



### **The Vineyard Dweller Salvatore Ferragamo**

*One of Ferruccio's twin sons, Salvatore, 36, shares his grandfather's name and love of shoes. But the Il Borro managing director's real passion is wine*



### **The Shoe Star James Ferragamo**

*Ferruccio's other twin son, James, oversees the shoe-design team. The company makes more than 1 million pairs of shoes each year*



### **The Newcomer Michele Norsa**

*The first outsider to take a direct stake in the company, CEO and group managing director Norsa is looking to expand the product range*

the above conditions," says Ferruccio. Thus far, no such child has been spotted. "I don't know if you follow soccer," says Massimo, "but Maradona's son is no Maradona, and where is the son of Pelé? Unfortunately, one has to be intelligent enough to know that genius might not strike again, and we have to find that rare creative talent outside." Today, new shoes are designed by a team overseen by James, although Norsa hints that they may be about to sign an emerging shoe-design star (he won't name names yet). Naming names, when it comes to celebrity clients, is something the family can be almost perversely reticent about, considering its history. Some of the founder's most sensational designs have recently been reissued as limited editions, and a gorgeous stiletto in suede and crocodile still has its original name, Viatica. It's only when reading the small print that one will spot that the original model was created in 1959 for Marilyn Monroe, who wore it in *Some Like It Hot*. "We try to make sure the customer looks at the product from the customer's point of view," explains James of this quiet approach to an extraordinary celebrity endorsement. (Monroe, a regular Ferragamo customer, insisted that her heels be extra high to put an added wiggle in her walk.) "It's more of a pull than push strategy; we're not into rah-rah-rah marketing

or shouting about what we do," James says.

"The company has always been shy in a certain sense," says Norsa, who admits such reticence is both a strength and a weakness. "After Salvatore died, there was such respect, it was as if no one wanted to talk too loudly. As a result, you could say this company has not taken all the advantages it could have. They probably could have become the size of Prada or Gucci, which were the same size or smaller 15 years ago." Norsa stresses that on the plus side, the brand's integrity is completely intact.

The Salvatore Ferragamo name will soon be evident on a wider range of products, especially those found within a literal stone's throw from the company headquarters. Currently, the Lungarno Hotel, across the river Arno from Palazzo Spini Feroni, offers guests bath and beauty products branded Lungarno. With new formulations, these will soon carry the Salvatore Ferragamo name, as will a new fragrance to join Incanto, F, Subtil and the eponymous scents for women and for men. Also for men, the clothing division will be expanded, "because men who enter our stores to buy a wallet can easily be tempted to buy more," says Norsa, who adds that he was amazed when he discovered that a company with such a heritage in leather did not offer luggage. "And you can't find boat

shoes—in a company where they are all obsessed with sailing!" he says, laughing.

Norsa openly concedes that one element of the heritage is lost forever. "My mother is 93 and has been a customer of Ferragamo for 60 years, and she says to me, 'But the leather used to be softer,' and she is right," he says. "But now you can't kill baby animals for their skins, and there were tanning techniques then which, of course, you can't use anymore. The ballerina was lighter 60 years ago, but while we've industrialized, we still make some of the finest shoes you will find anywhere."

The first thing Norsa did, before his appointment was even announced, was accost the photographer Mario Testino on the steps of the Ritz Hotel in Paris. "I said, 'We're going to be working together, but I can't tell you where!'" Testino has since been hired to distill the company's made-in-Italy roots and Hollywood glamour through campaigns featuring Claudia Schiffer and Stephanie Seymour, who are judged the right age for a grown-up brand. But while a change of image can happen fast, other shifts take longer. Norsa admits many challenges lie ahead. "I'm here to make this company change its speed, shed its skin," he says. "My commitment is to ensure Salvatore Ferragamo can be preserved for an eternity." ■