

# THE GIRLS *from* BRAZIL

GETTING TO KNOW FOUR BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MODELS FROM BRAZIL  
(YES, WE HAVE THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD)

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARIANNA HENUD, FANG SHIN, HEVELYN ALMEIDA, KAREN LIMA





# YOU MIGHT NOT THINK OF MANILA

as a place to be rattled off alongside the likes of Paris, New York, and Tokyo as a prime destination for the professionally beautiful, but for a growing number of foreign fashion models—particularly from Brazil—it is exactly that. For them, Manila, and the Philippines in general, is becoming their top stop, or even their new home. Our fascination with such “imports” is deep-seated, whether due to exoticism, international appeal, or whatever post-colonial psyche theory your professor pulled out of his behind in college. That we Filipinos are hospitable to visitors has become a cliché, but the corollary of that hospitality is a consuming, sometimes borderline unhealthy obsession with cars, food, clothes, and people from elsewhere. In this case, it's fashion models.

Esquire had the privilege to sit down with four such beauties, talking to them about their lives, careers, impressions of the Philippines, and life after the runway. Also, we took many, many pictures for you to admire.

Just at first glance, it's easy to see why Marianna Henud was at one point in the running to be *Brazil's Next Top Model*. And to the nation's good fortune, she's fallen quite hard for the Philippines, making it her home base and launching a number of new initiatives. She won't be known as merely a model—Top or otherwise—for long, mark our words.

With traditionally oriental good looks thanks to her half-Chinese origin, Fang Shin might not initially trip anyone's “latina” radar, but hearing her voice—and thick Portuguese accent—will quickly dispel any misconceptions about where she hails from. Spend a few seconds getting to know her, and one cannot but conclude that she's very much the ideal result of East meeting West.

Practically a vision of Hispania, Hevelyn Almeida's status as a Century Tuna Superbod is definitely well-earned, as is the rest of her modelling career, ranging from here to Minas Gerais in Brazil and beyond. Karen Lima is the most experienced model of the four, her statuesque aura balanced by her warm smile and amiable manner. Even the most classical beauty is less intimidating once she tells you her nickname is “xuxu” (for “bitter melon”).

**MH** = Marianna Henud

**FS** = Fang Shin

**KL** = Karen Lima

**HA** = Hevelyn Almeida

## ON YOUR TYPICAL DAY

**FS:** “I wake up at 11 sometimes because I have insomnia, but I have no problem waking up, even if I go to sleep at 6 or 5AM...I buy a lot of DVDs and watch movies.”

**KL:** “I wake up, then I have breakfast and go to the gym, and usually we have casting calls and go on jobs, and sometimes we go out and have fun.”

## ON DOWNTIME AND HOBBIES

**KL:** “I like to play PSP. My favorite game is *Need for Speed*. Sometimes I fight my boyfriend for it!”

**MH:** “Even when I'm alone between jobs, I can't get bored, because all I have to do is look out my window and see the view of the city. If I have a couple of days off, I go out of town, because the Philippines is so beautiful and there are so many places to go.”

**FS:** “I'm more relaxed. I've got a boyfriend, and Nina (a teacup Chihuahua). We're really a couple, we don't like to club. We relax and sometimes go out with good friends and have good food.”

## ON GETTING INTO THE JOB

**FS:** “I was born in Brazil. We moved to Taiwan and lived there for eight years, and I started modeling at five years old. People would walk with us and take pictures and suggest I try it out. When I was almost nine we returned to Brazil, and the same thing happened.”

**KL:** “It was always my dream. When I was four years old I would work on the runways, the smaller ones, and then I met my agent in Brazil, and they sent me all over the place... At the beginning it was really just fun, but then comes a turning point your life, when you've got to decide ‘Is this what I want?’, and then get serious about it.”

**HA:** “I first tried when I was 12, but it didn't work out. But when I was 16 my father saw some opportunities and encouraged me to try again, and that's when I started traveling.”

## ON SURPRISING PEOPLE

**FS:** “Nobody thinks I'm Brazilian, so when I speak Portuguese, people are always surprised. In China also, because I speak Mandarin fluently. My father's strict about speaking Chinese at home.”

**KL:** “When they haven't met me, they think I'm snobbish, but when they talk to me, get to know me, they'll see that I'm just normal.”

**MH:** “When people talk to me and find out that I'm not just a model, they get impressed. They hear about my NGO or my business and think it's just BS, but when I explain they discover how serious I am about it.”

## ON HOW IT'S NOT ALL JETSETTING, GLAM AND PARTIES

**KL:** “People think [modeling is] too easy, but it's not. If you're having a bad day, it doesn't matter. You have to go, look pretty, and do your job, and no one's going to ask you how you're feeling, and you can't show it. I'm just a hanger, that's how they see me and I know that's my job. Sometimes that's very hard.”

**FS:** “Normally you come for three months, and if you work well, you can stay for six months or a year, and then you move on to a new agent or contract.”

**HA:** “You never really have a set routine or schedule, and it all depends on the job. I only get to know about my schedules a week in advance.”

**MH:** “Sometimes, when you're staying in [agency provided] group housing, you've got to live with all kinds of people, including guys, and need to share bathrooms and tight quarters.”



KAREN LIMA: “I'm just a hanger, that's how they see me.”





FANG SHIN WITH NINA: "Normally you come for three months, and if you work well, you can stay for six months or a year, and then you move on to a new agent."



BRAZILIAN GIRLS: Whether transient or settled in the country, they've definitely changed the landscape of Philippine modeling.

**ON FRIENDS AND RELATIONSHIPS:**

**KL:** "It's not too hard to make new friends, but once you do it doesn't matter how long you're apart, you can still get together and help each other out."  
**FS:** "I'm with my boyfriend, and he's a model, too. We try to travel together as much as possible, and it's easier for us because we share the same style and it's easier to get jobs in the same places. It can be harder if a couple has a really different style, but we always try to make it work."

**ON BEING BRAZIL'S NEXT TOP MODEL**

**MH:** "It was like a dream for me at first. They had a lot of cameras, and they really put you in situations that you won't like... I got sick and went to the hospital... I was vomiting and I still had to shoot because I didn't want to be eliminated. I grew up so much as a person, it was my first experience living with other models. I learned a lot about respect, because everyone's so different."

**ON THEIR FAVORITE PHILIPPINE SPOTS:**

**FS:** "I've been to Bohol, Tagaytay, Puerto Galera, and Palawan... but for me the best one, the paradise, is Boracay."  
**HA:** "I like Bohol best, because of the natural beauty of the place, and I like the Chocolate Hills there and the white sand beaches."

**ON OUR NATIONAL CUISINE:**

**KL:** "I like *adobo*, but I still want to try some *bulut*. It's weird!"

**ON FALLING FOR THE PHILIPPINES:**

**KL:** "Everybody asks me [what my favorite spot is], and when I

say here they ask me why, and it's because the people are so warm, they're so polite and make you feel like you're welcome."  
**MH:** "I really didn't know where the Philippines even was when I first came, but it's so different from the other countries I've been to. When I'm here, I feel like I'm at home. And it's really something that I love, that everyone's always smiling. It's impossible to wake up mad."  
**HA:** "The Philippines is a country that I really love, and if someone asked me where I want to live, other than Brazil, it would be here."

**ON WHAT'S BEYOND THE RUNWAY:**

**FS:** "I have family in Taiwan, and I'm almost like a celebrity there. They just asked me if I can sing, but I'm really shy because I've never done it before... I plan to work hard now, because I'm still young, so I can relax later while I build."  
**KL:** "I want to open my own business, maybe a restaurant. While modeling, I've learned how to eat healthy and take care of my body, and I want to use that for my life after modeling."  
**HA:** "I haven't finished school yet since I started modeling early and haven't spent as much time in Brazil, but for now I'm enjoying the time I have while I'm young and can go back to graduate."

**ON GIVING BACK:**

**MH:** "I found a home here. The Philippines has given me so much, so I wanted to give back and start my NGO, Caridade. Our biggest goal is to give them something sustainable... I want Caridade to bring smiles to people, because that's something I've learned in the Philippines. You just walk in the street and they're laughing and smiling for you, even if they don't have anything, they'll still be smiling. I want to give them reasons to smile." **ES**



