

Contrology Pilates Physical Culture

Volume I

THE UNIVERSAL REFORMER

Esperanza Aparicio Romero - Javier Pérez Pont





Colección Contrology Pilates Physical Culture (7 Volumes)
Volume 1: The Universal Reformer

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08204 Sabadell - Barcelona
☎ *+34 680 457 788*
🏠 *www.hakabooks.com*
✉ *editor@hakabooks.com*
📘 *Hakabooks*

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CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	15
DEFINITION OF CONTROLOGY	17
WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT CONTROLOGY	21
HOW TO IDENTIFY A TRUE CONTROLOGY TEACHER	25
Teachers of the pilates method	
Romana kryzanowska	
Sari mejía santo	
The training equipment (apparati)	
Universal reformer	
Cadillac	
High chair	
Wunda chair	
Large barrel	
Spine corrector and small barrel	
Pedi-pole	
Magic circle	
A FOREWORD	31
PRECAUTIONS BEFORE GETTING STARTED - WARNINGS TO THE READER	33
NOSE BREATHING	35
TRAINING IN SPECIAL CONDITIONS	37
Weak or sensitive neck	
Shoulders, elbows, wrists	
Back	

Hips	
Knees	
Ankles	
Pregnancy	
TO BEAR IN MIND	41
Hyper-extension of the joints	
Positions of the feet	
Quality/quantity	
Positive attitude / perseverance	
THE SIX BASIC PRINCIPLES	45
Centre	
Concentration	
Control	
Precision	
Breathing	
Flow of movement	
KEY CONCEPTS	49
V feet position	
Central line and “box	
Navel to spine: “inwards and upwards	
Chin to chest	
Spine articulation vertebra by vertebra	
C-curve	
EXERCISES ON THE UNIVERSAL REFORMER	55
INTRODUCTION	57
The universal reformer	
Components of the universal reformer	
Exercise levels for the universal reformer	
Basic system	
Intermediate system	
Advanced system	
THE UNIVERSAL REFORMER BASIC SYSTEM EXERCISES	63
I – FOOTWORK SERIES	
Toes	
Arches	

Heels
Tendon stretch
II – THE HUNDRED
III – LEG CIRCLES
IV – FROG
V – STOMACH MASSAGE SERIES
Round
Hands back
Reach up
VI – SHORT BOX SERIES
The hug
Flat
Side to side
Twist
Tree
VII – LONG STRETCH SERIES
Elephant
VIII – KNEE STRETCH SERIES
Round
Arched
Knees off
IX – RUNNING
X – PELVIC LIFT

**THE UNIVERSAL REFORMER INTERMEDIATE
SYSTEM EXERCISES**

103

I – SHORT SPINE MASSAGE
II – COORDINATION
III – SWAN ON THE BARREL
IV – HORSEBACK
V – LONG BOX SERIES
Pulling straps
T-shape
Backstroke swimming
Teaser
VI – SHORT BOX SERIES
Twist and reach
VII – LONG STRETCH SERIES
Long stretch
Down stretch

Up stretch
VIII – STOMACH MASSAGE SERIES
Twist
IX – SEMICIRCLE
X – SIDE SPLITS
XI – FRONT SPLITS

**THE UNIVERSAL REFORMER ADVANCED
SYSTEM EXERCISES**

139

I – OVERHEAD
II – ROWING SERIES
Into the sternum
90° degrees
From the chest
From the hips
Shave the head
III – LONG BOX SERIES
Horseback
IV – LONG STRETCH SERIES
Long back stretch
V – TENDON STRETCH
VI – CHEST EXPANSION
VII – THIGH STRETCH
VIII – ARM CIRCLES
IX – SNAKE
X – TWIST
XI – CORKSCREW
XII – LONG SPINE MASSAGE
XIII – BALANCE CONTROL
Push up front
Push up back
XVI – RUSSIAN SPLITS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

183

*Humbly dedicated to Romana Kryzanowska,
teacher and friend.*

E.A.R and J.J.P

PROLOGUE

This book, together with the rest of the series, is aimed at anyone who wishes to check, develop or improve his or her Contrology technique on all the main apparati (equipment) designed by its creator.

Thanks to Romana Kryzanowska, our teacher, and to her daughter Sari Mejía Santo, we can enjoy today their legacy, a technique as close as possible to Joe Pilates' original creation.

Therefore, this volume on the Universal Reformer is dedicated to Romana, that historical master of Contrology who used beautifully, as can be seen in so many films, this major and central apparatus of the method. The whole Contrology system is based upon the Universal Reformer and couldn't do without it. It wouldn't make sense. The Universal Reformer was invented by Pilates, this genius of physical culture, back in Germany, at the very beginning of his task, and before his American adventure started to last forty-one years.

Again, neither the present volume nor all the rest presume to be a way to learn the method. They are only intended as support tools for pupils of any studio who wish to improve their teacher-guided sessions, for practitioners who decide to buy some piece of equipment to go on practicing at home, for

students in teacher-training who wish to be better organized and to have a more structured grasp on the method, for teachers who need a review...

During more than a decade we have seen a vertiginous increase in the number of Pilates schools, titles, teachers, studios and even books. It seems to us the time is ripe to present this series of ebooks. Our current purpose is now wider, and could be summarized as a wish to express our unwavering position, in the present context of chaos, to pass on to the general public the original method designed by Mr. Pilates as it has been transmitted by our teachers.

For this reason we wish to thank Romana Kryzanowska and her daughter Sari Mejía Santo for accepting us as collaborators in such a valuable tradition. Thanks to their untiring task and to the thousands of hours spent observing their sessions we have been able to better understand the human being and to try to help people through Pilates' legacy. Apart from their technical lessons, they have also taught us to be respectful, humble, devoted and hard-working professionals.

As Joe Pilates himself said, learning to control, exercise and understand human mechanics cannot be done through a book. This is completely true, but beyond this great truth, we expect this series may work as a "crutch" to go deeper into this great method of body conditioning.

We hope these guides are of help to the many who may need them. This is our sole purpose.

Javier Pérez Pont
Summer 2012

DEFINITION OF CONTROLOGY

“A good physical condition is the first requirement for happiness”. This quote by H. J. Pilates could well summarize the philosophy of his method. A good physical condition is achieved not only through the body, but also with the intervention of mind and spirit, with the final aim of “carrying out our daily tasks with love and energy”.

Contrology is a program of physical and mental training that conceives mind and body as a single thing, and explores the potential for change the human body has. This change, the main purpose of which is to improve body functioning, is founded on a strong “powerhouse”, an expression that refers to the circumference around the lower body, in so much as it is the structure that supports and reinforces the rest of the body. The method’s other pillar are the six Main Principles: Concentration, Control, Centre, Flow of Movement, Breathing and Precision.

Contrology means full coordination of body, mind and spirit. It is a unique system of stretching and strengthening

exercises developed by Hubertus Joseph Pilates, when he was almost ninety years old. Contrology is based on sequences of controlled and precise movements, done upon a number of special apparatus (equipment) designed by Hubertus Joseph Pilates himself, which pose a number of variable resistances to muscle work, acting like the muscles, and combining this work with exercises on the floor or on a mat. These exercises must be done in various positions (lying down, sitting, kneeling, leaning or standing), always avoiding impact or pressure on muscles, joints and tissues. Sessions are supervised at length by fully qualified and trained teachers.

People who practice this method on a regular basis develop a harmonic body, strengthen their mind, heighten their spirit, move more easily, sleep better and obtain a stronger, suppler body, and a slender silhouette. Contrology favors harmony and muscle balance. It is a method effective in itself, it isn't tiring or boring and it should be practiced in its purer form, without mixing it with other disciplines or therapies.

This method is something like an "inner shower": your heart will work at a stronger, more regular rhythm, without acceleration and excessive effort, blood will flow with new vigor and regularity, thus being oxygenated, and lymphatic drain, along with inner organs, will be stimulated.

"Ideally, our muscles should obey our will, or in other words, our will shouldn't submit to the reflective actions of our muscles". "It is the mind that rules the body". Joseph Pilates believed in the power of the mind to control the body. The wonder of many new users at the well being and energy they feel after their first sessions is not surprising. Pilates proved his beliefs once and again during his long years of research and training.

The goal of Contrology is physical and mental harmony: realizing fully the physical capacities of each person and correcting unbalance and weakness. This is why we recommend this method to all kinds of people, regardless of their age and profession.

Pilates himself was adamant about the purity of his method, which he defined as a combination of art and science, and he transmitted this conviction to his immediate followers. This notwithstanding, in the last years, after a USA jury sentenced that the term “Pilates” is generic, thousands of people are using this name as a bait for purely economical purposes. This unscrupulous use of the method can only lead to its deterioration. And the deterioration of the original method implies a drastic reduction of its effectiveness.

We would like to stress the importance of vocabulary and of a proper translation from the original language, that is, English, both for teachers and learners of the method. H. J. Pilates defended the use of a precise, clear and natural language when delivering his method. He gradually erased a number of expressions and substituted them for others which made up a unique and specific corpus. If you attend a proper Contrology studio, you will be surprised by the way teachers have of instructing pupils. A special vocabulary is used, made up by hundreds of turns used both by Pilates and by his wife Clara. To write the Spanish version of this book, we have had to find a translation as precise as possible for many of the Pilates terms. We have been lucky enough to have Romana and Sari’s help, both of whom also speak Spanish. If you attend a true Contrology studio, no matter what part of the world you are in, you will hear teachers use, in their own languages, the same “technical” vocabulary, along with numerous sentences by the method’s creator.

WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT CONTROLOGY

The work done by H. J. Pilates with his method lasted in its original form while its creator lived. His wife Clara, and the master Romana Kryzanowska later, kept the method alive to our days, helping thousands of people with their deep comprehension of the work of this genius and by applying his “original method”, which was after all the fruit of a lifetime of research, observation of the normal functioning of the human body, and result-proving. His revolutionary work is still alive today because it is perfect. As any masterpiece, it lacks nothing, and nothing is in excess, each detail is necessary because it has its own place; like Pilates used to say “why not aim higher instead of accepting mediocrity”. Whereas expressed in these terms the system might seem close, orthodox and hermetic, there is nothing further from the truth.

Contrology is nothing like this. As any other science or art, understanding and studying it require great doses of humility, ongoing and deep study and lots of sensible practice. As any other method, technique or science, it has its own sets of laws, formulae, principles, concepts, etc.

Today, discussions on what should be considered a genuine Pilates method are uncountable. All these arguments have one thing in common: they dazzle the public for obvious economic reasons and take advantage of the good reputation enjoyed by the name Pilates. No debate can be sustained if we look at the method's genuine tradition and history.

The method is named after its creator, Hubertus Joseph Pilates. As any other art, it gets its name from its creator to honor his work. Contrology should refer to those methods, exercises, principles, concepts, etc., invented and practiced by its creator. Any modification, and there are thousands (no exaggeration), addition, mix, variation or order alteration, of the exercises and, most importantly, of their objective, is simply no longer Contrology.

In a time when the fitness industry is constantly launching new tendencies, innovative and miraculous, the "Pilates method" still proves to have indisputably effective results. Contrology uses a number of devices the fitness industry has correctly identified as highly lucrative. This industry has therefore planned a complex marketing strategy of Pilates teacher training, to the point of turning the word Pilates into a hybrid; an infinite number of styles, mixes and off-spins, most of them claiming to be the most genuine, and all in a context of little rigorous and equally interested media.

On top of all, there are also schools that claim having updated and improved a method which, according to them, was obsolete. It goes without saying that changing something, be it a technique or a method, requires deep knowledge. One cannot change something unknown or only superficially understood, it would only be pretence. As for the so-called updating, anyone who has a proper comprehension of Contrology can see that the human body keeps walking, working and moving with the same joints, same number of bones and muscles it has used for the last thousands of years.

The method created by H. J. Pilates stems from the human body's natural movement to design hundreds of exercises put to the test by their creator himself. The method is based upon the humble and constant work done for long years by teachers who have lifted Contrology to its current position. Time will be the final judge.

Contrology was created to achieve a healthy body, a healthy mind and a healthy life. If we were to define Contrology in a single word, we would say it is movement, if in two words, controlled movement; if in three, strength, flexibility and control.

Applying Contrology means applying the method as it was conceived, individually and not in groups, using all the devices designed by its creator. You can attend individual sessions in a fully equipped studio, supervised all the time by a teacher; later, at home, and with the help of this book, you can complement your sessions.

EXERCISES ON

THE UNIVERSAL REFORMER



INTRODUCTION

- **THE “UNIVERSAL REFORMER”**

You must “work” on the springs, because having them under control at all times means you are controlling your muscles. You should practice and learn in depth the basis of Contrology (The Foundation), summarized in the exercises of the basic level. Working on the Universal Reformer is central to the method; it has to be used at every session. Any healthy person starting to do Contrology must start each session on the Universal Reformer, and only exceptionally will a beginner start his or her session on the mat. New exercises should be introduced gradually and in order, taking into account your physical condition. Remember that “less is more” and quality is preferable over quantity.

- **COMPONENTS OF THE “UNIVERSAL REFORMER”**

- » Headpiece (3 positions)
- » Handles (2)
- » Straps (2)
- » Shoulder blocks
- » Gears (3)
- » Spring bar
- » 2 hooks for the handles
- » 2 double hooks for the foot straps and 4 more for the safety straps
- » Sliding carriage
- » 2 frontal safety straps
- » 2 additional straps for leg exercises
- » Footbar
- » Framework
- » Shoulder blocks handles (behind them)
- » 3 pads
- » Bar (preferably of a light metal)
- » Box
- » Box handles (2)
- » 4 springs

EXERCISE LEVELS FOR

**THE
UNIVERSAL
REFORMER**

• BASIC SYSTEM

- » FOOTWORK
 - » Toes 10 x
 - » Arches 10 x
 - » Heels 10 x
 - » Tendon stretch 10 x
- » THE HUNDRED 10 series of 10 x
- » LEG CIRCLES 5 x / 5 x
- » THE FROG 6 x
- » STOMACH MASSAGE SERIES
 - » Round 10 x
 - » Hands Back 10 x
 - » Reach Up 3-4 x
- » SHORT BOX SERIES
 - » The Hug 3-5 x
 - » Flat 3-5 x
 - » Side to Side 2-3 series
 - » Twist 2-3 series
 - » Tree 3 series each leg
- » LONG STRETCH SERIES
 - » Elephant 5 x
- » KNEES STRETCH SERIES
 - » Round 5-10 x
 - » Arched 6-10 x
 - » Knees Off 5-10 x
- » RUNNING 20 x
- » PELVIC LIFT 5-10 x

• INTERMEDIATE SYSTEM

- » FOOTWORK SERIES
- » THE HUNDRED
- » SHORT SPINE MASSAGE 5 x
- » COORDINATION 5 x
- » SWAN ON THE BARREL 3 x
- » HORSEBACK ON THE BARREL 3 x
- » LONG BOX SERIES
 - » Pulling Straps / T-Shape 3 x / 3 x
 - » Backstroke Swimming 3-5 x
 - » Teaser 3 series
- » SHORT BOX SERIES
 - » Add TWIST/REACH 2-3 series
- » LONG STRETCH SERIES
 - » Long Stretch 3-5 X
 - » Down Stretch 3 X
 - » Up Stretch 3-5 X
 - » Elephant
- » STOMACH MASSAGE SERIES
 - » Add TWIST 2-3 series
- » SEMICIRCLE 3 x / 3 x
 - » Leg Circles/ The Frog
- » KNEE STRETCH SERIES
 - » Running
 - » Pelvic Lift
- » SIDE SPLITS 3 x
- » FRONT SPLITS 3 x each one

• **ADVANCED SYSTEM**

- » FOOTWORK SERIES
- » THE HUNDRED
- » OVERHEAD 3-5 x
- » Coordination
- » ROWING SERIES
 - » Into the Sternum 3 x
 - » 90° Degrees 3 x
 - » From the Chest 3 x
 - » From the Hips 3 x
 - » Shave the Head 3-5 x
 - » The Hug 2-3 series
- » LONG BOX SERIES
 - » Add Swan 3 x
 - » The Breaststroke 2 x / 2 x
 - » Horseback 3 series
- » SHORT BOX SERIES
- » LONG STRETCH SERIES
 - » Add ARABESQUES I, II y III
 - » Long Back Stretch 2-3 x each direction
- » STOMACH MASSAGE SERIES
- » TENDON STRETCH 3-5 x
- » SHORT SPINE MASSAGE
- » SEMICIRCLE
- » CHEST EXPANSION 2 series
- » THIGH STRETCH 3 x
- » ARM CIRCLES 3 x each direction
- » SNAKE / TWIST 1-2 x / 2 x
- » CORKSCREW 3 series
- » LONG SPINE MASSAGE 3-x each direction

- » KNEE STRETCH SERIES
 - » Running
 - » Pelvic Lift
- » BALANCE CONTROL
 - » Push Up Front 3 x
 - » Push Up Back 3 series
- » SIDE SPLITS
- » FRONT SPLITS
- » RUSSIAN SPLITS 3 x, 3 x, 1 x

**THE
UNIVERSAL
REFORMER**

**BASIC SYSTEM
EXERCISES**



I – FOOTWORK SERIES

- » Toes
- » Arches
- » Heels
- » Tendon Stretch

- **TOES**

TECHNICAL LEVEL: Basic

SPRING SETTINGS: 4 springs (less than 50 kg, 3 springs)

FOOTBAR: up

HEADPIECE: up

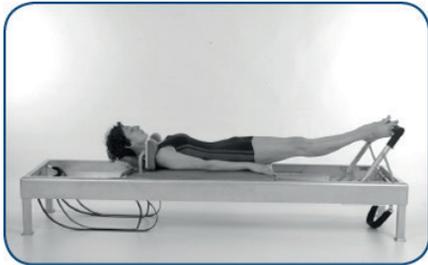
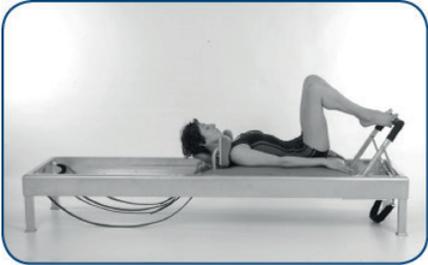
REPS: 10 x

OBJECTIVES: focusing on the “powerhouse”, aligning the body, warming-up, stimulating the heart

Starting Position

Lie on your back, in supine, and take your navel to your spine, with your body properly centered.

Place your toes (metatarsals) on the footbar, with your big toes as much apart as possible and your heels lifted together. Keep your knees open at shoulder-breadth.



Movement

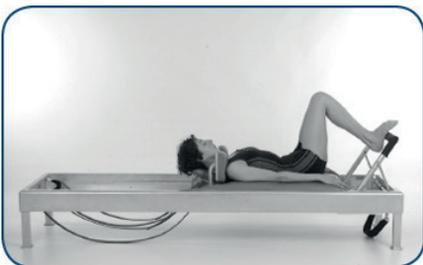
In this position, and starting the movement from your “powerhouse”, push the carriage to the end, while you stretch and clasp your legs as if they were zipped up.

Using your “powerhouse”, return the carriage to its starting position in control of the springs.

To Bear in Mind

- » Push and pull the carriage with flow and control, “working on the springs”.
- » Remember that your feet should be as open as possible; this is not a “V-feet position”.
- » Breathe naturally throughout the exercise.
- » Your back should be flat at all times, your neck and shoulders relaxed.
- » If you have any injury, work with fewer springs.
- » Footwork is essential to prepare the rest of the session.

• **ARCHES**



TECHNICAL LEVEL: Basic

SPRING SETTINGS: 4 springs (less than 53 kg, 3 springs)

FOOTBAR: up

HEADPIECE: up

REPS: 10 x

OBJECTIVES: the same as in the previous exercise, stimulating the liver

Starting Position

Place the middle of your plantar arches on the footbar “as a bird perched on a branch”, and keep your feet and knees together during the exercise.

Movement

Push the carriage away and pull it back, using your stomach and buttocks.

Modifications

If you are genuvalgum, you should work with your legs parallel to each other and in V-feet position, but with your heels apart and keeping a correct leg-hip alignment. Conversely, if you are genuvarum, you should work with your big toes apart and heels together (V-feet position).

To Bear in Mind

- » Breathe naturally.
- » Relax your heels and arch your toes throughout the exercise, as if the toes would touch the heels.
- » Make sure you exert pressure with the arch of the foot against the bar.
- » If you have any injury, work with fewer springs.



• HEELS

TECHNICAL LEVEL: Basic

SPRING SETTINGS: 4 springs (less than 50 kg, 3 springs)

FOOTBAR: up

HEADPIECE: up

REPS: 10 x

OBJECTIVES: the same as in the previous exercise, plus stimulating the kidneys

Starting Position

Place your heels on the footbar. Keep your knees and feet together at all times.

Movement

When pushing and pulling, keep your knees and feet together. When you pull the carriage in, direct your toes toward your knees.

Modifications

If you are genuvalgum, you should work with your legs parallel to each other and in V-feet position, but with your heels apart and keeping a correct leg-hip alignment. Conversely, if you are genuvarum, you should work with your big toes apart and heels together (V-feet position).

To Bear in Mind

- » Breathe naturally.
- » If you have any injury, work with fewer springs.

- **TENDON STRETCH**

TECHNICAL LEVEL: Basic

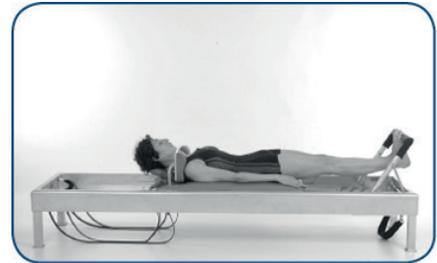
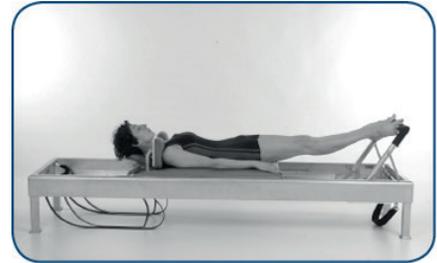
SPRING SETTINGS: 4 springs (less than 50 kg, 3 springs)

FOOTBAR: up

HEADPIECE: up

REPS: 10 x

OBJECTIVES: the same as in the previous exercises, stretching tendons and joints, strengthening feet and ankles



Starting Position

Finally, place your toes on the footbar again, and keep your feet and knees together.

Movement

Push the carriage and keep your position while, with flow, you lower your heels counting three and lift them also counting three. Work with the higher part of your legs and your “powerhouse”, not with your knees.

Modifications

If you are genuvalgum, you should work with your legs parallel to each other and in V-feet position, but with your heels apart and keeping a correct leg-hip alignment. Conversely, if you are genuvarum, you should work with your big toes apart and heels together (V-feet position).

To Bear in Mind

- » If you find it very difficult to keep your feet together, separate your toes very slightly.
- » Do not hyper-extend your knees, and do not let them twist inwards when lowering your heels, control your legs using your hip joint and buttocks.
- » If you feel too much pressure on your shoulders, you can use pads on the shoulder blocks.
- » Even if the headpiece is up, you can add a pad if you cannot keep your neck aligned with your body.
- » Make sure, throughout the exercise, you are looking in front of you so as to focus on your “powerhouse” and align your body better.
- » If you have any injury, work with fewer springs. You may even need to skip this exercise.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Esperanza Aparicio Romero and Javier Pérez Pont have worked as professional dancers for more than fifteen years, as soloists and leading dancers in several European companies.

In 1995 they discover Contrology, after training as Contrology teachers with the legendary Romana Kryzanowska and Sari Mejía Santo in New York. They remain for some time with their two teachers with the aim of perfecting their knowledge, and they ultimately obtain a Level II as international trainers of the organization.

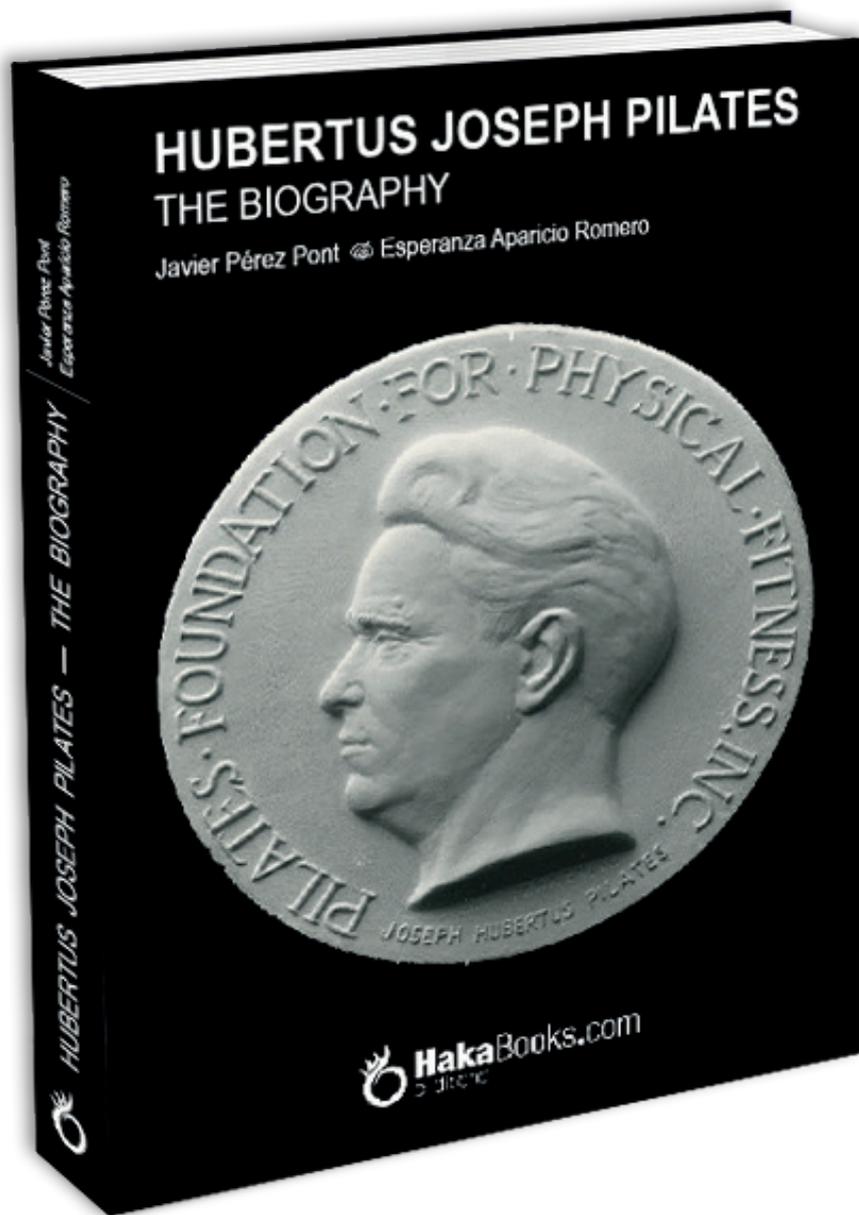
In late 1999 they decide to return to Spain and choose Barcelona as the site of what would be Barcelona's first Studio of Contrology, the first Contrology Studio in Spain to be endorsed and supported by their two teachers.

In 2002 they launch the Teacher Certification Program in Spain under the guidance of the two teachers mentioned above. During all these years, they have brought Contrology to a great number of conventions and TV and radio programs throughout Spain. Currently, and apart from managing their Studio and Teacher Certification School, they collaborate with the Romana's Pilates organization delivering international teacher-training seminars and classes.

Esperanza Aparicio and Javier Pérez Pont have published, in 2005, the first book about the method ever written by a Spanish author, under the title *El Auténtico Método Pilates, El Arte del Control* (The Authentic Pilates Method, The Art of Control) published by Martínez Roca, a part of the Grupo Planeta publishing house. The book has been a success, not only in Spain but also all over the Spanish-speaking American countries. It has also been translated into Portuguese.

And finally, they have just finished, after long years of research, the first and only biography to date of Hubertus Joseph Pilates. This biography is based on many oral testimonies, and also on official, historical and personal documents of Pilates himself. Under the title *Hubertus Joseph Pilates. La Biografía* (Hubertus Joseph Pilates. The Biography), this book will doubtlessly be a turning point on what has been believed to be true so far. The book has been published in three languages, Spanish, English and Italian.

<http://www.romanaspilates.com>.



For the first time ever we have the chance to find out the truth about Joseph Pilates.

A Book that will dispel the false myths concerning this historical figure, bring us closer to who Joe really was and what his Contrology meant.