

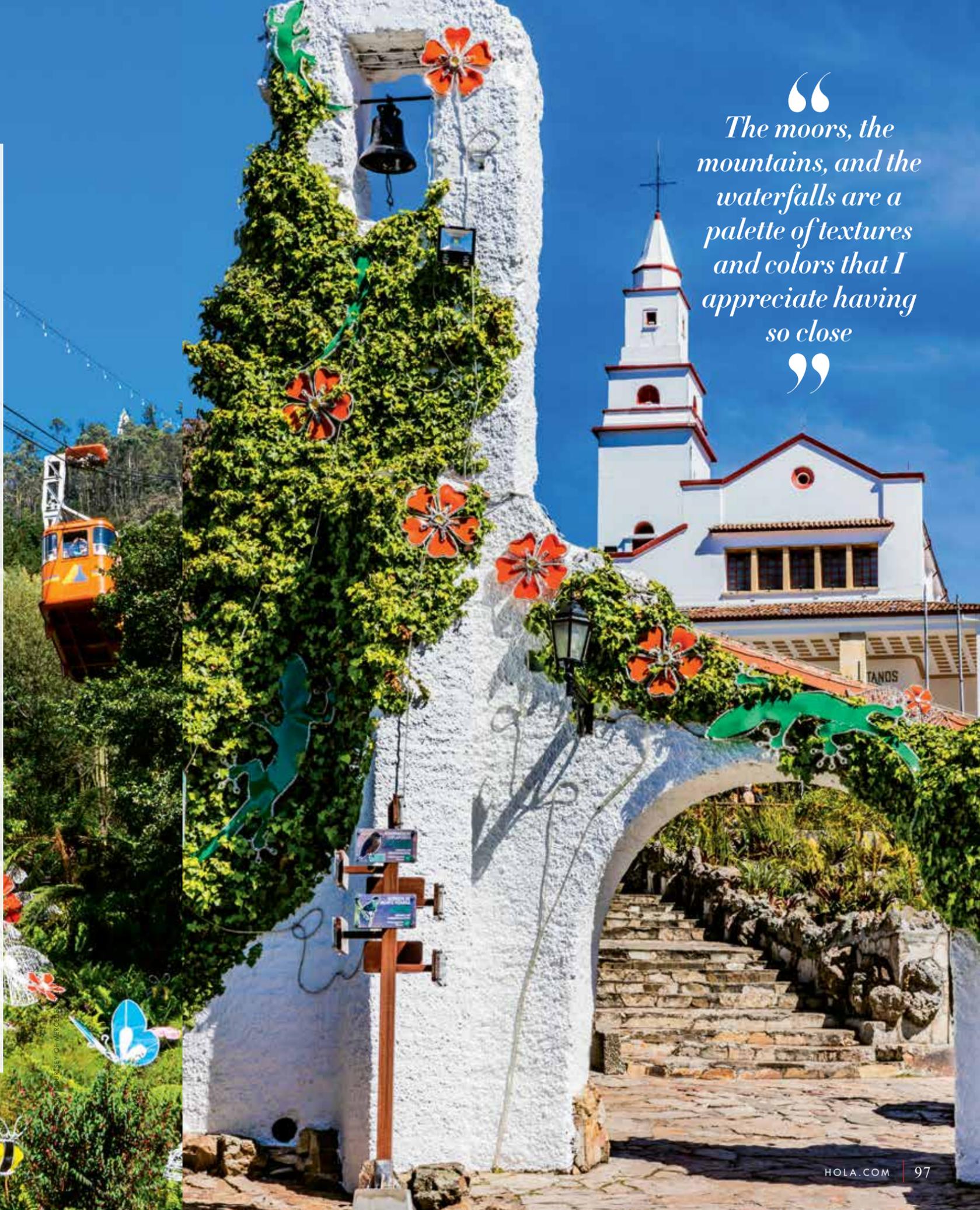


The universe of the Colombian jewelry and accessories designer Mercedes Salazar is a paradise of technical innovation, color, and the exploration of local artisans' age-old workmanship. Thanks to her signature style and curious vision, she is a global brand loved by singer Katy Perry, actress Sofia Vergara, and model and entrepreneur Margherita Missoni, among other celebrities. With an eye for celebrating the fantastic in the ordinary, and a love for the history behind every object, this Bogotá native shares the places in her hometown that she frequents and inspire her. "For me, Bogotá and the surrounding areas are a constant source of inspiration. I love the fruit markets. But geographically, **Cundinamarca** is one of the most beautiful departments. The moors, mountains, and waterfalls are a palette of textures and colors that I appreciate having so close," she says.

Bogotá is a place where the tension between the nostalgia to preserve and the impulse to develop has created a dynamic of neighborhoods with a lot of identity. The designer and mother moves comfortably in this tension between heritage and modernity. She works in a neighborhood that "harks back to yesteryear" and likes to have breakfast at the French bakery chain **Eric Kayser**. "Bogotá has very special traditional neighborhoods; **Santa Ana, Usaquén, Chapinero,** and **La Soledad**, among others. I like places where I get a sense of neighborhood life, something that has been lost

over the years," she says. In her opinion, the development of modern-day Bogotá, which has become more cosmopolitan with its assortment of amazing bars and restaurants and diverse cultural activities, has to go in hand in with a governmental agenda and an effort from citizens to help maintain safety, cleanliness, and the environment.

The designer has often claimed that her love for the



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MERCEDES SALAZAR CELEBRATES BOGOTÁ

THE INNOVATIVE AND FESTIVE DESIGNER SHARES THE PLACES THAT INSPIRE HER

world of fashion comes from a childhood place of creativity and discovery—playing with women’s clothing. “Dressing up for Halloween with whatever old clothes were in the drawers made it one of my favorite days of the year. My passion for transforming materials comes from two paths. The first stems from seeing my mom and aunts’ treasures—their homes and drawers always full of treasures—which for me was an obsession. The other is my need to express myself through what I do,” she said.

When she feels romantic, she visits **La Candelaria**, the neighborhood in the center of the city that has preserved its colonial architecture. To people watch and experience popular culture, she visits the **Plaza de Mercado de Paloquemao**. To meet up with friends, she goes to **Zona Rosa** or to **Parque de la 93**, contemporary-style areas where some of her favorite restaurants are located, like the excellent **Harry Sasson** or the Italian cafe **Il Pomeriggio**. Also, the store **Artesanías de Colombia** is a mandatory destination to appreciate artisanal crafts from all over

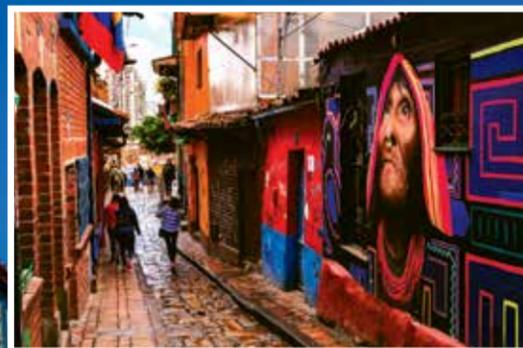
the country. “My house has the best *onces*. My daughter Lorenza is always making little cakes, cookies, and all sorts of sweets.” *Onces* are a Bogotá tradition of having a hot beverage in the middle of the afternoon with something on the side.

Just like her designs, the history of the city is defined by its appreciation and celebration of nature. Birds have been part of her collections, such as *Aves del Paraíso*, and *Pajaritos*. Her deep connection with the city’s mountains began when she was a child. “I grew up in the hills of Niza. I walked to the Colegio Helvetia school every day. I remember walking through pastures to go eat ice cream at Carulla. Today those areas are full of buildings,” she remembers. “I live on the eastern mountain, in **El Retiro**. I have a terrace where I can watch the sunrise and from where many afternoons I watch Bogotá turn crimson red in the east as the sun sets. When the sky is blue (Bogotá has the most beautiful sky color in the world) I have fun looking for white clouds to paint on my iPad.” Her dog Milú is her companion for walks through the eastern hills and the first one to get on the elevator when going



For Mercedes, Bogotá and the surrounding areas are a constant source of inspiration, especially the numerous fruit markets all over the city.

La Candelaria is a picturesque neighborhood in the center of Bogotá that maintains its colonial architecture and is home to many artists.



to their country home in **Tenjo**, outside of the city. “My favorite place has always been Cucurubá, our farm in Tenjo, Cundinamarca, in the native forest where my soul makes peace with the universe,” she reveals. Another place she visits to feel inspired are the moors. When she wants to feel inspired, she organizes a family trip to **La Chorrera**, “a waterfall on the road between Bogotá and Choachí and Chingaza, an amazing moor where sunflowers caress the sky. Always hoping to find a bear wearing glasses.”

All of her pieces have a process and history behind them. Colombia and the rich traditions of its artisans are often a starting point. Her obsession with researching these legacies began with her fascination with pre-Columbian earrings. She studied at the Escuela de Artesanías del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes de México and has taken courses to learn how to work with all types of materials, like iron, glass, and wood. The collaborative aspect is also key. Her products are handmade by mas-



The store Artesanías de Colombia is a mandatory destination to appreciate artisanal crafts from all over the country.



Harry Sasson is one of the designer’s favorite restaurants.



selling cookies,” she emphasized. “My favorite memory is seeing my dad in a red Toyota Land Cruiser on Sundays waiting for us all to get in to take us to eat the city’s best *obleas* in Petronita.” This dessert, consisting of *arequipe* (Colombia’s version of dulce de leche) sandwiched between two wafers, competes with *cuajada con melao* for her favorite. “After getting out of the Liceo Francés, where I went for one year, in the afternoons I would go to my grand-

mother’s house and as soon as Maria opened the door, I could smell the *dulce de brevas*, and there were some happy days when she would prepare *sopa de indios rellenos de cuajada* for lunch.

For dessert, there was *esponjado de curuba*. I could recreate that house and all of its nooks and crannies. It’s all so perfectly preserved in my memory that I get nostalgic just thinking about it.” ■

ter artisans and sold in over 19 markets. She has developed projects with incarcerated women, with the coffee chain Juan Valdez, and recently with the designer Carolina Herrera. “My life in Bogotá has been happy. My childhood was spent playing games in the neighborhood, like hide and seek, cops and robbers, doorbell pranks, and Ruta;

24 HOURS IN MERCEDES SALAZAR’S BOGOTÁ

Start the day with a walk on the mountain, by the ravine **La vieja brook (Avenida Circunvalar)** between the native trees in the eastern part of the city—a very beautiful place that’s worth seeing.

Have breakfast at **Brot**; along with its delicious breads, it has some very good *pandeyucas*. Walk through the Zona Rosa, where you can find several designers that I like, such as **Olga Piedrahita**, and **Pepa Pombo**. In the El Retiro shopping area are **Johanna Ortiz**, **María Helena Villamil**, **Maaji**, and **Mercedes Salazar**. If you’re in the mood for typical Colombian food for lunch, **Andrés DC** is a good choice in this neighborhood.