



PROVENCE PROMOTION

Interview with Jean-Brice Garella

From design to industry...

Flamboyant, ethnic, exotic, pure, baroque, inventive, etc., the fabric of Garella collections is as diverse as the Garella group is multicultural. Jean-Brice Garella, the son of a miner, is an emblematic figure in the Provence mining basin and the town of Gardanne, and is now the leader of this small / medium sized company that has outlets throughout the world with its haute couture fashion collections. Jean-Brice Garella is the symbol of a successful conversion combining tradition and new technologies, and is thinking about setting up a Creation cluster to collect young creators in the textile industry.



Jean-Brice Garella
www.groupegarella.com

> What is special about the Garella group nowadays?

Jean-Brice Garella: Our Company was created in 1975 as a result of a sort of alchemy drawing on local craftsmen's talent and the ambient cultural diversity. All creations in our group (600 000 items per year) reflect the expression and richness of this cross-fertilisation, and are inspired by this land ... The group covers six brands – JJ Garella, Indies, Bleu Blanc Rouge, Batiste, Nathalie Garçon and Sylla – and is itself a mosaic of talent, styles, characters and identities.

At the moment it includes 12 branches and has annual sales of 50 million Euros, it distributes its collections in France in more than 2 400 multibrand outlets and employs 200 persons, mostly in Gardanne. The group indirectly employs more than 1 000 persons throughout the world to make its collections, mainly in Italy, Portugal, Hungary and Poland. This passion for fashion also provides the momentum to export. 30% of our sales are in Europe, 20% are in Asia, Russia and the Middle East. This worldwide recognition is simply a reflection of what the town of Gardanne can hope for in the future...

> What are the factors of this success?

Jean-Brice Garella: These successes could not have been achieved without the active participation of the city. It has always assisted us in our development efforts. The town was ready and willing to help us find new sites whenever we needed to enlarge and include different brands. This enabled us to achieve our ambition, which is to grow in Gardanne. The town also helps us in our innovation approach, and satisfies our training and technology needs. With the installation of the Georges Charpak CMG, and the opening of the Saint-Pierre training centre, the town intends to develop new technologies, and offers us an opportunity to attract and train future talent to work in our workshops. For our group, this means helping us to make a success of our start in new technologies.

> Why are you interested in new technologies and are they the basis for the "Creation" cluster project for which you are responsible?

Jean-Brice Garella: They are inevitable in our activity so that we can continue to find added value for our work and remain cost effective in the creation of models and for bespoke work. In this way we can retain our differentiating advantage in a highly competitive sector. This is why the "Creation" cluster was created with the objective of bringing together young creators in the textile industry. This project is still in the maturing stage and will bring together all creation and technology activities that can be used in this field (computer graphics, stylist's offices, use of specialized software such as lectrasystems for laser cutting, etc.) In the next 5 years, it could employ about thirty people and become a genuine gateway between the needs of our activity and state-of-the-art technologies.

> How to conciliate the past and future?

Jean-Brice Garella: We must not forget where we come from. Most of us in Gardanne are the sons of miners and immigrants, and this creates strong ties. We have woven our common urban tissue based on solidarity, and colour the future tissue black and red. Red like our earth composed of bauxite, and passion; black like coal and energy ... Gardanne also symbolises an art of living, with its "Provençal village" aspect that we need to cultivate. Gardanne is not and never was a dormitory suburb. It is an independent town living with its own infrastructures for persons who work, live and study in it, with facilities such as nurseries, schools, student housing. Being in good living surroundings is a genuine factor of wellbeing at work that should never be neglected. The town's policy has always taken account of these problems. This solidarity built up over a long period, is a genuine advantage that puts our work on a more human scale!