

editor's note



ISABELI FONTANA PHOTO BY RICCARDO GIROTTI PHOTO BY SOR DOMENICO

Location, Location, Location

Producing this issue of *Ocean Drive* took me to some pretty wild locations. There was the \$29 million megamansion on Miami Beach, a sprawl of rooms and balconies (including a second-floor terrace with a totally transparent glass floor) that hosted the feature shoot for our annual Swim Guide. A road trip to the Fluent Cannabis Care Winter Garden Grow Operation in central Florida delivered the perfect location for a portrait of writer Maria Tettamanti, whose personal essay on medical marijuana is a must-read. We were given unprecedented access to the grow operation the day before the cannabis plants were harvested. (That's our crew in the photo above!) Closer to home—but nonetheless

visually intoxicating—Faena Hotel Miami Beach provided a stunning backdrop for our cover shoot with Brazilian supermodel Isabeli Fontana. From the hotel's luminous Cathedral to the gold-and-black Saxony Bar, every turn delivered a drop-dead-sexy frame for photographer Camilo Rios, who first met Fontana over a decade ago shooting backstage at the Victoria's Secret runway show.

But let's be real, the most impressive location of all is our gorgeous city, which will host Swim Week this month. You can expect leggy, tan, young and lovely models to take to the streets of South Beach, making the whole vibe even more sunny, fun and glorious than ever.



Patricia

Patricia Alfonso Tortolani
Editor-in-Chief
ptortolani@modernluxury.com
Instagram: @oceandrivemag,
@patricia_tortolani

From top left: With photographer Mary Beth Koehn, *Ocean Drive* account director Michelle Chole and writer Maria Tettamanti; Isabeli Fontana at the Faena Hotel Miami Beach.



FONTANA OF YOUTH

Leopard bandeau top with tulle, \$92, and high-waisted bottom, \$92, both at Agua de Coco by Uana Thomas, Aventura Mall; Medusa icon sandals, \$995, at Versace, Design District; Princess Flower earrings, \$2,700, Retro necklace, \$21,500, Princess bangle, \$3,900, Gourmelle bangle, \$9,000, and Portofino bracelet, \$15,000, all by Roberto Coin at Kirk Jewelers, Downtown Miami. Opposite page: Medusa pendant earrings, \$395, and Medusa coin ring, \$305, both at Versace, Design District.

The mark of a true supermodel is living a life **beyond** fashion. By carefully choosing when to rock the camera (or the catwalk) while prioritizing health and happiness, Brazilian goddess Isabeli Fontana proves herself worthy of the title—and then some.



By Katie Jackson // Photographed by RIOCAM // Styled by Denny Santiago // Shot at The Faena Hotel Miami Beach

BRAZIL IS KNOWN FOR ITS BEACHES, ITS BIKINIS—AND ITS BOMBSHELLS...

You know the names: Gisele, Adriana, Alessandra and Isabeli. They dominated the late '90s: stomping into prominence on the runways of Versace and basking in the pages of the Victoria's Secret lingerie catalog. With their sun-bronzed skin, tomboyish charm and coltish limbs, they dominated every category—pulling off high-fashion editorial work and commercial gigs—with equal aplomb. In the words of *Vogue*, they represented the “return of sexy.” Without a doubt, supermodels were one of Brazil's greatest exports.

For this supermodel, the story begins in Curitiba, capital of the state of Paraná, on July 4, 1983 (yes, she was in fact born on the Fourth of July). Fontana, whose parents are of Italian descent, grew up surrounded by soccer-playing brothers. A self-described tomboy, she was more interested in Maradona than mascara. Little did she know that a wave of popularity was sweeping Brazilian beauties, like herself, into the fashion stratosphere. In 1996—at age 13—Fontana was a finalist in the Elite Model Look competition. (Two years earlier a volleyball player from Horizontina named Gisele had placed second in the competition.) Before she could drive, Fontana was whisked off to Paris, then Milan, and eventually to New York City to launch what would become a decadeslong career at the top of the industry.

Today, the model and mother of two (Zion, 16, and Lucas, 12) spends most of her time with her family (they live part time in Brazil and in Miami) while practicing yoga and studying to become a health coach. Here, on a gorgeous sunny day at the Faena Hotel Miami Beach, Fontana takes us through her journey to supermodel stardom, spirituality and why the Magic City provides her with a “higher quality of life.”

Your success has lasted decades. Take us back to how it all started.

I was the only girl in my family. I grew up with my brothers, and I only had one best friend who was a girl and the rest were all boys. I was a total tomboy. I played [soccer] and was never into doing makeup. One day my mom said, “Wow, I really need to send this girl to a manners course!” I thought it was really stupid. I wanted to sit the way I wanted to sit, wear whatever clothes I wanted to wear. I just wanted to be myself. But there I was, learning how to eat properly, how to dress up and do my own makeup. I remember one of the rooms had mirrors everywhere, and I was very uncomfortable looking at myself because I felt so stupid and skinny and ugly and too tall. But then they told my mom that I had a good profile to be a model. That's when they told me about the Elite Model Look contest.

Do you remember the moment they announced you as the third-place winner?

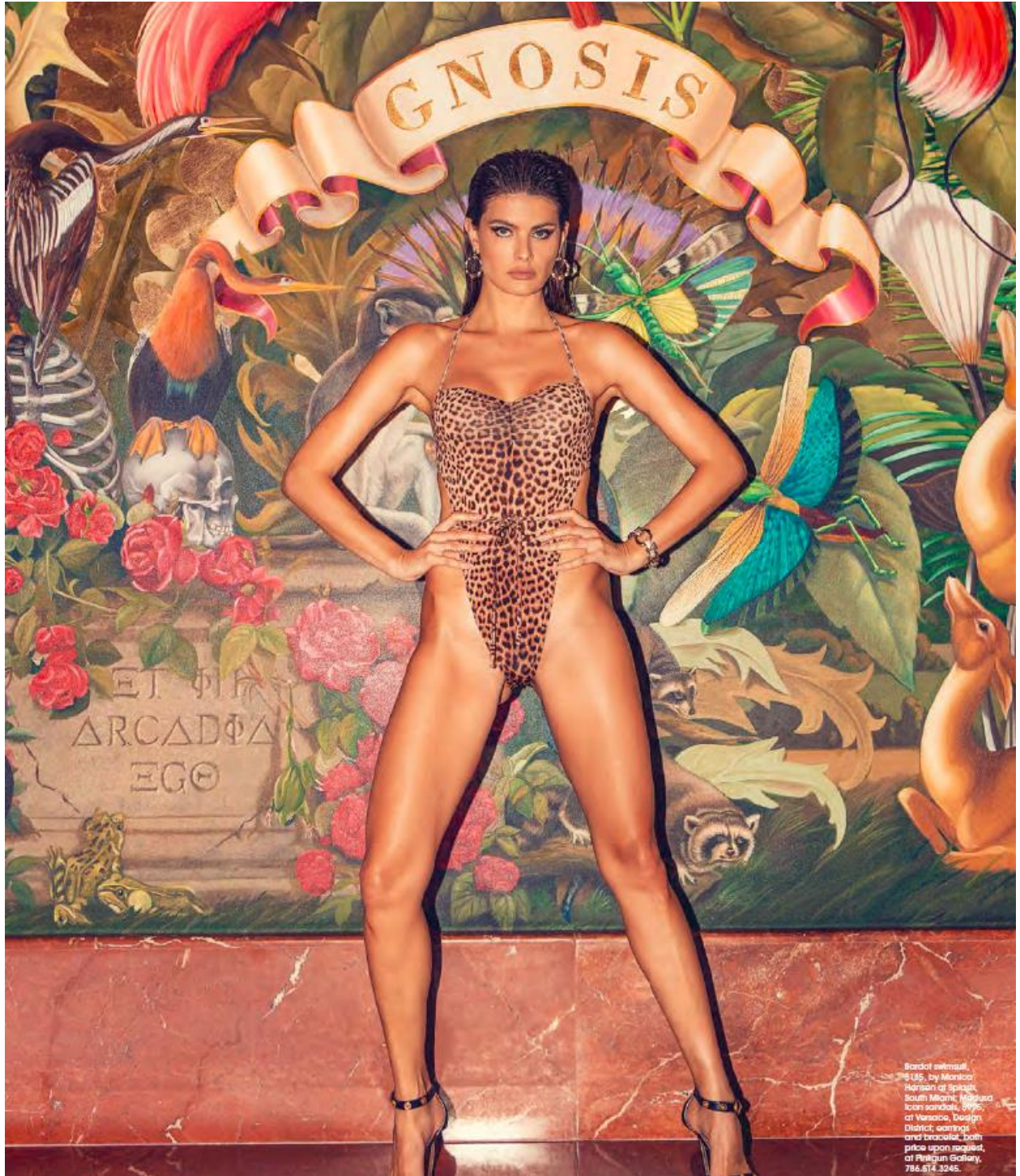
When they called my name I didn't even hear it—I had no idea it was me. I was looking around like, “Who got third place?” And then someone told me, “You! You go!” I was like, “Really?! Me?!” Everybody was staring at me. I was so shy. I was looking down and then I had to walk the runway and that felt really weird. I just wanted to disappear. I was only 13, a child. But then I moved to Paris with my mom directly after to start my career as a model.

What was it like to move to a new country at such a young age?

It was really hard for me. I didn't speak French, so I couldn't communicate with anyone. And I remember not wanting to try all the weird food they were serving. I felt like eating baguettes and butter all the time. I took a trip to Milan for castings with my mom and we just ate crap—pasta and rice and things I'm not supposed to. Along my career I learned how to eat, and now I'm learning even more as I study to become a health coach. So I was doing everything wrong. But we were poor; we had no idea.

When did your modeling career really start to take off?

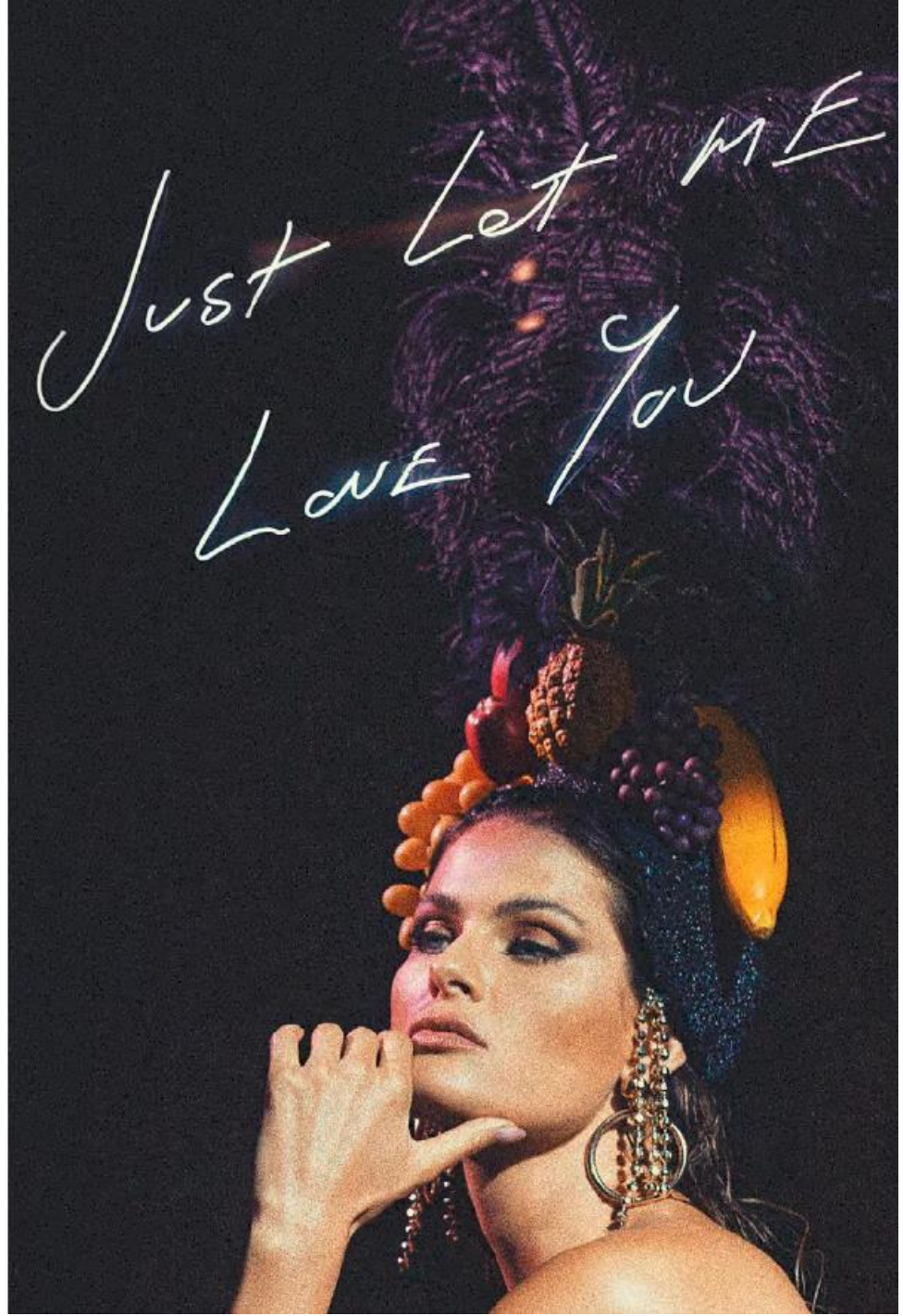
Everything started to go really well for me when I arrived in New York at 15. I did every show possible. American *Vogue* put me in an editorial. And then I landed Victoria's Secret at 16. I was working every day. I went from not being able to afford my favorite Cheetos to having enough money to buy my own apartment. And it was crazy because I remember I couldn't buy it because I was not 18!



Bodysuit, \$185, by Monica Hanson of Spazio, South Miami; Madusa lion sandals, \$195, at Versace, Design District; earrings and bracelet, both price upon request, at Pielgun Gallery, 766.614.3245.



bandeau top with tulle, \$184,
and tie-side bottom with tulle,
\$2, both of Agua de Coco
by Liana Thomas, Aventura
cat; stiletto sandals, price
upon request, of Dolce
Gabbana, Bal Harbour
tops; earrings, price upon
request, of Pincun Gallery,
36.514.3245. Opposto



Backlist price upon request; by Augusto Manzanares, by special order at manzanapdesigns@gmail.com; total pumps, \$995, at Gianfranco Ferré Harbour Shops; earrings, price upon request, at Pinkgum Gallery, 786.514.3245; sunglasses, stylist's own. Opposite page: Gold fibulae bracelet, \$495; Medusa locket necklace, \$995; Medusa pendant earrings, \$595; Medusa medallion choker, \$1,225; Medusa chain necklace, \$1,075; embossed heart necklace, \$1,180; and Medusa coin ring, \$305, all at Versace, Design District; cuff bracelet, all price upon request, at Pinkgum Gallery, 786.514.3245.





Fast-forward to today and you've graced dozens of covers all over the world. What's your secret to prepping the night before a major shoot?

I focus on being spiritual more than focusing on being superskinny or anything else. It's about my connection with God through prayer. You need that in this crazy business because you never know what's going to happen—you never know when you're going to make money again. So you can either be anxious or continue to be thankful for what you have. It's the most important thing I've learned in my life.

You have millions of followers on social media. What's it like to have so many eyes on you?

It's weird because with social media, we're so open and everyone says whatever they want without filters. Sometimes the stuff people say really hurts, but I try not to take anything personally. I just try to do what I think is right—I don't try to be something I'm not. I just want to be myself and hopefully be an inspiration to others.

Is that what inspired you to start your own YouTube channel, Face to Face with Isabeli Fontana?

I thought that it was time to let people know who I am. People think, 'Oh, she lives this amazing life, she has no problems because she's beautiful and skinny and she has great skin.' But it's not like that. I'm just like you. Everybody has problems and nobody is perfect. People see models as perfect human beings, but there's no such thing. We're all here to learn. With my YouTube channel, I wanted to come out of my shell and share my love for cooking, health and wellness as well as fashion, beauty and makeup. Most importantly, I wanted to inspire people to live their best life.

Tell us about your journey to becoming a health coach.

Oh my god, I am loving it! It's a lot of work, but I am learning so much. It's about food, but it's also about your career, relationships and living a balanced life. Yoga is also important to me. We all carry a lot of blockage, and yoga helps me understand my body both physically and spiritually. I've noticed that my relationships have gotten better since I started my practice.

Do you think living in Miami helps promote that healthy lifestyle?

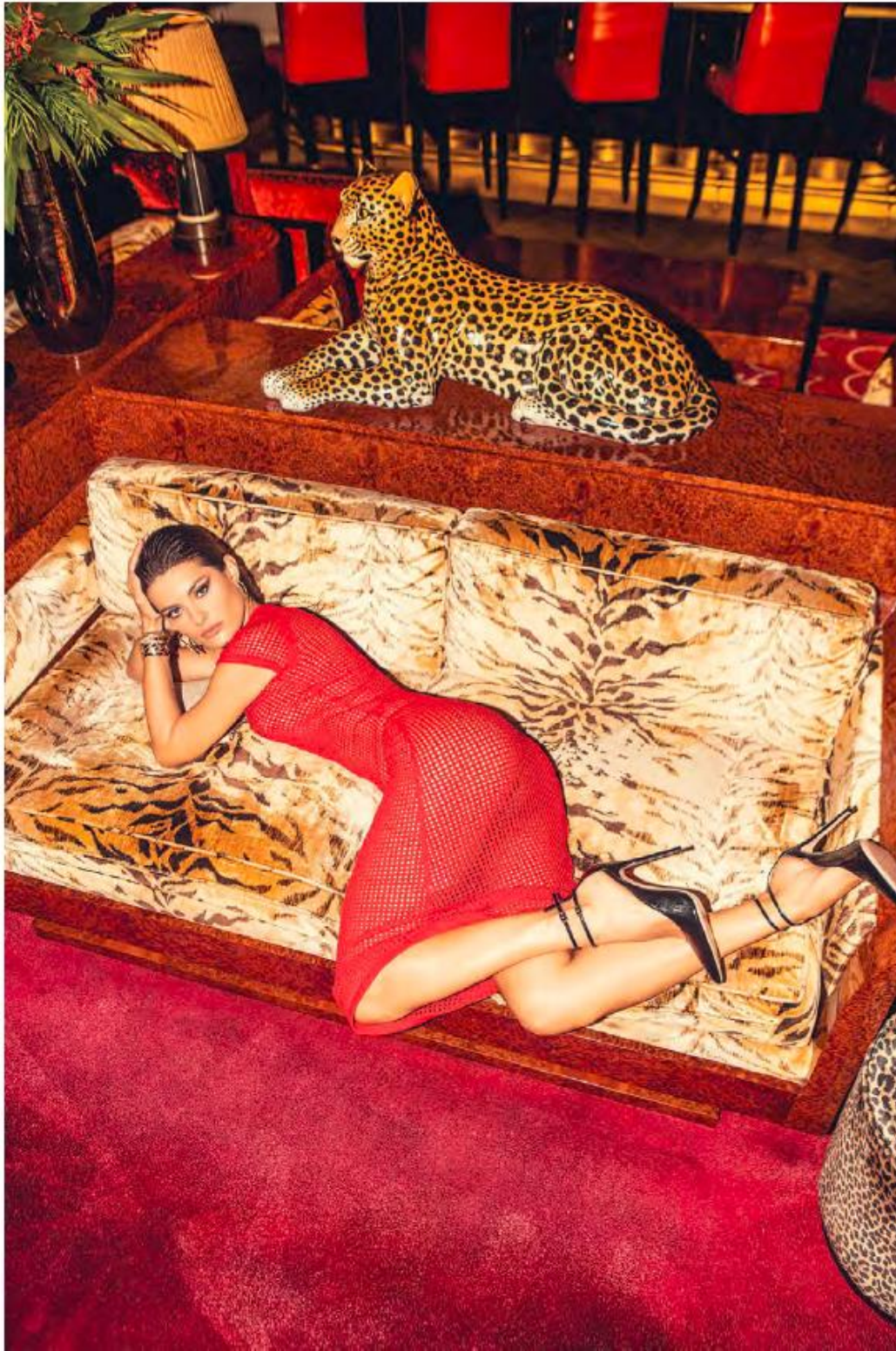
I wanted to be in Miami so badly because there is a higher quality of life. The heat is nice and feels so good. When I work in the cold places, I feel like my muscles are more tense and tight. But in Miami, it's not like that. I feel more relaxed. The restaurants are amazing too. I love going to Plant Miami at The Sacred Space Miami. Everyone is so happy there. The kitchen is open, and you can come and see and everyone [is] cooking with a smile on their face. It's so beautiful.

What's your favorite thing to do in Miami during your time off?

Go to the beach. I love to take a walk in the sand or ride a bike down the sidewalk with my kids. I'm a person who really needs nature around me. It calms me down and helps me stay grounded.

So many young aspiring models look up to you—what piece of advice would you give them?

Everyone has a beautiful intuition. Be accepting of yourself and trust your gut. And always respect yourself. You have to be really strong in this business, and if you respect yourself, everybody else will respect you. ■



Leopu dress, \$460, by L&D of The Webdier, South Beach; Kristi pumps, \$995, at Gianvito Rossi, Bal Harbour Shops; Triangle earrings, \$1,700, Stretch bracelet, \$1,350, Barocco bangle, \$9,500, Gourmette bangle, \$9,900, and Portofino bracelet, \$15,000, all by Roberto Coin at Kirk Jewelers, Downtown Miami. Opposite page: Linx Brazilian swimsuit, \$207, at Agua de Coco by Uana Thomas, Aventura Mall; Reed 105 sandals, \$795, at Gianvito Rossi, Bal Harbour Shops; earrings and bangle, both price upon request, at Pinkun Gallery, 786.514.3245.

Hair by Danny Jalaca of Creative Management

Makeup by Daniela Galán of Creative Management using Chanel Les Baigés

