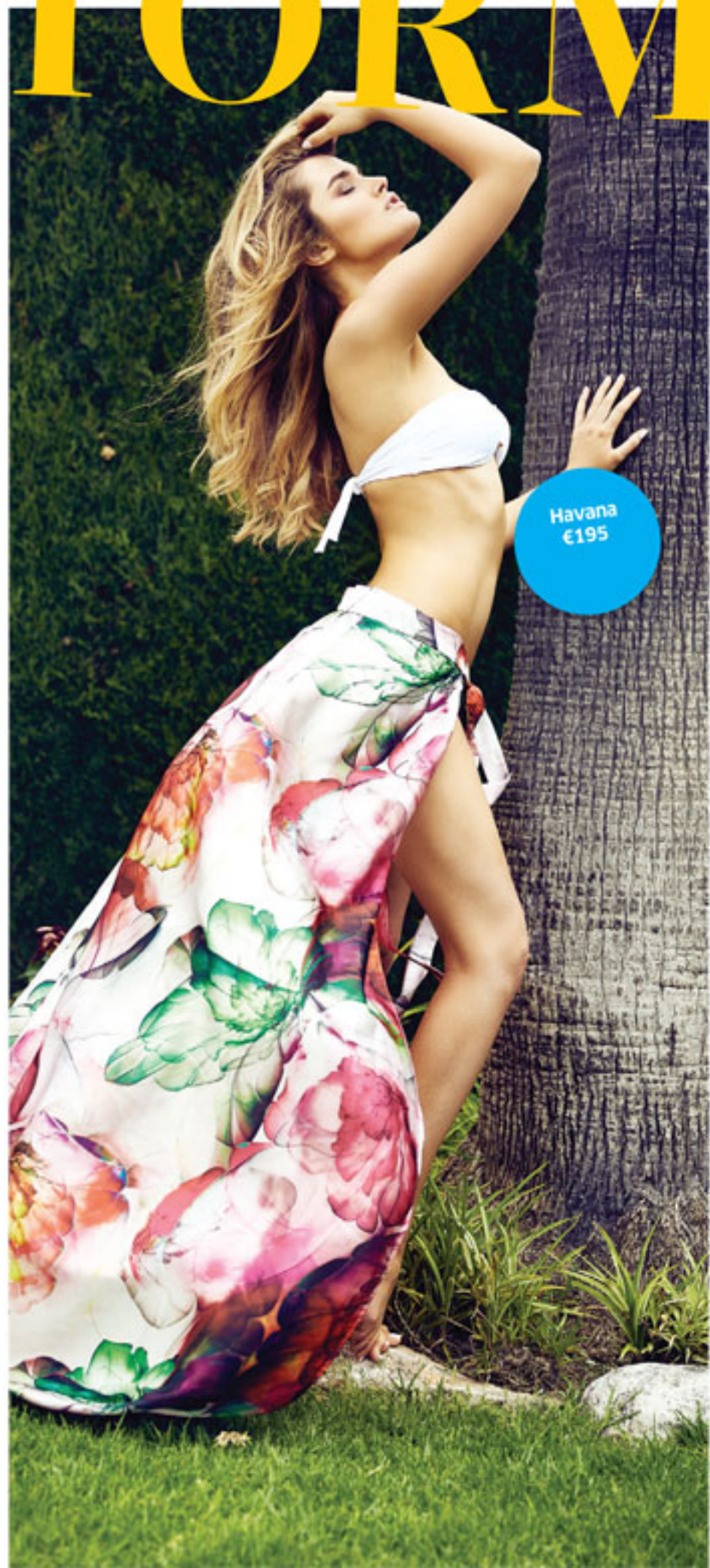


FASHION

BEACH STORM



Coco
swimsuit
€245



Havana
€195

Using imagination, flair and clever corsetry techniques, Virginia Macari has created swimwear that will coax women back onto the beaches, writes **Fiona Ness**

A speciality in corsetry was Virginia Macari's secret weapon when creating her debut swimwear range – a range that she hopes will give women their confidence back on the beach.

"We all have hang-ups about wearing a bikini, but it's all about feeling good about yourself. How many women in the world have what we perceive to be the perfect bikini body?" asks Macari. "If I can create swimwear that means you are wearing something you love, that makes you feel good about yourself, then I'll have done my job."

So you won't find unweearable or ridiculously revealing shapes, unwieldy or obvious padding or strapless scrunching of the body in any of Macari's designs.

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The 39-year-old says she achieves a cleaner beachwear silhouette with corsetry techniques that provide uplift and shape to the figure.

There are other tricks too, for those of us who don't quite feel beach-ready, such as bikini bottoms you can raise up to wear over the stomach, and lower for sunbathing. The range also includes a complementary collection of beachwear couture such as cover-ups which double as cocktail dresses, and sarongs hand-embellished by Macari with Swarovski crystals and handpainted sea shells.

"The swimsuits are designed in a way that you can throw on jeans or a skirt and wear them as a top. I wanted to make sure women felt they could actually wear them," Macari says.

The overall feel of the collection is that of insouciant elegance, with colour, cuts and fabrics operating outside any forgettable trends. Classic cuts in white and navy are joined with tropical prints and bursts of raspberry. The fact that it is manufactured alongside some of the world's top swimwear brands in Portugal and Brazil, Macari says, means that the pieces will endure season after season.

Despite being known for her socialite status, Macari is no newbie on the fashion scene. The Dubliner studied fashion design at the Grafton Academy in her early 20s, and previously ran her own fashion label. This is her first foray into beachwear and, with work on her 2016 collection already under way, the summer is looking bright for many years to come.

All swimwear and beachwear featured is from the summer 2015 Virginia Macari Beachwear Couture Collection, available exclusively from virginiamacari.com

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