

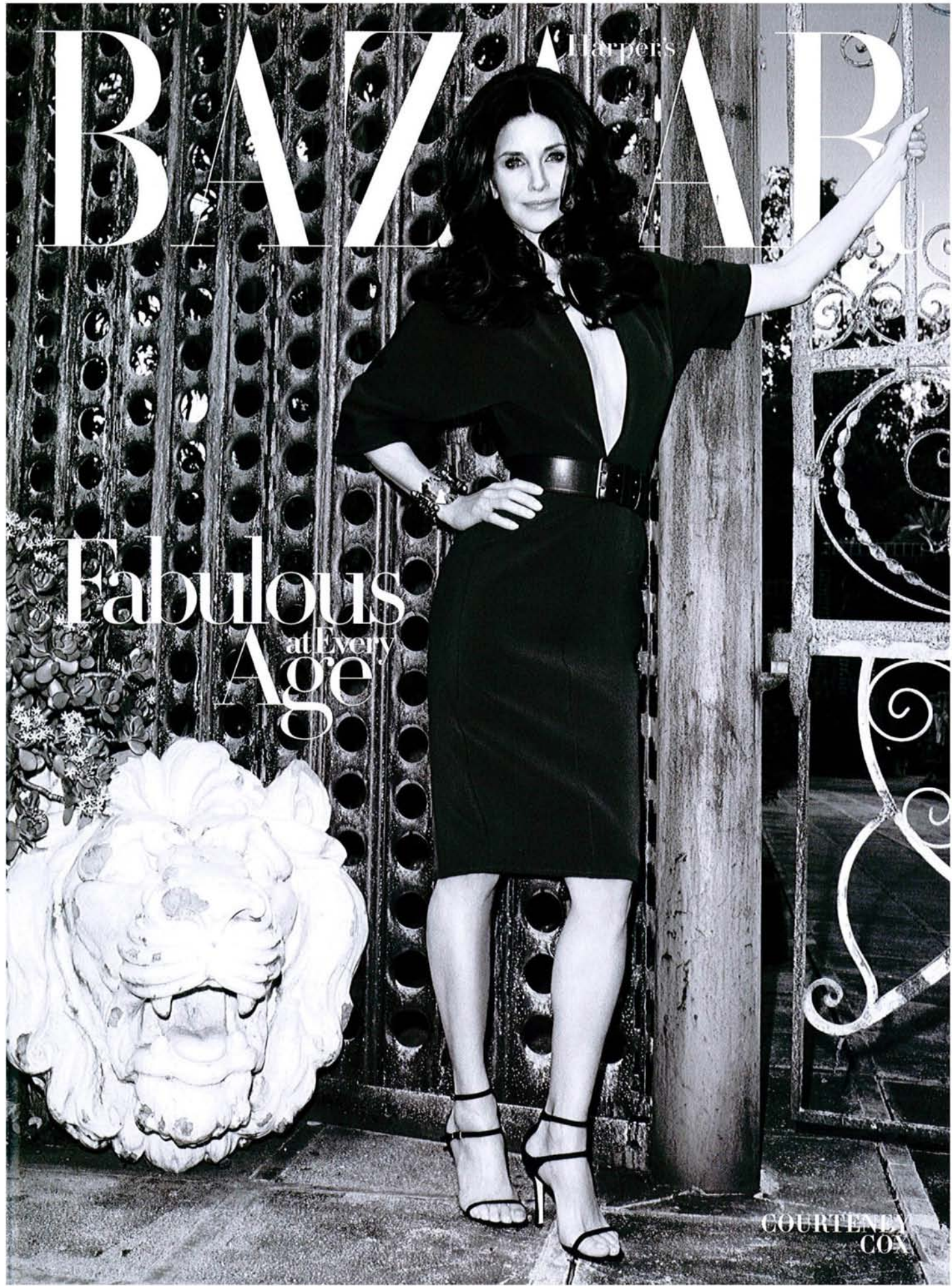
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## A FASHIONABLE LIFE

**BRUNELLO CUCINELLI**

*The CASHMERE TITAN and his family unwind in their Italian country home. By J.J. Martin*

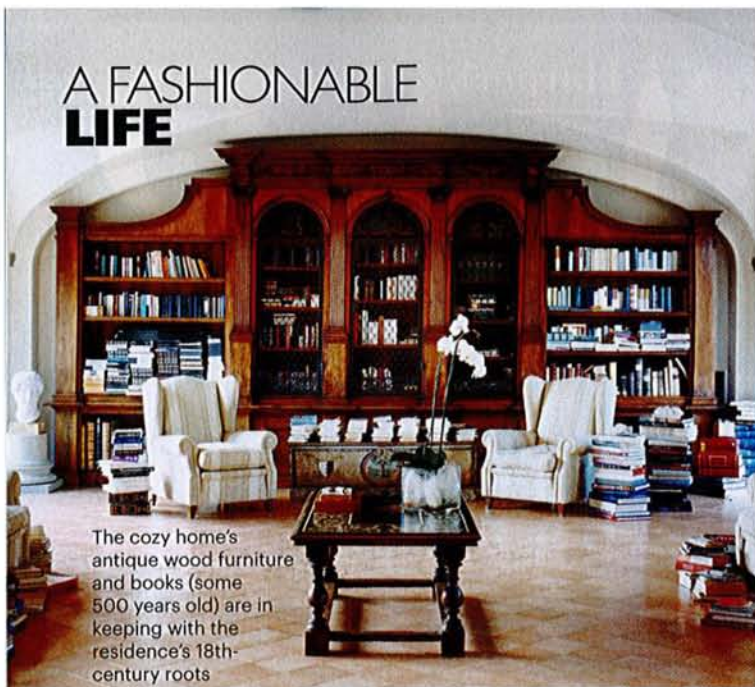
Photographs by Christopher Sturman

Brunello Cucinelli's headquarters, which sits next to the town church, is the central hub and financial backbone for the 400 residents of the tiny Umbrian village of Solomeo

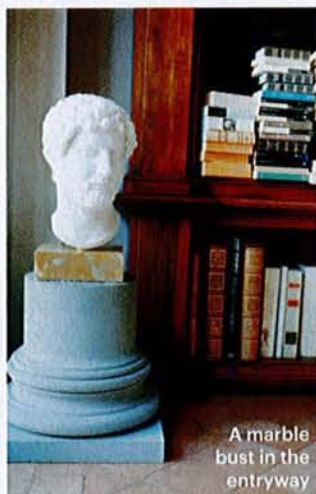
Cucinelli with wife Federica and daughters Carolina (left) and Camilla (seated) at an al fresco lunch



## A FASHIONABLE LIFE



The cozy home's antique wood furniture and books (some 500 years old) are in keeping with the residence's 18th-century roots



A marble bust in the entryway



An exterior shot of the home and pool



Cucinelli keeps stacks of books in every corner of the house, including next to the fireplace



Colorful spools of spun yarn line Cucinelli's office



Father and daughter Carolina take a stroll on the residence's leafy property

**W**hen Brunello Cucinelli married his high school sweetheart, Federica, in 1981 in the tiny Umbrian town of Solomeo in central Italy, the bride wore cashmere. The soft cream palazzo pants and matching cape were made by the bridegroom, a former farmer who had decided on a whim to whip up a collection of women's cashmere sweaters in bright colors and trendy oversize shapes. In 1978, the first order for the Brunello Cucinelli label was for 53 sweaters. Last year, the entrepreneur sold close to a million of his fine-fibered beauties.

"And that's just the sweaters!" Cucinelli, 58, beams boyishly. The Cucinelli label today has mushroomed into a luxe world of knit basics—capes, leggings, clingy dresses, arm shrugs, gauzy Ts, and leg warmers—that allow one to feel fashionably intact even when dressed down.

"It's a total phenomenon," raves Ken Downing, fashion director at Neiman Marcus. "The chic is built into the clothes, so you don't have to do anything. You're not super dressed up, but you look perfect."

The king of casual's castle is just as laid-back. Cucinelli's 18th-century residence, which took three years to restore, sits atop the green hill of Solomeo and is sparsely but perfectly appointed with Italian Renaissance furniture, oil paintings, and skyscrapers of stacked antique books—some from the 1500s—that could populate a small metropolis.

By all measures, the Cucinellis and their two daughters, Camilla, 29, and Carolina, 20, have hit the jackpot. But the only thing the unpretentious clan cops to is closets full of cashmere sweaters. "I think we each have about 60," Cucinelli says before dispensing all-important care instructions. ("Hand wash in cold water and never dry-clean!")

His factory, just down the road, is the unofficial sponsor for life as everyone in Solomeo knows it. Not only does Cucinelli employ close to 600 people, more than the town's 400 inhabitants, but he is responsible for the restoration of the town's church, main square, and recreation center as well as a new theater. Cucinelli, who grew up in the region, watched his father go from a happy farmer to a dispirited factory worker. "It's better when you earn more and work in a nice atmosphere and some of the money goes to things you enjoy," Cucinelli remarks of his pro-bono approach. "I just see myself as a custodian of this town." ■

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