

# Maternity & FASHION BEAUTY

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Sheer  
Marla Maples

Delivery  
by Design

Scents of  
a Woman

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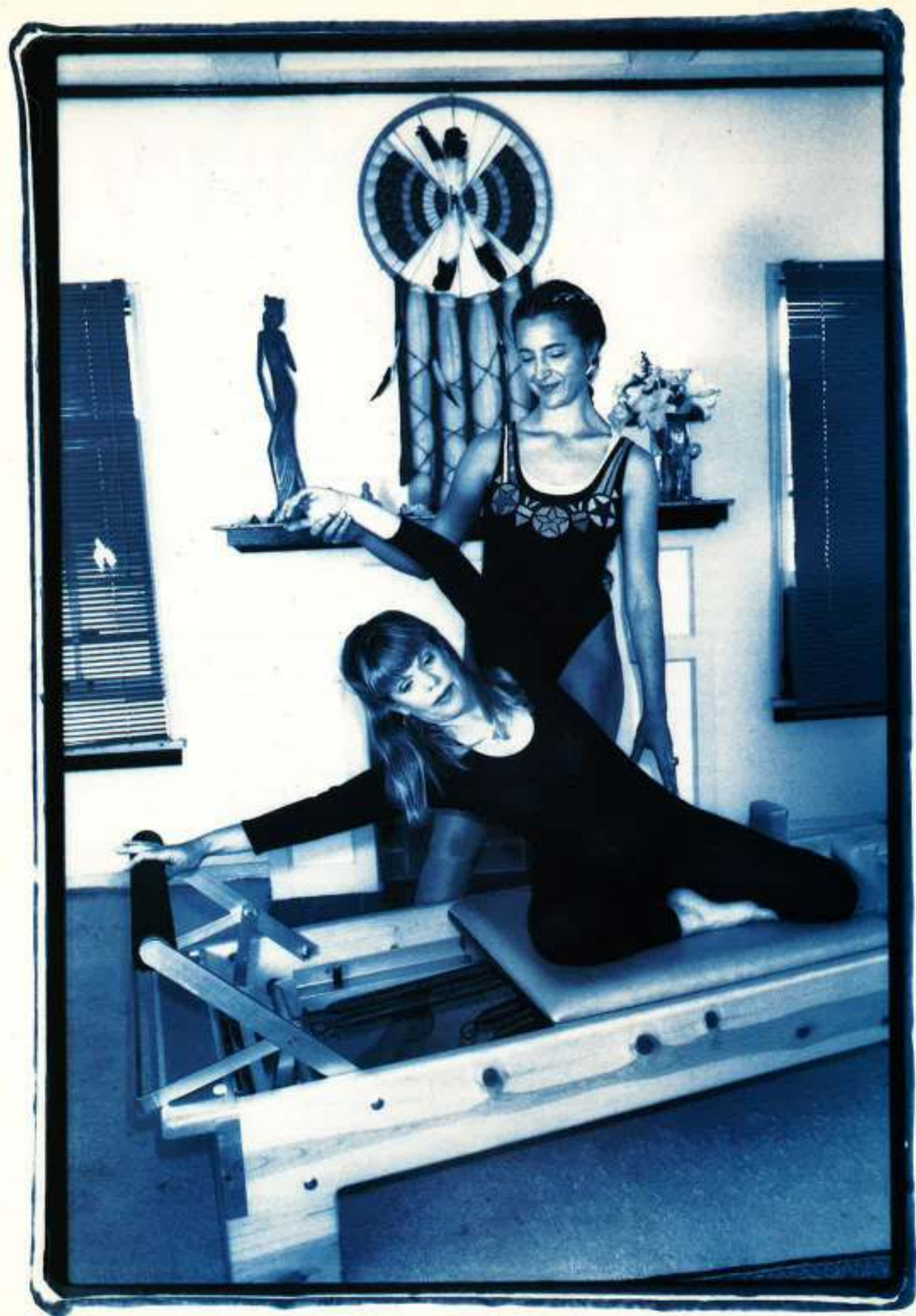


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by Katharine Stalter

# pilates

*Tired of aerobics classes set to the pounding beat of loud dance music? Join the club. More and more women—especially pregnant women—are discovering the mellow joys and strengthening benefits of an exercise program called Pilates (pi-LAH-tees).*

When Joseph Pilates came to America from Germany in 1926, he brought with him a system of exercise so precise and effective that many of the day's finest dancers flocked to his New York studio in their quest to build strength without adding bulk or losing flexibility. For years Pilates instructed such notables as Alvin Ailey and Martha Graham, the floor technique of the latter being strongly influenced by the Pilates method. So influential were his techniques that famed Russian choreographer George Balanchine proclaimed, "Pilates is the greatest genius of the body."

Pilates was afflicted with asthma as a child, and he later sought to improve his health through exercise. "He studied yoga, martial arts and gymnastics in the early 1900s," says Siri Dharma Galliano, a renowned Pilates teacher and the owner of Live Art Studio in Beverly Hills, California. Using his knowledge of physical fitness training, Pilates pioneered the development of the Universal Reformer, a machine that works body parts without producing muscle bulk. The Reformer is a bed-like apparatus whose carriage slides back and forth and has a pair of looped straps for arms and legs, with adjustable springs for resistance. When combined with a series of mat exercises, the Pilates method balances the body by improving ease of motion and promoting mental and physical harmony. "All his work is based on trunk stabilization, control, alignment, balance, minimalism of movement, breath and elongation," explains Galliano.

In step with the "kindler, gentler" attitude of the '90s, the techniques Pilates taught are once again becoming popular as an alternative to the loud, crowded and stressful experience of the average gym workout. Athletes ranging from Martina Navratilova to members of the San Francisco 49ers and Cincinnati Bengals incorporate Pilates techniques into their workout routines not only to gain strength, but also as therapy for sports-related injuries. Not to be outdone, Hollywood celebrities like Glenn Close, Jessica Lange, Louis Gossett Jr. and Rosanna Arquette are sworn Pilates enthusiasts.

Somewhat of a celebrity herself, Siri Dharma Galliano has been an instructor of holistic conditioning for 17 years. She is frequently found with her Universal Reformer on movie sets, providing physical fitness counseling using a holistic system she dubs "Astroyoga."

This unique approach combines astrological data with a student's personal fitness needs to get optimum results based on both the individual's nervous system and their psychological approach to movement.

Fortunately, the Pilates method isn't reserved just for the physically fit or the rich and famous. Many of Galliano's clients are women who are either pregnant or trying to flatten their stomachs between pregnancies. "For pregnant women—especially those with back problems—Pilates is a great way to elongate muscles. It works deep into the pelvic area and deep into the breath, so it does a lot to stimulate the reproductive organs. It keeps the arms, legs and buttocks in shape. Then [after delivery] all that has to be brought back is the stomach," explains Galliano.

Pilates movements also help develop the strength and deep breathing needed for delivery. "A lot of people think they need to do stomach crunches, but the Pilates method is so unique, you're sure to be working your stomach in the right way. If you strengthen the stomach, you strengthen the back muscles and you support the whole pelvic girdle," says Galliano. She recommends a one-hour session twice a week for pregnant women.

The Beverly Hills trainer believes this method is equally beneficial for women who are trying to get pregnant. "I work with a woman who, at age 40, wanted to have children. I've guided her through two successful pregnancies and now, at age 43, she's pregnant with her third child," beams Galliano.

Galliano teaches Pilates in pairs, so the experience is intimate and friendly. "A lot of women reach the point in a pregnancy where they feel fat and ugly. Here, they can be really beautiful," Galliano enthuses. "This is also her chance to get a break away from the demands of the kids, the husband or the career—there's no stress through loud music or jumping around."

Another hidden benefit is cost. Surprisingly affordable when compared to other fitness or beauty regimens, Pilates sessions with Galliano cost only \$25 per hour. "To be taught right, it has to be affordable," Galliano maintains.

With both the hidden and obvious benefits the Pilates method imparts, it is the perfect workout for health-conscious mothers-to-be.

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