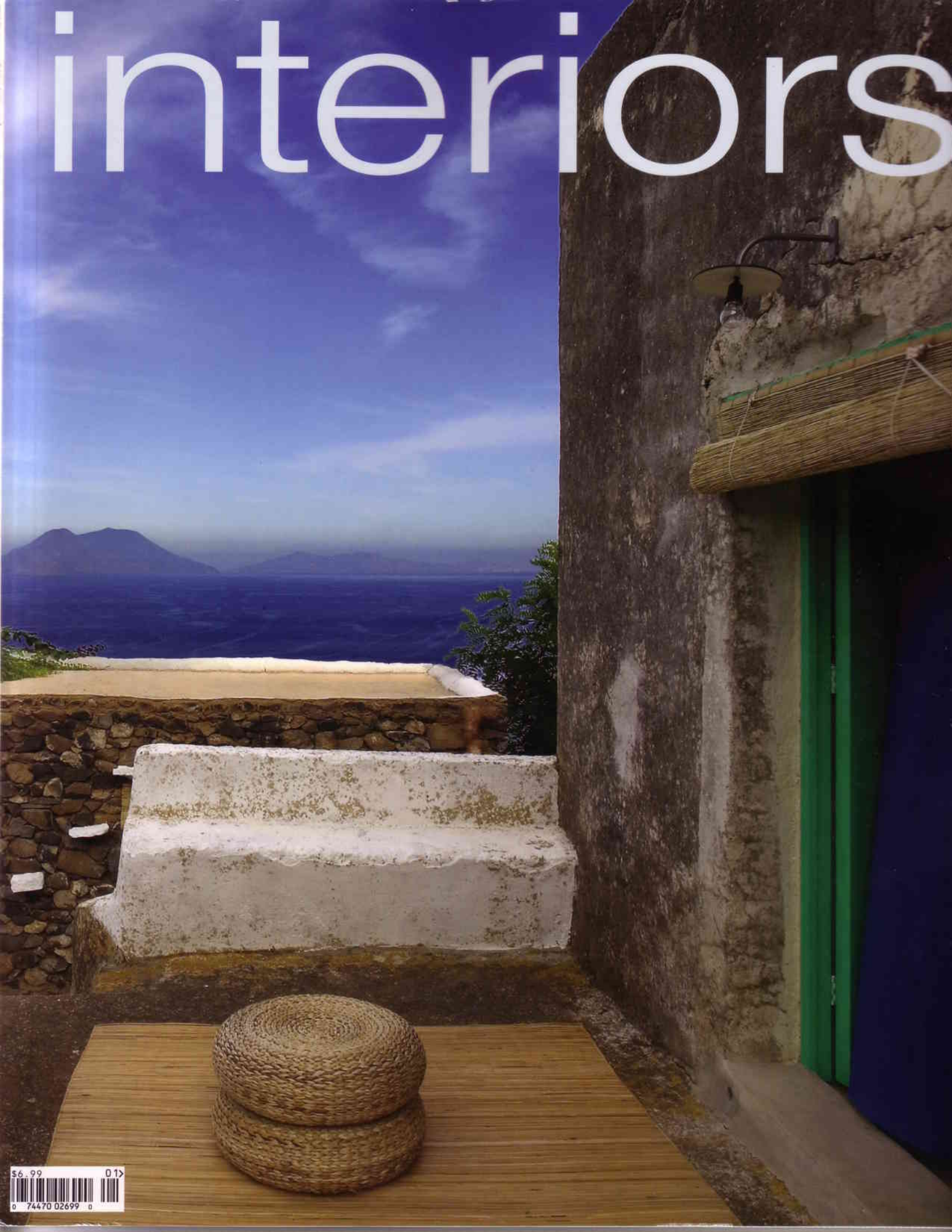


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La Dolce Vita

Welcome to an enchanting world of spirit and style—modern muse Patrizia Gucci reveals she's inherited more than one of the most legendary names in fashion

text: Jen Renzi photos: Nathan Kirkman



A career in high fashion was practically a birthright for Patrizia Gucci.

She is a descendant of Guccio Gucci—who founded his eponymous leather goods company in 1921—and the daughter of Paolo Gucci, who later grew the brand into a full-fledged fashion house. But after 12 years overseeing international public relations for the family biz, she left to follow her true calling: a modern-day Renaissance woman who counts painter, stylist, novelist, journalist, tile artist, furniture designer, interiors maven, and even—yes—fashion designer, among her many job titles. Creative juices may run in her veins, but her professional success is the by-product of hard work, innate talent, and significant charm.

So, too, is her new home, a cozy cottage tucked into the hills surrounding Florence. "The location is ideal," Gucci notes. "It's a quiet, peaceful hamlet that's just 10 minutes from the Ponte Vecchio." (Twenty minutes, perhaps, for those not driving Italian-style). She was drawn to the 19th century building—once a warehouse for nearby oil fields—for its Tuscan bearing and views of the Poggio Imperiale through English-style casement windows. The house is upside-down, with a living room on the top floor and a ground level housing a kitchen/dining area, bedroom and terrace abloom with gardenia, lemon trees and potted jasmine.



Gucci's year long restoration involved everything from whitewashing the kitchen's brick vaulted ceiling to replacing existing terra cotta tiles with antiqued oak floor boards throughout.

Blank slate achieved, she then added the décor's most distinctive feature: horizontal stripes of cream and beige paint that mimic the effect of wallpaper and make the 1,500 square foot space feel more expansive. "The walls of my old house were orange and pink; here, I wanted something more neutral that could harmonize with other colors," Gucci says. Strong hues abound: living room windows dressed in crimson silk, a ruby-red patchwork of antique kilims, a jolt of citrus orange livening a corner sitting nook, the bedroom's jade silk drapes and the kitchen's sprightly ruffled curtains of spring green Italian linen, used in lieu of cabinet doors.

Gucci favors such a palette in her own paintings; note her Rothkoesque red and orange fishing scene illuminating the living room's 16th century refectory table, salvaged from a Tuscan monastery. She hones her skills at Florence's Porta Romana Institute of Art and by traveling to exotic locales like Oman and Kyoto with charcoals and sketchbook in hand (and often returning with a treasure for her home). But her sensitivity to color, she says, is genetic. "My father had it, too—it's in my DNA!"



A keen eye is not all that Gucci inherited; many of her furnishings are family pieces, including the living room's ceramic horse head lamps and an 18th century cherry console with an unusual semicircular profile.

Provenance aside, though, her home is a quietly irreverent mix of old and new. Philippe Stark Ghost chairs pull up to a beech dining table that dates back to Napoleon III. A pair of carved, gold leafed lion's paws from a 17th century chair were reworked into reading lights for her walnut bedside tables. Lucite bookcases of her own design are stacked with volumes of Oriental philosophy and Italian literature. "Books are the secret of life," says Gucci. "It's like finding a new friend—I love reading my thoughts mirrored in people who lived in another time period."

Indeed, the house reflects not only her personal style, but also her life philosophy—a yearning for simplicity borne of growing up among charismatic, assertive creatives. "My family is complicated," she laughs. "Perhaps as a result, I've always gravitated to elegance that comes from simplicity. If you are comfortable with yourself, you don't need many adornments. Designing a house, you have to follow your own heart, your own path—and not be a slave to fashion," she concludes. Self-expression, after all, is always in style ■
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