

high life

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It's a Kick-Ass month on board, plus Irvine Welsh's *Fifty*, the life of Liberace and Despicable Me 2. Page 113

EXCLUSIVE

MARIO

TESTINO

RETURNS TO PERU



Contributors

JONATHAN PORRITT

Environmentalist Jonathan Porritt imagines a sustainable future (page 29). **Where are you curious about?** "I've always been fascinated by states like Arizona and Utah in the United States. I'd really like to see them for myself."



Editor's letter

Mario Testino is possibly the world's most high-profile photographer and his career exploded in the wake of his 1997 *Vanity Fair* shoot with Diana, Princess of Wales. He has photographed Kate Moss thousands of times, is credited with elevating Gisele to supermodel status, and shot the engagement photos of Kate and Wills. All a long way from where he grew up in Lima. But this month, Testino headed back to Lima for our exclusive cover story. After leaving for London when he was 22 (he instantly fell in love with Britain), he's now rediscussing the city he left behind.

Peru is one of the fastest-growing Latin American economies so it's easy to understand Testino's fascination. Built in a desert (Cairo is the only other metropolis drier), Lima is a mosaic of smaller cities. With 43 districts and nearly nine million citizens, Limeño life is undergoing a transformation. There are new transport systems, new malls for the new middle classes and it's fast catching up with Copenhagen to be the world's next great food capital. But for all this, Lima is conspicuously in touch with its roots – not globalised and not homogenised. Read all about it on page 36.

Enjoy your travels.
Kerry Smith, editor
high.life@cedar.com.co.uk
Twitter: @kerrysmith01



MARIO TESTINO

The world's most famous photographer talks about his native Lima (page 36). **Where are you curious about this month?** "The place I am most curious about at the moment is my home continent: South America. I feel drawn back to my roots."



EVIE WYLD

Author Evie Wyld shares her love of London (page 34). **Where are you curious about this month?** "I've always wanted to visit Islay and Jura in winter. I'm a big fan of 'freezing coastal walks followed by very good whisky'."

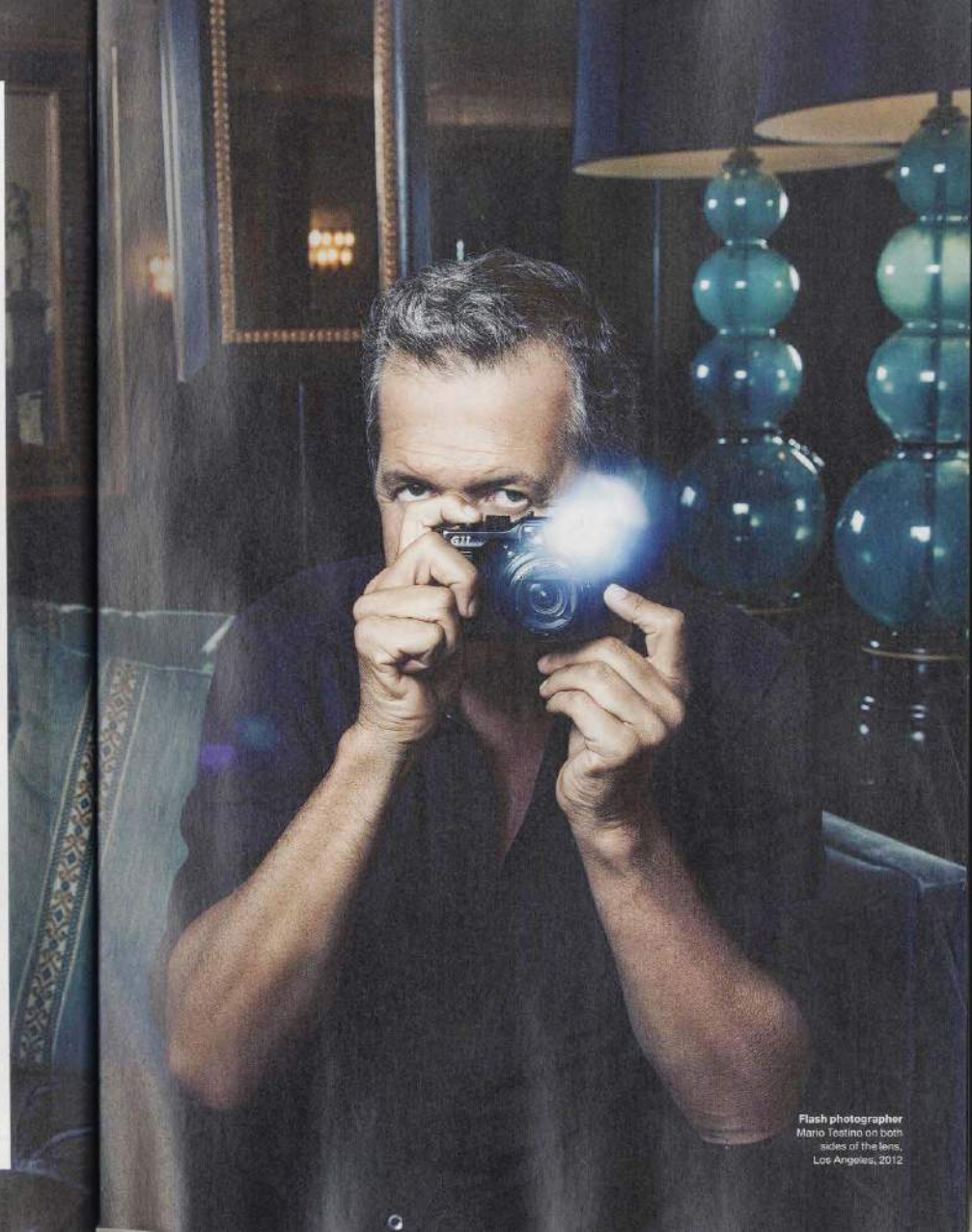


"I LEFT
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TESTINO

He's the world's most high-profile photographer, whose career exploded after his 1997 *Vanity Fair* shoot with Diana, Princess of Wales. He grew up in Peru and arrived in London in 1976 where he quickly fell in love with Britain.

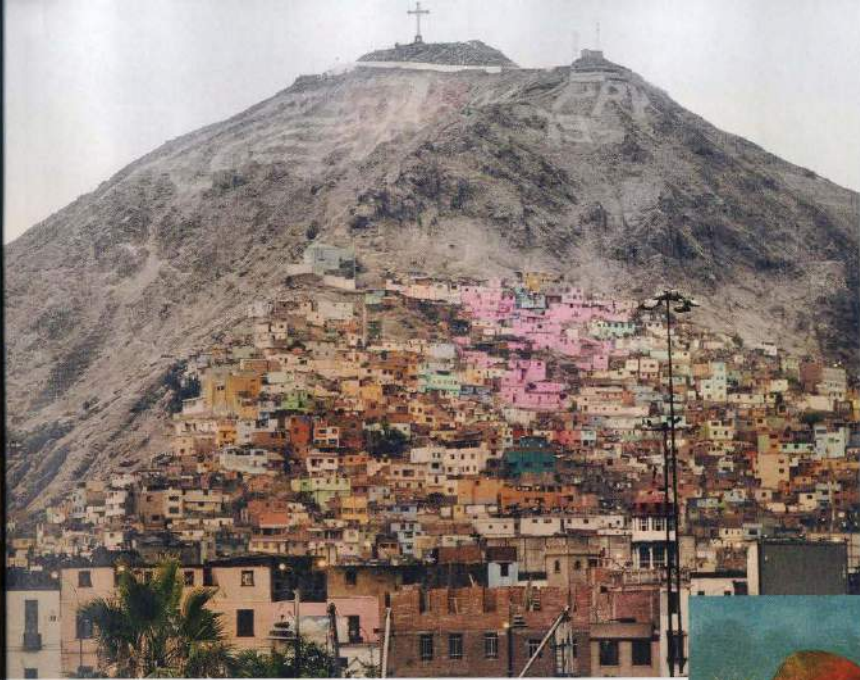
But recently Mario Testino has found himself drawn back to his homeland for its culture, food and pace of life. On the eve of his latest New York exhibition, he takes

Michael Holden
for a trip round Lima
exclusively for
High Life



Flash photographer
Mario Testino on both
sides of the lens,
Los Angeles, 2012

Clockwise from right: A highly decorated cross; Testino oversees the restoration at MATE, his charitable foundation; a Chinu idol; Museo Larco; Lima's San Cristóbal hill; an Inca portrait; Museo Pedro de Osma; the streets of Lima are paved with ancient and modern architecture; an Ica-Chincha feather vest; Museo Amahuac; a gallery at MATE; Testino aged three



Mario Testino knows the mechanics of modern fame as instinctively as a great chef grasps the possibilities of a kitchen. Give them ingredients and a transformation follows. For Testino, as perhaps the world's most famous photographer, the ingredients are people and products (in many cases already famous). They emerge from beneath his lights and lenses into what appears to be a dream. He has transformed the fortunes of fashion houses, taken already iconic figures (most famously Diana, Princess of Wales and Madonna) and made pictures that re-defined the way the world perceived them. You may not recognise the man, but his work is everywhere.

'I must look thin and fabulous,' says Testino, 58 years old and smoothly suited as he prepares himself to be filmed. We're in the meticulously renovated 19th-century buildings in Lima's Barranco district that make up his gallery, museum and the headquarters of his charitable foundation – MATE (Asociación Mario Testino). This evening will see the opening of exhibitions from Peruvian photographers Ernesto Bonvalide, Leslie Scarles and Musuk Nolte. The space bustles as final preparations are made, and pictures are hung and re-hung. The air is heavy with the smell of fresh paint. Testino though is calm as he checks his reflection in the lens before him. It's an illusion,' he smiles wryly, which is refreshingly candid, coming from one of the world's premier illusionists.

But no matter how well you know the game, there's always room for surprises. 'There's such a difference,' he says, 'between how we look in pictures [Testino's shoots are meticulously co-ordinated affairs: skin to film sets] and how you look in real life. Kate [Moss] and I were on a boat this summer. I, of course, am not the sort of person the paparazzi follow, so I wasn't even thinking about it, and next day we were *everywhere* in the press. Me and her! Me in a tiny Speedo bathing suit – hello!' He regards his midriff and pulls a face of exaggerated revulsion. 'The stomach is so hard to control, especially if you're a Peruvian and you like food. Just look around. He has a point. Lima's cuisine is consistently more delicious even than the fringes of a photographer, ambushed by the paparazzi. You don't need to eat here for long to realise you're in one of the world's great gastronomic centres. It's more than food though that has called Testino back to the city he left for London in 1976.

Testino was one of six children and his mother was a glamorous woman whose style made a lasting impression on her son. He worked as a translator for his businessman father and was on the move from an early age. 'When I was young, going to the airport seemed to be one of my pastimes and I was obsessed by going abroad and the look of the cabin crew. They all had "looks" – they were young, beautiful and beautifully dressed. I used to love going to the airport because it was like going abroad. At the time people would dress up to travel. Peruvians still do in a way, but at the time they would *really* dress up. It was a wonderful space to inhabit.'

Paradoxically, Testino thinks some of the same things that inspired him to leave Peru are part of the reason he has been drawn back. 'In Peru, we're very conservative as a society,' he says, 'but I'm looking at it now with new eyes and thinking maybe it's not that bad. I left Peru because it was too slow and everything seemed static.'

Now I've come back, I quite like that, I've found that Peru has been within me and it's coming out in an exaggerated way. I come here every month. I can't get enough of it.'

It's true. For all its urgent South American vibrancy, framed by the crashing (and eminently surfable) waves on its long Pacific beaches, occasional outbreaks of dubious contemporary architecture and lockdown rush hours, Lima is a world city conspicuously in touch with its roots, somewhere not globalised and by no means homogenised. It's a wild, muddled patchwork of ancient, colonial and modern. It's absolutely itself. The physical sense of being at the edge of the world is enhanced by the steep cliffs that run along the city's western edge. Meanwhile something of the old world allure of its better preserved districts percolates into even its more modern corners – the effect is of somewhere almost poised between eras – everything from prehistory to the present day seems to have its place here.

'The way that we get Peruvian culture in Lima is very different to the kind you find in the mountains,' says Testino. 'It's a distilled version of it. If you go to the mountains, you might think that everything is bright colours and Inca remnants. In Lima, you get aspects of that but it's a contemporary city with little pockets where you're constantly reminded of the heritage. You can see it in our *huacas* – historical monuments within the city – or in museums like the Larco Herrera, which has amazing ceramics of our culture. You'll see it in the Museo Amiano, which has a collection of textiles that I'm blown away by, even though I've been raised with them. But because I moved away, I see things in a new light.'

The sense that modern Peru is an evolution of cultures combined (forcibly in the case of the Spanish conquest in the 16th century) is especially clear in Lima's abundant museums. It's a union of apparently contradictory cultures that sheds light on Testino's work as well, not just as a photographer but now as the creator of his own museum. 'If you look at food today anywhere in the world, what's happening? Fusion. Everything is all about fusion. We are many cultures coming together, no? Peru's history has been greatly influenced by the Spanish, and maybe destroyed in a way as well. But many colonies have been like that. People thought that to conquer you had to destroy.' Testino's recent *Alta Moda* project is a celebration of what abides.

For *Alta Moda* (which translates as 'high fashion'), Testino photographed an archive of indigenous costumes from the Cusco region of Peru with particular reference to the work of Martin Chambi, one of the great Latin American photographers of the early 20th century. In both conception and execution it's a departure from Testino's more familiar work. But, as he explains, the connections are there. 'Those dresses represent a history of families, society, profession, status... There's a lot of meaning in those clothes. Today, we buy clothes because of the people who wear them. If Kate Moss or-



Clockwise from above Testino as a teenager; 'I thrive on being a photographer of the picture that lasts'; a gallery at MATE; La Rosa Nautica restaurant, Lima



MARIO TESTINO ON LIMA

EAT

'Our gastronomy is unbelievable at the moment. People come here just to eat – there are some amazing restaurants.'

Rafael and El Mercado Experimentation is at the heart of these restaurants, which serve French and Peruvian dishes with a twist, all inspired by the head chef Rafael's travels. rafaelosterling.com
La Plaza Run by two leading chefs,

of Japanese and Peruvian foods, Osaka is a gastronomic treat. osaka.com.pe

Astrid & Gaston Named after its founders and described as Peruvian meets haute cuisine, Astrid & Gaston is ranked 14th in *The World's 50 Best Restaurants*. astridygaston.com

La Rosa Nautica Situated atop a pier in the Miraflores district, La Rosa Nautica has a tantalising view of the ocean. larosanautica.com

SEE

'The Amiano (fundacion museoamiano.org.pe) is the most incredible textile museum, and Museo Pedro de Corrae, next to MATE, has a fantastic colonial collection. The Alaga house is the oldest in South America still inhabited by the same family, while the San Francisco Convent has the most majestic library. I would visit all the churches downtown, especially the Convento San Francisco and the Cathedral, and then go to the ancient monuments at San Ysidro and Miraflores.'

Coque Ossio and Juan Diego Sarmiento. La Plaza is a laid-back eatery specialising in Latin-American fare and classic Italian dishes. laplazaalma.com

La Gloria

The starting point for many established Peruvian chefs, La Gloria is run by Oscar Valdivia and chef Luis Alberto Sacchetti, and has superb Mediterranean dishes. lagloriarestaurant.com

La Gloria del Campo Located just outside Lima in Pachacamac, this is a rustic haven. Watch your food being prepared in the open kitchen. lagloriarestaurant.com
Osaka Serving up unique fusions



Three of a kind Testino's photographs of traditional Peruvian dress (left and above) from his *Alta Moda* exhibition. New York, marks a departure from his familiar work: a gold-plated, Swarovski crystal and pom-pom necklace, by Mario Testino for MATE by VICKISARGE (below)



ON BOARD Watch our exclusive interview with Mario Testino (selected routes) or visit bahighlife.com



By turning his attention on his home city, Testino is doing what he's best at – illuminating a subject to provoke our interest. Just as his models suggest a narrative, so too does this city – and by no means one that is sanitised or straightforward. Testino's Peru is as vivid and visceral as his pictures. 'I don't find perfection exciting. People are excited by the girl at a party wearing a dress that has a tear. That's more exciting, the suggestion of a story. Something happened. That's what I strive for,' he explains. And there is definitely something happening here. ■

Alta Moda by Mario Testino will be exhibited at the *Queen Sofia Spanish Institute, New York, until March. Contact +1 212 628 0420 or qsi.org. Mario Testino's exclusive collection of bags, halftons and jewellery inspired by Peruvian artisan craftsmanship is available exclusively at net-a-porter.com, from £115. A percentage will be donated to MATE. mariotestino.com_mate.pe*

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Gisele Bündchen wear something, people will copy them. Part of the thought behind this is that a look enables you to live that life. I wanted to show the clothes, not just the person. In these dresses, the person is almost taken away, because generations wear the same dress. The history is in the dress.'

At a time when digital cameras are creating an unparalleled deluge of images, it's interesting that one of the foremost champions of the photograph as a temporary spectacle should find himself making images that connect back over centuries and compiling a permanent exhibition of his own work. 'Fashion is about a moment,' he explains, 'and it's about change. Anna Wintour [the editor of *American Vogue*] told me that the photographer Irving Penn once said that he'd come to a time in his life when he wanted to create pictures that would hang on a wall. I was quite obsessed by this, and I think it just comes with age. What will last? You look at Instagram and it's a picture a second. There's a big difference between photography as art and photography as documenting. All those pictures taken on a phone are just a document of a moment. I thrive on being a photographer of the picture that lasts, that you can hang on a wall and look at, day in day out.'

Could it be that the ideas of national identity and of permanence are even more important in an era apparently led by disposability and globalisation? Exciting though those modern notions can be, are they really adequate for us as human beings emotionally? 'I think not.' He continues: 'When I opened my foundation, my goals were that my work should live in my country. Secondly, that I should promote culture here by bringing exhibitions to Lima. Thirdly I want to promote Peruvian art and tourism. I'm very attached to my city and I would love other people to see it. Everybody I bring here says it's incredible.'

How would he sum up Lima's appeal? 'The people. This place is about the people, they're magical, they're kind, they're nice. Of course we have problems like everyone else, but the energy and the essence of Peruvians is that we are very kind people, very funny and very up. I live in a world that is in such a hurry. My friend who just did my make-up is going for lunch. Going for lunch in my world would be *insane* during the week. I have too much work, I wouldn't consider going for lunch. And then sometimes I think in this striving to become successful and to achieve and to get better, we forget about life, no? Here life is still being lived at a human pace, and I'm excited by that too.'

DESTINATION: LIMA

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Photographs: 'Traditional Peruvian dress' (above), 'Three of a kind' (left and above), 'Alta Moda' (right), 'Mario Testino as a teenager' (left), 'I thrive on being a photographer of the picture that lasts' (middle), 'A gallery at MATE' (right), 'La Rosa Nautica restaurant, Lima' (bottom left), 'Mario Testino' (bottom right), 'A gold-plated, Swarovski crystal and pom-pom necklace, by Mario Testino for MATE by VICKISARGE' (bottom right)