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## **Chella Textiles**

### **Out-of-the-Box Innovation for the Out-of-Doors**

Santa Barbara, CA -- Chella Textiles is a corporate paradox. A young company with an age-old heritage, it creates outdoor fabrics so uncommonly beautiful they are often used indoors. Pioneering technical innovations -- most downright improbable, all industry firsts -- materialize out of halcyon headquarters in Santa Barbara. And now, despite or perhaps due to its ingenious iconoclasm, this contrarian little company is quietly emerging as the go-to resource for luxury performance textiles.

Founded by Lee Menichella in 1999, Chella is characterized by its owner's inherent belief that nothing is beyond the realm of possibility. While head of the hospitality sales territory in Los Angeles and Las Vegas for Cowtan & Tout in the 1990s, Menichella directed the company's ascent as a commercial luxury textiles house whose innovations by Jack Lenor Larson, Manual Canovas and Colefax & Fowler astonished the industry. "My years there convinced me that enduring style and technical superiority are not mutually exclusive," says Menichella, whose affinity for both are the foundation of Chella.

Like most visionaries, something is always gnawing at Menichella. In the late 1990's it was the weak offerings in outdoor textiles which -- despite designers' increasing demand for saturated shades and strong design -- consisted of coarse canvas in limited hues and the obligatory awning stripe. His vision for Chella crystallized upon meeting Scott Bodenner, a well-connected fabric wunderkind who had worked with legendary European mills and designed for Clarence House, Larsen and Zimmer + Rohde. Determined to take luxury fabric outdoors as well as indoors, the two men launched Chella with the mission to create logic-defying textiles that delight even the most jaded design devotee.

Menichella says the firm's singular focus on luxury performance textiles manifests the discipline necessary to develop the finest solution-dyed acrylics offered anywhere. "I spend an inordinate amount of time in the field listening to designers -- and reading between the lines," says Menichella. "I see my job as intuiting what they want before they even know themselves. Scott then turns my most eccentric ideas -- a true performance matelasse; the first outdoor chenille -- into solution-dyed acrylics with great structural and color sophistication." To the delight of the design community, Menichella's strength lies in achieving what was thought impossible. "We thrive on it," he maintains.

His own harshest critic, Menichella shuns faster/better/cheaper production options and insists on weaving at top-notch European and American mills, some of whose legacies date to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. "Certain mills employ true artisans who'll have thirty, forty years' weaving expertise," says Menichella. "Their parents worked there and their children will, too. Their mastery of the craft and the care that goes into their work will bring tears to your eyes."

As more designers and homeowners discover Chella's distinctive designs, the company is intent on maintaining the enigmatic Ying and Yang that renders Chella a rarity, not only in the outdoor textile arena but among fabric houses at large.