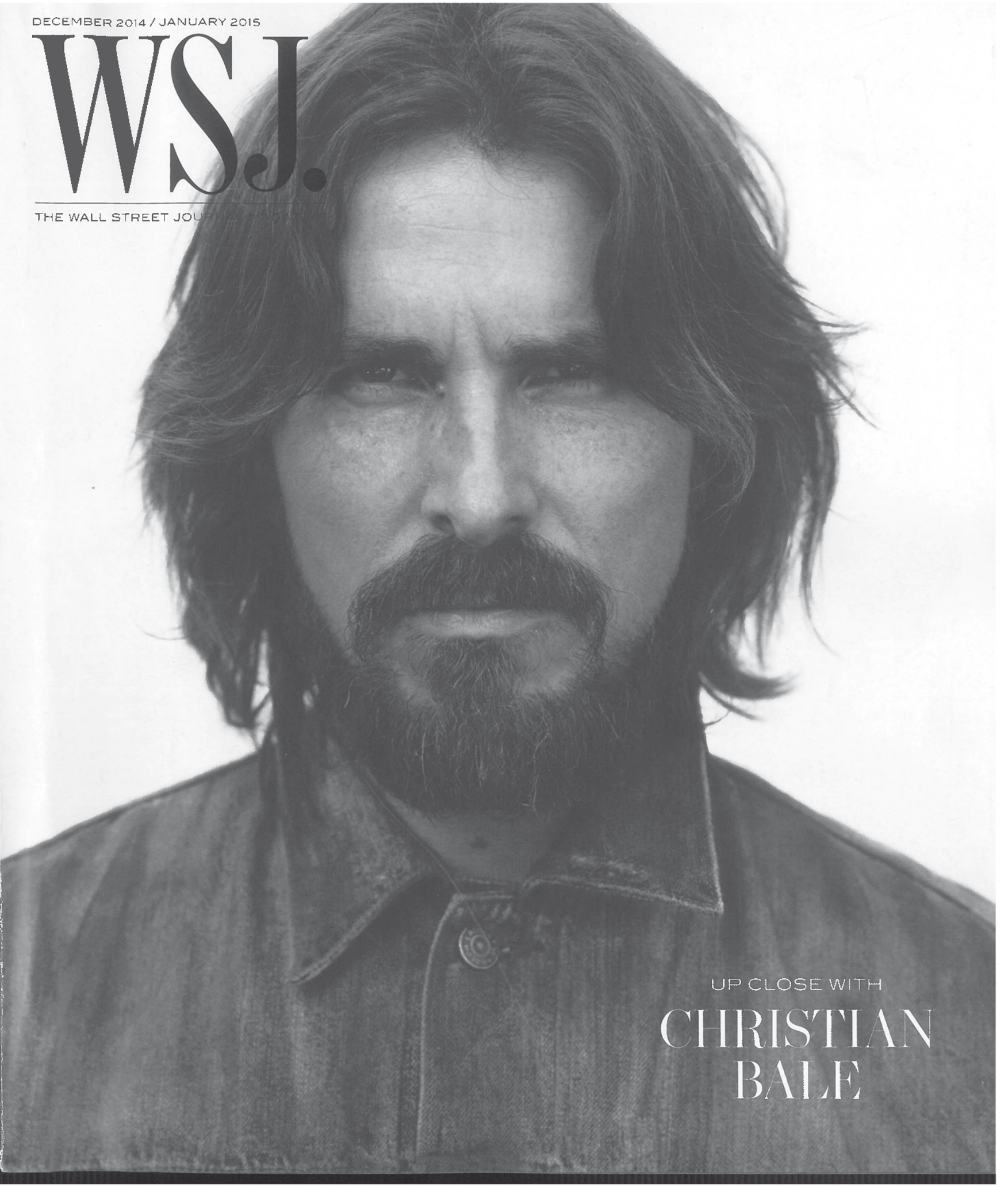
DECEMBER 2014 / JANUARY 2015

W.S.J.

THE WALL STREET JOU



UP CLOSE WITH

CHRISTIAN BALE

THE PELLICANO BRIEF

For nearly 50 years, Hotel Il Pellicano has been an iconic destination and a glamorous escape on the cliffs of the Tuscan coast of Italy. It is also the lifelong summer home of its creative director, Marie-Louise Sciò.

BY BREKKE FLETCHER PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHIEU SALVAING
STYLING BY ROBERT RABENSTEINER



LADY OF THE HOUSE
Guests can take a cliff-side elevator down to one of the lounge areas. Opposite: Marie-Louise Sciò in front of Fornasetti-inspired wallpaper in Il Pellicano's restaurant. Sciò wears a Dolce & Gabbana suit, dress shirt and bow tie and Dary's gold chain and pendant (worn around waist). For details see Sources, page 162.

ON A BALMY NIGHT in early October, on a cliff above the Tuscan coastline of Monte Argentario, near the town of Porto Ercole, Italy, a group has gathered around the pool at Hotel Il Pellicano. The hotel's longtime barman, Federico Morosi, is pouring cocktails for the guests, who are here to celebrate the end of the summer season on the candlelit terrace overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea. It could be a scene from any of the five decades the hotel has been open. Among those sampling duck polenta from a 1950s-style yellow truck parked on the stone patio are a cosmopolitan mix: Margherita Maccapani Missoni, ambassador for her family's fashion house; her race-car driver husband, Eugenio Amos; the actor Josh Hartnett and his girlfriend, British actress Tamsin Egerton; Fiat heiress and arts patron Ginevra Elkann; and book publisher Angelika Taschen. At the center of it all is a tanned brunette in a vintage leopard-print Yves Saint Laurent dress, greeting each of her guests with a warmth one might typically reserve for close relatives. This is Hotel Il Pellicano's creative director, Marie-Louise Sciò, 37, who, as the daughter of the owner, spent many of her childhood summers at this idyllic spot and today oversees it with affectionate gusto.



"The Pellicano is a home, not a hotel," says Sciò. "We have clients who have been coming here since the late '60s. They feel they are in a family."

After breaking ground in 1964, Michael and Patricia Graham, Il Pellicano's original owners, opened the hotel the following year. The couple, a glamorous combination of an aviator and an heiress, had arrived in 1962, just as the region, with its towering cypress trees, secluded coves and sparkling blue waters, was becoming popular with the likes of Jacqueline Kennedy, her sister Lee Radziwill and Fiat head Gianni Agnelli. The Grahams found a plot along a stretch of cliffs that was owned by their friend Prince Alessandro "Tinti" Borghese, from whom they purchased the land. Inspired by one of their favorite hotels, the San Ysidro Ranch in Montecito, California, they designed the hotel to be reminiscent of a Tuscan farmhouse, with 18 guest rooms and a few larger cottages. Michael Graham funded the construction by convincing his famous friends to invest in cottages in exchange for free sojourns. Soon Il Pellicano became a playground for European royalty, Hollywood actors and society figures, including Sophia Loren, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands and her husband, Prince Bernhard, Charlie Chaplin and designer Emilio Pucci, all of whom reveled in the hotel's privacy and barefooted ease.

Sciò's father, Italian business magnate and real estate developer Roberto Sciò, first arrived as a guest in 1967, seeking a summer escape for his family close to their home in Rome. Seven years later, he purchased a cottage that had belonged to Chaplin, whom he had met the first time he entered Il Pellicano's lobby. In 1979, Sciò acquired the hotel outright from the Grahams.

The second youngest of the four children of Roberto Sciò and his ex-wife, Marie-Louise Mills, Marie-Louise Sciò remembers many a happy summer at the hotel. "I was Eloise at the Plaza, but the beach version," she says. "I remember hiding in the bushes with my brother and watching the gala night parties my parents threw on Fridays: women in fabulous gowns, men in seersucker suits."

Sciò recalls mischievously snooping around guest rooms with her brother and staging performances for guests with her 12-year-old girlfriends, accompanied by a stereo blasting Madonna. "I was in awe of all these chic women drinking champagne and enjoying life," she says. "I remember sitting at the beach and waiting for another Riva boat to pull up." She also recalls attempting to save lobsters destined for the dinner table by stealing them from the grill and tossing them into the saltwater pool. "I was a really naughty girl," she says. Having grown up primarily in Rome, Sciò was packed off to boarding school in Switzerland at 15. "Most of the girls had been there for years, and I arrived completely goth, with blond highlights, wearing black hot pants. I hated it at first," Sciò says.

She found her stride when she studied interior design and architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. "RISD is where I learned how to think. Everything had a fine-art bent," says Sciò, who graduated in 2000. She applied her skills at New York City architecture firm Costas Kondylis and Partners before returning to Rome and working for interior decorator Massimo Zompa. Later her father and Il Pellicano came calling. "He said, 'We have to renovate a few bathrooms—can you do them?' So I did. And then the following year, he said, 'Oh, we need to do another few things.'"

This led to a major overhaul of the hotel in 2006, a year after she committed herself to the role of creative director. Originally, Sciò intended to hire an outside designer, "but no one got the spirit of the place. One wanted to do it à la Provence, and another wanted to do it ultramodern. It just didn't feel right," she says. "I said to myself, 'I can't get it too wrong. I grew up here.'" So she dove in and completed a six-month gut renovation. "I looked at all the Slim Aarons pictures, used the colors and tried to recapture the mood but make it more of today and not nostalgic," Sciò explains, referring to pictures taken by the famed society photographer at Il Pellicano, which were published in a 2011 book alongside images by the late photographer John Swope and contemporary photographs by Juergen Teller.

"We have changed it and updated it, but Il Pellicano hasn't lost its spirit," Sciò says. There are still humorous touches like the more than 20 pieces of pelican art that adorn the property, from an enormous painted glass bird perched on the bar, to paintings and sculptures by artist Gaetano Pompa, a friend of Sciò's father. The avian theme extends to the tropical Pierre Frey fabrics in the guest rooms and the birdcages she repurposed as lamps for the restaurant. "There was once a big parrot cage at the hotel that I wanted to reference," she says. The restaurant's bird-covered wallpaper is based on a fabric by renowned Italian designer Piero Fornasetti that once adorned a screen in a guest room. "I spoke to Fornasetti's son and asked him if I could turn it into wallpaper," Sciò says. The grounds still feature the deceptively simple topiaries and terraced gardens originally designed by Italian landscape architect Paolo Pejrone in the late '90s. There are also a grass tennis court, a cavernous spa, a gym and a boutique that carries such vacation-appropriate attire as A.P.C. dresses and Borsalino hats. Sciò's primary residence is still in Rome, where she lives with her 12-year-old son, Umberto, but she spends much of her time during the spring and summer, from mid-April through mid-October, at Il Pellicano, when the hotel is open. (Rooms start at $550 per night in the low

"MARIE-LOUISE IS THE PERFECT HOST: SHE IS ALWAYS JOLLY."
—JUERGEN TELLER



VIEW TO A THRILL There are few obstructions to natural beauty at Hotel Il Pellicano. Left: A mountain vista from one of the guest rooms. Right: A terrace adjacent to one of the cottages. Many of the rooms have private outdoor space.



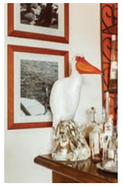
DRAPE OUT
This guest room features a custom bed with a headboard upholstered in Pierre Frey fabric.



SCIÒ PLACE Left: A waiter at Il Pellicano's restaurant. Below: Marie-Louise Sciò lounges by the pool wearing a Missoni silk shirt, skirt and head scarf and Francesco Russo sandals.









BIRDS OF A FEATHER Left: One of the hotel's chefs sources herbs from the property's garden. Above, center: A glass pelican perches on the bar. Below: Il Pellicano's restaurant overlooks the Mediterranean.





SHAKEN AND STIRRED Above left: A pelican is the logo. Left: A 1950s-style truck offers snacks to beachgoers. Below: One of two bars that serve barman Federico Morosi's 26 signature cocktails.



MAKEUP BY SALLY BRANKA; HAIR BY ALAIN PICHON

"I WAS ELOISE AT THE PLAZA, BUT THE BEACH VERSION. I REMEMBER WATCHING THE GALA NIGHT PARTIES MY PARENTS THREW ON FRIDAYS: WOMEN IN FABULOUS GOWNS, MEN IN SEERSUCKER SUITS."
—MARIE-LOUISE SCIÒ

season, which is April, May, September and October.)

"Il Pellicano is totally timeless—but not retro," says Margherita Missoni, who has been visiting annually since 2009. "It's in its own bubble."

It was Missoni who introduced Sciò to Juergen Teller, who since 2009 has become Il Pellicano's unofficial documentarian. His 2013 book, *Eating at Hotel Il Pellicano*, captured the inventive cuisine of the former house chef, Antonio Guida, whose surrealist creations, such as risotto with squid ink, sage, baby calamari and cream of turmeric rice, have earned him and the restaurant two Michelin stars (Guida left Il Pellicano at the end of this past season). "I got very fat doing the cookbook," jokes Teller, adding, "Our families have become close friends. Marie-Louise is the perfect host—always jolly. She runs the hotel with passion and love."

It's a role that she's embraced. "There was always a lady of the house. First there was Patsy and then my mother. Now I'm the lady of the house," she says. "I make sure everything is not just pretty, but working." (Sciò also oversees the one other hotel in the Pellicano group, La Posta Vecchia—a 17th-century villa located a 40-minute drive from Rome that houses Medici treasures and was once home to J. Paul Getty—as well as taking on the occasional private client.)

Three years ago, her partner and Umberto's father, Giorgio Mortari, died suddenly following a head injury. "It's been a horrible experience, but, through the pain, it has enriched me in some way," says Sciò, who has since gotten a tattoo on her wrist that reads, "Here, Now." "I think that you have to take whatever comes in life and make something of it."

At the moment, she is looking ahead to the hotel's 50th anniversary next summer. "I want to do the mother of all events," says Sciò, who is planning a gala for June. This year she also conceived of and released the hotel's first app, Il Pellicano Travel Guide, in which frequent guests (including Sciò's boyfriend, Argentine financier Alejandro Pitashny) recommend their favorite spots in such destinations as London, Rome and Paris. As for expanding the hotel group, Sciò says she is open to the notion of replicating the Il Pellicano experience in other cities, if the right properties can be found. "I'm a volcano of ideas," she says, before adding with a wry laugh, "but first, I need a vacation." ●