

BEACH PATROL



Mirla Sabino with, from left, models Dominique Clerc, Camila Quaresma, Marcella Llodra and Gioia Jansen.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY JAMES

MIRLA SABINO *Bringing Brazilian Bikini Culture to Miami*

Swimwear designer Mirla Sabino comes by her career naturally. "Brazil is the bikini capital of the world," says the Rio de Janeiro native, who moved to Miami in 1990. "At home, if you go to a beach town for vacation, you need at least two bathing suits for each day—and once you've worn one, you can't show it again. It's an entire culture that is just coming to the U.S." That innate understanding of swimsuits is probably why her two-year-old line, ANK, has already landed on the covers of *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, as well as on supermodel (and fellow Brazilian) Gisele Bündchen in the Victoria's Secret catalogue.

The 36-year-old's first stab at design was with leather belts, the big-buckled kind that were popular in 2000. At the same time, she was working as a distributor for the Brazilian-based handbag designer Elisa Atheniense. "I went to the coterie show in New York City thinking the handbags would be the big thing and maybe I could sell my designs on the side," Sabino says. "But it was the belts that exploded." Her line, Mirla Barrie, found its way into Bloomingdale's catalogues, high-end boutiques and fashion magazines, but as quickly as the success came, it was gone again. "The next year belts went out of fashion," she says. "Everyone was just wearing ribbons around their waist."

So Sabino entered the swimwear market, developing and marketing the Brazilian swimwear brand Agua de Coco's line for North American women. In 2005 Sabino launched ANK, and already the line is distributed internationally. "Women always tell me that mine are the first suits they've found that fit right. It's because I'm marketing to different countries—Japan, Indonesia, United States—so I have to think about the bodies of women all over the world." —Rachel Bertsche

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JUST THE FACTS

What is playing on your iPod? "The Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso."

You never leave home without: "A swimsuit! No matter where I go—even skiing."

Favorite way to spend a Saturday night: "Drinks at Casa Tua with my friends. I have great friends in Miami."

Something no one knows about you: "I need my alone time. I love to be with my friends, but sometimes, since I travel so much, I need my me time."

Next place you want to visit: "I really want to go to Cambodia."

What is on your nightstand? "*The Book of Ayurveda* [by Judith Morrison]. I'm trying to immerse myself more in yoga. I need to get balanced."

Guilty pleasure: "Chocolate!"

Designers in your closet: "Vera Wang and very stylish Roberto Cavalli pieces. But if I had to pick just one designer to wear all the time it would definitely be Giorgio Armani."