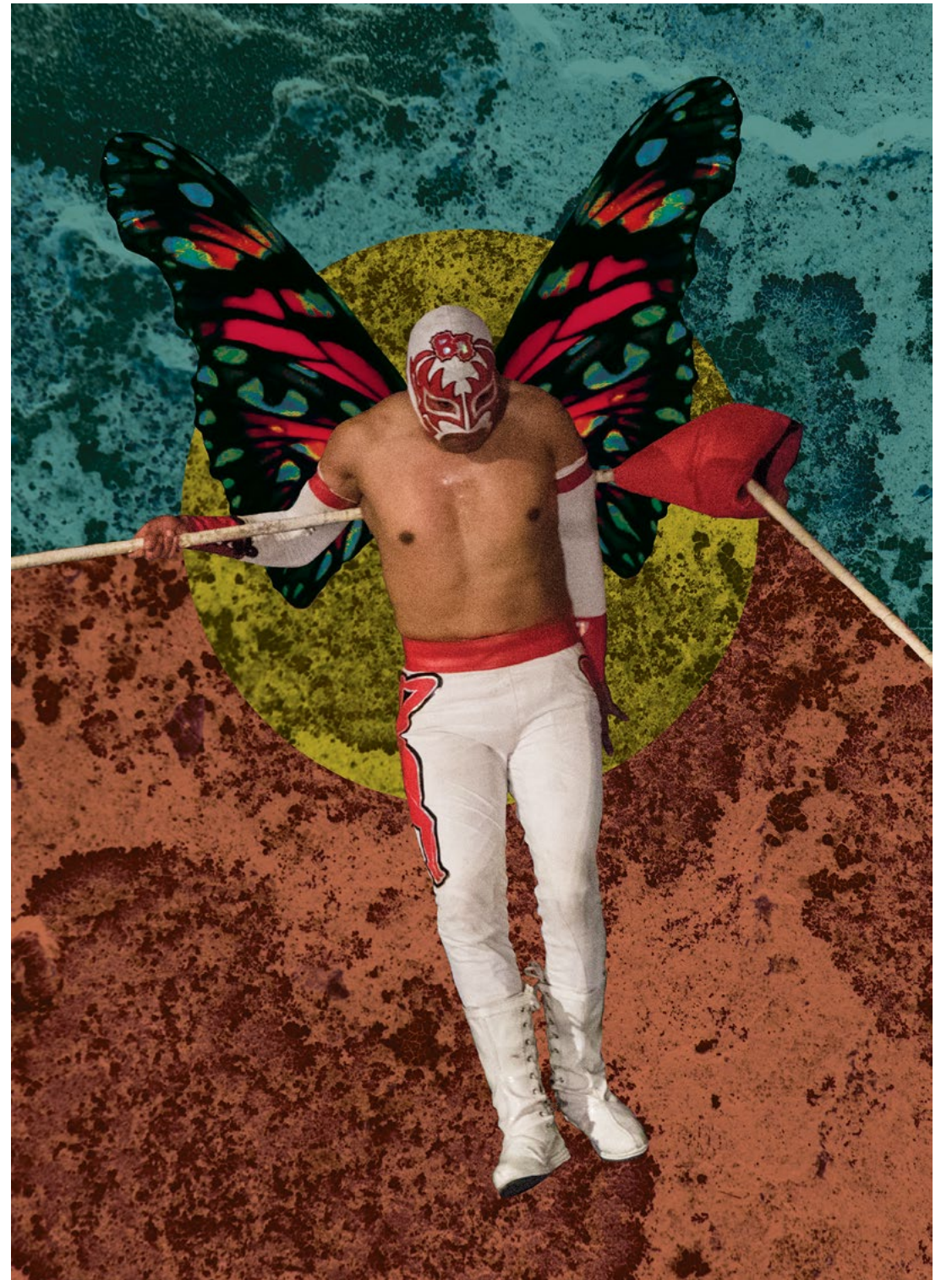
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Images: Marla Celeste
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IDENTIDAD —MADIDI—

Proving the park's unmatched biodiversity

TEXT AND PHOTO: ELEANOR HENDERSON

The journey from La Paz to the San José de Uchupiamonas community, in the heart of Madidi National Park, reinforces its ecological importance. I flew from El Alto at 7:30 in the morning and the terror of boarding a plane that could fit in my living room was alleviated the moment the Amazon began to sprawl beneath us. It was an experience in and of itself. Soon I would be on a boat making my way down those same rivers and estuaries.

As you take the boat from the town of Rurrenabaque into the jungle's heart, macaws fly above, and the sound of the rainforest is draining. Madidi bridges the tropical Andes and the Amazon Basin, and has an altitudinal span of nearly 6000m. The sheer biodiversity of the park is undeniable and, for me, it's become clear that it deserves the recognition and cultural significance that Identidad Madidi will bring it.

The most unprecedented findings are six species of vertebrates that are new to science

Identidad Madidi is a two year scientific expedition in the Madidi National Park that has focused on collecting data on its population of vertebrates and butterflies. The project branches across several institutions in Bolivia, including the Wildlife Conservation Society, Instituto

de Ecología, Dirección General de Biodiversidad y Áreas Protegidas, Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, and numerous others.

The expedition began in June 2015 and has already collected data at eleven sites, with plans to cover five more. The primary objective is to prove the previously suspected fact that Madidi is the world's most biologically diverse

protected area. This terminology is stressed by expedition leader, Robert Wallace, who notes that they are 'not trying to prove that it is the most biologically diverse place in the world', as that would require determining biodiversity by square meter or kilometre.

The champion by that count is most likely somewhere in Ecuador or Colombia. Instead, what they are seeking to prove is that Madidi, as a singular national park, protects more species than any other on Earth. The hypothesis is becoming more definite as the expedition goes on, since the project has already doubled the expected number of new vertebrate species recorded on the exhibition, from 100 to 200. According to Wallace, 'The altitudinal gradient is crucial. It is the reason for Madidi's outstanding biodiversity.'

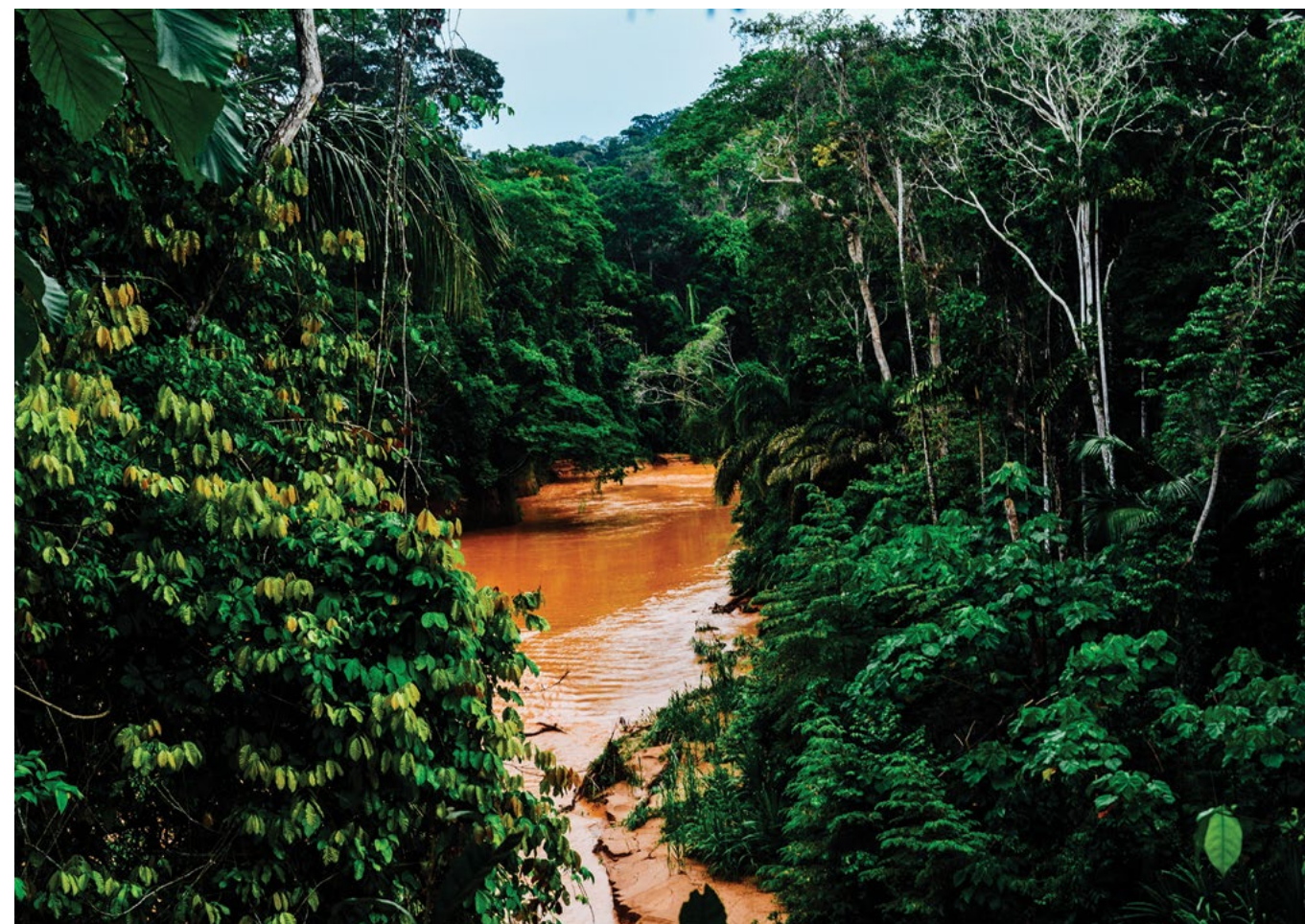
Madidi has been known by ornithologists for decades. Before the Identidad Madidi expedition began, there were already 1001 bird species recorded in

the park, roughly 90 percent of the species they expected to be found there. In contrast, the existing data records only 25 percent of the butterflies that are expected to live in the park. In less than two years, the expedition has logged 463 butterfly species for the first time in Madidi, bringing the total number of records in 2015 to 1080 butterfly varieties,

explicit when considering the lack of data Identidad Madidi has collected on moths as opposed to butterflies, which are the only invertebrates the study has focused on. It has focused on butterflies for two main reasons: they are more charismatic, and far more 'manageable' in terms of the number of species. Wallace says they could find between

lands and only covers an altitudinal gradient of around 4000m. By the end of Identidad Madidi, Wallace expects they'll be able to say that Madidi has more vertebrates and butterflies than any other national park in the world.

For Wallace, the need to communicate the importance of Madidi to the rest



more than can be found in all of North America. Wallace says a conservative estimate for the final tally is around 1600.

Although the influx of different species is exceeding original expectations, the most unprecedented findings of the expedition are the six new species of vertebrates registered by 2015. These are not just 'new' to Bolivia or Madidi, but 'new' to science. This has clearly drawn attention to Identidad Madidi. Last year, the local and international press extensively covered the discovery of a new rubber frog, the *Oreobates sp. nov.*

What's even more incredible is the extensive potential for new discoveries that remains in the park. This is

10,000 and 15,000 different species of moths in the park. 'At one point,' he recounted, from a previous excursion into the park, 'the entomologist estimated there was something like 300 to 400 species of moths on one bed sheet with a light at one time.'

The need for more research and attention is true for the majority of the most ecologically diverse areas in the world. It is difficult to show that Madidi is the most biologically diverse protected area in the world because that level of data is not yet available for other protected areas. Before beginning the expedition, the Wildlife Conservation Society used the data on the Manu park in Peru as the closest comparison for Madidi. Manu, however, doesn't contain tropical grass-

of Bolivia is at the heart of the project. 'Whether it turns out that Madidi is first, second, or third in the world for biodiversity doesn't matter,' he says. 'The data we are collecting is crucial.'

Today, the project is being taken to schools across the country and has reached more than 18,300 students in approximately 149 institutions, encouraging and exciting young people in Bolivia. For many conservationists, a primary goal of their work is to expand people's knowledge of the areas they study in order to encourage their protection. The reach of Identidad Madidi in Bolivia is extraordinary. By 2017, the project hopes to reach an additional 150 schools, totalling 40% of all educational institutes in La Paz and El Alto. ◊

ALL DRIED UP

THE DROUGHT HAS BROUGHT OUT THE UGLY AND THE GOOD IN LA PAZ'S AFFECTED AREAS

TEXT: KARINA GUZMAN
PHOTO: WILLIAM WROBLEWSKI



Manuel Morales, a resident of the San Antonio neighborhood in eastern La Paz, has been collecting rainwater to flush the toilet and do the laundry, using every drop he can gather from the sky to complete household tasks. Water is rationed in his neighbourhood at the moment, and his house receives it for only an hour a day, which he uses for cooking and consumption. 'I never imagined it would come to this,' he exclaims.

La Paz is currently facing the worst drought it has seen in over 25 years. Climate change and deforestation are blamed, but accusations of mismanagement by the public water company EPSAS have also been leveled. None-

theless, the three reservoirs that provide La Paz and El Alto with water are almost dry.

Protests have swept the city since this latest water crisis, and Manuel thinks they will continue to grow. Demonstrations over access to water are nothing new to Bolivia: protests in Cochabamba

THERE'S AN AWAKENING OF SOLIDARITY IN PEOPLE THAT TRANSCENDS CLASS DISTINCTIONS.

in 1999–2000 forced the US company Bechtel to abandon its water-distribution concession, and in 2005, other protests in El Alto assured a similar fate for

the French multinational Suez. If things do not improve, the residents of La Paz and El Alto have their response well-rehearsed.

In mid-November, dependable sources of drinking water disappeared overnight in much the city. Augusto San Miguel, a young law student who lives in the

exclusive Aranjuez neighbourhood in the city's far south, was shocked when he turned on the tap and nothing came out. He had always taken his water sup-

ply for granted. Now city residents like him must come to terms with the daily reality of living with limited water. The periphery and the south of the city are the worst affected, but the shortage has hit both the poor and the rich alike, yielding interesting consequences.

Some affected residents have been creative in their search for and conservation of water. After the initial shock of losing access to her regular water supply, Zona Sur resident Julia Chinchero organised with her neighbours. Together, they searched for alternative water sources and escorted water trucks to their neighbourhood (other residents have been known to divert trucks from their assigned areas). Eventually, the

water returned, but, in a sign of poor planning, water trucks are still being sent to Chinchero's neighbourhood instead of areas of the city where the water supply is still interrupted.

This unequal distribution of the limited water supply provided by trucks forces **paceños** to be vigilant. Gloria Quino, from the northern "Cervecería" neighbourhood, says that the water shortage has caused confrontations among neighbours. Water trucks have been commandeered by the unscrupulous, forcing Gloria to guard the tankers as they make their way from the Hospital Obredor district.

Chinchero has also seen the water-rationing system break down. Although there is a group of neighbors who oversee the provision of water in her neighbourhood, most people on foot can only carry a couple of litres; those with cars can receive many gallons more. And some, like Augusto's family, struggle to collect the water which is distributed miles from their homes. Additionally, water-truck schedules are not always convenient.

La Paz's city centre is known for, among other things, the continual demonstrations that take place on its streets. There's always a different demand, and always the same method: marches down the boulevards, with placards waving and the shouting of discontent. It's a way to demand one's rights and to hold the powerful accountable. And the people from El Alto are particularly renowned for using this strategy to get their voices heard.

In the past, these demonstrations were usually staged by people from the poorer districts of the city. But with the water shortages plaguing all sectors of society, the relatively privileged residents of Zona Sur and other affluent areas are also taking their concerns to the streets. They've been pushed into a scenario where their need is provoking a political awakening. Augusto reflected on the

changes triggered by the water shortage: neighbours are getting into disputes with each other over access to water, which some parties are trying to exploit to make a political point, but there's also an awakening of solidarity in people that transcends class distinctions. A recent march in Plaza San Francisco illustrated this, when a group of protesters from Zona Sur demonstrated next to a group from El Alto. Some of the Zona Sur protesters commented on the **alteños'** better organisation and suggested that they emulate the more experienced group.

'I NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD COME TO THIS.'

- MANUEL MORALES

The current water crisis in La Paz and El Alto is building bridges between social classes, and hopefully raising environmental awareness. This resource shortage comes as an intensive course on effective water management for all, and as a severe political sting for some. Manuel recognises that some people were thoughtless about water, but this is changing through their experiences of the crisis. His family has learned to recycle the water they use to wash their faces and brush their teeth, using it to flush the toilet.

Given that this crisis is in a large part caused by changing environmental factors, these productive responses can only be helpful for the city of La Paz as a whole in the long run. In the wake of the crisis there has been a lot of finger-pointing and searching for someone to blame. Julia Chinchero believes this crisis was known about five years ago, and resents that nobody took action to prevent it earlier. Her concerns may be legitimate, and the government and the municipal water company must respond. But pointing the finger in the face of the daily struggles faced by most *paceños* because of this crisis is not particularly helpful on the ground. What is encouraging is that people are responding both by changing the way they view water and the way they use it in their daily routines, and educating themselves over what they – and the government – can do to prevent history from repeating itself. ♦



LAS PRIMAS OF BOLIVIA'S NEW SCHOOL TATTOO

LET YOURSELF BE SEDUCED BY THIS SEXY URBAN STYLE

TEXT: VALERIA SALINAS MACEDA
TATTO AND PHOTO: JODIDO DIEGO (JUAN DIEGO ALVARADO)

Since 2010, the tattoo scene in La Paz has experienced a revolution of sorts, as the Bolivian New School style has become increasingly popular within the community. The New School of tattoo design mixes the styles of graffiti and graphic novels, popular amongst a global movement of New School tattoo artists, with traditions and typical characters of Bolivia. The result: a new tattoo aesthetic that leaves the marks of the Bolivian national identity.

Juan Diego Alvarado, 28, was born in La Paz and is one of the pioneering artists that started creating these new designs. He believes that inking these images is important because, as he emphasizes, the relevance of cultural content and 'identity factors' are the central points of the Bolivian New School style. 'The idea is to create designs to show part of the Bolivian identity,' he says. 'In this way, Bolivians can valorized our culture and spread it to other countries.'

'The idea is to create designs to show part of the Bolivian identity.'

- Tattoo artist Juan Diego Alvarado

Diego, known amongst his friends and peers as Jodido Diego, has also created a series of these designs, which have drawn accolades because of their originality and innovation. He calls them **las primas** – **cholitas**, but with a modern look that includes a rebel spirit. Juan Diego created his first *prima* in 2014, for a design book. His intention was to

achieve a fusion between traditional Bolivian culture and contemporary elements. He incorporated elements of graffiti and comic-book styles in order to design a *cholita* that fit in with New School trends in tattooing.

Las primas always look like beautiful young girls, and all of them share similar facial features. They seem to be part of the same family, as if they are indeed *primas*.

The modern Andean graphics created by Diego consistently show a traditional symbol of La Paz – the *cholita* – from an innovative point of view, as the artist takes the risk of re-creating these typically traditionally dressed women as sensual pinup girls. *Las primas* are attractive and doe-eyed; their intense gaze shows their sex appeal. Some of *las primas* are naked; others exhibit less flesh, and a few are simply portraits. No matter the pose, however, there is an essential *cholita*-ness in each depiction, a concept from the collective social im-

aginary of the people of La Paz. For example, *las primas* wear Borsalino bowler hats and gold jewelry as indispensable accessories, and, of course, they have long dark braids – oftentimes drawn as coca leaves.

These *primas* also modernize the traditional *cholita* character. They are tattooed themselves. On their skin, Diego

inks designs laden with symbols of La Paz's identity: the city's initials, the letters "LP"; **tantawawa** masks, a ritual element used in **Todos Santos** celebrations; coca leaves; Mt. Illimani; **fiatitas**, or Andean skulls that protect the home and promise miracles; **chakanas**, or Andean crosses; and other cultural symbols. Bolivian identity survives, even thrives, using these tattoos as a strategy.

The family of *las primas* is big, and it grows each year. Today this inked household has approximately 20 members, and it's even going international. Elvis García is a Chilean tattooist who has a sexy *prima* tattooed on his left arm. 'When I looked at her, I fell in love,' Elvis says, laughing as he remembers the day he met *la prima* that captured his heart while he was visiting La Paz. He describes this event as 'love at first sight,' and he confesses that the sensuality of the image was a factor in deciding to have it inked into his skin. Perhaps this flirty *cholita* wanted to know the sea, and used her most powerful seduction techniques to captivate Elvis with the objective to move to Chile with him. Nowadays, this *prima* lives in Santa Cruz, and each day she accompanies Elvis to his tattoo studio.

This creative metamorphosis – from the traditional presentation of a **cholita**

paceña to a new, modern, sexy depiction is exciting. A little ink and a lot of imagination has turned an icon of La Paz into a sensual urban phenomenon.

If you're looking for an iconic Bolivian twist to a tattoo, you may not be able to resist the seduction of *las primas* from the Bo-

livian New School. Give them a chance – they are really quite sexy! ♦

If you are interested in a *prima* tattoo from La Paz, contact Juan Diego Alvarado at his Instagram: @jodidodiego. For more information about this artist, visit jodidodiego.com.



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FROM THE ASHES

A DETENTION CENTRE FOR ADOLESCENTS
TRIES THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ROUTE

TEXT : RODRIGO DELGADO CALDERON

I am sitting in Café Urbano in Sopocachi listening to 'El Fénix', a song by **paceño** rapper-songwriter Fercho. The lyrics, set to hip-hop beats with Latin flavour, tell a story of redemption – Fercho's own.

'I'm gonna get out of this hole that I stuck myself into,' Fercho raps in Spanish. 'I'll live again / like a phoenix, I'll be reborn / Run like the times, fly with the wind / Free and unimpeded.'

Fercho, the stage name of Luis Fernando Gutiérrez Eyzaguirre, is short and athletic with light brown skin and a shy smile. He was orphaned at 12 years old and subsequently got involved with petty crime, including robbery. In 2012, when he was 20, he was convicted of aggravated assault. As an adult, he could have been sent to the San Pedro prison in central La Paz, but instead he was sent to *Qalauma*, the first juvenile social-rehabilitation centre of its kind in Bolivia. He served a 20 month sentence and was then released on probation for good behaviour.

Since opening in 2012, *Qalauma*, which is located about 20 kilometres south of La Paz on the **altiplano**, has housed approximately 600 teenagers and adolescents between the ages of 15 and 25. The centre's approach to social rehabilitation is based on the idea of 'restorative justice', which takes a more human and holistic approach in working with inmates than

other detention centres. *Qalauma* tries to change the punitive essence of the penitentiary system towards a more humane treatment of the incarcerated.

Qalauma is an Aymara word meaning 'the drop of water that carves the stone'. The name itself is full of symbolism and serves as a metaphor for both the judicial and penitentiary systems and attempts towards the reform of these systems. The 'stone' symbolises the hard and rigid nature of the judicial system and its punitive approach. It also represents the existing prejudice towards inmates in Bolivia. The 'drop of water' symbolises the notion that change can happen through perseverance and conviction.

In more traditional penitentiary systems, the aim is to punish offenders with no reconciliation for the victim or community. However, the restorative justice approach at *Qalauma* turns the idea around by focusing on the needs of both the victim and the offender, as well as involving the community. The center's restorative justice process involves three stages of rehabilitation. First, a personalized diagnosis of each offender is created to identify what factors and conditions led him to commit a crime and an individualized strategy is identified to help mitigate past traumas. Second, education and training is provided to the offenders, in the form of professional workshops. Third, the center offers therapy sessions in which family members and victims can confront the offender.

Around half of the inmates in *Qalauma* had dropped out of school before being incarcerated, so the training and workshops are particularly valuable to the young offenders. For Fercho, the education and musical workshops he received at the centre provided the opportunity to record an album called *La Misión*. Because of prejudice that society has towards inmates, he's had difficulty finding work. 'I couldn't find a steady job and I was often overworked and underpaid,' Fernando says. 'It's a stigma you carry.' He currently works part-time, selling mail-order items – clothes, perfumes, jewellery – door to door.

**'I'll live again / like a phoenix,
I'll be reborn.'**

- from 'El Fénix', by Fercho

Despite obvious challenges, the experiences of the inmates at *Qalauma* have had significant positive effects. Since it opened less than five years ago, the rate of all former inmates that have relapsed back into criminal activity remains less than 7 percent. *Qalauma's* successful model has paved the way for reform of the juvenile judicial and penitentiary systems. It now serves as an example that is being copied throughout Bolivia.

Although he doesn't recall his time locked up as a pleasant experience, Fercho is thankful for the help he received there. 'If it weren't for *Qalauma*, I don't know where I'd be right now,' he admits. 'It helped me realize that I'd need a change in life.'

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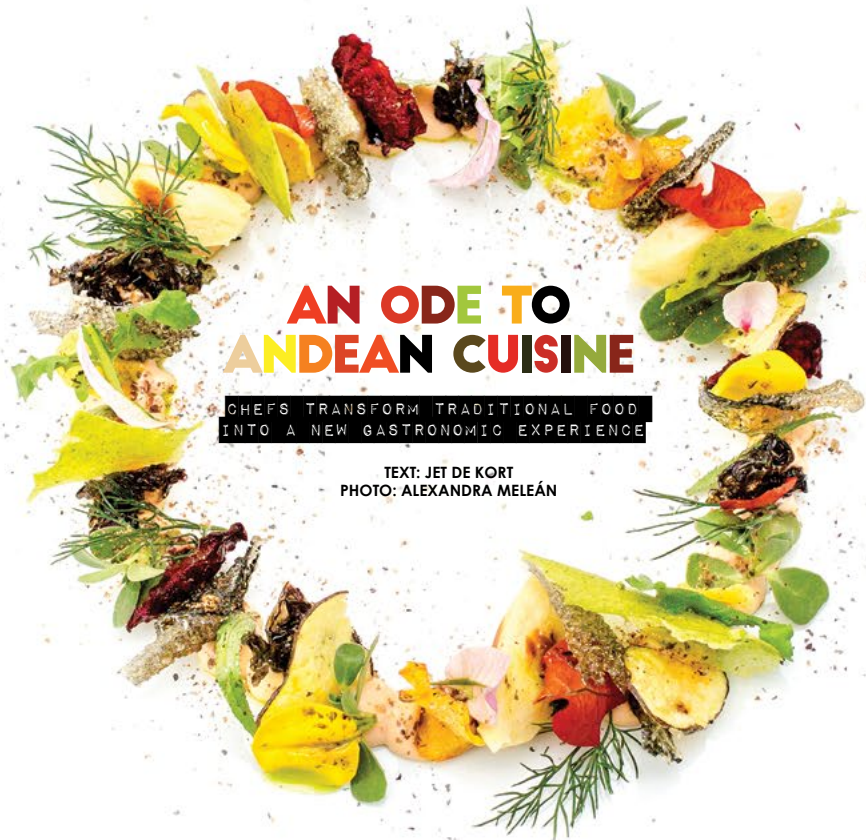


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AN ODE TO ANDEAN CUISINE

CHEFS TRANSFORM TRADITIONAL FOOD INTO A NEW GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE

TEXT: JET DE KORT
PHOTO: ALEXANDRA MELEÁN

While living in La Paz, I have inherited much of Bolivia's food traditions, from early morning **salteñas** to **chufío** and **choclo** for lunch on the **altiplano**, and from the countless soups to **anticuchos** after a night out. Which is nothing to say of the enormous amounts of **pollo frito**. These dishes are some of my favorites in Bolivia, as they are for millions of Bolivians, too. Basic ingredients such as quinoa, potatoes, and **yuca** are characteristic of the Andean menu, and they've also become part of the much of the rest of the world's diet.

Ona Restaurant is a new gastronomic establishment in town, and it celebrates the culinary traditions of the country by presenting an innovative menu. It is located in Zona Sur, where a gourmet dining scene has flourished over the past few years. Ona is located in the Atix Hotel, and it opened its doors officially in December. The young chefs here offer an à la carte menu as well as an attractive prix fixe of seven courses that provides a tour of the flavours and tastes of Bolivia.

Head chef Juan Pablo Reyes explains the concept of the restaurant, which focuses on remembrance and memory. 'In our menu, we bring up flavours that people remember,' he says. 'It is maybe aesthetic,

but the idea is that when guests come to eat here, they will recognize the flavours of the food and relate it to their memories.'

Reyes and his team transform these memories into mouthwatering gastronomic delights. 'We mainly work with fresh, seasonal and locally sourced ingredients, and apply different techniques to the preparation of the dishes,' says Reyes. The ancient Andean ingredients are transformed into new culinary experiences by modern techniques. Traditional and known flavours are given a new presentation.

As I've only been living in La Paz for three months, I am curious if Reyes's menu allows me to recall my short-lived Bolivian culinary experience. The starting cocktail is promising; Andean gin La República served with local herbs evokes memories of nights out in La Paz. The next item, *yuca* shaped into a carrot, was followed up by a must-have on any Bolivian menu: soup. The creamy base of native potatoes might be a safe choice, but the additional beet tortellinis stuffed with more potato give it an extra culinary touch. Continuing my fine dining journey, I try a pretty and fine-tuned plate consisting of smoked trout cream buried under a bed of Andean seaweed, native potatoes, and lettuce.

After devouring these small dishes, I'm ready to be surprised by the main courses, but first a refreshing lemon-based sorbet to prepare myself. More trout is served, this time fried and marinated in herbs and grains accompanied with a variety of potatoes. It reminds me of my journey to Lake Titicaca, where this delicacy is farmed. Then I enjoy an entrecôte served with typical products of Bolivian soil, such as callampa mushrooms and **arracacia**. And last but not least, a scoop of cinnamon ice cream, traditionally eaten in the country's **plazas** by many Bolivians on the weekend.

After more than satisfying my appetite, I reflect on the meal. The flavours and tastes presented were not unknown to me; the ingredients that were used are common in any Bolivian kitchen. The menu translates into my memories of Bolivian food; I recognize the different components of the dishes and relate it to the food I ate.

The chefs at the Ona – which means 'gift' in Pukina, a now-extinct language originating on the shores of Lake Titicaca – have succeeded in executing their concept. I will remember this experience, dining on new interpretations of traditional Andean cuisine, as an exciting summary of the flavours I have enjoyed in Bolivia. ♦

GLOSSARY

BolivianExpress
Magazine

AGUAYO - a traditional, colourful, hand-woven cloth

ALTEÑO - a resident of El Alto

ALTIPLANO - Bolivia's high plain

ANTICUCHO - beef heart marinated, skewered, and seared over the grill

APTHAPI - an act of communal eating and togetherness practiced in rural regions of Bolivia

ARRACACIA - a root vegetable originally from the Andes

CAMPO - 'countryside'

CELULAR - 'cell phone'

CHAKANA - the Incan cross

CHOCLO - a large-kernel variety of field corn from the Andes

CHOLITA - a term of endearment for traditional, indigenous Aymara and Quechua women

CHOLITA PACEÑA - a traditional Aymara women from La Paz

CHUÑO - freeze-dried potato product traditionally made by Quechua and Aymara communities in Bolivia

CUMBIA - a style of dance music popular across Latin America

GRINGUITA - a white female from the United States, also often used to refer to any foreign, non-Latina female

LÁ VIGILIA - 'vigil'

LAS PRIMAS - 'the cousins'; refers to cholitas drawn in a modern street style popular with some Bolivian tattoo artists and fanatics

LOQUITO - slang for 'crazy guy'

ÑATITAS - human skulls kept in people's homes that are said to have special powers of protection; they are adorned and venerated by families and are said to keep families safe and prosperous

PACEÑO - a person from the city of La Paz

PACHAMAMA - a Mother Earth figure in Aymara and Quechua cultures

PLAZA - a public square

POLLO FRITO - 'fried chicken'

QALAUAMA - Aymara word, meaning 'the water drop that carves the stone'

SALTEÑA - a style of baked, savory empanada from Bolivia, filled with meat and mixed in a sweet, slightly spicy sauce

TANTAWAWA - a sweet bread, often formed in the shape of a child, used during 'Day of the Dead' celebrations

TELEFÉRICO - 'cable car'

TODOS SANTOS - the Feast of 'All Saints'

WIPHALA - A flag consisting of a series of brightly colored squares representing the many nations of Bolivia

YUCA - 'cassava'

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