THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

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Business of Style

Her Place in the Sun

Marie-Louise Scio's life has forever been tied to Il Pellicano — one of the world's most glamorous summer hotels. Now, with a new consulting agency, she takes her inimitable experience beyond the family's Tuscan Shangri-La.

BY LINDSAY TALBOT PORTRAIT BY FEDERICO CIAMEI



HOST WITH THE MOST Hotelier Marie-Louise Scio in her Rome apartment, poised for a new chapter.

MARIE-LOUISE SCIO spent much of her childhood at Il Pellicano, her father's fabled hotel on the coast of Porto Ercole in Tuscany. While most kids were at summer camp learning to pinch pots, Scio spent the season observing the operation of one of the most worshiped retreats in the business. Her earliest memories are a series of sun-soaked vignettes, mirroring the saturated snaps that society photographer Slim Aarons took of the hotel in the 1970s and '80s. Lacquered Riva speedboats idled in perpetuity, unloading a steady stream of illustrious guests — a colorful mishmash of European royalty, Hollywood stars and members of the original jet set. They descended year after year to enjoy the nuanced service, the Negronis, the saltwater pool and the starry dance parties beside the Tyrrhenian Sea.

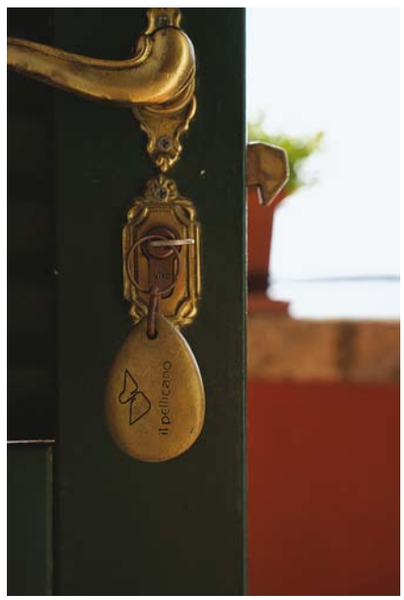
All of it was perfect training for the job Scio has held for the past decade: creative director of the Il Pellicano Group, which includes La Posta Vecchia, a 17th-century villa outside Rome that was her family's private residence before they converted it into a 19-room hotel in the '90s. "I wasn't planning on working in hospitality, but I got completely sucked in," says the 38-year-old, who studied architecture at RISD. "I've lived and breathed hotels all my life." In her post, Scio has overhauled everything from Il Pellicano's menu fonts to the maids'

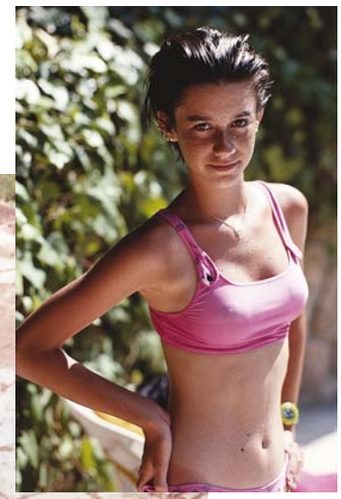
uniforms (chalk-gray sheaths with satin red and blue bows inspired by a '60s Yves Saint Laurent collection). She enlisted Juergen Teller to photograph an Il Pellicano cookbook, and opened a hotel boutique with custom A.P.C. T-shirts and Anya Hindmarch totes. ''We needed a modern-day repositioning, and there wasn't anyone better suited for the job than I was,'' she explains.

This month, Scio brings this abundance of experience as well as her innate sense of style to her own creative consulting agency, in which she'll lend the Il Pellicano touch to independent boutique upstarts, sleepy grande dames and even corporate hotel chains. She'll provide everything from interior design advice and branding strategies to access to the influential pack of artists and fashion folk she runs with — a happy byproduct of playing hostess at one of the world's last truly glamorous hotels.

''I want to help other businesses do what we did — I see potential in so many places. The question is, do you want to be a one-hit wonder or do you want to last?'' Scio says. ''So many new hotels focus more on the facade than the experience itself. They'll spend a fortune on marble bathrooms and fabrics, but overlook the breakfast presentation or mini-bar.'' Indeed, the secret to the Scio family magic lies in their hotels' well-considered but understated charms: a hard-to-replicate recipe of Old World decor and manners, time-tested service and trained discretion that can only come from decades of welcoming famous faces (arguably rivaled only by the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood). Never one to succumb to an Edison light bulb, a reclaimed barn door or over-the-top Vegas-style amenities, Scio believes instead in quiet details like an unforgettable barman, a well-stocked library and house-scented creams and soaks. ''For me,











HOME SWEET HOME Clockwise from above: the colorful bar at Hotel Il Pellicano on the coast of Tuscany; Scio as a young child at La Posta Vecchia outside Rome, where her family lived before converting it into a hotel; a Slim Aarons snap of Scio at the hotel in 1991; the rocky beach at Il Pellicano, beloved by famous photographers and movie stars since the 1960s; a pelican-engraved room key.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: SLIM AARONS/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY MARIE-LOUISE SCIO; BOBO OLSSON; MATTHEW HRANEK; COURTESY HOTEL IL PELLICANO







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BOBO OLSSON; COURTESY LA POSTA VECCHIA HOTEL (2); JUERGEN TELLER

PRESERVATION SOCIETY Clockwise from above left: a pink marble tub in a suite at La Posta Veccia outside Rome, onetime home to the influential Orsini family and J. Paul Getty; the site's manicured gardens; Scio has applied a light touch to the rooms at La Posta Vecchia, which still have many of the villa's original antique furnishings; Scio sunbathing at Il Pellicano.

'I don't care if it's a one-star or a six-star hotel, just as long as it's not lacking soul.'

luxury can be sitting in a beautiful place with a paper plate and plastic fork,'' says Scio, an inveterate traveler who recently took her son to see the Northern Lights in Lapland and to a friend's remote home in Patagonia. She names Jeff Klein's Sunset Tower Hotel in West Hollywood as a place possessing the enduring consistency and continuity she holds paramount (''It's brilliant. The same cream, pink and beige motif everywhere from the spa up to the penthouse''), as well as the Rose Hotel in Venice, Calif., (''A low-key beach house by photographer Glen Luchford with a real point of view'') and Deetjen's Big Sur Inn, which has both shared and private bathrooms. ''I don't care if it's a one-star or six-star hotel, just as long as it's not lacking soul,'' Scio says.

Not that she's abandoning her first love. Two new Il Pellicanos are in the works, one in London and one in the U.S. ''I think it's time for an urban Pellicano,'' she says. ''I'd love to create little islands of Italianess in cities like Los Angeles or San Francisco. Who knows, maybe I'll even do one in Hawaii.''

