



KARLA MARTINEZ DE SALAS



VOGUE MEXICO
VOGUE LATIN AMERICA
W MAGAZINE
INTERVIEW
T MAGAZINE

←
Martinez de Salas brought
American and European
furniture with her from
New York but has turned
primarily to local design
while decorating her home
in Mexico City.

Shortly after Karla Martinez de Salas relocated from New York to Mexico City, she gave birth to twins girls, Costanza and Ines. “Through everything that I promote, all the content, I’m very aware of how my daughters will consume it when they’re older,” she reflects. As editor in chief of *Vogue Mexico* and *Vogue Latin America*, she strives to illustrate the different sides of women. “I want the images to celebrate strength, power, vulnerability,” she says.

Martinez de Salas took her early inspiration from powerful female figures: “[At American *Vogue*], I worked with an assistant market editor, and we called in clothes for Grace Coddington, Phyllis Poznick, Camilla Nickerson,” she remembers. These women were the “creative forces” at the magazine and in her case, personally instrumental. Nickerson, she says, “would do all of these twists and turns with the clothes but knew that at the end of the day, she had to turn in a certain kind of image. She was breaking the rules, but in her own way that she knew Anna [Wintour] would like and appreciate.”

Looking back, she calls *Vogue* “an amazing school,” crediting her job at the company as one of the most formative. She admits that although it might seem trivial to have called in clothes and jewelry for these women, it was one of the best learning experiences. “It was never just a bathing suit. It was about the process. And that’s how it is for me now,” she explains. “It was never, and is still never, only clothes for me; it’s the process of making an amazing picture.”

From *Vogue*, she went to work at *The New York Times’ T* magazine, under the influential

wing of Stefano Tonchi. “With him, I learned that it’s about more than fashion,” she recalls. “It’s about art, travel, food, architecture—all of these things that make up style.” Thinking back on her first meetings at the magazine, she laughs, “I would write down all of the names that were mentioned, because I didn’t know who they were talking about. Everyone was so much smarter and more cultured than I was.”

A 10-month (“short, but productive”) stint at *Interview* alongside Fabien Baron and Karl Templer followed. “That’s where I really learned how you really get the picture that you want,” she says of her time at the magazine. Eventually, though, she was lured back by Tonchi, this time at *W* magazine, and hired as the fashion market and accessories director. Now, helming *Vogue Mexico* and *Vogue Latin America*, Martinez de Salas says she is more ambitious than ever.

“I feel like Latinos haven’t really raised their voices. We’ve been silent about our place in the creative industry,” she admits. “Like when Nina Garcia was appointed the editor in chief of *ELLE*, nobody said she was a Latina woman. She is, and that’s kind of a big deal.”

With that in mind, Martinez de Salas is on a mission: “It’s super important to not only promote the culture and all the amazing beaches, what have you, but the people who are here, who are representing Latin America and Mexico in the fashion industry and the world in general,” she says.† “I feel like our platform could be really powerful in that sense, and that’s exciting for me.” The editor in chief aims to “give voice” to photographers, models and other creative professionals, both in the magazine and behind the scenes. As



In 2010, Martinez de Salas co-founded Project Paz with a group of friends in New York City. The nonprofit partners with designers, artists and brands like Sotheby’s and Carolina Herrera to support children and promote peace in Juarez, Mexico.

for any major difference in her work, having moved markets, she says, “The staff here is much smaller. In New York, there are 10 people in the fashion department alone. Here, we have something like 15 in total.” But, she adds, “It’s kind of a reality check on all the excess of the industry in New York.”

Life in Mexico City has been an adjustment as well, but one that Martinez de Salas takes in stride. “One of the biggest mistakes that I made when I moved here,” she remembers, “was trying to mimic my life in New York, which was not very easy to do.” Relying on a car, she says, has been a significant lifestyle change, on top of adapting to cultural differences more generally. “Fitness culture, which only recently started taking off here, is really interesting. People can come late to a class, which would just never happen in New York. The other day, I was stressed because I was late for yoga, but when I walked in, nobody cared,” she laughs.

When it comes to the city itself, she bubbles with excitement. “There’s always something going on here,” she says. Mexico City, she notes, is one of the cities with the most museums in the world—Museo Nacional de Antropología, Museo Nacional de Historia and Museo Frida Kahlo are just a few of its most notable. On top of those institutions, the region is gaining more international notice in the art world with fairs like Zona Maco. “Mexico has been in the spotlight, and in a good way,” she reveals. “There was a stigma around Mexico being dangerous—and it can be—but people are coming here now for the food scene, the art, the culture.” That attention is markedly different from where

she grew up. “I always say that El Paso is the forgotten child of Texas,” she explains of her southwestern roots. “When you grow up in a small city, you really appreciate other cities. Everywhere we went had more than El Paso, and was really exciting because I wasn’t jaded.” Now in the heart of a world-class city, Martinez de Salas is grateful for her less-than-traditional roots. “We grew up listening to Depeche Mode, the Violent Femmes and other alternative rock bands,” she says. “I feel like the people around me were always rebelling against the fold.” El Paso, in her eyes, doesn’t get the recognition it deserves. “There is a big group of people from El Paso and Juarez who wound up in New York, in creative industries.”

After studying marketing at the University of Arizona in Tucson, which she describes as “also a very small town,” Martinez de Salas moved to Paris for an internship, first with IMG Models and then at the Hearst offices. “I thought, ‘Oh my god. This is the best place ever,’” she recalls. That awareness, she says, sets her apart from those who grew up in major urban environments and allows her to see things in a different light.

“There are so many types of people here, and that really influences you creatively,” she says of Mexico City. With her unique eye and endless inspirations, Martinez de Salas is not just shaping the future of *Vogue Mexico* and *Vogue Latin America*; she is shaping the future of the region itself. “I really hope that when people see my magazines, they want to know more about our culture, the people and what happens here,” she adds. “And that they discover something new.*”

Martinez de Salas says the Parque de Chapultepec is one of her favorite places to run and roam with her daughters in Mexico City.

I feel like the people around me were always rebelling against the fold.