

MIQUEL ANGEL VAQUER

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Miquel Vaquer is a true example of the eternal adage that is “you can’t judge a book by its cover.” For this six-foot-tall-very-handsome-and-oh-so-mediterranean-and-Spanish-poncho-wearing-leggings-rocking-cowboy-hattin’-have-you-seen-my-newest-sample-from-Bernard-Willhelm man, wine is a serious family business that dates over 100 years. In the past four years he’s turned his family cellar, Casa Mariol, from a classic to a new design that stops even the biggest wine un-enthusiast dead in its tracks. For him, “good wine is just as important as a well-built dress, a nice perfume, an exquisite meal, and great music.” I recently caught up with him at one of his favourite Barcelona restaurants, El Noti, for a power lunch right before his first Casa Mariol Ambition Tour of the United States where we discussed all things vino.

MF: Are you making a wine revolution?

MV: I think we’re definitely starting something. Perhaps our 2010 collection does not show the full extent of what we want to achieve, but it is certainly the beginning of a change in the wine industry. For us it’s very important to experiment and we want to start a new culture inside the wine industry. Ever since JO! came out in 2008 we’ve embarked on creating the types of wines we would like to see in our favourite wine shops.

MF: And what would that favourite wine shop be like?

MV: It would be a place where the consumers could make a logical purchasing decision and be themselves. Products would speak to consumers on a one-to-one basis, where you’ll know every specific detail of the product, but not necessarily have a PhD in wine history. Everything is important, but we can’t expect for our costumers to be experts on wine because not even the industry insiders are. We like to go beneath the surface of our clients, who are bombarded by hundreds, or maybe even thousands of wine labels that all are selling the same image and that is “we are the best wine out there”, to know what they want.

MF: So what does Casa Mariol tell its costumers that is so different?

MV: We don’t want our customer to be intimidated by our wines. Choosing wine should be as simple as picking marmalade for your morning toast. Our company has always created wines that are for daily consumption. Good wine, nonetheless, but ever changing. We come from Terra Alta, a known fertile region of wine producers in Spain, which serves as suppliers of grapes and wines to other companies.

MF: How was it growing up in a vineyard?

MV: It’s funny that you asked that because everyone is always asking me how was it growing up during the harvest in the vineyard, but I was never there cutting up the grapes. To me the harvest season was working in the cellars, receiving the crops for up to a month and from there we would produce the wine.

MF: But you would visit during harvest, right?

MV: Of course, we would go supervise and tell the farmers when the grapes, which have to be perfectly ripe with the right amount of sugar, would be ready for picking.

MF: When did you start working there with your family?

MV: As long as I can remember! I spent every summer cleaning up wine bottles. My parents would prop me up on a stool and place me on the assembly line to place the neck covers on every bottle.

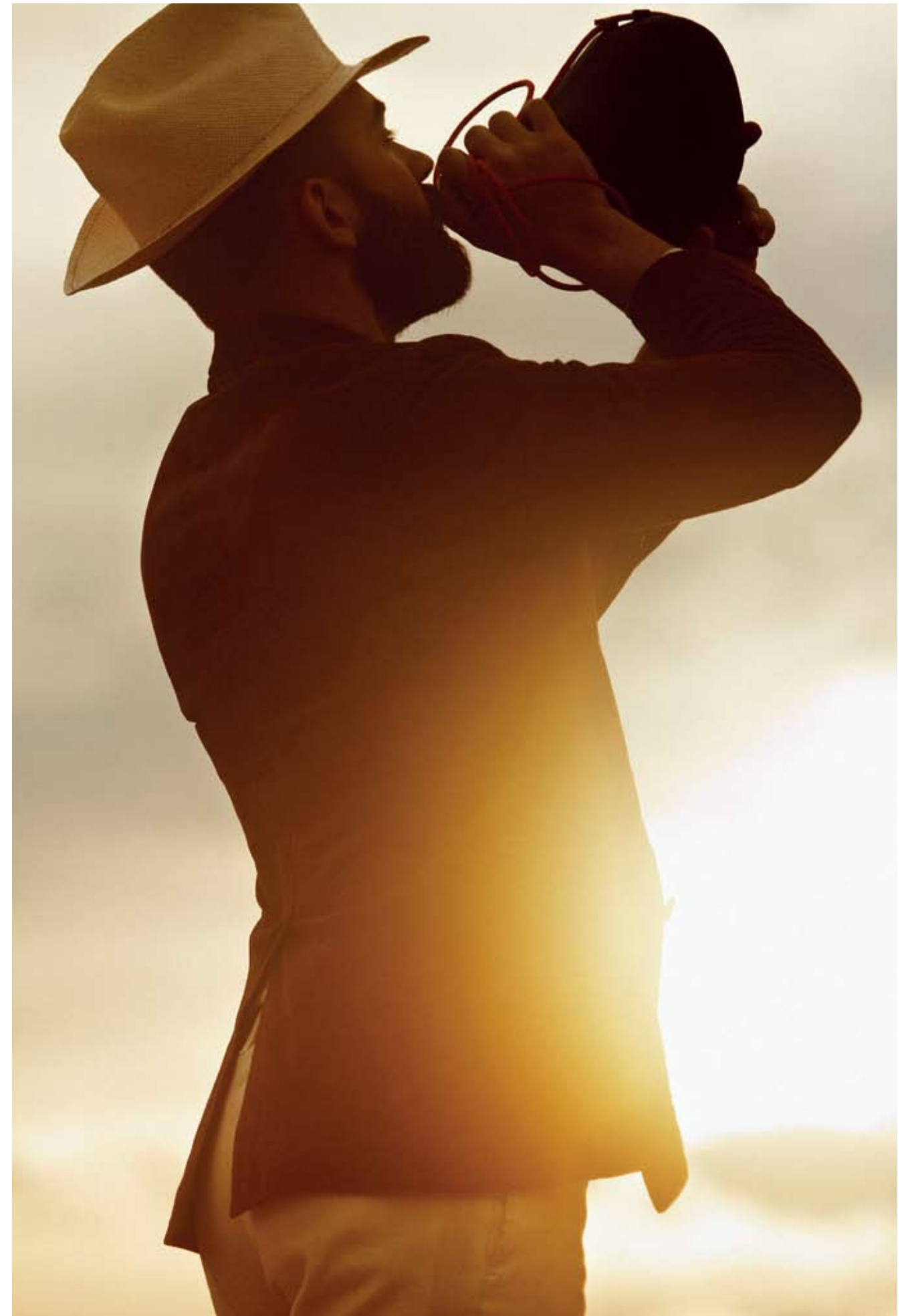
MF: Did you always want to work in the wine industry?

MV: No. For many years I worked as a journalist and as a scriptwriter for television programs. I left for Boarding School at the age of 13 after there were some sort of strikes that had canceled school for many weeks. I was very happy to leave for it because I longed to go into a Boarding School, even though I had a privileged live in my small town of Batea. Even to this day, I enjoy going back on weekends, and spending Saturday mornings on the farm with my father. Tradition is very important to me. All of my childhood friends are now proud farmers who are taking care of the land.





Mono de piel de borrego verde oscuro y botas,
HERMÉS. (otoño-invierno 2011).



Americana de ante marrón, camiseta blanca
con botones, pantalón de lino blanco, **TOM FORD**.
Sombrero de paja, **ADAM KIMMEL**. Y pañuelo
con print de leopardo, de la estilista.

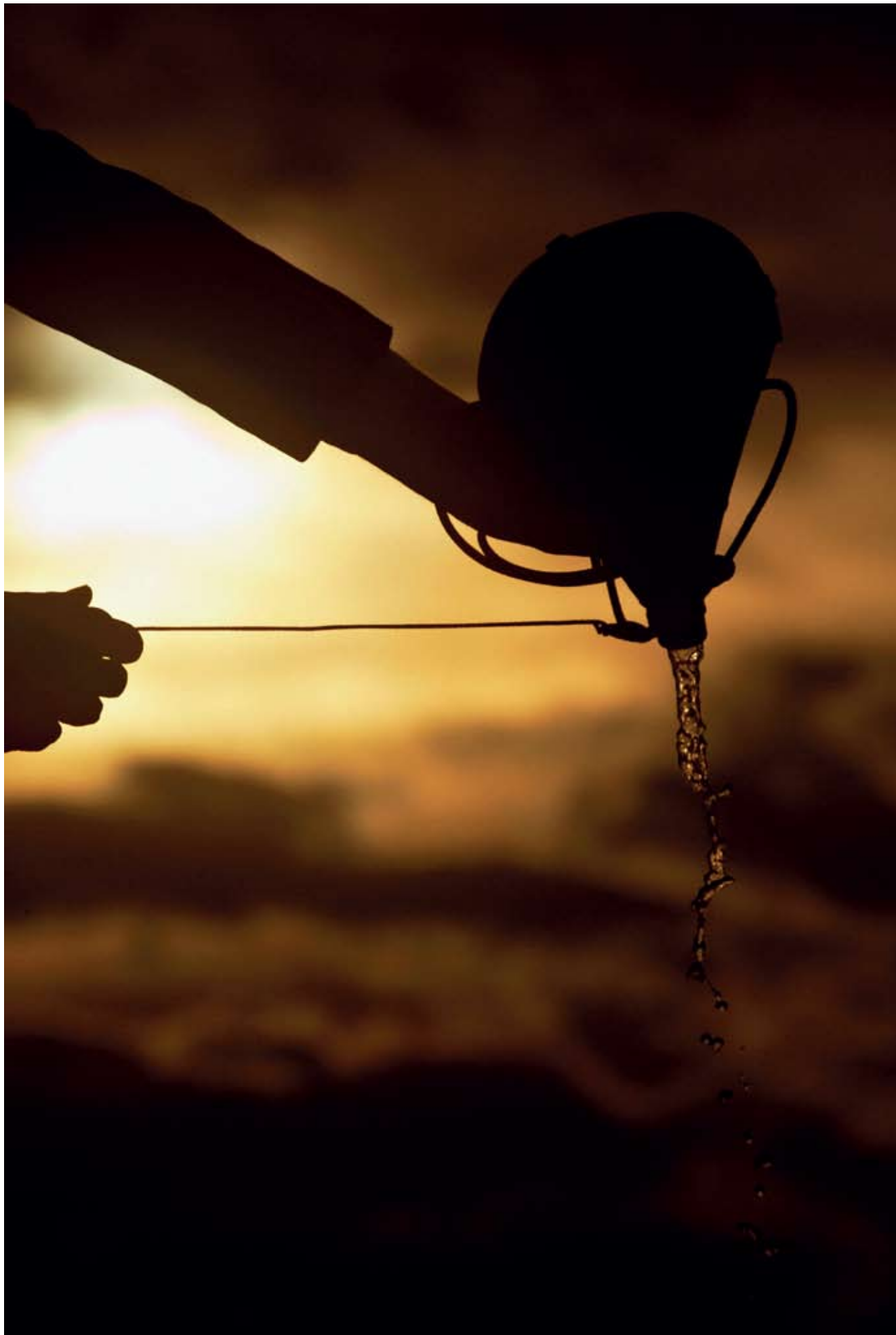




Pantalón de lino blanco, mocasines marrones de piel trenzada con borlas y cinturón marrón de cuero trenzado, **TOM FORD**.



Americana de ante marrón, camiseta blanca con botones, pantalón de lino blanco, mocasines marrones de piel trenzada con borlas y cinturón marrón de cuero trenzado, **TOM FORD**.



After Boarding School I went onto do a Bachelors in Humanities. After my second year in college I left off to work for five years with various Production Companies for TV and Film working on huge Reality TV. shows like the Spanish versions of Show Me The Money, Deal or No Deal, Pop Idol...

MF: No wonder you are a show man!

MV: Aha! When I saw that I might have been steering into a comfort zone routine I decided to quit television and move to Paris.

MF: Did you enjoy living in Paris?

MV: Living there was great, learned French, made fabulous friends like Bernard [Willhelm]. During this time I realized how important my family's business was and how productive I could be working for them. This was in 2007..

MF: Of course, you've been given the opportunity to give Casa Mariol a full-on facelift.

MV: Even though I now work in sales, my job is highly creative. During my years in the television industry I learned to work on a product that reached millions of consumers, but I was torn because they were products which I didn't consume. I feel that I've given the company a breath of fresh air by coming in and re-launching the products. We wanted to create an ambitious project with Batea's best grapes to create great wine, and, of course delivering an affordable product.

MF: Yes, wine tends to be an upscale product, but, these are very reasonable for the image they portray.

MV: My father does not believe in expensive wines. If you ask him to produce a wine that costs 30€ per bottle he wouldn't know how which ingredients to put into it.

MF: What is your take on people who suddenly own vineyards?

MV: These people don't know what to do with all their money. They think that it could be a profitable mid-range venture when the reality is that it is not. When you are aging wine it takes a lot of money and years to have this investment, which is basically stagnant, to start showing some earnings. To us, this is all quite foreign. All the fads, pop-up wine shops and collaborations with artists seem strange because we've simply been doing wine for over 100 years. When you are born and raised in a small town like Batea, you know that this is what you will probably do for the rest of your life.

MF: Tell me about the birth of JO! and the Miquel Angel Vaquera in Casa Mariol.

MV: My brother, José María, decided to plant verdejo in Catalonia. My father thought that he was crazy because nobody was growing this type of grape in this region. Once the grapes were ready for picking, my brother and sister did not want to launch just another wine, so they asked for my help and we started working on the concept development of this new venture. They were not aware of the magnitude of the product that they were making. I wanted to take advantage of the whole concept behind having fun with wine and not making it such a stiff and snobby product. When it came out, I was sure that we were making the most contemporary wine in the world. It was a well-developed experiment with a strong emotional background that wanted and continues to communicate a new culture in wine consumption.

MF: How did your family react when they saw the iconic JO! neon green streamlined inspired crest?

MV: They have always been very supportive of my ideas and choices. I've never had to over justify the new artworks and products.

MF: You're continuing the Casa Mariol tradition, but, for today.

MV: I have great responsibility by having my family's last name. Just as my brother has a responsibility for the quality of the wines, it didn't strike me until one day I realised "this is mine as well" and then I felt the necessity to work on the communication and marketing of this company.

MF: Did you juggle concepts before reaching the final one?

MV: Not really. In the contemporary wine industry you don't really have to present many ideas since it's such a young market, or, better yet, nobody is really doing what I'm doing. It is not as if I was working on an eyewear or perfume launch where there are many brand extensions. Traditional wineries are not really interested in keeping up with trends.

MF: Do you feel like you're the big pink elephant in the wine fair?

MV: I have a lot of respect for this industry and I'm always very careful when I launch a product.

MF: Your wines portray a very confident image, which at the end of the day, are an extension of yourself. When somebody meets you, they are not seeing your typical wine salesman.

MV: I believe that you are your product. I am my wines.
