



MIAMI

# BOTH SIDES NOW

A Coconut Grove fashion designer and hotelier finds inspiration in Miami and Cartagena.

By Shayne Benowitz

When fashion designer Silvia Tcherassi decided to restore a 250-year-old colonial mansion in Cartagena in order to create her eponymous boutique hotel in 2009, the move was less about charting new territory and more about returning to her roots. The Colombian native studied interior design in Barranquilla before launching her multinational fashion empire in Miami in 1999.

“I learned to find the balance between color, textures and proportions, and applied this approach to fashion and interiors,” explains Tcherassi. Her self-described aesthetic is casual luxury, which she exudes, with neatly cropped blond hair and a serene smile. Whether dressed in a signature crisp white

**HOME BASE**  
Designer Silvia Tcherassi's Miami apartment is neutral and modern.

TCHERASSI PORTRAIT AND APARTMENT INTERIOR PHOTO BY NICK GARCIA

blouse or a column tunic splashed in tropical colors, she appears equal parts elegant and effortless. “For me, spaces are dresses that need to be embellished in order to be enjoyable,” she says. “Art, furniture and accents are the accessories.”

In fashion, she’s found inspiration in everything from the trees of Coral Gables to minimalist American artist Anne Truitt, but in her interiors, it’s the project’s location that she uses as her guiding light. Take, for instance, the task of restoring the four-story colonial mansion in Cartagena, which sits on a UNESCO World Heritage Site, compared to designing her own home, a sparkling new 3,000-square-foot condominium in Coconut Grove. “Design needs to have a context to breathe,” explains Tcherassi, who enlisted architectural firm estudioMORFO for both projects. “Each property has the same signature style because they have my creative input behind them, but the context of each city and the use—one is private, another public—makes them different.”

The Tcherassi Hotel + Spa, with seven unique guest rooms (some with cathedral ceilings as high as 30 feet), each named for a different fabric favored by the designer Organdie, Voilée, Peau de soie—feels like a wealthy friend’s sunny, seaside South American villa that’s been in the family for generations. The property boasts an original stone facade, a 20-foot-tall antique wooden door and a gilded baroque gate that leads to an interior courtyard where there’s a small pool (one of four on the property) landscaped in a checkerboard of green grass and concrete. White canvas umbrellas and lounge chairs dot the lawn. And a vertical garden wall with 3,000 local plants serves as the focal point.

To breathe new life into original walls and wood, Tcherassi applied gold dust and white paint with a Champagne patina. Inside the guest rooms, lampshades are made of frothy couture



DESIGNING WOMAN

From top: The fashion designer and hotelier Silvia Tcherassi strikes a stylish pose at home in Miami; the Tcherassi Hotel + Spa in Cartagena is a well outfitted oasis.



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**COLONIAL CARTAGENA**

Clockwise from top left: A portrait of Tcherassi watches over the designer's modern-Colonial hotel; the hotel's second floor library; a guest room overlooks the garden.



lace, and her labels are sewn into comforters for texture and playful movement. Bathrooms are modern, with floor-to-ceiling glass walls and floating bathtubs, mirrors and large countertops.

Her Coconut Grove home, by contrast, has a more contemporary and eclectic, even avant-garde aesthetic, which Tcherassi embraces. “Miami inspires me,” she explains. “It’s a city with soul, and this soul is young, vibrant and multicultural—the perfect frame for a creative mind.”

Capturing the natural light and sweeping views of Biscayne Bay from the balcony was important to Tcherassi. She achieved this with a bright white living room filled with cushy sofas (Piero Lissoni), white orchids, contemporary art pieces—including a laser-cut acrylic piece by Chilean artist Voluspa Jarpa that is made from declassified CIA files about South America—and mirrored, angular end tables. The dining room features a custom dark-wood table (Draga & Aurel) screen-printed in resin with Tcherassi’s favorite food and fashion quotes; a light-reflecting ladylike antique Italian chandelier and a red circular art piece by Daniele Papuli texturized with long ribbons—a signature Tcherassi flourish.

From fashion to interiors, contemporary to Old World, minimalist to avant-garde, Tcherassi’s creative output is constantly evolving, as evidenced by her plans for two more hotels in Colombia and by the recent launch of her Silvia Tcherassi Atelier line.

Yet one constant remains: The two countries she calls home will always offer an unlimited font of inspiration. *Rates from \$253, tcherassihotels.com* ■