

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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PHOTOGRAPH BY PABLO CARRERA

Tcherassi Hotel + Spa in Cartagena, Colombia. Turn the page for more on this new boutique property from designer Silvia Tcherassi.

COLOMBIAN GEM

Miami designer Silvia Tcherassi opens her first hotel in Cartagena.

BY SUZY BUCKLEY



Silvia Tcherassi in a spacious suite at her new Cartagena hotel

When you visit Cartagena, you smell and breathe emotion and happiness," says Colombian-born clothing designer Silvia Tcherassi, radiant as she points out every detail of Tcherassi Hotel + Spa, the seven-room boutique property she and her husband, Mauricio Espinosa, opened there last fall. "This city is magical, colorful and rich in history. It's in the Caribbean, but at the same time has a very European touch."

Between her background in interior design and well-cultivated fashion sense, hotels were a natural progression. For the past 18 years, Tcherassi has electrified runways from New York to Paris with her colorful, bohemian prêt-à-porter and enchanting ball and bridal gowns, which she sells at her eight boutiques throughout Colombia, Mexico and the United States. "It's the perfect brand extension," she says. "I'm still expressing my vision and point of view, but it's design as applied to another field."

Tcherassi worked with design and restorative architects and an anthropologist to turn the 250-year-old building into a sophisticated combination of spaces. She completely modernized the mansion with fabulous restorations to the colonial building's bones and advanced technologies. A 40-seat Italian restaurant, Vera, is open to the sky on the first floor. Besides a tranquil spa, the hotel has multiple pools and a roof deck offering 360-degree views of the city and the sea. "When you first

walk inside, you see that it's very light, clear, modern and green at the same time," says Tcherassi, pointing out the huge vertical garden in the lobby, featuring more than 3,000 lush local plants and a large gold mosaic she bought in India.

The oversize guestrooms and suites have a bright, airy feel and are named after some of the fabrics used in Tcherassi's collections (voile, peau de soie, mousseline). They're appointed with dramatic high ceilings, private balconies, rich wood floors, restored walls that sparkle with hints of gold dusting, open bathrooms and contemporary necessities. Bathroom amenities bear Silvia's fragrance, the do-not-disturb

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signs are made of luxurious materials and one-of-a-kind lace, and the acrylic lamps are constructed in the same atelier where she designs her clothing lines. The property also has an eco-friendly flair: Many of the rooms' artistic headboards are designed with woven plantain fibers. "My fashion is a reflection of my personality, and the hotel is the same," she says. "You play with the forms, color and spaces. It's a lot like me: Some parts are very minimal, simple and clear, yet there's also something traditional and avant-garde."

Today Tcherassi lives between her homes in Key Biscayne and Barranquilla, travels often to Italy's Lake Como to design her fabrics, and visits her premiere hotel as much as possible. "When I come to Cartagena, I reconnect to my roots and memories immediately," she says. "It's a white canvas surrounded by touches of nature and art: the perfect place to inspire and be inspired." **OD**