

P

eru's newfound economic dynamism has brought with it a number of surprises. After the numbing violence and cultural stagnation of the Shining Path years, the capital, Lima, has leapt ahead to become two things no one had ever expected of it: a global gastronomic capital, and one of Latin America's hottest art cities.

Artistically Lima has three great strengths. One is its fast-moving contemporary art scene, fuelled by pioneering local fairs PArC (which this year staged its third edition) and Art Lima. The country's wealth, derived in part from mining and minerals, in part from agriculture and fishing, has created an upper middle class with a healthy appetite for contemporary art. And with demand, of course, comes supply. Vigorous and varied, the art scene in Lima is hard to pin down, but it is characterised by a lively interest in social issues, a preference for installation, photography and mixed media over painting, and an unabashed use of colour. The past two decades have seen an upsurge of young Peruvian artists such as Christian Bendayán, Fernando Bryce, Ishmael Randall Weeks, William Cordova, Cherman, and Eliana Otta.

Secondly, Lima has a massive haul of Peru's pre-Hispanic heritage, which dates from around 1500BC until the Spanish conquest in 1534. This is essentially shared out between the city's Museo de la Nación (which has 15,500 pre-Columbian works) and its National Museum of Anthropology, Archaeology and History – though neither of these establishments has the allure of the Museo Larco, founded by collector and archaeologist Rafael Larco Hoyle (1901–66). This whitewashed 18th-century mansion, set among verdant gardens in the Pueblo Libre district, is an elegant display case for treasures including the Inca *quipu* – knotted strings in enigmatic arrangements, thought to have been a means of communication – and an extraordinary collection of Chimú ceremonial garb from 1300 to 1532, which seems to fill the dimly lit gallery with a mysterious golden glow.

The city's third speciality is the art of the Viceroyalty, dating from the latter's creation by »

Lima heats up

The capital of Peru is emerging as a sizzling centre for contemporary art as well as gastronomy. As the Lima Museum of Art prepares to launch its new permanent exhibition, Paul Richardson picks the best of the city's museums and galleries, and speaks to globetrotting local chef Gastón Acurio



A view of Lima from the Chorrillos seafront

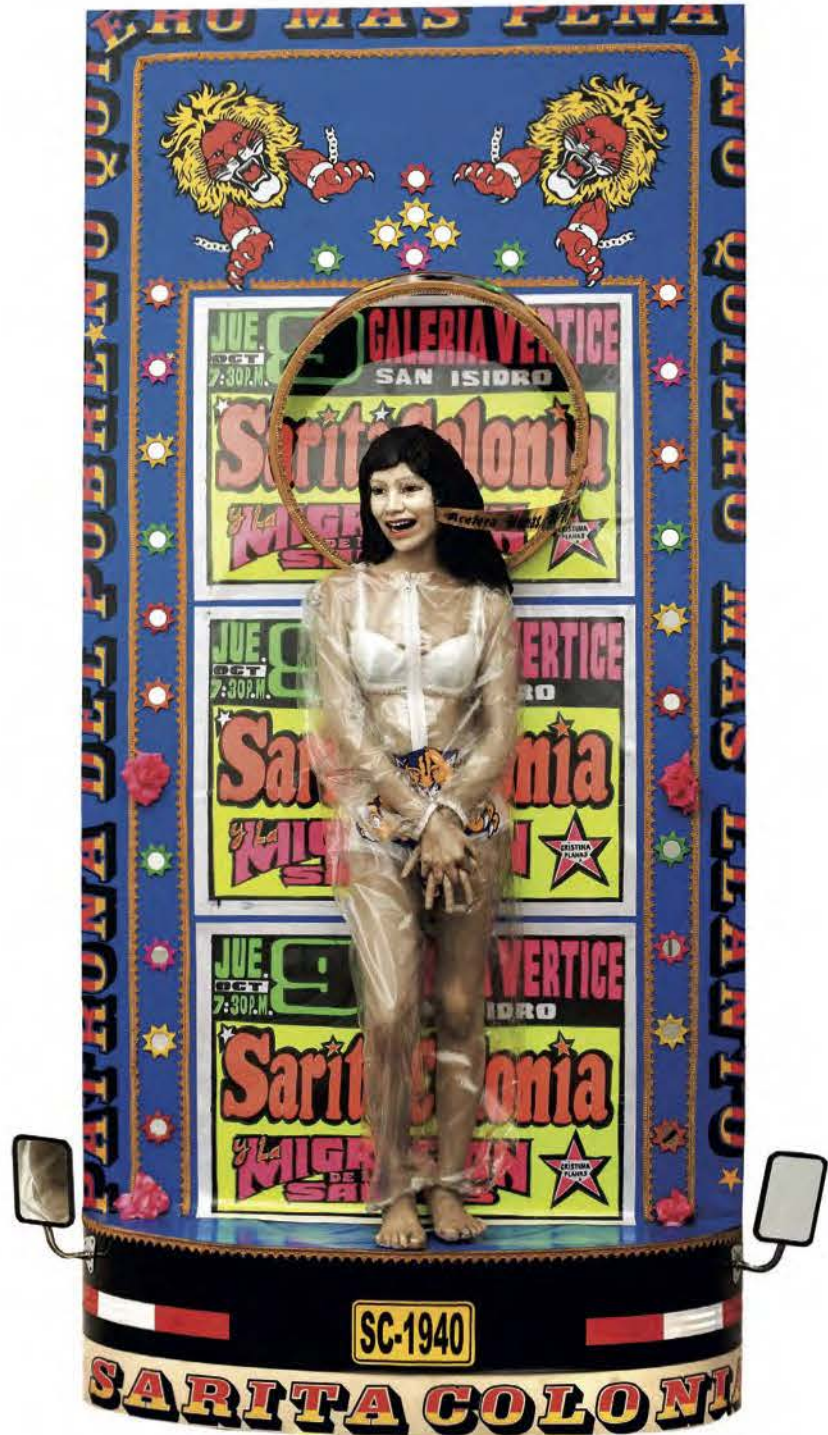
Below, Cristina Planas, *Sarita*,
at Galería Delbarrio in
Chorrillos. Opposite, Plaza
San Martín in central Lima

the Spanish Crown to Peru's independence in 1824. A morning spent poking around the churches and convents of the historic Centro district, ground zero for the Spanish colonial enterprise in Lima, should satisfy even the strongest craving for 17th-century religious paintings in gold-slathered frames. The churches of Centro are a feast of colonial baroque with some marvellous details – the cathedral's wooden choir stalls, intricately carved by Pedro Noguera; and, in the refectory of the Convent of San Francisco, Diego de la Puente's famous *Last Supper* of 1695, in which the apostles are seen tucking into a guinea pig spatchcocked on a platter.

Lovers of the colonial style and its sometimes weird collision of indigenous *naïveté* and European technique will want to set aside a few hours to visit the Museo Pedro de Osma, Lima's major repository of colonial art, and a morning for the Barbosa-Stern Collection. A detached house in a quiet suburb of the city is home to the Barbosa-Stern family's 1,500-strong assemblage of Peruvian colonial art as well as a conservation workshop (in the garage) which helps pay for the day-to-day running of the collection. Silvia Stern and her son Aldo Barbosa are charm personified, and their enthusiasm for the important work carried out by their family since 1966 is beguiling and infectious. 'We are only the temporary possessors of art,' says Barbosa. 'For us, art belongs to the eyes that see it.'

The family collection began as a hobby, with Aldo's father Eduardo and his wife trawling the markets of Lima for colonial masterpieces at knockdown prices. So far, so typical. What makes a visit to the collection compelling is Aldo's insight into the works and their historical context. He takes the paintings off the walls and shows them to you, explaining the complex iconography and arcane techniques, including the use of cochineal beetles for a uniquely Peruvian shade of red.

For total immersion in the bubbling waters of Lima's contemporary art scene, the place to go is San Isidro. Here, unlike in the colonial centre, the streets are clean, the cars new and expensive, the low-rise buildings packed with design stores and artisan pasta-makers. An art-gallery tour of this barrio would have to include Rosario Orjeda's Vertice, Cristina Quimper de Trazegnies's »



***The bohemian barrio of
Barranco overflows with art,
artists and arty goings-on***



La Galería, and Roberto Ascóniga's Enlace – the latter a private gallery doubling as an urban oasis, laid out over the two floors of a 1950s townhouse with plashing fountains in its peaceful inner garden. South of San Isidro, in exclusive, glossy Miraflores, are Forum (currently celebrating its 35th year), El Ojo Ajeno and – the cuckoo in the nest – Revolver, whose black-painted façade suggests a readiness to shock. Its streetwise young founder, Giancarlo Scaglia, has been here three years and is himself an artist: he tells me of his satisfaction at seeing Peruvian contemporary art begin to hold its head up internationally.

Until now the three strands of Peruvian art – contemporary, colonial and pre-Columbian – have been observable in discrete environments but never as part of a historical continuum. A chronological vision is the masterplan at the Lima Museum of Art, universally known as MALI. For 50 years the city's leading public art gallery, housed in one of the series of pompous late-19th-century neoclassical buildings in the Parque de la Exposición, the

© Koenig Johnson, courtesy of the artist. © Augusto Ballardo, courtesy of the artist

Museo del Oro, Lima, Peru/Bridgeman Images

museum is due to reopen its doors in September after a long and thorough restoration.

Under Natalia Majluf, its feisty director, MALI is Peru's most serious-minded as well as socially integrated art museum, and the place is plainly on a roll. From the autumn, a new permanent exhibition of local art is to be installed in the airy, high-ceilinged galleries of the building's first floor, running all the way from the Moche, Cupisnique, Nazca and Inca periods to the mid-20th century. Lima Town Hall has ceded an adjacent lot, currently occupied by a tawdry concrete auditorium beside the museum, for an underground gallery to house its contemporary collection, which is to be built within the next five years. Meanwhile MALI's busy schedule continues: this year's programme features the most ambitious exhibition of Chavín culture (1500–300BC) ever put together (running until 9 August), and, from September, a major retrospective of Martín Chambi, the indigenous photographer responsible for some of the most remarkable images that exist of early-20th-century Peru.

Chambi is hardly the best-known Peruvian photographer of all time: that title must go to Mario Testino. When, after 35 years in exile, Testino decided to open MATE, a museum for his own work in his native city, there was only one possible location: a former colonial mansion in Barranco, Lima's bohemian barrio and the city's preeminent creative quarter. But alongside the raw energy of the contemporary art scene, the works on show come across as silky smooth and obsessed with surface: even the Peruvians Testino photographs in traditional dress are given the high-gloss treatment. Each of Mario's muses – Kate, Gisele, Madonna – has her own room at his gallery; Princess Diana has a whole pavilion, where the Versace gown she wore on Testino's *Vanity Fair* cover of July 1997 is displayed like a saintly relic. 'Diana taught me about giving,' reads a quote on the wall.

Beyond the Mario mansion, Barranco overflows with art, artists and arty goings-on. Signs in the street sum up the barrio as '*Alegría, Entusiasmo, Energía*' (happiness, enthusiasm, energy). Always a magnet for artists – painter and sculptor Victor Delfín, 87, still lives and works in a fantastical cliffside house that is now also an eight-bedroom guesthouse – the neighbourhood is increasingly chic and expensive, but its artistic character has, happily, prevailed. Almost the first building of any note you see as you enter the barrio from Miraflores is the black-and-red cuboid form of MAC, Lima's public Museum of Contemporary Art. The neighbourhood's energetic group of commercial galleries includes Wu Galería, Cecilia González, Yvonne Sanguinetti and 80m2/Livia Benavides. Further down the coast, there is talk of scuzzy Chorrillos becoming a future satellite of »

Below, a Chimú ceremonial knife.
Opposite, from top: an installation
by Koenig Johnson at Wu Galería;
Augusto Ballardo, *Cordillera Negra*,
2015, at La Galería in San Isidro



Peruvian art in Lima

Art Lima
www.artlima.pe

Barbosa-Stern Collection
+51 1 224 1035,
www.barbosa-stern.org

Cecilia González
+51 1 477 1395,
www.ceciliagonzalez.org

80m2/Livia Benavides
+51 1 252 9246,
www.80m2galeria.com

El Ojo Ajeno
+51 1 444 6999,
www.galeriael ojoajeno.pe

Enlace
+51 1 222 5714,
www.enlaceart.com

Forum
+51 1 446 1313,
www.galeriaforum.net

Galería Delbarrio
+51 1 251 9111,
www.del-barrio.com

La Galería
+51 1 422 1099,
www.lagaleriaperu.com.pe

Lucia de la Puente
+51 1 477 0237,
www.gluciadelapuate.com

MAC (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo)
+51 1 514 6800,
www.maclima.pe

MALI (Museo de Arte de Lima)
+51 1 204 0000,
www.mali.pe

MATE (Museo Mario Testino)
+51 1 251 7755,
www.mate.pe »



Barranco, with Gabriela Tineo's urban-art space Galería Delbarrio the bravest pioneer.

No one wants to miss out on a boom, and even Hotel B, which opened in 2013, advertises itself as the city's first and only 'art hotel'. With good reason: there's a Sonia Delaunay in the lounge, and the corridors and rooms are hung with the work of contemporary Peruvian and Latin-American artists – much of this booty provided by Susana and Lucia de la Puente, the wisened-up and well-connected sisters whose influential gallery stands next door.

On a summer morning in Barranco, if you're lucky, you'll find the sea breezes have swept away Lima's habitual grey fogs, giving way to piercing sunshine. Garden walls are overhung with oleanders in voluptuous flower, clashing merrily with houses painted dusty orange, cochineal red and Yves Klein blue. Down on Malecón Pazos, where Barranco plummets to the sea, Livia Benavides has recently moved her 80m² gallery into a rambling former summer house with diaphanous inner spaces and a shabby-chic garden at the back. Here in this *modernista* beach house Benavides shows the work

Above, Victor Delfín in front of his painting, *Any*, at his home in Barranco. Opposite, Lima Cathedral in the historic Centro district

Museo Larco
+51 1 461 1312,
www.museolarco.org

Museo Pedro de Osma
+51 1 4670063, www.museopedrodeosma.org

PARC (Perú Arte Contemporáneo)
www.parc.com.pe

Revolver
+51 1 255 8571,
www.revolvergaleria.com

Vertice
+51 1 421 3856,
www.galeria-vertice.com

Wu Galería
+51 1 247 4685,
www.wugaleria.com

Yvonne Sanguinetti
+51 1 247 2999,
www.yvonesanguinetti.galeria.com

Peruvian art in London

Ceviche Old St
Martin Morales's new London restaurant isn't just a place to savour Peruvian cuisine. It also shows works by more than 50 of the country's leading contemporary artists, co-curated with Claudia Tross. +44 20 3327 9463, www.cevicheuk.com

of young Peruvian artists including Rita Ponce de León, Maya Watanabe, Gabriel Acevedo and David Zink Yi.

'It was a local necessity. There were so few galleries here that Peruvian artists found it hard to get any exposure. Even now, there are still too few,' declares Benavides, taking me inside the house for a look at Eliana Otta's *Recuerdo del Mantaro* (Remembrance of the Mantaro), a chunk of Amazon riverbank physically removed and installed here complete with all its layers of plastic trash.

Sensitivity to environmental issues is an important concern in current Peruvian art, but what strikes me even more forcefully is the new generation's fruitful engagement with the Peruvian cultures of an earlier time. In a back room of her house, Benavides points out an installation by Ximena Garrido-Lecca in which rustic clay pots that might have come from some archaeological dig are connected to each other with industrial copper tubing. Another room is entirely occupied by a tower made of old hi-fi speakers – a piece by Miami-based Peruvian William Cordova entitled *Badussy (Machu Picchu After Dark)*, 2004–05. The black speakers are stacked into a monstrous totem, the piece clearly harking back to the monumental structures of pre-Hispanic Peru. If Lima and its art have shown me anything, it's the power of the historical continuum. ♦

Paul Richardson travelled as a guest of Miraviva (www.miravivatransel.com), whose expert-led art tours in Lima can include exclusive access to the Barbosa-Stern Collection, visits to other celebrated collectors and artists such as Victor Delfín, and gallery tours in Barranco, with accommodation at the Arts Boutique Hotel B